

## *Writings through John Cage*

The following text was commissioned by David Crawforth after a request by Audrey Riley for a short introduction to her performance of *one*<sup>8</sup> at Beaconsfield gallery London on December 12th 2003. When I was asked to write the following text it seemed out of place to offer a brief explanation or introduction to the work of such an immensely significant and influential artist as Cage. Even to try and give some idea of what an important artist he has been for me personally in my own work seemed a daunting prospect. I chose instead to take Cage himself as my model using procedures that Cage himself might have used had he been asked for a text. Cage always strongly emphasised the point that his lectures “exemplified rather than explained” his other creative work, and he applied similar processes to creating his lectures as he did to writing music. One technique used in his later work is to take several source texts and from them, sometimes in combination with chance procedures, to create mesostics.

...mesostics are written in the conventional way horizontally, but at the same time they follow a vertical rule, down the middle, a string which spells a word or name. The vertical rule is lettristic and in my practice the letters are capitalized. Between two capitals in a perfect or 100% mesostic neither letter may appear in lower case. In an imperfect or 50% mesostic the first letter may reappear but the second one is not permitted until its appearance on the second line as a capital in the string.<sup>11</sup>

I drew on Cage’s own writings and published conversations, in particular the Harvard lectures *I-VI*, the lecture *Composition in Retrospect*, and Richard Kostelanetz’s book *Conversing with Cage*, to create a source text from which I extracted fragments, (sometimes just a single word), using them to construct a 50% mesostic forming the vertical string from the names of the composer, the performer, and the title of the piece; John Cage, Audrey Riley, *one*<sup>8</sup>.

Paul Newland

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<sup>11</sup> John Cage, *I-VI* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), p.1.

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Just  
dO  
wHat it is they are  
Not knowing

spaCe  
musicAl sculpture  
it is as thouGh sounds occur  
of thEir own accord.

sometimes Just  
a suggestiOn i found it  
worked tHerefore  
i Nap

pounding the riCe without lifting  
my hAnd  
the principle underlyinG all  
thE solutions acts in the question that is asked

not a single plan Just a space  
Of time and as many  
people performing in tHe same place  
a gymNasium

an arChitecture  
thAt isn't involved  
with makinG  
thE stage directly opposite the audience and higher

Just  
dO  
wHat will  
happeN next

the responsibility of eaCh person is  
mArcel duchamp said to complete the work  
to see oriGinally  
meaning is in the brEath

musiC is  
About  
chanGing  
thE mind

aCt in  
Accord with obstacles  
usinG  
thEm to find or define

the proCess you're  
About to be involved in  
if you don't have enouGh  
timE

to acComplish  
whAt you have in mind consider the work finished  
proceed Giving  
Equal attention to

eaCh of the  
pArts or you could say  
study beinG  
intErrupted

as unexpeCted  
pleAsures free the mind from its desire  
to concentrate remaininG  
opEn

i welCome  
whAtever happens next  
continGency  
inconsistEncy

music thOUGH which bows  
aNd  
doEs so to the

audiEnce confessedly  
Is the opposite of what seems to me  
to make people stronGer  
to cHange  
Them

gOvernment has the desire  
iN it to control  
thE solutions

it lEaves no freedom for me  
sounds are poInts in space  
enjoy the situation with Great pleasure  
sounds sHould be honoured  
noT enslaved

pairs Of opposites  
haviNg black and  
whitE as it

wEre  
wIth the play of these opposites  
one can enGage  
withH all the games  
geT

Out of your (cage)  
academic composition  
has lEd us to

climaxEs and so on  
all I can say is that it doesn't  
seem to radically chanGe  
tHe  
familiar convenTion

the opposite of a revolutionary attitude

art that alters- is Useful in our lives

I've never liked the idea of one

person in control

I visited a fine potter in japan he sat down and said

my purpose is to

Remove purpose

If I have a

particular

purpose and then a series of actions come about all I get

is an approximation of my purpose then nothing but

A sort of compromise takes place perhaps that still takes  
place when my purpose is to remove purpose namely I see that

