

Letters:

the brief love of John Cage

for Pauline Schindler,

1934-35

transcription and introduction by Maureen Mary

These letters were found among materials left by Pauline Gibling Schindler, the wife of the architect Rudolph Schindler. At the time of these letters, the Schindlers were separated. He continued to live in his own house in Kings Road, Los Angeles (now West Hollywood), and she was most frequently in Ojai, a small settlement some seventy miles north-west of Los Angeles, where she stayed with her young son Mark. When this correspondence starts, John Cage is 22 and Pauline Schindler is 41. Letter 18 gives a definite date for Cage's first lesson with Schoenberg.

Introduction

Pauline Schindler was born Sophie Pauline Gibling in Minneapolis, 1893. Her parents, Edmund and Sophie Gibling were immigrants. Her father was English, her mother German. Together, they were intelligent and industrious partners.

Pauline was brought up near New York with stays in England and Germany. She had an excellent formal education. After receiving a degree from Smith College, she did extensive post-graduate work in music and social sciences.

She moved to Chicago and worked from 1917 to 1919 on the staff of Jane Addams' Hull House, the settlement house for the poor and center for social reformers and intelligentsia (John Dewey was a Trustee). At the time when Pauline was there, Addams and Emily Green Balch were founding the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom for which both, on separate occasions, were to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Pauline's mother became the Treasurer of the League. Pauline met and married the Viennese born architect, Rudolph Schindler, and moved to Taliesin, Frank Lloyd Wright's home and studio. Schindler had been close to Adolf Loos and his Viennese circle, which included Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern.

Pauline considered being a composer, but chose instead to be a handmaiden to her husband's genius, much to her father's dismay. She did, however, continue her passionate advocacy of the arts, and especially music. She wrote enthusiastically about the music of Henry Cowell, Edgar Vardse and Carlos Chavez. She was a political activist with a commitment both theoretical and actual to socialism. She championed the oppressed, the impoverished and the politically incarcerated. Late in her life she was subpoenaed to appear before the Un-American Affairs Committee apparently for having -entertained, among others, Igor Stravinsky, Aldous Huxley and Robert Oppenheimer.

Frank Lloyd Wright appointed Schindler superintendant of his office for the duration of his absences, over a two year period, in Japan where Wright was supervising the construction of the Imperial Hotel, Tokyo. At the same time, with a large commission for the oil heiress, Aline Barnsdall, Wright set up office in Los Angeles, which is where the Schindler's moved in 1919. Soon Schindler set up his own, independent practice. The Schindler's, in collaboration with another

family, built the Kings Road House with financial support from Pauline's parents. The Kings Road House, writes the architectural historian Rayner Banham, "remains one of the most original and ingenuous domestic designs of the present century - and one of the most gratifyingly livable." For some, it is considered to be the definitive statement of Schindler's 'space architecture'. It also reflects Pauline's social philosophy, a place of simplicity where people from all walks of life could meet together. Pauline had expressed this kind of open meeting house in a letter to her mother even before she had met Schindler.

The marriage was not a peaceful one. Schindler was truly a Bohemian and did not respect the institution of marriage, and behaved accordingly. Pauline had wanted to consider the marriage a legal formality to satisfy her family, but was much more conventional in her response to it than she imagined she would be. They separated some years after the birth of their only child, Mark, but continued to live side by side at the Kings Road House. Communicating only by letter, Schindler always addressed Pauline as "Madam." Pauline finally left Kings Road. She went north to Carmel and to then the Dunes at Oceano. In both places, through her editorial work on *T17e Carmelite* and the *Dune ForLim*, she continued her efforts to affect the cultural climate. The former was a weekly paper, the latter a monthly journal.

Among the first subscribers to *Dune Faaim* were Countee Cullen, poet and editor, and a leader of the Harlem Renaissance; Henry Cowell, composer and editor of *New Music*; Havelock Ellis, sexologist and philosopher; Martha Graham, dancer and choreographer; Robinson Jeffers, poet; Robert Milliken, Nobel Laureate physicist; Richard Neutra, architect; Margaret Sanger, family planning advocate; Leopold Stowkowski, conductor; Thomas Watson, founder of IBM; and Ella Young, a poet of the Celtic Twilight. In the 1933 subscribers' number Pauline submits a 'Note on the contemporary arts'. She comments: "Mies van der Rohe in Germany designs a building which says exactly what Chavez in Mexico writes in a sonatina. There is not a superfluous line or tone in either. Each is dictated by an inner, as well as a reasoned, necessity", and then "Edgar Var6se tells in sound playable orchestrally, of the impact of the electrons in the swirling vortex of the tom, the splitting, the explosions, the shock. In this moment of music (the composition called Ionization) he transcends the factor of scale between human being and atom, takes us within the atom (whose interior dynamic necessarily half-deafens us.)"

