Superimp0sition

For improvisers and animated score

Musical score by Martin Kay
Animated score by Steve Weymouth (based on Angela Wagstaff’s Rhizome etchings)

Composed for my Doctor of Musical Arts,
Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney

Premiered by Martin Kay (alto sax), David Reaston (Guitar & pedals), Steve Barry (piano), Mathew Bruce (Violin/Tibetan gong) and Jamie Cameron (drumkit)

Music Recital East, Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Vivid New Music at the Con, 2 May 2017

Angela Wagstaff: Rhizome print
Instrumentation

Alto saxophone
Prepared piano
Violin/Tibetan gong
   Guitar
   Drumkit

Duration: circa 17’
Dedicated to Angela Wagstaff (Rhizome etchings), Steve Weymouth (animated score), David Reaston (Guitar & pedals), Steve Barry (piano), Mathew Bruce (Violin/Tibetan gong) and Jamie Cameron (drums) for their artistry and dedication. Your unique artistry indelibly shaped my work.
… The rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight

*Deleuze and Guattari*
Performance Notes

In *superimpOsition* there are two scores, the animated score, based on a series of etchings made by the artist Angela Wagstaff, and a notated score I composed to guide the interpretation of the score, which carries through concepts of accumulation, difference, repetition and rupture begun in my Spectral etude for improvising orchestra, *impOsition*.

Interpreting the animated score

For the first performance, I asked the improvisers to respond to the score as it scrolled to the left, responding to images as they left the screen. This approach was to make connections between sound and vision obvious to the listener. This was successful to a degree. In a future iteration, I wish to experiment with different responses to the animated score, moving closer to the rhizomatic ideal, freeing the performers to respond to any image on the screen regardless of positioning (this is an invitation to experiment). In the final section of *superimpOsition*, the ensemble interprets a series of pulsing lights, signalling the close of the work. This is an effective scaffolding strategy which, although directing the performers’ attention, breaks free of linearity.

Interpreting the notated score

The notated score was made to carry concepts forward from my work *impOsition* and Wagstaff’s *Rhizome*, opening them up to further improvisation. To gradually evolve loops through a balance of difference and repetition, the performer must hold each improvised iteration of a loop in their mind, to maintain constant variation. The compositional imperative to maintain the improvisation of differences creates a cognitive competition between accumulated short-term memories and the immediate interactions of the perceptual present. *superimpOsition* places a greater burden on the memory of the performer, as the loops continue for longer periods of time and after a few iterations
may bear little resemblance to the opening loop, though the transformations are linked through a chain of events.

Three roles

Rupture: Each rupture introduces new material, corresponding to a colour change in the score. There are also many secondary ruptures, significant points in the animated score which can also shift the musical mood and texture.

Loop: repeat the material improvising gradual differences so that each adjacent loop shares musical content.

Zone: The performer is free to improvise freely. This is not a soloistic role, just one unbound by the looping process.

Harmonic territory (Tibetan gong analysis)

superimpOsition uses the partial structure of a Tibetan gong I bought in Rishikesh to transform the instrumental capacities of the guitar and piano. This table forms the basis for the scordatura guitar and the prepared piano. The strongest tonal centre for the work is B3 (-24).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Pitch (closest to equal temperament)</th>
<th>Hertz</th>
<th>Cents deviation from equal temperament</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
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Prepared Piano

For the first performance the following notes were prepared with cardboard, paper, or plastic.

Scordatura guitar

For the first performance, an eight-string guitar, reaching lower than the normal guitar tuning, was the basis for selecting this scordatura. Four strings were tuned to the following scordatura.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concert pitch</th>
<th>Deviation from equal temperament</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eb2</td>
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superimpOsition
For improvisers and animated score

Section timings
(Ruptures corresponding with colour changes in the animated score)

Rupture one
Timing: beginning to 30”
Colour: yellow

Rupture two
Timing: 30” to 4’30”
Colour: red

Rupture three
Timing: 4’40” to 8’06”
Colour: yellow

Rupture four
Timing: 8’06” to 12’02”
Colour: green

Rupture five
Timing: 12’02” to 14’36”
Colour: blue
Violin/Tibetan gong

**Rupture One** (zone): Indicate the beginning of the work by bowing the Tibetan gong

**Rupture Two** (loop): Enter during the rupture

**Rupture Three** (loop): Begin with piano

**Rupture Four** (loop): create a swarm effect with the ensemble

**Rupture Five** (zone): Play upward sweeps
Prepared piano

Rupture One: Tacit

Rupture Two (loop): Play broken arpeggations

Rupture Three (loop): Play almost together with violin

Rupture Four (loop): Create a swarm effect with the ensemble

Rupture Five (zone): Respond freely to sound and image. Recapitulate melodic fragments from Rupture Three
Saxophone

**Rupture One (zone):** Interact freely with surrounding sound and image

**Rupture Two (loop):** Continue ideas from Rupture one

**Rupture Three (loop)**

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**Rupture Four (loop):** create a swarm effect with the ensemble

**Rupture Five (loop):** Play ascending lines. Introduce melodic fragments
Guitar/pedals

Rupture One (zone): Build ambience using open strings

Rupture Two (loop): Build ambience using open strings

Rupture Three (loop): Wait until violin and piano complete their unison melody once

Rupture Four (loop): create a swarm effect with the ensemble

Rupture Five (zone): Play freely. Introduce melodic fragments from Rupture Three
Drums

**Rupture One (loop):** Tacit

**Rupture Two (loop):** create loops using small gongs and cymbals. Introduce fragmented grooves

**Rupture Three (zone):** Respond freely

**Rupture Four (loop):** Play gongs

**Rupture Five (zone):** Create upward sweeping lines