

## FOREWORD

"The eye of man hath not heard, the eare of man hath not seen ..."  
A dream so strangely set in motion.

For Shakespeare, Bottom's dream is at the same time an experience made possible by genuine art. With "ORGAN<sup>2</sup>/ASLSP" by John Cage and its trans-epochal realization in Halberstadt's Burchardi Church, as well as through Sabine Groschup's more than ten-year artistic encounter with this project, one can have just such an experience.

In 1985, for a piano competition, Cage composed "ASLSP" with the help of chance operations. In 1987 he reworked it, together with Gerd Zacher, into a new piece for organ with the ambiguous title – As SLOW as Possible, also refers to "Soft morning, city! Lsp!" from the last chapter of Joyce's "Finnegans Wake": as Lsp. It consists of eight parts, each of which must be played and each of which may be repeated. Nothing is prescribed – except for the relative pitches and the relative duration of the sounds. The idea of a very long "performance" duration was developed in Trossingen in 1998.

The project in Halberstadt started in 2000. In 2001 the bellows were heard, in 2003 the first pipes sounded. The year 2006 was quite hectic: two sound changes took place within a single year. The current sound will not change for almost another seven years. And when, as planned, the last tone has faded away in the year 2640, then at least the church building will have experienced a longer lasting peace than ever before in history. May this hope not be disappointed.

Because of the dates inscribed on donor plaques along the walls of the church, some visitors only see a bizarre indoor cemetery with music. Others see the traces of more than 639 years of passed time on the walls, recognize in the sound sculpture the graphic notation, so to speak, of the relatively few tones, hear a highly intricate organ sound that shimmers in the space – and experience a bit of eternity. The continuum of time, of history, seems blasted open, without a shot at a clock having been fired. With Benjamin, one might speak of a present that is not transitory, but which consists of time vouched for, and comes to a standstill. At the same time, the former Cistercian church is filled with more than 639 years of future as a "Klang{t}raum" – a sonic dream house.

Along the way, many questions arise. May one simply end the "pause" with which the piece begins? Without an organ, and then with an incomplete, provisional instrument, can one initially even dare to begin? What if, due to sheer impatience, one has played too fast and is eleven months ahead of his time? May one compensate for that later by slower playing? What, then, would be slower than "as slow as possible"? What if the concert is interrupted because the bellows stop functioning? Who actually are the musicians at this concert? Is it even a concert at all, if frequently no listeners are present? Every

evening, when the last visitors have departed: the church door closes and all questions are open! Cage would have been glad, he loved questions: "That is a very good question. I should not want to spoil it with an answer."

In 2005, Sabine Groschup visited us in Halberstadt for the first time and asked new questions. She and Georg Weckwerth were working on "A View of Ears", a film essay about pioneers of modern sound art in the second half of the twentieth century. Since 2012, and using the material shot back then, several of the total of 89 planned edited versions of the Cage-congenial experimental documentary film "[JC{639}]" by Sabine Groschup have been created. And the participative embroidered artwork "My ORGAN<sup>2</sup>/ASLSP : A work in progress for the next ...", which is designed for five large canvases, is wondrously plotted in the literal sense: through the depiction of the sequential parts of the score. Sabine still has many more fantastic ideas, some of which I am familiar with, some I can only imagine, and many more that I am anticipating.

I wish the exhibition "[JC{639}] 1/2 EDITION ETC." with John Cage: "many open ears to see and eyes to hear."

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