As these letters commence, Pauline has temporarily broken up with Pat O'Hara, a reporter from *The Daily News*, over what she considers to be an indecent proposal. While maintaining his close friendship with Don Sample, John Cage has proposed marriage to Xenia Andreyevna Kashevaroff, an art student at Reed College and the daughter of a Russian Orthodox priest from Alaska. Perhaps through her friendship with Henry Cowell,

Pauline probably met John Cage sometime before 1934. The first undated letter from Cage to Pauline, as Associate Editor of *Dune Forum*, is scribbled in pencil on the back of his typescript 'Counterpoint', submitted for publication in response to an article 'Modern music; a critical summary' by the violinist and conductor, Roderick White. The two articles appeared together in the February 15, 1934, issue. Henry Cowell challenged both White and Cage in 'Double counterpoint' in the March 15, 1934, issue of *Dune Forum*.

1 Handwritten in pencil. No envelope. Undated.

Dear Pauline:

Gavin gave me Roderick White's article and asked me to answer it and it somehow gave an impetus with the attached result.

Hazel and Edward have not yet returned and Mary, Don and I are having dinner tonite at the Dunes with Gavin. ¹

Probably by tomorrow we will leave as Don is very anxious to get settled.

Dr. Gerber was over last nite and proved very stimulating. Henry Okuda made sukiyaki.² The pump stopped working according to Don, W.C.'s up the Western Coast cease functioning as we approach.

Love to you and Mark.

John.

How's Mozart?

Don sends his love too and thinks of you often.

2 Handwritten in pencil. Envelope dated December 11, 1934. Postmark, New York.

Dearest Pauline:

I am terribly excited as the prospect of seeing you soon again and I want you to know I am extremely worried that you won't or will get the flavor of N.Y. via me. I am in a rush of vortex!!! and you must pardon if this arrives to be only a note. I will meet Schoenberg (whom you have already) by taking him presents from Mrs. Weiss who is not coming. ³ How is Mark? ⁴ Give him my best and Pat. ⁵ And Buhlig! ⁶

I can't wait. And everybody. There are two more important people in L.A. whom I think you don't know. Joseph Jackson, first. Wm. Grant Still, negro (composer). ⁷ These distinctions are important now. Everything is important. Equalities distinctions writing them out and emphasizing them.

Love,

John

3 Handwritten in pencil. Envelope dated December 29, 1934. Postmark Los Angeles. Posted to Pauline Schindler, Box 702, Ojai, California. Return address: J. Cage, 1207 Miramar, LA, Calif.

[Figure 1: Letter and Envelope](#)

Dear Pauline:

I'm in L.A. now and want to see you. I'm living here with Mother and Dad and want to see you very much. ⁸ How is Mark and when can we get together? Buhlig is at Big Bear until Tuesday late afternoon. ⁹

Love,

John I want you to help us start a new music society, will you?

4 Typewritten. Envelope dated January 11, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Dearest Pauline:

Your letter came - your parenthesis - and I love it because I shall steer clear of all directions except a bee-line for you.

Life has been hectic and the sky beautifully cloud-filled, sunlight and then beautiful shower-baths. Palm-trees and acacias in bloom and all sorts of things I took for granted for too long. I feel bristling with spontaneity: I love you.

At last I heard some of the Kunst der Fuge. What can I say but that listening receives one into a new broad heaven, awakening and including, I feel where you have been. Nothing I have ever heard is at all similar. Oh, for a blindness to all else! '

Buhlig is giving three recitals in his home sundays: Jan.20, 27, and Feb.3 Beethoven, Bach, Modern (respectively). Subscriptions \$2.50 or single admission \$1.00 8:30 P.M. He wanted me to tell you so that if people in Ojai coming down were interested they would know about it through you if you knew and told them.¹⁰ That keeps me from taking Weiss to Santa B. but I am coming to see you next week. ¹¹ The car has become a problem and I lose all spontaneity about asking for it, because it has to do with mother who needs it in her work.

I have been phoning people right and left and finally we have the returns of the concerts definitely up to \$137.50. The idea was Calista's in order to pay Buhlig's railway fare. We won't stop till we get to \$240. It is exciting and I enjoy it because it is for Buhlig.

It is, of course, conclusively shown that I know nothing about modulation, but so much the better, because then I can go -Gn Avorking till I do. I bope very much that my work is not so bad that Weiss will give me up as a bad job.

I met Schoenberg and he is simplicity and genuineness itself. There was analysis of the Dance Suite hanging up on the wall like a mural.

Did I tell you I met another teacher to-be of mine tonight: Wendel Hoss, a friend of Weiss, who will teach me to play the French Horn. I think it will be better than the flute. And I will stop smoking and join an orchestra.

I feel all the friction you have in reading this letter. What is an orchestra, you ask, or a French horn, or harmony, or collecting money for tickets? Nothing at all but a series of essential farces. Do they touch you? I think not.

All the love in the world and more

John

5 Handwritten in pencil. Envelope dated January 18, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Dearest,

There was a little open space the other day. I was walking and thinking of you in Ojai, an open space of country, and suddenly I knew what wildness was. I hissed and grunted and felt myself expanding with a big heart till for a moment I was out of my mind and only tremendously alive.

I did not know you were wild and intoxicating. And now I have only very present memories. Life has been short, has only begun. And your hair is some kind of a promise, I don't know of what, perhaps that it will reach your shoulders that I may bury myself in it.

Perhaps I am satisfied that you whom I know are a fragment you are entirely another's. And yet, these days you are always with me.

