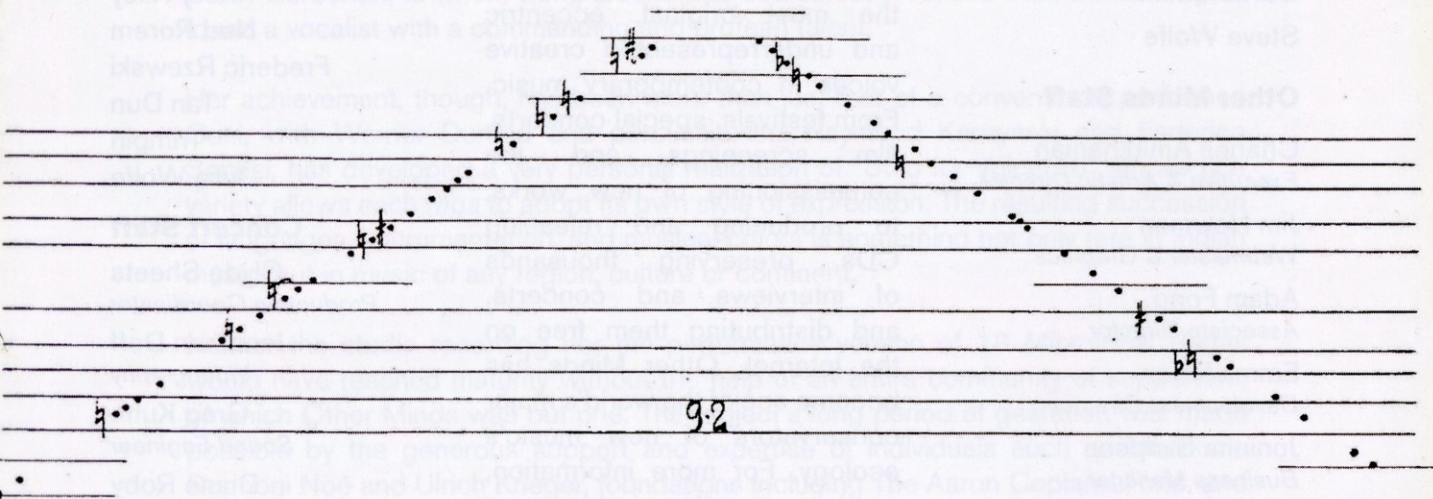


OTHER MINDS PRESENTS

18 MICROTONAL RAGAS



"SOLO FOR VOICE 58" FROM SONG BOOKS (1970) BY JOHN CAGE



**FEATURING AMELIA CUNI
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2007
ST. JOHN'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BERKELEY**



Charles Amirkhanian, Artistic Director

*"His epitaph might be that
he composed music
in others' minds."*

—New Yorker, 1992, following the death of composer John Cage

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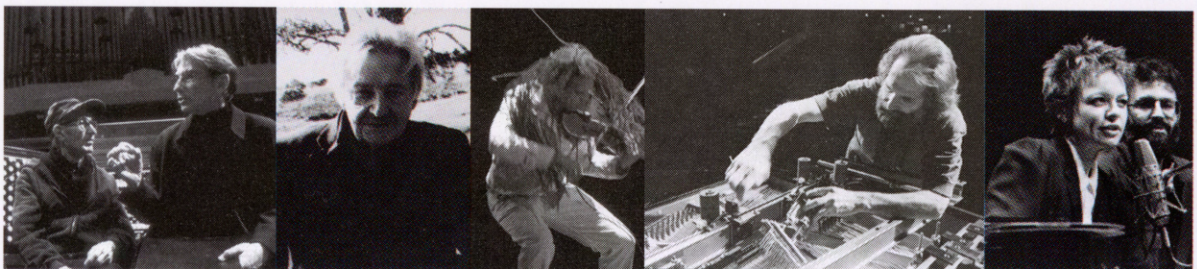
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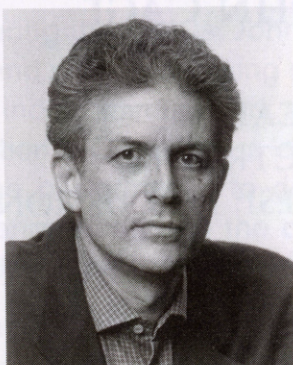


photo: Mark Estes

Tonight Other Minds proudly presents the culmination of a project three years in the making. When Amelia Cuni first proposed to develop her own special realization of John Cage's "Solo for Voice 58," we had only months earlier presented the American Premiere of her piece *Ashtayama—Song of Hours* at the 10th Other Minds Music Festival (2004). Thanks to a positive experience at OM 10, Cuni presented to Other Minds a very special opportunity to pay tribute to a composer who has influenced so many other minds: John Cage.

