

# ***Variations I*** ***for Stephen Montague ('58) 6/'90***

by

**John Cage**

(1912-1992)

**The realisation of *Variations I*** is based on the expansion of the *phonemes* found in the names “Stephen Montague” and “John Cage”. (A *phoneme* is the unit of sound used in a language such as: Ss...t...ee... etc.)

## **Instructions:**

1. The music events are to be memorised.
2. SATB chorus should stand in the performance space in the exact linear shapes and design of the four lines drawn in the graphic score. (See score)
3. Generally each *phoneme* is begun by a single person and passed on to their neighbour until the entire chorus is producing that sound. The choice of pitches should generally be in a comfortable range with no vibrato. The work is primarily soft and atmospheric (with only occasional louder events).

### Performance sequence example:

The bass singer furthest left begins by producing a “s” sound (as in “Stephen”). The “s” sound is then passed from him to the person left and continues (person to person) along the linear route to the end of the bass voice section.

When the “s” sound reaches a junction (as with the sopranos) it not only continues on through that junction but spreads up and down along the intersecting line.

4. Five members of the chorus (or extra musicians) chose an instrument and play a single, unique, percussive sound once as indicated in the score by the small dots. Exactly when the individual sound is played is left up to the performers. Only the sound on the right hand side of the page is moderately loud.

## **Performance sequence:**

1. The Basses begin the piece. They initiate each *phoneme* in the name “Stephen”:
  - “Sss” [ : *white noise* - long – sustained until everyone is producing the sound :]□
  - “t” [ : *unvoiced* - short/explosive- sparse (not too cluttered)- *mf* :]□
  - “e” [ : pitched - sustained – gradually create a microtonal cluster starting on any pitch but the cluster never wider than circa 2 semitones- *pp* :]□
  - “v” [ : *unvoiced* – short/explosive – sparse- *mp* :]□
  - “eh” [ : *voiced* – short – dense – accented – *mf* :]□
  - “n” [ : pitched – sustained - microtonal cluster as before but different starting

pitch- *pp*:]□

2. The Sopranos (bottom of line) initiate each *phoneme* in the name “Montague”:

“M” [ : pitched – sustained - microtonal cluster new pitch- *pp* :]□  
“ah” [ : pitched – sustained - microtonal cluster on higher pitch- *ad lib* slow  
*cresc / decresc*: *p* to *mf* individually (not as a group) :]□  
“n” [ : pitched – sustained - microtonal cluster on lower pitch - *pp* :]□  
“t” [ : *unvoiced* – short/explosive- sparse- *mf* :]□  
“ah” [ *voiced* - short – *mf* - 4 or 5 times only ]  
“g” [ *half voiced* – short – *mp* - 3 or 4 times only ]  
“u” [ : pitched – sustained – microtonal cluster on different pitch – *p* :]□

3. At any point during the performance of the last *phoneme* (of “Montague”) any member of the chorus may flip a coin to determine whether they do or do not sing the “C-A-G-E” melody below. Heads you sing, Tails, you don’t. You have 3 flips.

whispered  
C A G E (un) C A G E D  
Use any vowel but only one.  
One long breath per note.  
Sing independently of everyone else!

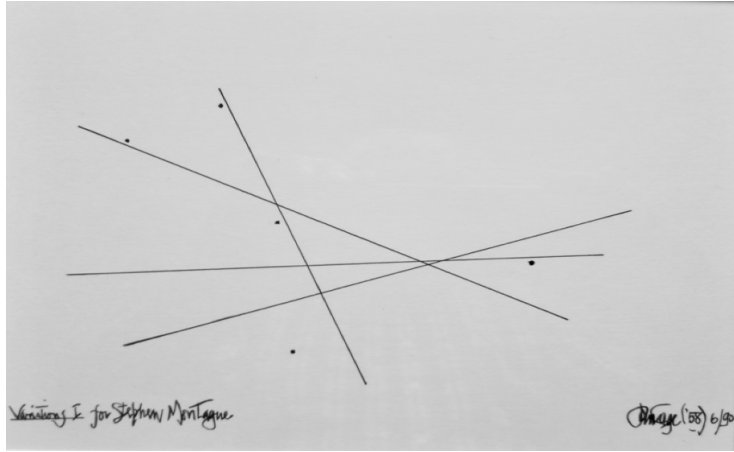
4. At some point during the CAGE chorale Altos (starting at the far right) begin the *phonemes* on “John” which gradually cancel it.

“J” [ : *unvoiced* – short/explosive – sparse- *mf* :]□  
“ah” [ : pitched – sustained – microtonal cluster- *mp* :]□  
“n” [ : pitched – sustained – microtonal cluster different pitch- *p* :]□

5. Tenors (far right side) initiate phonemes on “Cage”:

“K” [ *unvoiced* - short /explosive – *mf* - 2 or 3 times only ]  
“a” [ : *unvoiced* (white noise on “a” as in “Cage”) – sustained - *mp* :] □  
“j” [ : *unvoiced* – short- *p* - repeat less and less to nothing :] □

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Sketching I for Stephen Montague

Montague (188) 6/90