It is late and I am tired and I love you and want to be with you.

I am sure there is something unexplainably and mysteriously sacred about the Valley, something including evil.

John

6 Typed draft. Undated, but prior to next letter. Pauline uses the lowercase.

tuesday

john:

here i sit in the sun among the little trees, with the serene morning all around me. yes, i know there is fusion. i know a little almond tree, it stands all alone on a hillside. and when it is in bloom (i have watched it now these three years) its ecstasy is certain to me.

it is almost articulate. oh, perfume is utterance. and blooming is an act of love. i believe that a part of the great meaning for human beings of loving, is the sudden power it gives them knowing the earth more fully, of entering into communication with the essential forces, to which we are usually dull and asleep. and on that morning when you knew and recognized the mountains, the shapes of the hills, you knew what is really there all the time. it is only when we love that we are awake, participate into the whole, enter the further dimension of awareness...

yes, Stravinsky. i think i must try to come on thursday to hear the other. yes, i will try. now i know what you and your music are to be, john. never let me mislead you into intellectualization, the bypath away from immediate essence. your music will articulate from the center and core of being.

john, john, i am glad of you.

Pauline

7 Typed. No envelope. Undated.

Dearest,

You didn't come. As far as the music is concerned, you didn't miss anything. Today after last night I feel ill, as though the world were diseased. Incapable and trembling because there is nothing. A flat

zero. The sooner the world forgets Stravinsky the better. If he gave the primordial, as you say, I swear it was a cheap imitation. My question is this: Is this a completely lost generation?

Forgive me. But what a vacancy he has made. I will say this for Stravinsky: possibly but unfortunately, some of his works, the ballets, will act as easy transitions for Lawrence's big baby.¹² Oh, you see how black I am. But how can you love a world that is filling itself with hollowness? Someone in the Shape of God must come and Save. This is a weak answer.

I spoke with Danz in the intermission. I said, But this is nothing. And he excitedly replied in my book I said so as though that made it right and proper. And Ramiel said, you shouldn't have expected anything. Why shouldn't I have? Those two belong back a ways. We need strong life which is superhuman and through conscious necessity growing.¹³

I have a letter from Xenia.¹⁴ She is alone and has been ill. She says she wishes I were there. I told Ramiel about Xenia some time ago. So that last night Brett said to me, How is Alaska coming? I was very confused and said what do you mean, Xenia? He said, yes, I'm interested. I couldn't reply, and stuttered like an idiot and my head whirling, why should he be interested and why should he look so sadly and kindly and patiently and add Are you serious? That whole little world with its complexities of never always sleeping together knows.

Brett was with Dolores Istarbi.¹⁵ She is a quiet Spanish girl, very beautiful. She told me she was going to get a wall-washing job or something equivalent. Like me. I looked at her and thought that would be very unsuitable and told her so. She said, find someone to keep me. That ought to be easy. And she replied that the field is over-crowded. She is living with Brett now and apparently looking for work during the day.

I am not patient enough.

Oh, Pauline, I know what good is, and I'm not good.

To be with you would be too easy now. It would be an escape from something I must meet -- this muddle. I want to conquer and then come to you. You see how evil and proud I am. The only conquest is through humility and I am not humble now.

I think of you all the time. I had a ticket for you last night and didn't offer it to anyone until the last minute.

John
[Postscript]

I have another new feeling of you. You flutter. I saw two butterflies over my head against the sky.

I was sure you were coming last night. I love you all the time.

John

8 Typed. Envelope dated January 24, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Dearest,

Everyone is very excited because of Buhlig's concerts. Last Sunday we presented him with

\$178.50 with a few unpaid tickets which brought the total to roughly \$200.00. After the concert a few of us stayed and drank sherry, including Rosa and McGeehee.¹⁶ The single reservations for next Sunday amount to over fifty dollars. The house was jammed full of people so that all the windows were kept open with curtains drawn. One movie star came who asked Ramiel (?) where the best seat in the house was and he said would you like to be on the keyboard side or would you like to look into the eyes of the pianist? She answered,--into the eyes of the pianist! So that whenever Buhlig looked up to see a picture of Beethoven that he had placed opposite his eyes, he found instead a movie star, and reacted, he said, by blushing and looking rapidly back again at the keyboard. There were shouts of Bravo! and Greater than Giesecking! Buhlig had to return ten times to stop the applause.

I am studying the French Horn. It is a very mysterious instrument. I never know, yet, what tone, if any, I'm going to produce and am always surprised when I find I've made one and highly interested in what tone it is. I go immediately to the piano to see roughly what one it was and then wonder whether I was out of tune or the piano. I have to make some money to pay for the instrument (\$50.) and to pay for the lessons (\$5.) In a year, Mr. Hoss says, I can get a scholarship. Weiss has gone away and my discipline is not so good. I feel on the other hand excellent and only wish I were in Ojai. I may not go- to N.Y. again. Mr. Weiss may come here. Buhlig of course wants me to go to N.Y., but I don't know. Was denkst?

I was hoping to have the car this week-end. I would have come up Friday Night. Dad won't let me. He says the car has to go to the garage and get examined and tightened, etc.

