

# **CONTACT THEATRE**

matthew wright (2005-8)

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**Imagine a huge cloud, built of fragments of yesterday, blown into a whirlwind by rotating machines. Imagine passing through this violent storm, reaching the centre and suddenly finding stillness.**

CONTACT THEATRE was written for the Percussion Group of the Hague and is based on the following nine quotes from Paul D. Miller's book *Rhythm Science*:

"..21<sup>st</sup> century aesthetics needs to focus on how to cope with the immersion we experience on a daily level.."

"..a digital signifier whose form adjusts its shape in front of us like an amorphous cloud made of zeros and ones.."

"..an interface architecture that twists and turns in sequences overlaid with slogans, statistics, vectors, labels and grids.."

"..a knowledge and pleasure in the play of surfaces, a rejection of history as objective force in favour of subjective interpretations of its residue.."

"..systematic attempts at figuring out a rhythm of everyday life in an industrial context.."

"..from math to code to culture.."

"..you can braid your own narrative of the multiplex consciousness notion, the development of sonic sculpture as a way to meld music and art and the stresses brought about by trying to blend mass entertainment with what used to be thought of as high culture.."

".. a dialectical triangulation between thesis and anti-thesis.."

"..from the sonic debris of a possible future, the cultural permutations of tomorrow, heard today, beyond the corporeal limits of the imagination.."

## **Equipment and notes for sound engineers:**

6 turntables – up to six performers

3 x 2-channel or 2 x 3-channel dj mixers

3 unspecified records, 1 jazz record (preferably a trumpet solo), 1 hip hop record, 1 rap record (preferably an accapella),

3 copies of DJ Q-Berts' 'Marshmallow Brayks' record, stickers.

PA with at least nine channels – one sound engineer

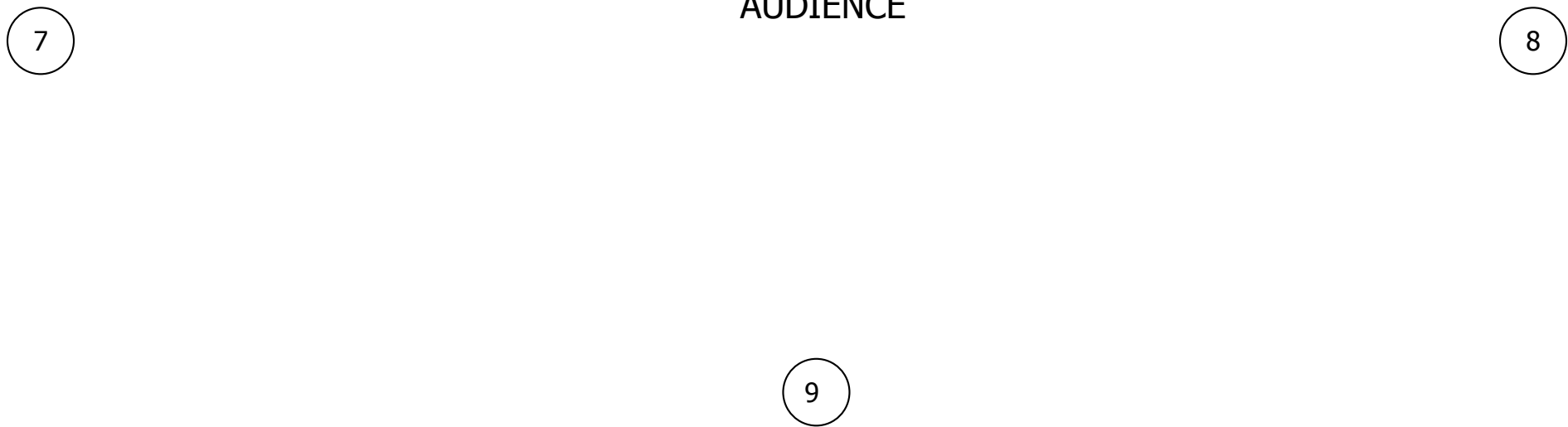
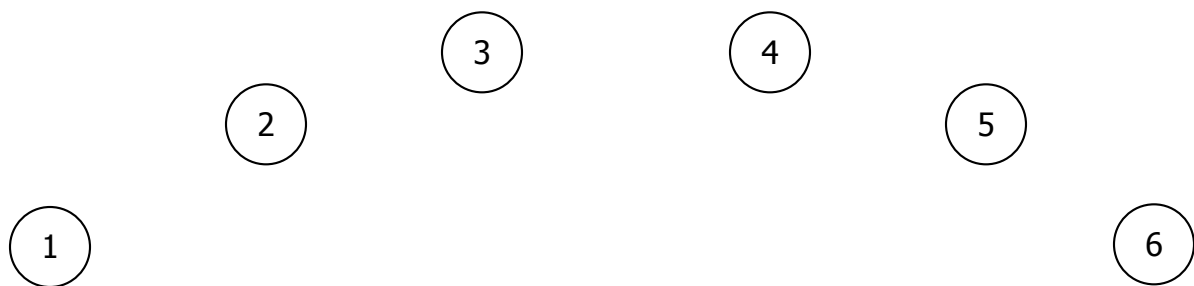
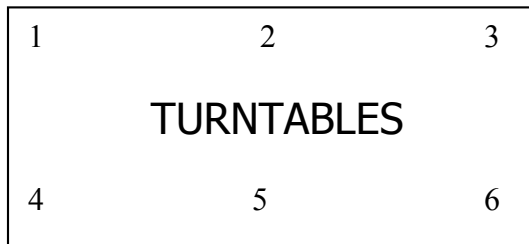
Nine Loudspeakers

