



Philip Corner, Conductor
Nicholas Music Center, Rutgers University
October 4, 2003 8PM

MASON GROSS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS PRESENTS THE EXHIBITION

CRITICALmass

The Thousand Symphonies¹⁹⁶⁸ by Dick Higgins

The Thousand Symphonies: Their Story¹, by Dick Higgins

In the Spring of 1968 Geoffrey Hendricks and Robert Watts told me of a project that was afoot at Douglass College, where both were teaching at the time, to organize a show around guns.² At that time the USA police seemed to have nothing better to do than to chase down teenagers for possessing miniscule amounts of marijuana and throwing them in jail, thus ruining their lives. Remembering George's piece for me and my music paper, I decided it would be more worthy if one could set all the policemen in the USA to composing symphonies themselves. So I proposed that the beautiful music paper be machine gunned and that symphonies be derived from the result. Geoffrey Hendricks arranged for Captain Toby of the South Brunswick Police to do this, which duly happened with a 9mm MP40 Schmeisser submachine gun, filmed by Alison Knowles. The film survives.³ A rusty milk can which was at the rifle range was used to hold some of the paper for convenient shooting; it then became a sculpture, called Symphony Dispenser (1968), and is now in the Sammlung Hahn at the Modern Art Museum in Vienna, Austria. A volunteer orchestra, conducted by Philip Corner, performed nine of the resulting symphonies at Douglass College on December 9th. Maciunas had to work at a design job the evening of the concert, as I recall, so he was unable to attend the performance, a pity since he told me he liked the project and there has been no subsequent performance to date. The Douglass concert was taped but the only copy I know of disappeared when the Ars Viva! Galerie in Berlin, Germany, went bankrupt in 1984. The whole situation was documented with photographs in Source Magazine in 1970; any photographs which I had went into Source's files and I do not know where these are.⁴

¹ Higgins, Dick. *The Thousand Symphonies: Their Story*, Barrytown, NY. 8 December 1991. ref. page 2 of 3. The text remains unchanged from the original issue. However, footnotes 2 & 3 were originally 4 & 5 and have been renumbered for the purpose of including footnotes herein 1 & 4

² Douglass College was part of Rutgers University at New Brunswick, NJ. It has since been reorganized.

³ This film [was] on display at the Emily Harvey Gallery for its Christmas show (December, 1991)

⁴ Das Anudas photographs documenting the event were provided courtesy of Geoff Hendricks archive.