



Curatorial > VARIATIONS

With this section, RWM continues a line of programmes devoted to exploring the complex map of sound art from different points of view organised in curatorial series.

"Variation" is the formal term for a musical composition based on a previous musical work, and many of those traditional methods (changing the key, meter, rhythm, harmonies or tempi of a piece) are used in much the same manner today by sampling musicians. But the practice of sampling is more than a simple modernization or expansion of the number of options available to those who seek their inspiration in the refinement of previous composition. The history of this music traces nearly as far back as the advent of recording, and its emergence and development mirrors the increasingly self-conscious relationship of society to its experience of music. Starting with the precedents achieved by Charles Ives and John Cage, VARIATIONS will present an overview of the major landmarks in Sampling Music, following examples in 20th century composition, folk art and commercial media through to the meeting of all those threads in the present day.

Curated by Jon Leidecker.

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Jon Leidecker was born in 1970 in Washington D.C. to two physicists. Since 1990 he has performed appropriative collage music under the pseudonym Wobbly, aiming for extended narratives spun from spontaneous yet coherent multi-sample polyphony. Selected recent works are freely available online. <http://detritus.net/wobbly/>

VARIATIONS

#1

Transition

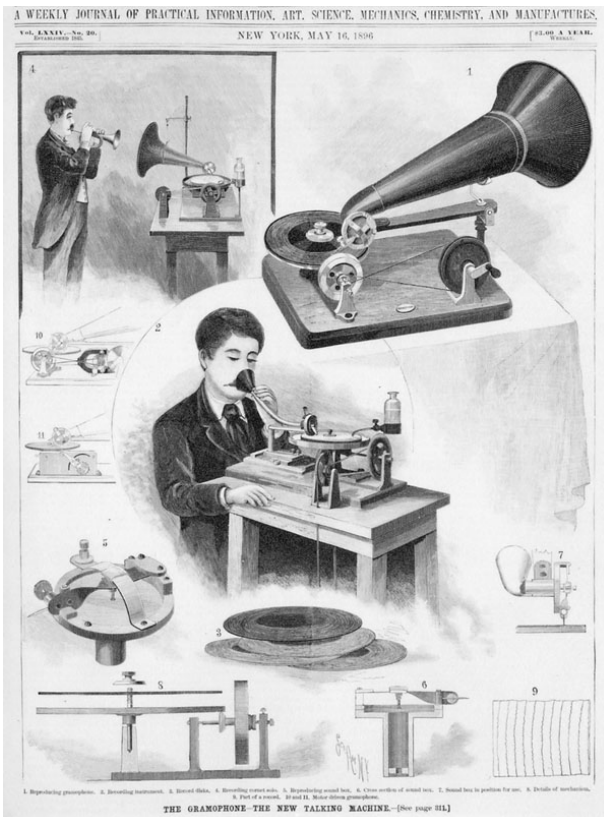
The first episode of this overview of appropriative collage in music covers the years 1909 through 1961, beginning with Charles Ives, who composed in a cut and paste style with sheet music in a way that anticipated what later composers would do with multi-track tapes and mixers. We skip through decades to arrive at "Twisting The Dials", the Happiness Boys' 1928 tribute to late night radio surfing, before moving to John Cage's proto-sampling pieces for radio and tape, "Credo In US" and the "Imaginary Landscapes". We witness the million-selling cut-in records of Buchanan and Goodman and the resulting lawsuits, Richard Maxfield's tape cut-ups of a sermonizing preacher, and conclude with James Tenney's dedicated dissection of a single recording of Elvis: "Collage No. 1", the first *remix*.

01. Summary

The idea of a completely original piece of music is fairly recent. Music was passed on through sound, through generations, even for centuries after the invention of written music. Only in the 14th century did it become standard practice for a composer to sign his name to a piece of music and claim it entirely as his own, giving rise to the cult of the individual composer. But as recording supplanted sheet music in the 20th century, the presence of communal influence became unavoidably obvious once again as composers began to use recordings to make new recordings. We can now hear the presence of more than one voice. And there is a reason why people don't say they listen to a record – they say that they play a record. From the beginning, recordings have been instruments.

