अनाहत

Sandeep Bhagwati (2008/2009)

A n a h a t a

Comprovisation performance score

for movement, music, media & real-time computer

Introduction

The score of अनाहत you look at right now is an idea score for the realization of a multi-disciplinary comprovisation.

In order to be fully realized as a performance, it will need several levels of aesthetic research and decision-making. It will need a considerable amount of "composition" within the parameters of this score to define the framework for the improvisation that is necessary to adequately perform it.

Likewise, it will need a considerable amount of training and rehearsal time to make the basic premise of this score work possible at all. This premise is a kind of performance that is fully contingent, aware of its ephemerality and without any option for repetition or fixedness – and yet one that can firmly rely on solid compositional foundations and offer enough of a framework to the performers that they feel safe about working with each other and letting themselves develop the free and contingent elements of the performance.

As an idea score, अनाहत is not determined at all in any of its material aspects. Almost every technical, audible and visible aspect that makes up a full-blooded performance must still be realized – albeit in full compliance with the rules and ideas laid down in this score.

The score makes no assumptions about who the performers will be, how many of them will be around and what tradition or practice they bring to the score. Any movement, music or media tradition or practice could, in principle, be used in realizing this score. The only stipulation is that the performers are willing to follow the principles and instructions of the score and are willing to collaborate intensely and over a long period of time.

Finally, no mention is made of how the different informational details necessary for realization will be put at the disposal of the performers. What will their scores, stages, timelines look like, how will they exchange information ? This entire field is in constant flux and new ideas and technologies for the real-time organization of stage performance are developed all the time. The author of this score therefore felt it too constraining to determine the way some central features (such as the currently applicable hexagrams, the transition modes, the configurations and the overall form etc.) are determined by the performers. For all these both offline and online solutions are envisagable, with the solutions involving decision making during performance being preferred by the author. The purpose of this work is to explore awareness of both the tangible and the intangible, invisible, inaudible. Capturing this essence should be the main aim of any performance or other realization of अनाहत.

Sandeep Bhagwati

Montreal/Moscow, April 2009

CONTEXT

In Sanskrit, the word अनाहत (anahata) means unhurt, unstruck and unbeaten. **Anahata Nad** refers to the Vedic concept of unstruck sound, the sound of the celestial realm. The world is divided into the unstruck and the struck, i.e. the deliberate and the non-intentional or, in another perspective, evocation and immanence.

The concept of an unstruck sound of profound importance is also one of the fundamental techniques in playing the ancient Chinese music instrument **qin**, where the best and most important sounds are those that, in reality, do not sound at all and are only imagined by the player in continuation of the audible sounds s/he has played. The **qin** always has been the instrument of the learned who, by playing it essentially only to themselves, carry out explorations into the formless, the vague, the bland – concepts at the heart of T'ang aesthetics.

In both cases, the unstruck (and therefore inaudible sound) has the function both to continue our vivid and concrete world into realms that are not as concrete (and thereby acknowledging their reality) and to serve as the real *raison-d'etre* of the concrete world, interpreting the world of concrete objects or audible sounds as borders, limits and frames for the essential nothingness at the centre of this kind of making art and music.

This concept of nothingness as a continuation of the tangible and the essential core of performance is central to two related concepts that are explored in this score:

Khali (from Indian rhythmical theory) and **Weakness** (from the great Chinese classic I Ching).

Khali, in Indian *taal* theory, is a moment of emptiness in the rhythmic cycle, necessary for the cycle to actually renew itself and start afresh. **Khali**, indicated by almost dry, non-resonant strokes and unexpected rhythmical elisions, is not only necessary to keep the taal-cycles flowing naturally, by weight and counterweight, as it were, but also to provide a lifting feeling that makes the percussion not too grounded, but generates a feel of upward/forward pull that allows the rhythm to change and introduce the necessary subtle and floating variations that characterize Indian drumming – impossible, if all beats were equally weighted.