What are you doing all the time? How are you? How are Mark and Pat? I am always thinking of you and feeling you to be different and quieter than you ever were before; I am always loving you and wanting to be with you.

John

9 Pencilled note in two torn halves. No envelope. Undated.

This is an antidote. If one is necessary. It is love and hope and health and all "good things". It is a flowing over of wanting for your happiness.

.....

Let us not be afraid of happiness. Read the Dostoevsky if you will but please return it. There is time yet. I will send money for it.

Love, John

10 Handwritten in pencil. Envelope dated February 9, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Dearest Pauline

Everything is in a rush. What with the hour and the exercises and now I'm composing and there are new Kandinskys and I'm really composing - the same material as for the song I showed you but I'm composing on the sly and won't show it to Weiss.¹⁷ But I'll show it to you because I like it and I love you. I want very much to see you but I'm in a muddle of Saturday Sunday, etc. I'm not going East; I don't think Buhlig would want me to break up the hour so soon.

I have rewritten to Xenia. She sent me an eskimo drum and I have asked here to marry me again and she is going to write me soon. I know she is. I have a magnificent gift for here which I shall be paying for the rest of my life.

Love,

John

P.S. Would you use some of the enclosed to send me a Library book? It is worrying me.

J.

11 Typed. Envelope dated February 21, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Dearest Pauline:

The mountains and the beauty of everything and of you--all was a song I sang through I the morning. What happens? Do we become a landscape of smoothly curved and deeply recessed forms, shapes and shadows and jutting brilliant peaks? Or does nature have desire and love? I know there is fusion. Last night there was a fog and the glow of lamps, but it was no longer a material circumstance. It was a poem of quiet pregnancy, the slow movement of humanity. There is not a desire; it is an actuality. There is in life an intoxicating struggle which is to itself a mystery and a miracle. And it is the same with the hills. What joy for them to remain forever at the point of ecstasy! The possibility of our being natural.

Forever,

John

12 Typed. Envelope dated February 22, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Dearest Pauline:

STRAVINSKI! ... The evening was pure joy--and I think that this music is natural. There are no "mideas" in it. It is, you know it, pagan, physical. It is seeing life close and loving it so. There are no whirring magical mystifications. It is all clear and precisely a dance. It is not "frozen architecture."

I heard one person say afterwards: Henceforth I shall not take music seriously but shall enjoy it twice as much." I was furious and turned to him and said, Take it twice as seriously and enjoy it four times as much!

Throughout the "Eight Pieces" the audience had an ostinato of ecstatic laughter. And irrepressible applause, which was not in the least unacceptable.

I spoke with Kurt Reher afterwards, a fine cellist in the orchestra. He brought me back to the "Germans." He said, it 's nothing but the Firebird. That is real.

The Firebird, yes, and I had forgotten that it existed. It is the beautiful born from the evil. It is as though one decided to have wings and fly, and nothing else had power but that. Infernal demands are nothing to deter.

This is now music which we have and which is accepted, which does not provoke anger, hysteria or any vulgar objection. And it is a static music which is itself and which [does] not prophecy or go forward in an adventure. It is not a speculation. It is the worship of the Golden Calf. Moses and God are far away. [18](#) And we say Yes to cutting them off!

[Signed and handwritten in red pencil.]

I love you. Oh that I were with you.

John.

13 Typed. Envelope dated March 1, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Dearest, my love,

I have that job now today and I began making money this morning while I was practising my horn and writing andante cantabile. So I am going to be working under pressure, isn't that marvellous. And I shall come to see you like a worker who isn't working when he's seeing you but loving you very very much so that he works better and better when he thinks of you. Now the world is dramatic again. And extreme activity. Next week the Abbey Players are giving two plays of Synge: Riders to the Sea and the Playboy. [19](#) Will you come down and go with me? PLEASE. I LOVE YOU. MAKE SOME ARRANGEMENT. I PRAY GOD EVERY MINUTE THAT YOUR'E NOT ILL. I think it's Thursday they play those plays. The rest they're doing isn't as significant.

John

14 Handwritten in pencil. Envelope dated March 2, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Dearest Pauline:

Kings Road must be the place. Please find out about it. If possible - that is if tenants can move - I would like it ready by May 15th.

Xenia writes again and it is a certainty and miraculous Schoenberg asked me to come to see him. It will be some time next week. I hope many things will come of that. It will be my first really meeting him.

I am completely nervous now tingling and active in every direction so that I am somewhat ineffective but radiating.

Love,

John

I enclose something for mailing the Dostoevsky. You will mail it, won't you?

15 Handwritten in pencil. Undated, but the letter seems to relate to this period.

Pauline Dearest,

I am luminous. There is a marvelous extension around me like the things continents have around

them in atlas maps. I am on the topmost peaks of sensitivity. I am convex and then I'm concave. I include and exclude. I simmer. I purr. I shall be fired from my job. My father's like a character out of Moliere. Stubborn, one faced like imitation-college short story. He's become an idea, a dissension, a unit molecule taking up position. But I am on top. Did you know your note in the book depressed me ... I wrote you a long letter which (thanking God), I didn't send. Place does not matter. We will live everywhere and always.