The realization of Cage's deceptively simple score demanded years of planning, composing and rehearsing. But when I heard the fully developed *18 Microtonal Ragas*, I was taken aback. Here was a musical result whose guiding spirit was Indian, and whose materials revealed something quite different: the all-embracing ethic of Cage. It reminded me of his *Musicircus*, of which he'd said, "You won't hear a thing; you'll hear everything." The resulting aural polyglot seems a fitting tribute to Cathy Berberian, to whom *Song Books* was dedicated: in Amelia Cuni we have again found a vocalist with a commanding and protean talent.

Her achievement, though, has been more than just that of a conventional performer. Cuni, with Werner Durand and percussionists Raymond Kaczynski and Federico Sanesi, has developed a very personal realization of "Solo for Voice 58" whose rich variety allows each *raga* to adopt its own style of expression. The resulting succession of languages, instrumentation, and musical colors is something not only rare in Indian music, but in music of any region, culture or continent.

Neither the studio recording nor the performance version of *18 Microtonal Ragas* would have reached maturity without the help of an entire community of supporters, of which Other Minds was but one. The project's long period of gestation was made possible by the generous support and expertise of individuals such as Mariuccia Rognoni Noé and Ulrich Krieger, foundations including The Aaron Copland Fund, and faithful curators such as Matthias Osterwold of Maerzmusik.

I welcome you to tonight's performance, and hope you'll take home a copy of our new CD release of *18 Microtonal Ragas*. Having passed in September the 95th anniversary of the birth of John Cage, we are very proud to present both the recording and performance of Amelia Cuni's "Solo for Voice 58," as a tribute to one of the original 'other minds.'

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Charles Amirkhanian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Charles Amirkhanian
Artistic Director

OTHER MINDS PRESENTS

18 MICROTONAL RAGAS

“SOLO FOR VOICE 58”

FROM SONG BOOKS (1970) BY JOHN CAGE

AMELIA CUNI: DHRUPAD VOCALS

WERNER DURAND: DRONES & ELECTRONICS

RAYMOND KACZYNSKI & FEDERICO SANESI: PERCUSSION



Tonight's program will feature:

The complete “Solo for Voice 58” consisting of 18 microtonal *ragas*, to be improvised with pitches selected from Cage's graphically notated score. The *talas* are fixed in the score.

Selections from the following pieces from Song Books will also be superimposed:

Solos for Voice 6, 10, 19, 32, 57, 71, 76, 77, 78 (theatre)

Solos for Voice 41, 42, 51 (theatre using electronics)

Solos for Voice 3, 21, 72 (songs using electronics)

Texts have been selected from the following sources:

Original writings by Amelia Cuni; Poems by Alain Daniélou (*Raga Dhyanas, Microtones, Affinitá, Der Grundton, The Drone*); Solos for Voice 3, 12, 21 (including texts by Henry David Thoreau and Erik Satie); other works in Amelia's repertoire; Chautal text by Dilip Chandra VEDI; Brajbhasa from Surdas Holi Song; Poems by Roberto Sanesi (*Su fondamente invernali, La bottega del vetraio*)

The performance will last approximately 90 minutes; there will be no intermission.

Amelia Cuni's costume was designed by Petra Peters.

The development of this performance was supported by Other Minds in collaboration with Mariuccia Rognoni Noè, Expozice nové hudby (Brno), Voix Nouvelles–Fondation Royaumont, Casa da Música (Porto), Handelsbeurs (Ghent), Megaron (Athens), and Ultima (Oslo). The world premiere performance was given March 19, 2006 at Maerzmusik/Berliner Festspiele.

This concert presentation of *18 Microtonal Ragas* is presented in partnership with Goethe-Institut San Francisco and the Italian Cultural Institute of San Francisco, and is sponsored in part by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.



FROM CAGE'S SONG BOOKS TO 18 MICROTONAL RAGAS

During the 1940s, John Cage came in contact with Indian music and philosophy and started applying some of its principles to his own work. "Solo for Voice 58" is an indeterminate work and consists of 18 separate and independent parts. In his directions, Cage refers explicitly to traditional Indian music forms. The challenge for the performer is to develop *ragas* and *talas* in a non-traditional context. This challenge has been the driving force behind Amelia Cuni's intensive engagement and development of *18 Microtonal Ragas* for the past few years.