Weakness, in the I Ching, is what makes the world (and our fates) change. The I Ching, an ancient Chinese manual of divination, is a matrix of 64 different "hexagrams". Each hexagram consists of 6 parallel lines, stacked onto each other. Each line can be full (a straight line) or interrupted (a straight line interrupted by nothingness at its centre), thus generating the $2^6 = 64$ hexagrams. After asking a question to be answered y divination, each line is decided by an oracle throw. This oracle throw, however, has not 2 outcomes (to decide whether the line is full or empty) but four – two strong versions either way, and two weak ! The weak lines are what give the I Ching its name: Book of Changes. For a weak line in any given hexagram will at some point change into its opposite, thereby generating another of the 64 hexagrams. This movement from one hexagram to another, each hexagram having a very precise meaning, is the change in our fates, this is what the divinator tries to interpret in the context of the question asked. Thus weakness, the absence of a stable identity, in the interplay of emptiness and fullness generates forward movement, change - and thus: life.

SCORE INSTRUCTIONS

1 PERFORMERS

This piece calls for at least one movement person, one sound producing person and one person operating a computer program that treats sensor data and sonic material from the other two performers.

These performers perform according to a score made of **hexagrams** like those in the I Ching. These hexagram define exactly how and what a performer shall perform – whether pre-rehearsed or improvised material, whether There will always be two hexagrams, on indicating the start conditions of the work, one the end conditions. Each performer must generate a transition between these two states, using one of several possible **transition modes**. Such a transition is called a **reading**. A reading may take anything between 30 seconds and 6 minutes to complete.

During a reading all performers can assume one of several **configurations** such as a leader and 2 accompanists, or a chain or a rotating leadership etc. (more see below). This choice is made beforehand and must change in the next reading. In addition, all performers could be connected by an interactive system, relaying data to each other – especially relevant for sound and visual data.

During a reading the performers must interact and react to each other as prescribed in the configurations – but in a deeper sense, they must also imagine their own transitions independently, even if the mode of transition is prescribed to them.

A performance of Anahata can comprise many different readings, or several versions of the same reading. Or it could be a concatenated performance, where one end state becomes the new start state. (see **Overall Form**).

2 PREPARATIONS

Each performer must prepare (or have someone else prepare) 32 short "compositions" in his/her own medium. These compositions must conform to the parameter conditions laid down for the 32 "composition" hexagrams. Each performer must practice these compositions perfectly. In addition, as each of these compositions has an "improvisation" counterpart using exactly the same parameters, these compositions can be used as "improvisation seeds", in order to explore the improvisatory potential of the given parameter.

3. HEXAGRAMS
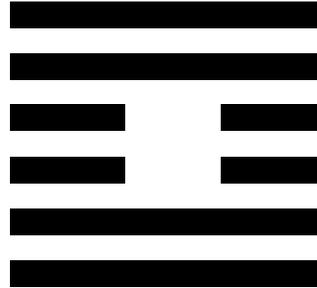
This is a hexagram, made of six layers of lines that are **read from bottom to top**. It can consist of two different types of lines, full (unbroken) and empty (broken). Each line also is either strong or weak. Strong lines remain as they are, but weak line flip into their opposite, thereby generating a new hexagram.

In the context of this work hexagrams are of central importance. They are the main score information for the performers, and contain all information a performer needs.

In a hexagram, each line stands for one parameter (say: speed) and the two types symbolize two different approaches to speed (say, fixed or flexible speed). Any hexagram thus embodies one entire aesthetic format, determined by the six different lines. Even changing one line will create a new aesthetic format.

Each performer needs to learn all 64 possible hexagrams and know precisely what kind of aesthetic format they represent in his discipline. This is achieved by studying the **decision matrices** provided in this score, one for each artistic practice involved, and, through research and exploration, finding or newly creating aspects of one's own artistic practice that fulfill all 6 parameters of any particular hexagram.

3.1. GENERATING HEXAGRAMS

There are two ways of generating the hexagrams, both deeply linked to the performance itself.

1) integrating the oracle into the performance itself – i.e. creating a performative moment in which one of the artists divines a hexagram line by line in the traditional Chinese way (with yarrow stalks or coins).
2) By creating a computer program that watches/listens to an improvised interlude and generates the hexagram line by line through this analysis. The program should be constructed in such a way that a trained performer has a chance of influencing the programme and thus the choice of lines.