I shall not ask you my usual questions, but send you and Mark real love. And I am so reflective now of some mysterious sources of brilliance that I am sure you and Mark. are radiant.

John

16 Typed draft with pencilled corrections. Early March, 1935, see following letter.

monday

john: yesterday sunday your letter had not come yet and mark and i were peculiarly acutely happy all day. working hard and very intently sometimes separately and sometimes on the same thing. all the time going in doors and out of doors and feeling the presence of the spring growth about us. the mountains snow-topped and our house fresh with bowls filled with lupine bloom deep blue. i said to myself, this is all i want, this simple being and inner blooming; why i have always been so restless, always wanted to achieve and to know with my mind, in words to see the shape of totality.

it was the first day i had been fully happy since very long. i had had a long anguish, my illness only a minor symptom. the illness was my having given up; i had simply ceased

to believe in the general good will of human beings, i saw us still in a state of cannibalism so dull of heart that we could lie and betray and live by cruelty.

i began a long letter to you, saying come sooner come very quickly because all of life is in flower. that i would drive in to town on thursday with my friends the communist milkman and his wife, and back the same day after the strachey lecture and you to come with us for the week-end if you could.

and again this morning, when i drove to ventura, the mountains were blue-black, the orchards and the hillsides were singing. i said, the human animal, the most uncouth of all that the earth has born, - a peculiar distortion, perhaps a mistake, - suffers decadence and evil and invents horror, - but the earth itself is renewed every year in this ecstasy and prodigal beauty and not to man, i resign from the sickness which civilization is, i rejoin the whole. then at the post office, your letter.

i came home and sat down and thought, and tried to feel my way back in desolation, and nothingness, to imagine that whole evening, the Stravinsky, brett, dolores. the letter from xenia, and my not having come. i thought, john is drowning in the sense of nullity, just as i have drowned so many times in horror. but i knew that before any letter of mine should reach you, you would have seen perhaps an acacia tree, or even a little leaf uncurling on a plant grass - high, and the sense of scale would have returned. not because of the mere cheering of beauty of leaf or tree, no i of course do not mean that, but simply that it and its eternal return are somehow more real than any human mistake or distortion any lie a composer or a writer may, in a moment of vanity and emptiness, utter. the sense of scale of course includes the noticing that the human animal has come in only a few hundred thousand years or maybe two million from blind animality; now it moves through the much of its own lies and betrayals and cruelties, chaShe had an excellent

formal education. After receiving a degree from Smith College, she did extensive post-graduate work in music and social sciences.

She moved to Chicago and worked from 1917 to 1919 on the staff of Jane Addams' Hull House, the settlement house for the poor and center for social reformers and intelligentsia (John Dewey was a Trustee). At the time when Pauline was there, Addams and Emily Green Balch were founding the Women's International League for Peace and from the orchestra music of the younger Bachs, the Mannheimers, and so forth.

RR: Now there is a renaissance in musicology, and they are studying this music and we're discovering that there was much happening in the New World earlier than people realize. Perhaps now we will turn to Paris. I have a wonderful recording of Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* by André Cluytens. I wondered what he was like as a teacher and a man?

KH: Well, he was a week? but you must surely come here before then. when, John?

there is between us yet the spiritual awkwardness of our not knowing one another well enough. otherwise I would have known better about last Thursday. there is an essential rhythm (sic) of consciousness to be found, a kind of stillness, oh there is far for us to go.

yours
Pauline D,

17 Handwritten in pencil. Envelope dated March 5, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Pauline, my love:

The lupin is marvelous, it is pressed into a shape of Asia which vibrates in me. The spread of the leaves and the colors. It is as though you had sent yourself. I am a thousand needles now, coming out of me. And I did see an acacia tree, and the first person I saw I said the acacias are blooming! And I was actually surprised when the answer came, They always bloom.

Pauline, I am incoherent. I will come undoubtedly to Ojai Saturday. Please, if you are not well, just let me be near you.

John

18 Handwritten in pencil. Envelope dated March 19, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles. This letter reports on Cage's first lesson with Schoenberg, presumably on March 18, 1935.

Dearest,

You are coming down Friday, where will you stay? I will have tickets for you for the Philharmonic and when you get in town you must phone me at MU223, if it is considerable time before the concert. . If not I will be waiting for you and Mark in front of the Philharmonic. I took my first lesson in Schoenberg's class yesterday (Monday) evening. He is marvelous, indescribable, as a musician. I am going to the last 3 rehearsals. In the class we are analyzing Brahms Symphony No. 4, Kunst der Fuge. Well tempered Clavichord and Schoenberg. Quartet III (String).

I would have come up last weekend, but I had been practically convalescing all last week and was

not only tired but overwhelmed as now with work in many different fields. If there is time to write please do.

Love,

John

19 Handwritten in ink. Envelope dated April 4,1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Dearest Pauline:

Running in circles.

Call him "doggie"and Mark "son-o" and Yourself "sweet-heart".

I love you.

John.

20 Handwritten in pencil. Envelope dated April 15,1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Pauline, Sweetheart,

I suppose I am unfaithful but not wholly so. Many things have happened to me. And now that the concert is over I am exhausted, -of course only for a little while and not completely because I am full of ideas and am writing more music for those flutes. This time it's still the same subject but it's definitely 2 flutes; but most flautists play piccolos too so that this will be a second piece.

