



School: Bath School of Music & Performing Arts

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Project Title: bête gabriel-rufael (composition for tenor saxophone, percussion, and computer-controlled click track)

UOA: 33 - Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies

Research Questions

bête gabriel-rufael (2015) is a musical composition for tenor saxophone, percussion, and computer-controlled click track.

The primary research questions explored in the composition concern re-considering the materiality of sound via certain tenets of the new materialism. According to new materialist philosopher of science Karen Barad, '[m]atter is differentiating, and which differences come to matter, matter in the iterative production of their different differences' (Barad 2007: 137). That is to say that like matter is considered to hold commonality across its instances (e.g. different stones are still all considered stone). In a manner akin to Deleuze, Barad's scrutiny highlights how, in fact, the iterative properties of matter actually only reveals the different kinds of differences that either bifurcate matter into like instances of the same substance, or differences in matter itself.

Sound is not usually considered through this lens, especially within the context of musical performance. On a given musical instrument, repetition of an input performative action is considered as tethered to an (expected) output sound – and this is especially important in the formulation of a notion of musical repetition, where a musical idea may return and heard as akin to something previous.

As a result, the primary research questions of this project can be considered as follows:

How might the repetition of performative actions (on musical instruments) be bifurcated from output sound? What are the conditions by which the same performative action (on a musical instrument) may be repeated with divergent sonic results?

How might a common set of parameters be forged (for a chamber ensemble of saxophone and percussion) so that manipulation of these common parameters effects destabilises all the output sounds of all constituent members of the ensemble, regardless of the instrumental family or playing action?