NOT ALLOWED is the use of any random procedure that chooses one of the 64 hexagrams *in toto* or the use of any computerized random generator for individual lines.

I CHING DIVINATION

YARROW STALKS
One takes fifty yarrow stalks, of which only forty-nine are used. These forty-nine are first divided into two heaps (at random), then a stalk from the right-hand heap is inserted between the ring finger and the little finger of the left hand. The left heap is counted through by fours, and the remainder (four or less) is inserted between the ring finger and the middle finger. The same thing is done with the right heap, and the remainder inserted between the forefinger and the middle finger. This constitutes one change.

Now one is holding in one's hand either five or nine stalks in all. The two remaining heaps are put together, and the same process is repeated twice. These second and third times, one obtains either four or eight stalks. The five stalks of the first counting and the four of each of the succeeding countings are regarded as a unit having the numerical value three; the nine stalks of the first counting and the eight of the succeeding countings have the numerical value two.

When three successive changes produce the sum 3+3+3=9, this makes the old yang, i.e., a firm line that moves. The sum 2+2+2=6 makes old yin, a yielding line that moves. Seven is the young yang, and eight the young yin; they are not taken into account as individual lines.

COINS
   * use three coins with distinct "head" and "tail" sides   * for each of the six lines of the hexagram, beginning with the first (bottom) line and ending with the sixth (top) line: * toss all three coins * assign the value 3 to each "head" result, and 2 to each "tail" result * total all the coin values * the total will be six, seven, eight or nine * determine the current line of the hexagram from this number: 6 = strong yin, 7 = weak yang, 8 = weak yin, 9 = strong yang   * write down the resulting line * once six lines have been determined, the hexagram is formed

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3.2. READING DECISION MATRICES (see appendix)

Each artistic discipline has an individual I Ching-compatible decision matrix, where each full and each empty line is correlated with a particular parametrical quality. In this way, each hexagram of the I Ching will stand for one particular combination of performance parameters.

For example, the decision matrix for movement looks like this:

DECISION MATRIX: MOVEMENT

FULL LINES		EMPTY LINES	
▬▬▬	Stable position	▬ ▬	Position changes
▬▬▬	Holistic movement	▬ ▬	Isolated limb
▬▬▬	Direct moves	▬ ▬	Embellished Moves
▬▬▬	Fixed speed	▬ ▬	Flexible speed
▬▬▬	Pulsating rhythm	▬ ▬	Cyclic rhythm
▬▬▬	composed	▬ ▬	improvised
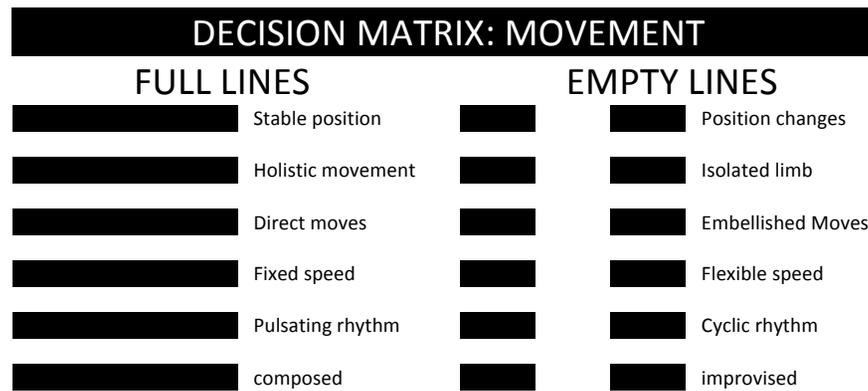
PARAMETER LEGEND

COMPOSED	a pre-established choreography based on the other parameters		**IMPROVISED**	An constrained improvisation based on the other parameters	
CYCLIC RHYTHM	Using pre-composed rhythm sequences (taals) to control movement flow.		**PULSATING RHYTHM**	All moves must fit into an overall pulsation.	
FIXED SPEED	The speed of the rhythms does not change		**FLEXIBLE SPEED**	The speed of the rhythm stys the same.	
DIRECT MOVES	All moves reach their goal directly.		**EMBELLISHED MOVES**	Moves are embellished with extra flourishes etc.	
HOLISTIC MOVEMENT	The whole body is involved		**ISOLATED LIMB**	Movements are confined to one limb or area of the body	
STABLE POSITION	Dancer stays on the same spot		**POSITION CHANGES**	Dancer moves around the stage.	

