

# Reunion - 1968

Marcel Duchamp and John Cage

Ema Šútovcová, Sound 1., 2023/24

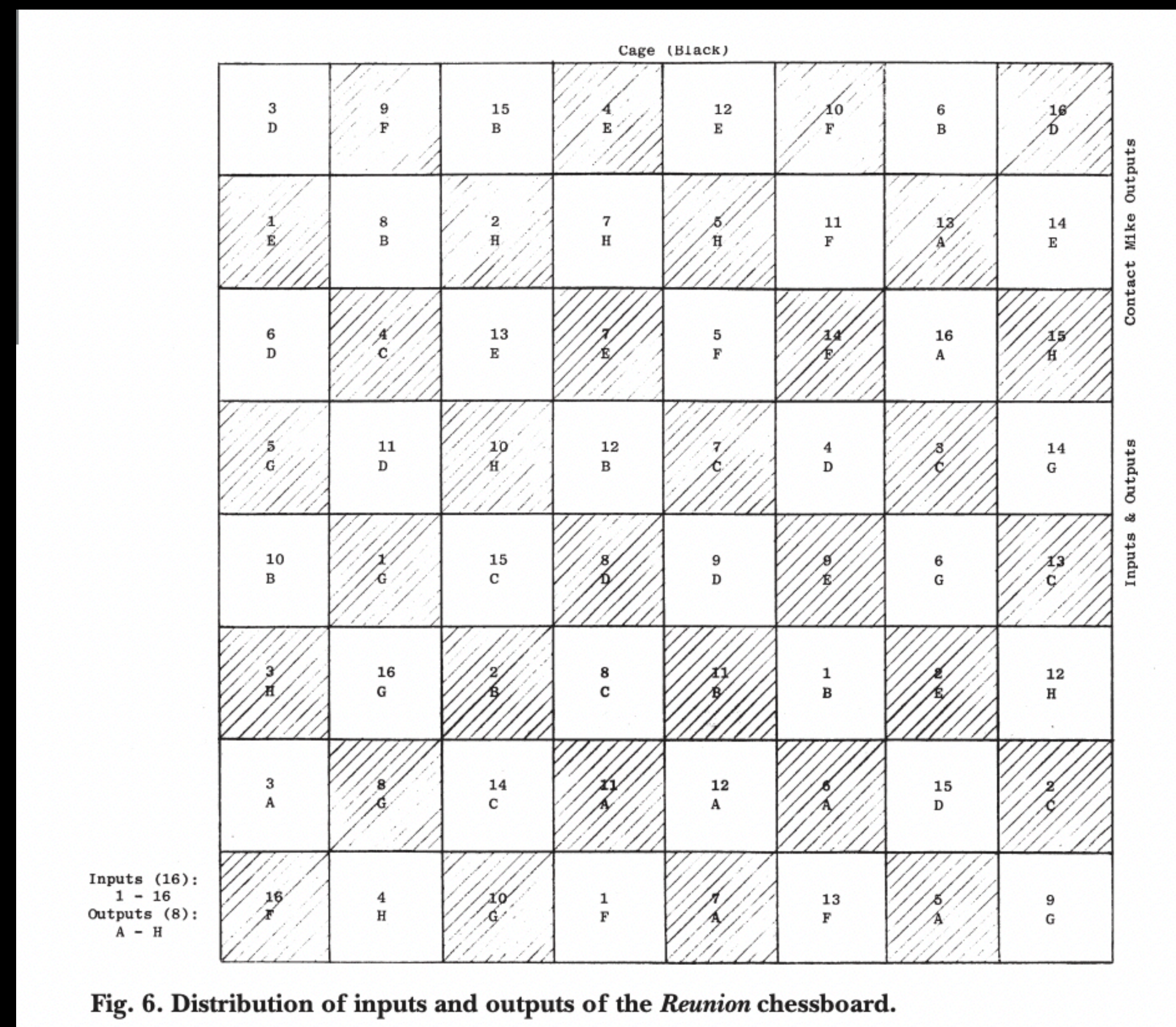
- Principal players were John Cage, who conceived (but did not actually “compose”) the work; Marcel Duchamp; and composers David Behrman, Gordon Mumma, David Tudor and Lowell Cross, who also designed and constructed the electronic chessboard, completing it only the night before the performance.
- The sounds varied according to the position of pieces on a specially prepared chessboard
- Event “Reunion” began at 8:30 on the evening of 5 March 1968, and concluded at approximately 1:00 the next morning
- Photo: John Cage installs contact microphones inside the chessboard while David Tudor and Lowell Cross confer. (