I haven't Done it but at least I'm going along

in the Right

direction

saying it as you listen

not to understand but to be aware

the experiencing mind is what we need whether things are going

smoothly or not it finds tranquility in

the least tranquil situation

no why

the Accepting mind is delighted

just a

Dip

what it alters is mind

the white paintings of rauchenberg

don't have any images

we are able to see such

things as dust and shadows

the particular

number of performers involved gives the title

You

Add a

superscript on repetition of a title one<sup>1</sup> one<sup>2</sup> ...etc

time brackets a period of time in which music may begin or end

self-alteration

methodstructureintentiondisciplinenotation

indeterminacy

to hear two sounds

one high my nervous system

one low my blood in circulation

set in vibration

without any intention

on my pArt that experience gave my life  
direction i gave Up making choices ( in their place  
no one else was Doing that  
the exploRation of  
nonintEntion  
I did not know immediatelY what I was doing

the natuRe of chance  
I put the asking of questions  
aLl  
answErs (answer all questions)  
anYthing  
  
sAys what  
yoU have to say we can tell  
what is being saiD without  
undeRstanding it  
changE must take place  
find a humourous waY  
  
to embaRrass government out of  
exIstence  
a pubLic occasion  
thE performance of a piece of music  
a metaphor of societY of how we

wAnt society to be  
we coUlD make a piece  
in which we wouLd be willing to live  
metaphoRically  
a rEpresentation of  
societY

i'd pRefer  
a societY without a president  
it seems to me our Laws should  
bE changed  
so that theY

mAKE it possible for poor people to  
the history of mUsic as something that  
live with Dignity  
my memoRy of what  
is supposEd to be the same thing each time  
You get when you go to school

Rauchenberg  
dId a white painting  
that there couLd be right and wrong performances  
but wE're coming to  
an enjoYment

Of music  
which is aNd wants to  
bE unrepeatable

in Other words  
Not a painting  
what was intEResting

abOut it were the specks  
oN it, hmmm  
it bEcame

an airpOrt for shadows  
aNd dust  
as wE

pErform  
It became a way  
of catchinG deviations from perfection  
each performance  
To

bE the  
flrst time  
catchinG deviation from intention  
even if it's called tHe  
same Thing

catching unintEnded  
devIations I like it better  
when somethinG is done  
tHan when  
someThing is said

so much music goEs up and down  
In a melodic way  
reachinG a  
High  
poinT and a low point

Coming to rest  
And in so  
doinG  
sEems to be saying something

disCover how to  
pAy attention to  
somethinG that's not  
intEresting

an aCtion  
nothing's being sAid but  
somethinGs  
bEing done

this woRk  
Is a set of variations  
purposefuL  
and thE theme is not given  
paY attention

puRposelessness  
what Idea arises in your mind  
how shouLd I know  
as you listEn  
don't paY attention

puRposelessness  
nonunderstandIng  
seLf  
altEration  
contingencY

the outCome of which is  
sepAration of cause and effect  
to make somethinG that finds  
purposEful

not foRseen  
Impermanence  
not seLf  
Expression  
not being in anY way in the way

Just a dip  
i was prOmoting the notion of impermanent art  
my memory of wHat  
happeNed is not what happened

absCence of theory  
not knowing whAt will happen next  
i'm makinG it  
away from likEs and dislikes

Just  
sOber and quiet  
no wHy  
iN a quiet frame of mind

musiC never stops  
we just turn AWay  
not thinkinG  
unintEnded

Just  
Open  
ratHer  
thaN

Closed  
whAt happened (shadows and dust)  
nothinG to say and saying it  
to sobEr and quiet the mind

Just  
twO sounds  
no wHy  
oNe eight (performed by audrey riley)