So any hexagram would give, e.g. the dancer, a precise parametrization of one section of a performance. (For more about the structure of an entire performance, see **Overall Form**.) Let us assume we have generated the following hexagram describing the **start state** of one **reading**.

REPAIR

weak	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬	Stable Position
weak	▬▬▬ ▬▬▬	Isolated limb movement
strong	▬▬▬ ▬▬▬	Embellished Moves
strong	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬	Fixed speed
weak	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬	Pulsating rhythm
weak	▬▬▬ ▬▬▬	improvised
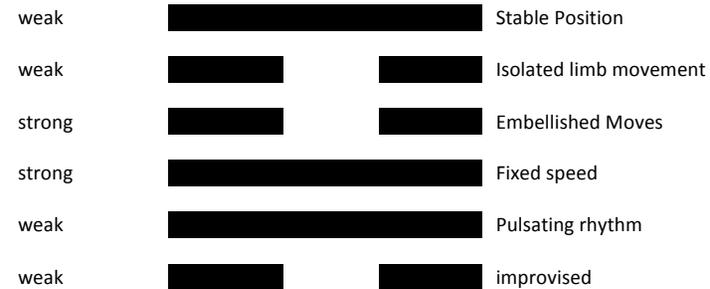
Please note that the bottom line, i.e. the most important (I Ching hexagrams are read from bottom upwards) offers the choice between improvisation and composition. This means that 32 hexagrams (=settings) can be composed in advance, but also that the other 32 must be made up on the spot (keeping, of course, to the other 5 parameters above the first line). Each hexagram also has a title: here it is REPAIR. These titles are important in guiding the performers towards the emotional content of their performance.

The above hexagram is your start position. But things will change over time. You may have noticed that some lines are designated as weak and some as strong. The weak lines will at some point change into their opposite state, generating a new hexagram, the **end state** - here it is:

COMPLETION

▬▬▬ ▬▬▬	Position changes
▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬	Holistic movement
▬▬▬ ▬▬▬	Embellished Moves
▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬	Fixed speed
▬▬▬ ▬▬▬	cyclic rhythm
▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬	composed
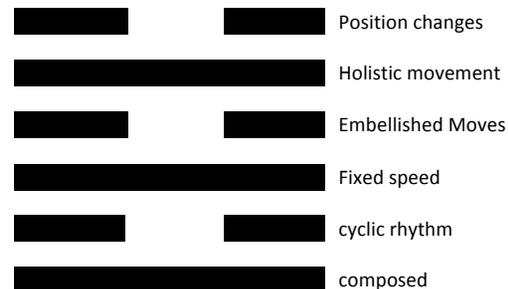
Once these two states are determined, the performer's task is to work out a transition mode between them.

4 TRANSITION MODES

Transitions are the main creative element of this comprovisation piece. They must by necessity always be improvised, as the over 4000 different combinations of start and end hexagrams already are too numerous to rehearse. In addition, there are 6 different transition modes that can be employed. They are:

| TRANSITION MODE	SKIP	JUMP	TEST	TOGGLE	GLIDE	MORPH
DESCRIPTION	*The transition appears only sometimes, for a very short moment: But you must imagine a Morph transition all the time. What you perceive is only the tip of the iceberg- all else is stillness.*	*After some time in the start state make a sudden jump to the end state.*	*Try out isolated elements of the end state, then go back to the start state before making a fast transition*	*Very quickly and many times switch abruptly between start and end states until the end state "wins"*	*Stay in the start state for a long time, then glide into the end state swiftly, but without any abruptness*	*Over the entire duration of the transition try to imperceptibly morph one state into the other.*
GRAPH						