Six Monitors

1 laptop and sound card with at least 3 output channels – or – 3 mp3 players / CD players (preferably with shuffle facility)

The turntables are arranged in a rectangle as shown below, with a video camera placed high above the performers. The live feed from the camera should be a tight shot of the turntables, so that a 'theatre' of hand gestures is visible to the audience. Six of the loudspeakers (speakers 1-6) should be placed in a semi-circle in front of the audience, and the remaining three speakers (speakers 7-9), used for the speech fragments and whispers only, should be placed at the left, right and behind the audience. The signal from turntable 1 should be routed to speaker 1, from turntable 2 to speaker 2 and so on for all of the turntables. The speech fragments that enter at 4, Cycle 2, should be panned sensitively at the desk between speakers 7 + 8 during section A. Whispers 1 should be routed to speaker 7, whispers 2 routed to speaker 8 and whispers 3 routed to speaker 9. A distinction should be made between the extremely precise, dry signals from the turntables and a slight reverb on the speech fragments and whispers. Where the sound engineer is asked to fade in or out the speech fragments or whispers, this should take place within the bar it is requested, apart from the last fade, which is extremely gradual.

**Turntable and loudspeaker placement:**



Each record is conceived as material with four 'zones':

- Zone One – the static at the beginning of the record, before any recorded material
- Zone Two – Recorded Material
- Zone Three – the static at the end of the recorded material. The zone used for preparing the records with stickers.
- Zone Four – the label at the centre of the record.

Within these zones, a total of nine techniques are used:

- The 'rewind' on zone two – creating a high frequency 'squeal'. This should be performed with a speed beginning at one revolution per second and reaching at least three revolutions per second.
- 'full contact' on zone four – drop the needle onto the label of the record, creating harsh white noise.
- 'full contact' on zone two – a simple playing of the record.
- 'half contact' on zone – lift the tone arm with the lever so that it is suspended just above the record, enough to begin looping material on the record.
- 'power off' on zone four – drop the needle onto the label of the record and switch off the power of the turntable.
- 'drone' on zone four - place the needle on the drone at the end of side A of DJ Q-Berts' Marshmellow Brayks – a flat F will be heard at 33.3rpm.
- 'pitchshift glissandi' on zone four – place the needle on the drone at the end of side A of DJ Q-Berts' Marshmellow Brayks and alter the pitch of the drone with the vari-speed pitchshifter. (Players 1-3 only)
- 'half contact' on stickers placed in zone three – prepare records with at least three stickers in zone three, and lower the needle above these stickers as in the 'half contact' technique mentioned above. The effect should be of a looping rhythm with at least three attacks.
- 'vibrato' on the 'drone' - place the needle on the drone at the end of side A of DJ Q-Berts' Marshmellow Brayks and lightly 'dust' the surface of the record with the left hand.

All of these techniques are illustrated on the accompanying CD-ROM.

The speech fragments and whispers faded into the mix by the sound engineer consist of digitized versions of the DJ Spooky quotes. The overall effect of the performance should be of an overwhelming whirlwind of sound at the front of the audience, with a slightly detached 'narration' from the speech fragments and whispers at the sides and behind.

Thanks for playing - MW

# CONTACT THEATRE

(With huge thanks to The Percussion Group of The Hague)

## A: Violent, relentless and constantly changing

(Play sections 1 - 7, then 2-7, 3-7, 4-7, 5-7, 6-7 and 7, becoming more frenetic each time, before moving attacca onto B)

1 45rpm

2 45+2rpm

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Vari-speed turntables:

Musical score for sections 1 and 2. Section 1 is marked '1 45rpm' and section 2 is marked '2 45+2rpm'. The score consists of six staves (numbered 1-6) with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *fff*. Above the staves, there are three bracketed sections with instructions: '5 - 8" Revinol Record - as fast as possible!', '5 - 8" Throw needle onto the label of the record, producing harsh 'white noise'', and '5 - 40" Throw needle onto the normal playing area of the record'. Section 2 is marked '(simile)'. A '1/2 contact - looping' instruction is present at the end of section 2.

