

Review

Cabrillo Music Fest's Appeal

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THE CABRILLO MUSIC FESTIVAL has garnered much attention this year with composer-in-residence John Cage, who premiered *Dance 4/Orchestras* Sunday. His compositions are often like conceptual art and architecture: Far more fun to talk about than to experience. Cage is a joyful character, with good reason: No matter how baffled the audience may have been, bemused applause showed the audience's willingness to share his glee.

"I think I'm 200 years behind," said the scholarly looking chap standing to my left as he joined in the applause. Whether you think Cage's widening popularity marks one of the great intellectual hoodwinks of our time or if you're genuinely intrigued by his ideas go to one of the remaining festival concerts and hear for yourself. His most recent is based on chance, with random results, but some of his earlier works, featured this weekend, are more accessible. They employ gamelan instruments, dance collaborations, and "prepared" pianos altered by objects positioned inside.

The contrast between two musical pictures of Brazil—one by a Frenchman, one by a Brazilian—demonstrated

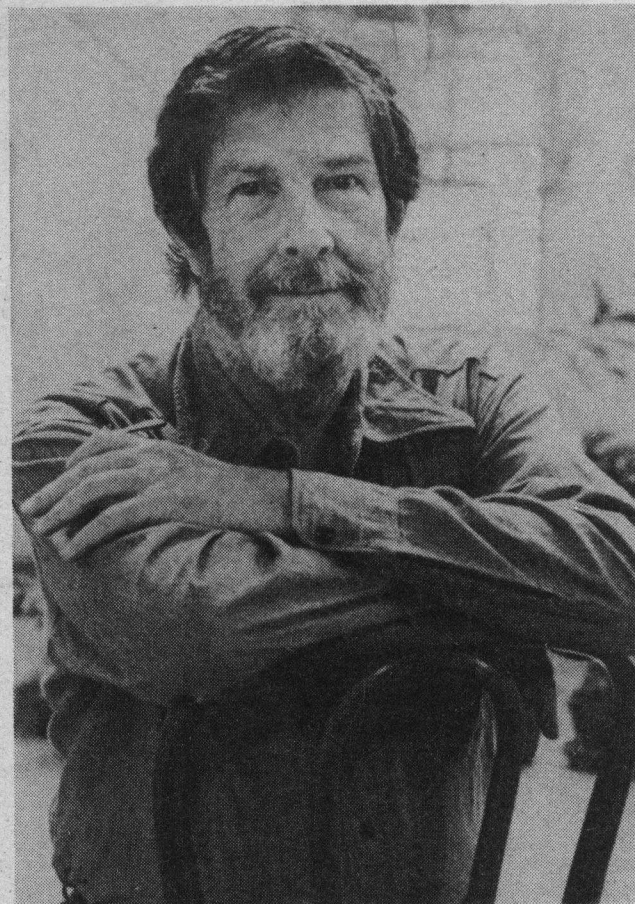
inspired programming in Friday's pairing of Darius Milhaud's *Le Boef Sur Le Toit* and Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Choros No. 8*.

Milhaud put into his festive piece what he learned from a trip to Rio in 1917. His tongue-in-cheek music is filled with dance rhythms and slyly humorous tin-ear parodying of the sounds of funky street players of the time. Mostly a violin showcase, it featured concertmaster Romuald Tecco fiddling up a storm. Although Tecco's playing made *Le Boef Sur Le Toit* the crowd pleaser of the concert, the heartfelt nationalism of Villa-Lobos' 1927 work made his music the concert's high point for me. Its intensity and variety of textures and emotions had far more impact. By comparison, the Frenchman's notions of native Brazilian music seem a bit academic to my jaded ears. But you could still get a whiff of the excitement Milhaud's composition must have stirred up in Paree—North or South American music was pretty hot stuff back then.

Felix Mendelssohn's romantic *Incidental Music To A Midsummer Night's Dream* is even more magical than the Shakespearean play. The ethereal violin parts of Sunday night's closing selections just about conjured up a fairy world before our eyes in Mission San Juan Bautista. And for anybody sour on marriage—idea or reality—the famous Wedding March from this work is enough to make anybody walk the nuptial plank.

In contrast to the fair world was George Barati's *Confluence* which premiered Friday night at the Cabrillo College Theater. Starkly modern and featuring a large percussion section, *Confluence* was a meeting of Eastern model and Western atonal ideas snaking their way through a jungle of subtle changes. Barati was Santa Cruz County Symphony director from 1971-1981, a Guggenheim fellow, and the composer of a prestigious Philadelphia Orchestra recording.

From Barati's modern work, German baritone Wolfgang Schone took the audience into the love-hurting heart of Gustav Mahler with his *Sounds of A Wayfarer*. Mahler dedicated these romantic songs to a woman who loved him but agreed to back off for professional reasons, a personal note not lost in the composition. Melodic and romantic, even those left cold by operatic singer would enjoy Mahler's tearjerkers.



John Cage

Saturday, accompanied by orchestra conductor Dennis Russell Davies on piano, Schone gave a recital of three other masters of the art song, Beethoven, Schubert, and our American insurance salesman/composer, Charles Ives. Sunday afternoon, Schone was joined by his wife soprano Jena Ruchek for two Bach cantatas in the beautiful 200-year-old San Juan Bautista Mission.

Tickets are still available for all shows except those featuring Keith Jarrett. Check the Good Times Calendar for concert days and times. ●