02. Playlist

- 01 Christian Marclay, "Record Without A Cover" (1985) (under narration)
- 02 Charles Ives, "Barn Dance" (William Strickland with the Imperial Tokyo Philharmonic), 1908
- 03 Charles Ives, "Putnam's Camp" (Michael Tilson Thomas with the Boston Symphony Orchestra), 1912 (under narration)
- 04 Charles Ives, "Thoreau / Concord Sonata" (John Kirkpatrick), 1918 (under narration)
- 05 Charles Ives, "Calcium Light Night, Gunter Schuller", 1970 (under narration)
- 06 Charles Ives, "Fourth Symphony, Second Movement" (Michael Tilson Thomas with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), 1918
- 07 Christian Marclay, "Record Without A Cover", 1985 (under narration)
- 08 The Happiness Boys, "Twisting The Dials", 1928
- 09 Hindemith, "Trickaufnahme", 1930 (under narration)
- 10 Walter Ruttmann, "Weekend", 1930 (under narration)
- 11 Luigi Russolo, "Corale", 1921 (under narration)
- 12 John Cage, "Imaginary Landscape No. 1", 1938 (under narration)
- 13 John Cage, "Credo In US" (Reiner Riehm with Ensemble Musica Negativa, recorded 1971), 1942
- 14 John Cage, "Imaginary Landscape No. 4" (Cikada Duo), 1951 (under narration)
- 15 John Cage in conversation with Morton Feldman, 1966
- 16 John Cage, "Radio Music" (Gianni-Emilo Simonetti, Juan Hidalgo & Walter Marchetti), 1956 (recorded 1974) (under narration)



[The Gramophone – the new talking machine (Scientific American, 1896 May 16)]



[John Cage, preparing a piano (before 1950) Courtesy Cunningham Dance Foundation]

- 17 John Cage "Imaginary Landscape No. 5" (Cage realization w/ David Tudor, Louis & Bebe Barron), 1952
- 18 Pierre Schaeffer, "Etude Aux Chemins De Fer", 1948 (under narration)
- 19 Pierre Schaeffer, "Etude Pathétique" (excerpt), 1948
- 20 Pierre Schaeffer & Pierre Henry, "Valse" (from "Symphonie Pour Un Homme Seul"), 1951
- 21 Christian Marclay, "Record Without A Cover", 1985 (under narration)
- 22 Louis Armstrong, "I Surrender, Dear", 1931 (under narration)
- 23 Bing & Dixie Lee Crosby, "A Fine Romance", 1936 (under narration)
- 24 Les Paul & Mary Ford, "How High The Moon", 1951 (under narration)
- 25 Buchanan & Goodman, "The Flying Saucer (Part 1)", 1956
- 26 Christian Marclay, "Record Without A Cover", 1985 (under narration)
- 27 Buchanan & Goodman, "Buchanan & Goodman On Trial", 1956
- 28 Don Charles presents the Singing Dogs, "Jingle Bells", 1955
- 29 André Hodeir, "Jazz Et Jazz", 1951 (under narration)
- 30 Hugh Le Caine, "Arcane Presents Lulu", 1956
- 31 Nam June Paik, "Homage A John Cage / Etude for Pianoforte", 1958-1960
- 32 Richard Maxfield, "Sine Music", 1959 (under narration)
- 33 Richard Maxfield, "Amazing Grace", 1960
- 34 James Tenney, "Monody" (John Anderson, clarinet, remixed), 1959
- 35 James Tenney, "Collage No. 1 ("Blue Suede")", 1961
- 36 James Tenney, "Collage No. 1 + Monody", 2008 (remixed)

03. Related links

Charles Ives - Recommended Recordings
http://www.musicweb.uk.net/ives/03_Recordings_Main_Menu.htm

John Cage Info
<http://www.johncage.info/>

John Cage & Morton Feldman In Conversation 1967
<http://www.archive.org/details/CageFeldmanInConversation>

Ron Rice - "A Brief history of Anti-Records and Conceptual Records"
<http://ubu.com/papers/rice.html>

Chuck Miller - "Dickie Goodman: We've Spotted The Shark Again"
<http://www.chuckthewriter.com/goodman.html>

Chris Cutler - "Plunderphonia"
<http://www.ccutler.com/ccutler/writing/plunderphonia.shtml>

James Tenney & Frank J. Oteri in Conversation
<http://www.newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=4247>

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