While all performers must make the transition from the same start state to the same end state, they can choose their transition mode independently of each other – except if they are "**working together**" (see **Configurations**)

4 CONFIGURATION MODES

Performer A B C can enter into the following different relationships:

1) A ☛ [B&C]	**2) B ☛ [A&C]**	**3) C ☛ [A&B]**
4) A&B ☛ [C]	**5) A&C ☛ [B]**	**6) B&C ☛ [A]** **7) A&B&C**

Legend: ☛ = determines (leads) & = collaborate [ ] = follow(s)
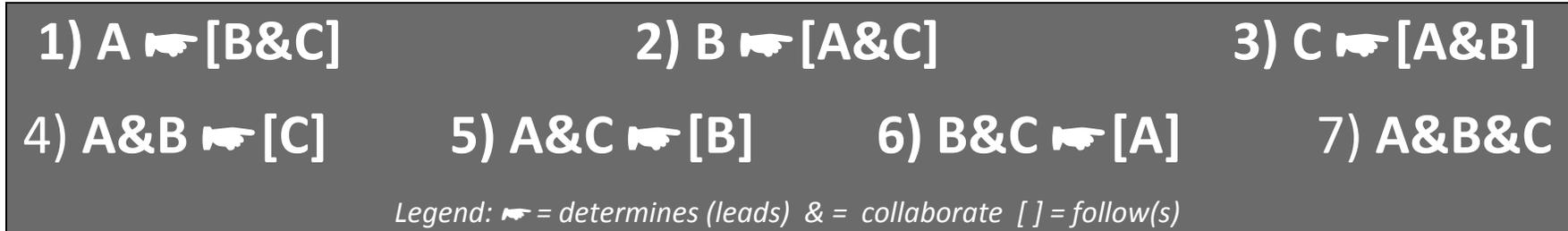
At the beginning of each reading the configuration is determined for the duration of this **reading**. This can happen by hand-signs given in a rotating fashion. This can happen by way of an external program that determines the configuration, as well as by other means.

Performers *collaborating* always synchronize their **transition modes**. And if they are not collaborating they should not choose the same transition mode. In a sensor controlled-environment, their sensor data for crucial parameters (such as loudness, distortion, rhythm, spatialisation etc.) are averaged and applied to all collaborators equally.

Performers that *lead* others determine the flow, the intensity, sometimes even the type of activity that can happen. In a sensor-controlled environment their sensor data determine crucial parameters for all three performer (groups).

Performers that *follow* give up their self-determination in one or more aspects of their performance to support the leading performer(s). In a sensor-controlled environment, their sensor data for crucial parameters are replaced by the leaders' data.

5 Overall Form

The form of this work is organized around the concept of readings. One reading comprises the oracle process that leads to the determination of start and end hexagrams and the artistic realization of the flow from the start hexagram towards the end hexagram.

Of course, the entire performance can consist of only one reading. But if a performance shall consist of several readings, they can be arranged in three different basic ways.

MOVEMENTS
Oracle 1 ➜ Reading 1 ➜ Oracle 2 ➜ Reading 2 ➜ Oracle 3 ➜ Reading 3 ➜etc.

Or

INTERPRETATIONS
Oracle ➜ Reading 1 ➜ Reading 1 backwards ➜ Reading 1' (new settings) ➜ Reading 1' backwards ➜ etc.

Or

First realize Oracle 1 and Reading 1 as in Movements. Then the end hexagram becomes the new start hexagram, and some mini-oracle process only determines which of its lines are weak: this gives a new end hexagram, which when arrived at, again turns into the new start hexagram. The form is thus:

CHAIN
Full Oracle: Hex 1 ➜ Hex 2 ➜ Mini-Oracle ➜ Hex 2 ➜ Hex 3 ➜ Mini-Oracle ➜ Hex 3 ➜ Hex 4 ➜ Mini-Oracle ➜ etc.

The overall form is chosen before the start of the performance – but is also changeable during performance. One can combine different basic forms to achieve more complex forms.