Schindler was marvelous about the concert. And Kings Rd. was literally magnificent. I'm afraid that it quite "ran away with the evening." The entire effect was one of horizontality and sort of dynamic color which was not exciting but rather full and complete. [20](#) The Japanese and H.C. were thoroughly happy in spite of the fact that the audience amounted to only about 40 people. [21](#) Isabel M. Jones came however in spite of there being two other concerts. There was plenty of warmth and fresh eucalyptus. We expected between 100 -150 people from the response beforehand. We paid expenses and had \$13.00 over which satisfied H.C.

They had an appointment in Santa Barbara at noon Sunday but were leaving from Burbank so that I didn't come. Besides, I am far behind on my research work and music.

I am planning on coming up next weekend. I am afraid you are "sunning" yourself again. But that's excellent. Please don't be angry with me or disappointed in me. I have not forgotten and never will. This afternoon on falling asleep, I dreamed of you - strangely enough Schindler was with us. But that isn't strange because I'd just seen him. Apparently, we were living on a new world, because when we turned on the radio there resulted a sort of fugal jazz which was very interesting and you said it had "size." About a week ago I had another unusual dream. I heard the entire III String Quartet in my sleep. [22](#)

I have a great deal to tell you.

Let me know about next weekend please.

Love,

John

And to Mark, Love and the dogs to Mark.

21 Handwritten in pencil. Envelope dated 22 April, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Dearest Pauline,

You are good and true and I feel like a child who has been a little terrible. You will forgive. You said will I teach you and this is not possible. I am nothing. You are excellent and great and you have only to accept that.

You will know me as a bad boy and insensitive.

You know I can defend myself; but for that words. Words that are elastic and suit all ends. So that I shout in your temples and am silent before festivities. This is not sad.

Why does one love one's reflection? Why?

But I give over. You know what I know -- and as I intimated this has not changed. I shall grow perhaps again. And I shall come to you.

For it has been good with us.

But now I am minor and you must hold yourself aloof from me for I am non-essential. It must still be Pat. There is something more there. Either there is calm or even more intense agony.

John

22 Typed draft from Pauline. Dated in pencil April 23, 1935.

yes we draw apart then for a time.

no double or multiple focus for you in this prenuptial moment, but only an unimpeded one-pointedness. and for me now wholeness again and balance in aloneness.

not essential to me, John you, but very dear. you led me a little out of anguish and brought me a little toward clear seeing. but you now how darkly I still see. nor were you insensitive. for you were aware of the pain for me these last days; you understood very much. me trying not to cry out, and not being so very successful.

I have not asked for words; only for communication. I know the danger of the word; but there are many ways. If in a year, you and I or all or any of us can look eye into eye and acknowledge one another wholly, and speak in that glance, it will be enough.

till later then, john.

and for now, blessing and blessing.

23 Handwritten in pencil. Envelope dated 24 May, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Pauline, dearest,

I love you always; it was in many ways puzzling to me that although you were in Los Angeles we didn't see each other. I have not before now had the time, literally (sic), to write; so that you may infer that you were right, if you stayed away because of some feeling that I was "too occupied". Buhlig said you said something of the sort. I had dinner with him the evening following your dinner; and it seemed strangely unnatural that we shouldn't have been together.

Possibly I have not told you that Schoenberg teaches me counterpoint now. And I am very happy because my work seems to please him. Today he turned to the two other pupils and said: You see, I don't even have to look at it (my exercises); I know they're right. He is a teacher of great kindness and understanding and it is a rich comfort that he gives.

His recent "Suite in Old Style" was played Saturday and is a marvel. There is nothing old about it. Although it begins with an Overture (Prelude and Fugue) the whole "idea" is basically a new concept of Fugue. There are, i.e., no too (sic) relationships of subject and answer identical. His feeling for the variation of idea did not allow of the opposite nor of another "old" idea, - that of vagueness. So that the episodes (which are usually built of the latter) are here the development of the prelude. It is fascinating because the [prelude] is largo and is forever interrupting the fugue allegro.

The work is convincing in every way and proves in a manner understandable to the most sluggish of ears the profundity and high seriousness of the composer. He is music, today; and we may be glad and never too enthusiastic that it is so.

And now,--Xenia. All I know is that she will be here early in June; that there was a formal announcement (here sister's idea) in order that "showers" might follow; and that I am, according to mother, as unprepared as though I were living on the streets (Xenia knows this and says she will accept even starvation with me "gracefully").

I had a letter from Mr Poland in which I was offered a position without pay which, unfortunately, I could not accept. [23](#)

I saw the family doctor today and he tells me spontaneously that he is amazed at my health which he has never known to be better. He means mentally. No frustrations, etc. He says, if it continues, I will get even fatter.

I ran into a lady who has a daughter in much the same condition as Mark. And she claims that although the injections are necessary that they alone will not do the thing that diet is of supreme importance. She has taken the whole matter very scientifically. Vitamins. Would you like to get in touch with her? Yeast. A vegetable juicer.