- The evening began with a large audience. Cage and Duchamp adjourned after several hours when the house was empty. Next morning they finished the match; Duchamp had given himself the handicap of a knight, but in the end he won
- Photo: During the game, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage smoke cigarettes



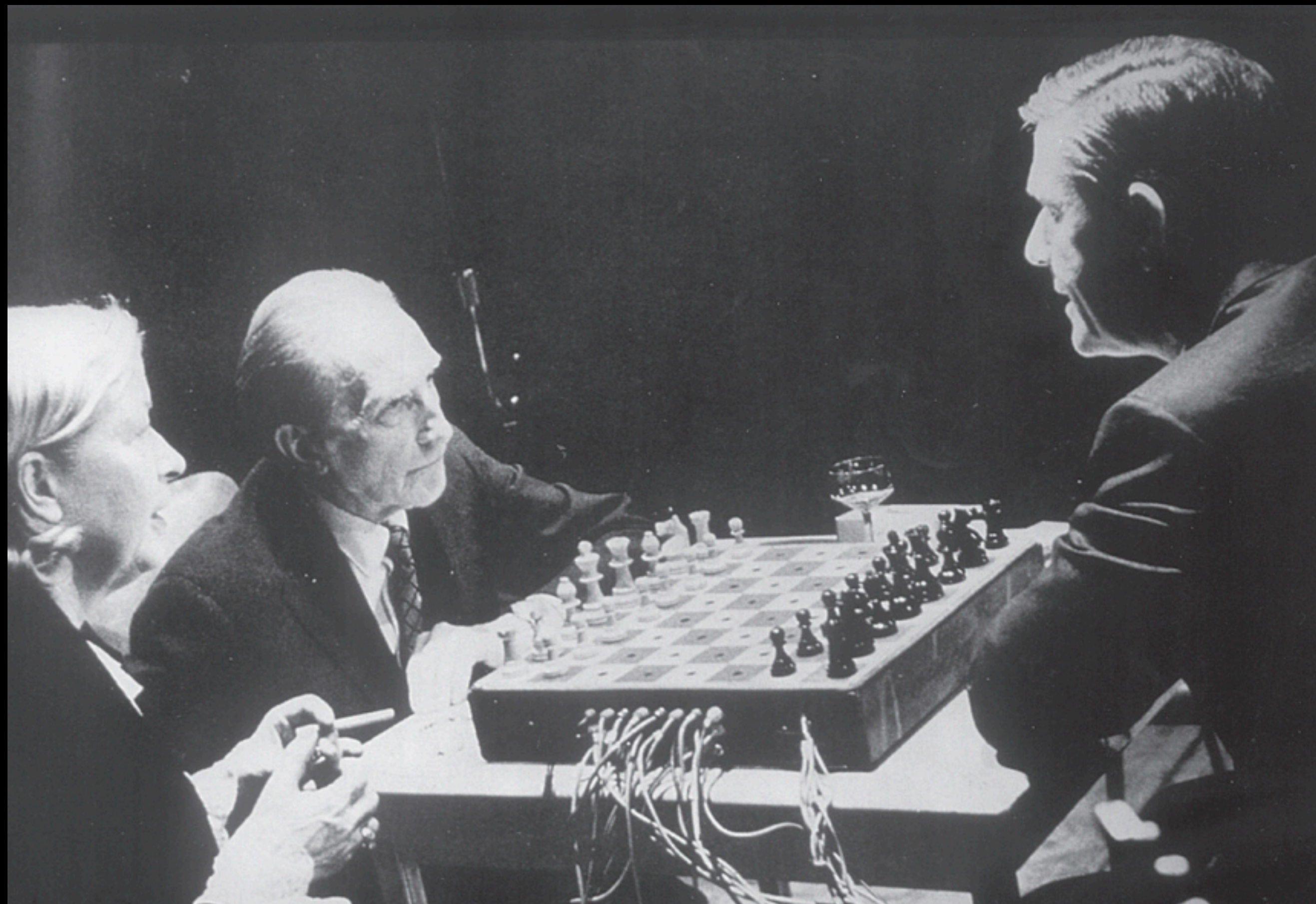
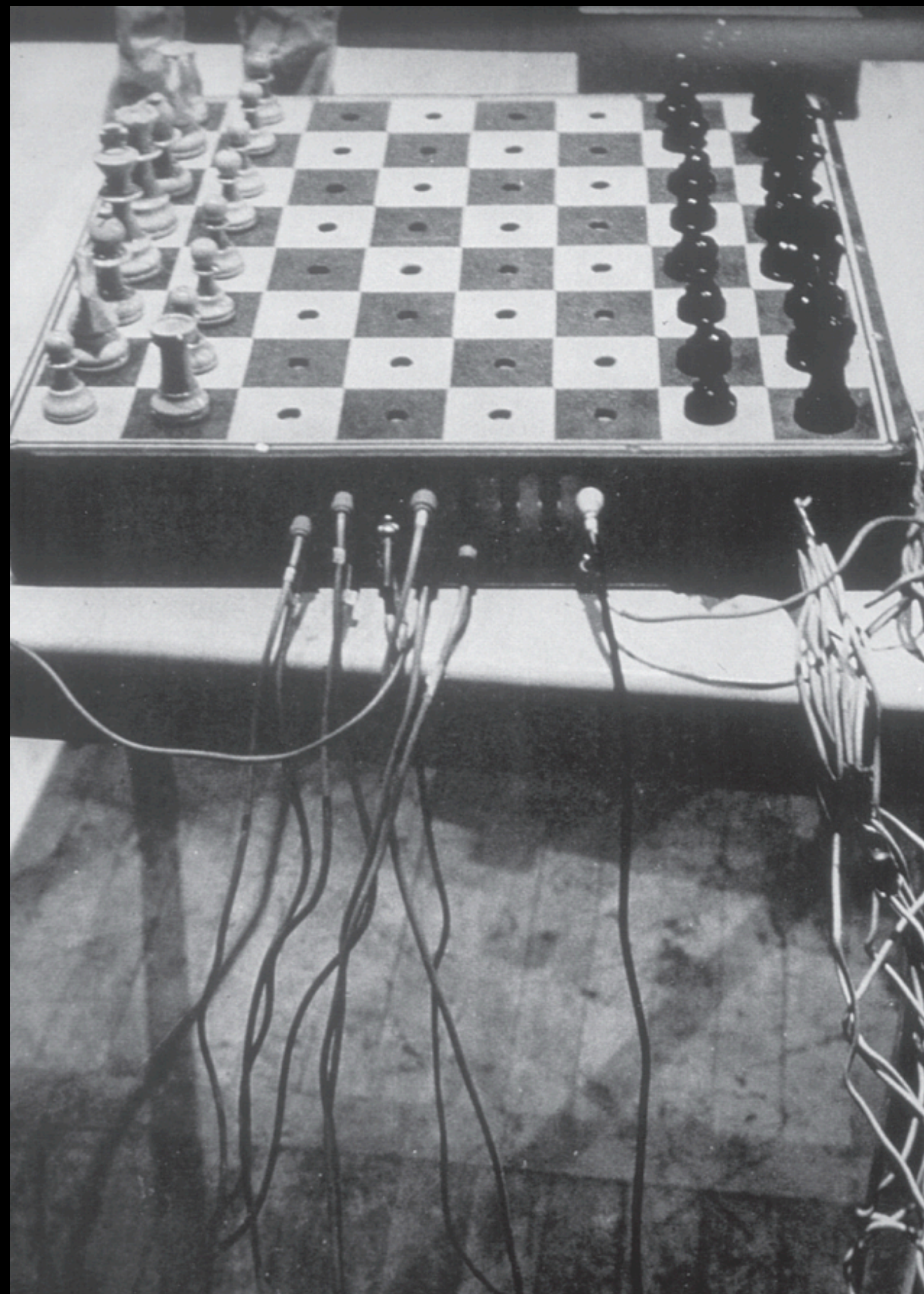
- The functions of the chessboard actually depended upon the covering or uncovering of its 64 photoresistors (one per square), not upon the nine contact microphones installed inside.
- At Cage's insistence, they provided internal locations for contact microphones so that the audience could hear the physical movements of the pieces on the board if the appropriate conjunctions of inputs, outputs and player movements.
- At most, those sounds were soft "thunks," even when greatly amplified.
- The oscilloscope images emanated from modified monochrome and color television screens, which provided visual monitoring of some of the sound events passing through the chessboard.

