



**Asking
queStions /
maKING
musIc:
listeniNg, analysis,
and caGe** *

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KEYWORDS: John Cage, music analysis, listening, performance, *Etudes Australes*

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[0.1] This paper originated as a pair of text and visual essays inspired by an interest in the analysis of Cage's music. "Asking Questions" opens a contemplative space around some conceptual problems that arise in association with the analysis of music by Cage and others.⁽¹⁾ "Making Music" is an analytic exploration of a passage from the opening of the sixth etude from Book I of Cage's *Etudes Australes*, as performed by Grete Sultan and by Sabine Liebner.⁽²⁾ Both essays venture somewhat outside the contemporary mainstream in music theory and analysis in that they are works of scholarship with an aesthetic component, a mode of discourse that finds precedent in writings by Benjamin Boretz and J.K. Randall.⁽³⁾ Rather than serving primarily as illustrations or examples, the slides, which include images and quotes from Cage, are often positioned at an angle to, but in constant dialogue with, the text, as another voice.⁽⁴⁾



(click to read the essay)



(click to read the essay)

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Works Cited

- Boretz, Benjamin. 1979. "Language as a Music: Six Marginal Pretexts for Composition." *Perspectives of New Music* 17, no. 2: 131–95.
- Randall, J. K. 1975. "a Soundscroll." *Perspectives of New Music* 13, no. 2: 126–49.
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Footnotes

* The title block suggests, but does not strictly conform to, Cage's mesostics practice: while it includes pre-existing text (the two subtitles) and vertical alignment spells out a significant word, letters found down the spine do occur in lower case in the intervening series of letters just prior.

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1. "Asking Questions" was conceived for, and an earlier version first presented on, the plenary session "Contemplating Cage at 100" at the Society for Music Theory's 35th annual meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana.

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2. Earlier versions of both papers were presented jointly as "Asking Questions / Making Music" in Spring 2013, as part of the Eastman School of Music's Cage Centennial Lecture Series and on the Department of Music's colloquium series at the University of Virginia.

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3. For example, [Boretz 1979](#) and [Randall 1975](#).

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4. All visual art works by John Cage are reproduced courtesy of the John Cage Trust. A list of image sources appears as an appendix.

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