3 45+4rpm

4 45+6rpm

[fade in speech fragments here - Cycle 2]

Musical score for sections 3 and 4. Section 3 is marked '3 45+4rpm' and section 4 is marked '4 45+6rpm'. The score consists of seven staves (numbered 1-7) with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *fff*. A '1/2 contact - looping' instruction is present at the end of section 4.

**5 45+8rpm**

**6 45+10rpm**

Musical score for Percussion tracks 5 and 6. Track 5 is labeled '45+8rpm' and track 6 is labeled '45+10rpm'. The score consists of seven staves, each labeled 'Perc.' on the left. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including dotted rhythms and eighth notes, with dynamic markings such as *fff* and *mf*. A vertical bar line separates the two tracks. In the middle of track 6, there are four boxes containing the text '1/2 contact - looping'. The score is marked with a '13' at the top left and a '14' at the top right.

[fade out speech fragments here - Cycle 7]

**7 45+10rpm**

Musical score for Percussion track 7, labeled '45+10rpm'. The score consists of seven staves, each labeled 'Perc.' on the left. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including dotted rhythms and eighth notes, with dynamic markings such as *fff* and *mf*. Each staff contains a box with the text '1/2 contact - looping'. The score is marked with a '18' at the top left and a '19' at the top right.

# B: Finding harmony - slow and meditative

5 - 25"

[fade in whispers 1]

22

move to drone - MARSHMALLOW BRAYKS, SIDE A

Perc. **fff**

Perc. **fff**

Perc. **fff**

Perc. **fff**

Perc. **fff**

Perc. **fff**

**(33.3rpm)**

switch power off - allow white noise to decrescendo

switch power off - allow white noise to decrescendo

switch power off - allow white noise to decrescendo

switch power off - allow white noise to decrescendo

switch power off - allow white noise to decrescendo

switch power off - allow white noise to decrescendo

power on, move to drone

**(33.3rpm---33.3-10rpm --33.3rpm)**

gliss

[fade in whispers 2]

25

**(33.3rpm---33.3+10rpm --33.3rpm)**

gliss

gliss

gliss

gliss

gliss

gliss

1/2 contact on sticks - looping

1/2 contact on sticks - looping

1/2 contact on sticks - looping



### [fade in whispers 3]

Musical score for Percussion instruments, measures 29-36. The score features four melodic staves with notes and slurs, and four rhythmic staves with "1/2 contact on sticks - looping" markings. Performance instructions include "vibrato" and "gliss."

### C: Growing in intensity

Musical score for Percussion instruments, measures 37-44. The score features four melodic staves with notes and slurs, and four rhythmic staves with "simile" markings. Performance instructions include "vibrato".

43

Perc. 1  
Perc. 2  
Perc. 3  
Perc. 4  
Perc. 5  
Perc. 6

53

Perc. 1  
Perc. 2  
Perc. 3  
Perc. 4  
Perc. 5  
Perc. 6



[fade out whispers 2]

[gradually fade out whispers 1 - - - - -]

- - - - -out]

# **Matt Wright - biography**

born 1977, Norwich, UK

Matt Wright works as a composer and turntablist at the edges of concert and club culture, his output stretching from music for Renaissance ensembles to large events combining Djs, classical musicians and digital media.

Erosion, non-linear networks, the idea of music 'at the edge of collapse' and the dialogue between 'stillness' and 'speed' are recurrent themes in his work and he favours an open and ecstatic approach to material.

He has created scores, performance scenarios, improvisations + turntablist backdrops with a broad range of new music performers, including, amongst others, The Apollo Saxophone Quartet, The Duke Quartet, Rolf Hind, Nicolas Hodges, Joanna Macgregor, London Flutes, ELEVEN and Vamos! (UK), MTK, Ensemble Klang, The Maarten Altena Ensemble, The Percussion Group of The Hague, SOIL, Electronic Hammer and De Erepijs (Netherlands), BLINDMAN (Belgium) and ELISION (Australia). He has worked in venues as diverse as Abbey Road studios and Tate Modern (London), De Ijsbreker (Amsterdam) and Bunkier Stzuki (Krakow) and his output has been streamed online, broadcast on BBC Radio 3, Resonance 104.4FM and Channel 4 television. His work has been premiered in six countries, recorded on the URM and Horizon labels, and MONSTA will soon be published by Boosey and Hawkes.

He is a Senior Lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University, where he leads the BA (Hons) Sonic Arts Degree Programme and the urban music ensemble CONTACT.

THANKS FOR PLAYING

**[www.matt-wright.co.uk](http://www.matt-wright.co.uk)**