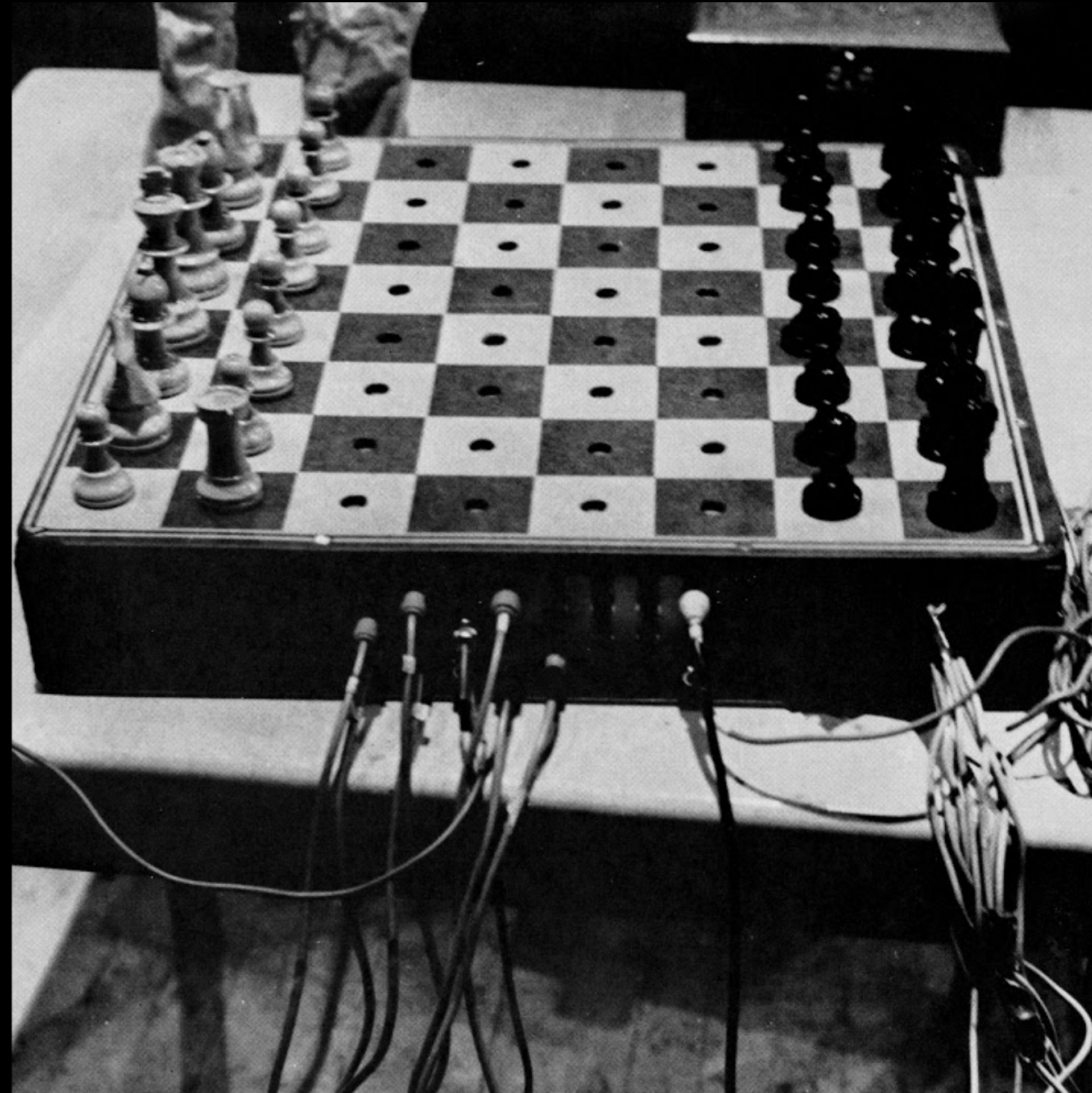


# Why is it call reunion?

- John Cage's 1968 Reunion was a “reunion” of the things Cage loved most: chess, performance, and music. He used it to reunite and work with the artists and musicians he most admired by transforming a chess game into a work of performance art, with a musical electronic chess board at its center.







- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4Khq9l4w\\_g&t=121s&ab\\_channel=DEE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4Khq9l4w_g&t=121s&ab_channel=DEE)



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- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yysZTaaFQM&ab\\_channel=pezzipez](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yysZTaaFQM&ab_channel=pezzipez)



RESPONSIBILITY

*Reunion: John Cage, Marcel  
Duchamp, Electronic Music  
and Chess*

*Lowell Cross*

- [https://www.johncage.org/blog/cross\\_reunion.pdf](https://www.johncage.org/blog/cross_reunion.pdf)