A great amount of love, John

24 Handwritten in pencil. Envelope dated June 3, 1935. Postmark Los Angeles.

Dearest Pauline:

Xenia will be here Thursday.

Do you know anything about Kings Rd?

I have at present \$50.00, 2 new suits, etc., and have had my job again although there will be a few weeks now while I don't have it.

Work with Schoenberg is proceeding excellently. If your tenants are still in K.R., let them stay but if they're not, let me take it. Because I would be the least certain sort of tenant to have. Schoenberg may go east in September. I know that Xenia is very happy now in an excited way and this is good; so am I. I am on edge and can't sleep. Everything is fitting properly and I am very lucky.

I think you are right about those emotional "nows" - (forever). But it is ground that plants grow in. Capacity must be had.

I will see you soon; but you will write to me about Kings Rd. Buhlig said about the boy that yes if he were sufficiently advanced and could obtain some place to live and practice. Did he write. He is not well at all. And he is not agreeable with regard to my getting married. He also needs money badly. He is playing the Art of Fugue tomorrow evening and I'm afraid is depending on what people may come owing to what telephoning I may have done. Which I have been to (sic) busy to do as I might have done. I have just been at the limit and shall continue investigating further limits. The doctor whom I (but I told you that).

Please love me like you used to. Peter is sending you cartoons tomorrow.

Forever, really.

John

25. Years later. Typed letter sent from Willow Grove Road, Stony Pt. Dated Sunday, March 4. Probably 1956, see next letter.

Dear Pauline:

I should have answered your letter sooner, but am involved in doing research for a book and writing it and it has all taken my time and concentration for I am one-tracked. Nevertheless, it will be very good to see you here as Spring begins. But your letters give the impression of tourism plans with not much staying still.

The apartment situation I should certainly like to help with, but I don't know what to say. In Stony Point, it could be arranged, though somewhat primitively, and you would be 35 miles from town, with little means of transportation. However, welcome. There are some ten people and 116 acres and waterfalls, but the people are more or less jammed together. My place is not yet made comfortable, but by March 30 might be so. If something else turns up, I shall let you know. When you get to town, call Merce at Algonquin 5-7240 and he will know my new telephone number which I do not yet have.

Almost all of my friends in town have limited quarters and no extra space; if you wouldn't mind staying in one big loft-like situation with other people, that could probably be done; but there would be no solitude. It would at least be a place to leave things when you went away to Philadelphia, etc.

And the mushrooms! Very few come so soon, - maybe none. But there will be spring flowers!

I am planning a series of weekly concerts in April or May and June, -- dance and music. The musical scene here, as far as the aspects of the art that interest me go, is dead as a door-nail. Most everyone believes that the 'battle of modern music' has been won. I go on obscurely and subversively non-agreeing.

Painting is more evident and alive here, and you will meet and talk with marvellous painters: Bob Rauschenberg, Philip Guston, Klein and De Kooning. And there is a another composer who is marvellous to be with: Morton Feldman. And Richard Lippold: he has, by the way a big house in Long Island, but also 1 hour away. I am sure he would welcome you.

So keep me informed and we shall certainly walk and talk and answer them only with spontaneity!.

[Handwritten in ink]

As ever,

John
John Cage

26 Handwritten in ink on lined paper. Envelope dated March 31, 1956. Post mark New York. Addressed to Pauline Schindler, c/o Jeanette Turner 41-44 48th St. Long Island City 4, N.Y. Return address: John Cage, Stony Point, N.Y.

Dear Pauline,

It is marvelous that you will be here. At the moment I am immobile - bad back - in bed. But on the 30th of May a concert am giving and send you herewith ticket. Otherwise, best to spend time after concert since rehearsals etc. Phone is Haverstraw 9-3561.

Love, John

When in town: ALgonquin 5-7240

[Figure 2:](#) Ticket enclosed and unused. Cad Fischer Concert Hall. Juillard String Quartet, Maro Ajemian, Grete Sultan, David Tudor, John Cage, Pianist

27 Handwritten in ink. Envelope dated May 13, 1959. Addressed to Pauline Schindler, Copley Square Hotel, Copley Square, Boston, Mass. PLEASE HOLD. Return address: John Cage, Willow Grove, RFD Stony Point, N.Y.

Dear Pauline,

Please call me - Haverstraw 9-8161. Am in and out this month. If you don't reach me, drop a card to Stony Point with your phone no. on it.

Love,

John

28 Pauline writes a letter from 835 Kings Road to the illustrator Rockwell Kent.

The letter is typed and dated 7 December 1964.

Dear Rockwell Kent: ²⁴ Looking about today in a book of yours, I thought with what a positiveness, with what an absolute certainty, your work has spoken of the order, beauty, and love present in our universe.

I remembered a conversation I had had some months ago with the composer John Cage. I asked him, "John what are you saying in this sound?" He answered, "I am saying, the universe is chaos. Second: Accept the chaos. Third: Like the chaos!"

I have not been able to decipher the reasons why this is what is being said in all the arts today; or of what it is a symptom. I feel in it a desolation, inner catastrophe; while yours is not only serenity, not only a sort of blessedness experienced and given, but also it is, by somehow, true ... As the statement in a work of Bach is true.