In Cage's score, he indicates a series of graphically notated microtones from which the performer can select the *raga* pitches, leaving open a vast range of possibilities, encouraging the interpreter to reflect, question, choose and create in an experimental way.

Cuni first performed "Solo for Voice 58" during a rendition of the complete *Song Books* at the Theater Bielefeld (Germany) in May 2001, featuring Christian Kesten, Steffi Weissmann and the new music vocal ensemble Die Maulwerker. She then went on deepening her involvement with this unusual work, feeling that this was a unique opportunity to further her own understanding of the relationship between tradition and experimentation, confronting East and West in a process of de-conditioning perfectly fitting her personal history as a European *dhrupad* singer.

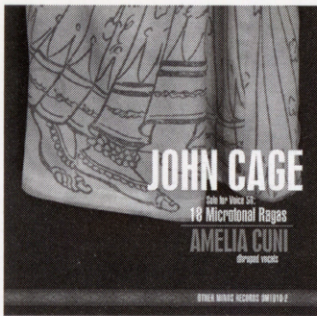


photo: Kai Bienert

Two basic concepts are embodied in Cuni's realization of the complete "Solo for Voice 58": the meaning of *raga*—to color the mind—and chance operations, a typically Cagean tool. Together, they inform the sonic and visual result. Following Cage's own instructions, other selections from *Song Books* have been integrated and superimposed as part of the *18 Microtonal Ragas*.

The overall outcome of Cuni's interpretation of "Solo for Voice 58" is therefore some kind of recognizable *raga* music, although it cannot be defined as exclusively Indian. Infused also is the experimental nature of the performer's relationship to the score, and the sense that the concepts of *raga* and *tala* can be manifested in an endless variety of ways. Cage has emancipated these concepts from their accumulated cultural and historical bindings, projected them into a truly cross-cultural dimension and evidenced their potential as 'open musical forms.' From that point of emancipation, Amelia Cuni has developed and practiced Cage's *ragas* and *talas*, discovering and creating new musical beings, grown from seeds of joy and discipline.

This note adapted from Amelia Cuni's essay, "Creating 18 Microtonal Ragas," available in the CD booklet of Solo for Voice 58: 18 Microtonal Ragas (Other Minds 1010).



Other Minds 1010-2 CD

Solo for Voice 58: 18 Microtonal Ragas

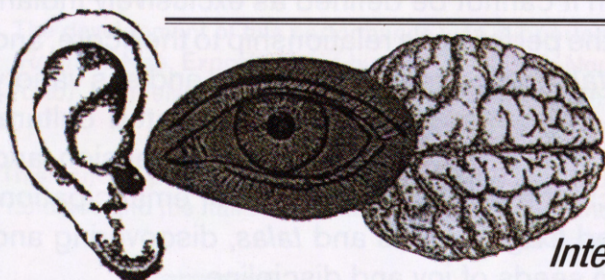
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This recording on the Other Minds label is accompanied by a 28-page booklet with essays by Amelia Cuni, Indian music scholar and composer Sandeep Bhagwati, and Cage scholar William Brooks. The following is an excerpt from Bhagwati's essay:

When I first heard the premiere of [Amelia Cuni's] "Solo for Voice 58" at the Maerzmusik festival in Berlin in 2006, I felt the stirrings of an unknown kind of Indian music, a music that no longer belongs to India, just as Cowell's music did not any longer belong to Europe. Although it uses all kinds of devices, ideas and atmospheres—in short, chromosomes from Indian music—Amelia Cuni's interpretation of Cage creates something profoundly different: An infant that still has to learn how to walk, and yet is promising, enlightening and fascinating enough to have found support, nourishment...and love. I experienced a music that evoked so many things I remembered and delighted in from Indian music, that melted in my mouth with never-before-tasted *rasas* I could relish—and yet at the same time forced me to listen with a Western attitude, making sense of the different roles of the players in a chamber music way, trying to analyze the complex and original relationships of drone to tune (one of the many decisive contributions of Amelia's artistic partner Werner Durand to this project), attempting to follow texts in Italian, English, French and German—texts I could actually understand, not yet another medieval Brajbrasha or Sanskrit poem. Is this new or experimental music? I do not know, and the question seems irrelevant...Amelia Cuni, in following Cage's instructions and intentions in a faithful, yet unexpected manner, achieves one thing that is truly rare in all kinds of experimental music: Her straightforward and yet sensual music makes you suddenly care about all the ideas, time and biographical material she nourished this project with. She has, in more than one sense, composed her own musical home; and we are all warmly invited to live in it and be her welcome guests.



