I’itoi Variations (1985)

I’itoi is the mythic Elder Brother of the Papago Indians of southern Arizona, the famous "man in the maze" of Papago art. He figures in the creation myth as a shadow figure to Earth Doctor, and bears certain resemblances to the Aztec Quetzalcoatl; he led the Papago to their present land, created the calendar, taught them to smoke tobacco, bothered the young women, was killed by his own people, and came back to life before disappearing back into the earth.

The Papago keep I’itoi's myth alive through a long cycle of songs, of which I’itoi Variations is based on the "Song of the Black Mountain" (originally recorded on Everest, later available on Legacy international CD 388). I was intrigued not only by the song's unusual rhythm, with its shift between dotted and undotted beats, but by the women's moving drone above the men's melody. The translated text of the song is as follows:

There was a black mountain in the ocean. There was an unseen cloud coming toward that mountain. It went into the black mountain and made it wet.

Across I’itoi's death-and-rebirth story I superimposed a worldly/spiritual contrast modeled after Beethoven's Op. 111 Sonata. Variation VI is the crisis point, the Scorpionic death/ transformation; Variation VII is the alchemical rebirth as spirit. Variation II is an homage to Busoni's two-piano masterpiece Fantasia Contrappuntistica. Variation IX is subtitled "Hoodoo" after the lumpy, vertical rock formation characteristic of so many Utah canyons. The Finale carves metaphorical petroglyphs (rock drawings) on the slowed-down, rocklike theme, then turns back for a quick trip through all eleven variations in reverse order.

I’itoi Variations was a calculatedly ambitious work, a summing up of my education. I was about to turn 30, had quit my job to stay home with my newborn son, and was propelled by a need to achieve something big and difficult. I admired the "intellectual" monumentality of the two-piano repertoire, including Busoni's Fantasia, Wallingford Riegger's Op. 54 Variations, Bartok's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, Stockhausen's Mantra, Ligeti's Monument / Selbst-Portrait / Bewegung, Zimmermann's Monologe, Reich's Piano Phase - each of which left its mark on the piece some way or another. I’itoi Variations was written with the help of a grant from the American Ritual Theater Company, and was initially published by Editions V in Essen, Germany (run by Gerhard Stäbler). It seemed commodious enough to merit two dedicatees: my wife Nancy and my fellow political composer Frank Abbinanti.

World premiere: May 4, 1990, at Cooper Union's Great Hall by Double Edge (Nurit Tilles and Edmund Niemann)
to Frank Abbinanti and Nancy Cook

I'itoi Variations
for two pianos

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I'itoi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'itoi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'itoi Variations

Var. II: Homage to Busoni

$J = 204$

Pno. 1

Pno. 2
I'toi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'toi Variations

Pno. 1

Pno. 2

Var. III

\[ j = 160-168 \]

slight accelerando
I'itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations
I’itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations

Var. IV

$ d = 40-48 $ Freely (16ths can be a little faster than general tempo)

I'itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations
Var. V: Canon Interruptus

\( \text{\textit{I'}itoi Variations} \)

191

\( \text{\textit{I'}itoi Variations} \)
I'itoi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'itoi Variations
Var. VI

I'toi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'itoi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'itoi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'itoi Variations

Peaceful $q = 100$

$325$

Pno. 1

Pno. 2

Impetuous $q = 216$

$333$

at tempo

$325$

Pno. 1

Pno. 2
I'itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations
Var. VII

\[ \text{\( q = 100 \)} \]

\[ \text{\( j = 100 \)} \]

\( P \) consummately peaceful

very delicate

I'itoi Variations
I'toi Variations
Var. VIII

400  \( \frac{d}{d} = 120 \)  Limpid, without accents

I'itoi Variations
Pno. 1

Pno. 2

I'itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations

more and more insistent

subito pp

Pno. 1

Pno. 2

cresc.
I'toi Variations
I'itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations
Pno. 1

Pno. 2

I'itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations
Var. X

Stark, almost violent, but decrescendoing to the end

\[ j = c. 104 \]

Pno. 1

with pedal on each chord

Pno. 2

I'itoi Variations
I'toi Variations
Var. XI: Finale - The 41 Petroglyphs

\( j = c. 40 \)

Pno. 1

\( pp \)

`pp - delicately, but with inexorable momentum`

Pno. 2

\( pp \)

Attacca

I'itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'itoi Variations
I'itoi Variations
Coda

I'toi Variations
I'itoi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'toi Variations
I'itoi Variations

Molto ritard.....

Accelerando - as much as possible

April - December, 1985
Glenview, Illinois

I'itoi Variations