For this I am utterly grateful to you, as are so many of our fellow human beings, and because of this, I greet you, now at Christmas time, with love.

Pauline Schindler

Towards the end of his life, Cage was asked about Pauline.²⁵ He replied: she was always beautiful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the Schindler Family - Mark, Mary, Margot and Eric - for their memories and A insights. To Mark Schindler especially for the privilege of freely working through his bi mother's materials. To Ellery Allen for her experiences and fair-minded assessment of Pauline's accomplishments. To my husband, Lionel March, for his invaluable contributions and support, and to Richard Ferguson for his assistance and enthusiasm in the transcription of the letters.

Notes:

1 Possibly Hazel Watrous, art dealer; Edward Weston, the celebrated photographer; Mary McMeen, acting secretary to *Dune Forulm*, Don Sample, Cage's companion; and Gavin Arthur, a nephew of President Chester A. Arthur who 'used it'. He was an astrologer who later in his career did astrological readings on, then, Governor Reagan. He is reported as having written a book on 'the circle of sex'. At the time, he was founding editor of *Dune Folzlm*.

2 Not identified.

3 Wife of Adolph Weiss, composer and bassoonist. Weiss was a former pupil of Schoenberg. In 1933, Cage had been in New York to study harmony and composition with Weiss on the recommendation of Henry Cowell. He had also studied with Cowell during this stay. Weiss left New York to take up his post as conductor of the San Francisco Opera

4 Mark Schindler, Pauline's twelve year old son. Mark a graduate of Reed College and Black Mountain College, is now an engineer and inventor.

5 Pat O'Hara, reporter *Daily News*, Los Angeles. Close friend and lover of Pauline Schindler.

6 Richard Buhlig, celebrated concert pianist recognized for his 'objective' performances of Bach and Beethoven, and promotion of contemporary works. In 1929, Pauline Schindler reviewed recitals of Buhlig's at Carmel. The recitals included the Beethoven, but also pieces from Byrd and Purcell in the first recital, to Scriabin, Bartok, Schoenberg and Cowell in the third recital.

7 William Grant Still, distinguished African-American composer and symphonist, studied privately with Edgar Vardse. Sometime orchestrator for Paul Whiteman.

8 Mother is Lucretia 'Crete' Harvey, pianist and avid reader. Dad is John Milton Cage Senior, a successful inventor with particular interest in undersea vessels.

9 Big Bear Lake and San Bernardino Mountains, ski resort and settlement east of Los Angeles.

10 Ojai, from the Chumash Indian word meaning 'nest', a valley edged by the Topa and Sulphur Mountains, about seventy miles north of Los Angeles. Now home of the Ojai Music Festival under the direction of Pierre Boulez.

11 Santa Barbara, one hundred miles north west of Los Angeles.

12 Lawrence - not identified. Or is Cage suggesting a transition from the music of Stravinsky to the writings of D H Lawrence which had caused outrage and had often been banned before his death in 1930? The 'big baby' remark may allude to the fact that Stravinsky and Lawrence had both at times carried the characterization 'l'enfant terrible'.

13 Danz and Ramiel - not identified.

14 Xenia Andreyevna Kashevaroff, daughter of Russian Orthodox priest from Alaska, part Eskimo. One day she walked into an art and craft shop owned by his mother 'Crete' where Cage worked. He fell in love with her at first sight. She was then an art student at Reed College. They were married for eleven years.

15 Brett Weston, photographer and son of Edward Weston.

16 Not identified

17 Galka Scheyer was the representative of the Blue Four Group in the United States - Kandinsky, Klee, Jawlinsky, Feininger. She had stayed at the King Road House where the works were propped on the floor against the concrete walls. Scheyer and Schindler lectured on modern art up and down the West Coast. To support himself, Cage also gave lessons on modern art to Santa Monica 'housewives'.

18 Presumably a play on Schoenberg's opera *Moses und Aron*.

19 John Millington Synge, Irish playwright. Ella Young, one of the first subscribers to the *Dune Forum*, promoted the interests of this famous troupe of players from Dublin. Playboy: *Playboy of Me Western World*

20 Schindler's masterwork and now an historic landmark in West Los Angeles. It is currently home to the Austrian MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles.

21 H.C. Henry Cowell, born in the San Francisco Bay area at Menlo Park, composer and pianist, author of *New Musical Resources*, editor of *New Music*, and former student of Schoenberg. Cowell had toured the Soviet Union in the late twenties. On his return in 1929 he gave recitals of his works in "Mother Carrington's" studio in Pacific Grove, near Carmel which Pauline Schindler reviewed. Carrington gave Cowell his first piano lessons.

22 Schoenberg's Third String Quartet!

23 Mr. Poland. Not identified.

24 American artist whose stark woodcuts illustrated special editions of classical works including *Beowulf*, *The Decameron*, *Canterbury Tales*, *Moby Dick*, as well as illustrations to Robinson Jeffers, an original subscriber to *Dune Forum* and his own travelshe University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, pp. 65-99. These letters seem to confirm, Mark Schindler's impression, that John Cage never actually lived at the Kings Road House, although he clearly visited it on several occasions and would have liked to have been a resident.

ex tempore

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