Indian music scholar and composer
Sandeep Bhagwati



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John Cage & Pat Woodbury, UC Davis, 1970
photo: Charles Amirkhanian



Anthony Braxton with Charles Amirkhanian, 1985
photo: Esther Kutnick, from the Exploratorium's "Speaking of Music" Series

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Greame Jennings
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BIOGRAPHIES



Amelia Cuni is a singer and composer living in Berlin. She has trained her voice and musical skills in India where she studied *dhrupad* singing and kathak dance for more than 10 years. Her main teachers have been R. Fahimuddin Dagar, Bidur Mallik, Dilip Chandra VEDI and Manjushri Chatterjee. Her present work includes contemporary music and multimedia collaborations with artists of international repute as well as traditional *raga* music. With her own productions, she has performed at major venues and festivals all over the world; several composers have written for her voice. www.ameliacuni.de



Werner Durand performs his own music on saxophones, Iranian ney and self-made wind instruments. Besides various projects with Amelia Cuni, he plays with ArmchairTraveller. He was the founder of The 13th Tribe and has collaborated with numerous composers/performers. He has recorded for X-tract, Rec/ No Man's Land, Tzadik, Table of the Elements, Staalplaat, Barooni, Amiata and many others.

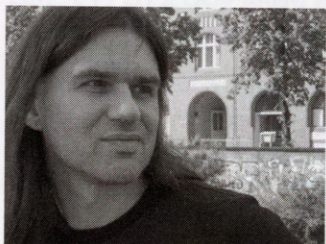


Raymond Kaczynski is a percussionist and composer living in Germany. He studied at Central Michigan University and at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He learned mrdangam and South Indian rhythm for 5 years with Ramnad V. Raghavan. His work is based on dance, literature, and music composition. He plays his own sound sculptures, percussion and electronics and has performed in Europe, Asia and America. www.xray-k.com



Federico Sanesi is a percussionist and composer living in Milan, Italy. He has done classical studies at Milan Civic School of Music with D. Searcy and at the IIMC in Venice. Since 1980, he has been learning from tabla master Shankha Chatterjee; later on, also South Indian drumming from Anil Kumar at Kalakshetra. His work is focused on integrating various musical languages and cultures through poetry, dance, theatre, cinema and visual arts. He has played with artists from many parts of the world participating in innumerable international festivals and CD productions.

Co-producer and music consultant Ulrich Krieger provided invaluable insights in the development of 18 Microtonal Ragas, through an intensive exchange with Amelia Cuni.



Ulrich Krieger is a composer, performer and improviser. He studied classical/contemporary saxophone, composition and electronic music at the University of Arts in Berlin and the Manhattan School of Music. His recent activities include development of an approach to the saxophone he calls "acoustic electronics," and extend into the various fields of new and experimental music, electronic music, noise and avant garde rock, working with artists such as Lou Reed, Lee Ranaldo, Thomas Köner, La Monte Young, Michiko Hirayama, Radu Malfatti, Ensemble Modern, California E.A.R. Unit, Soldier String Quartet. He currently teaches composition at California Institute of the Arts. www.ulrich-krieger.de

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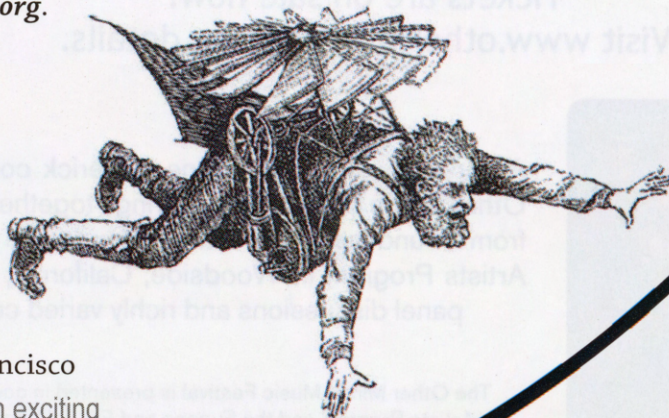
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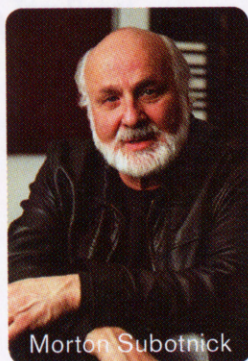


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