

Album Notes and Bonus Works Information: **austraLYSIS Dualling CD, Earshift 085 (2024).**

Notes by Roger Dean, **austraLYSIS**.

Dualling Album Notes

The introductory statement and track listings on the album sleeve give a first impression of the overall strategy of the album. The listening notes (also on this **austraLYSIS** website page) hopefully complement this, and perhaps provoke successful modes of listening. Here I'd like to discuss some of the ideas that went into the recordings and, in some cases, into the subsequent montaging and editing prior to the mix/master processes.

All the works on the album and in the bonus material are 'dual' in at least one sense: where dual is, of course, a gentle pun (not duel!). The general idea was that a performer would always be interacting with just one primary entity: be it another performer, an object (sound, image etc), or their physical environment. Group improvisation, in contrast, presents such a plethora of possible interactions that it is often impossible for a player to follow all of them completely.

So how did the *dualling* work? Even when the improviser is solo, during the recording process they were working with a real or virtual acoustic environment or composition. Alternatively, in two of the bonus items on the website, they were interacting with a kinetic visual composition. The descriptor *dualling* applies more obviously to the pieces in which two live performers played together. *Serial Dualling* involves one performer recording and then recording again as they interact with the previous result. This is akin to the studio process of overdubbing, but is much more interactive, as indicated by the titling of two such pieces as *Autoaltercation 1* and *2*. Some other recordings made individually were slightly modified through editing, and combined with additional material after the session in the montaging I then undertook. After this, I made preliminary mixes, and passed the results to Greg White for full mixing and mastering (completed in two stages separated in time).

So the one main input to an individual performer could be a condition (notably the acoustic/recording space) or an action/object (another performer, pre-recorded sound, an algorithmic acoustic process, a generative idea). We have performed solos and duos in **austraLYSIS** quite regularly. However this was the first recording with such a focus since our early **LYSIS** albums *Dualyses* (1978, Soma 782; re-released on CD 2012, Soma 788) and *Cycles* (1977, Mosaic GCM 77, also on Soma 788); and since **austraLYSIS**'s *Sonic Stones* (2006, Tall Poppies TP182). One of the main aspects that distinguishes *Dualling* from most such previous performances and albums is that I pre-composed seven short electroacoustic works (abbreviated here as EA). Each was about three to five minutes in length, and with a relatively clear main temporal process that was intended primarily for use as an audible companion and stimulus to a performer. In contrast, much of our previous electroacoustic work with performers had been either live generation of sound or live processing of acoustic sound from the performers; we also have made many electroacoustic pieces without performers. Secondly, Greg had developed virtual string quartet and virtual drums/bass interactive performance patches, in advance of the session, for use in several duals. A third distinction was that as producer, I gave an occasional verbal suggestion of a creative direction before an individual performance, a component that we had previously largely eschewed. There were also performed text and audio-visual works as partners.

On the album, the result of these ideas is a set of eighteen short pieces that comprise (a) solo acoustic instruments; (b) duo acoustic instruments, including the virtual strings and virtual drums/bass as acoustic instruments, though played through a computer; (c) a work with performed text; (d) duos with electroacoustic partners. I'll briefly describe each track in terms of these groupings in what follows. Tracks are referenced as Tnumber.

In the solo acoustic instruments group (a), T2 (*Alone in Space: Aired Thoughts 1*) shows Phil controlling reverberation, using wind noise, moving around the microphone, and then in the mixing, moving around the space. T9, *Macedonian Air (Aired Thoughts 2)* has Sandy 'taking the air' in these and other senses, at times almost gasping for continuity, rather than relaxing.

In the group (b) of duo acoustic instruments the first is T3, *Dualling 1*, in which trumpet and piano duet live, using some elements of jazz harmony and slight reference at the end to My Funny Valentine (a famous trumpet vehicle of Miles Davis). The style of the piece links somewhat to the overtly jazz oriented piano and virtual drums/bass in T4, *Distant Drums*. Here the drums remain a kind of meta-jazz, using techniques that subvert the conventions of both the mainstream of jazz and of free jazz and its successors. T6, *Strafe*, is a very dynamic trumpet/saxophone duet. *Stabs 1* (T7) juxtaposes Phil with a complex piano sequence pre-realised and edited from my Deep Improviser, an AI (machine learned and generative) device based on my own keyboard music, improvised and algorithmic. The piano chords are often repetitive and forceful, seeming sometimes algorithmic, and at best human. *Assembly* (T8) is an intense piano and virtual drums dual, with correspondingly heavy acoustic and energy dynamics. In *Raise (Dualling 3)* T10, saxophone and piano both exploit extremes: of pitch flux and multiphonic (multi-pitched) sounds on saxophone, and of the range of the piano keyboard addressed. *AutoAltercation 1 (Serial Dualling 2)*, T12, involves Sandy deconstructing her instrument, thereby creating extra dualities of wind/ mouthpiece/ body, alongside that of soprano and tenor saxophones. In T13, *Riding*, Sandy dynamically moves with the companion strings (as if guiding them). *Rhytharmonies* (T15) involves an algorithmic sequence of harmonies on PianoTeq, the physical synthesis piano, forming a rough retrograde from starting chord to distant points and back again, including abrupt shifts of register. Sandy, on tenor, is aware of the contour from prior hearings, and responds accordingly. Finally in this group (d), *in AutoAltercation 2 (Serial Dualling 3)*, T17, I play successively both on the keys and inside the piano, including scraping sounds, that sometimes even sound electroacoustic as well as challenging.

Group (c) comprises solely *Unbalancing* (T11). The basis for this is a text in three parts (written and performed by Hazel Smith) consisting of a monologue, a poem and a set of aphorisms that project radical instability and unpredictability. For the piece I composed a structure for improvising with which all four musicians engaged, with Greg playing virtual strings, often very sustained, and complemented by sustained trumpet layers. Each person was recorded solo alongside the spoken text, in a dualling response mode, and the montage and mix was made after the session. The text of the piece is appended to these notes.

Duos with electroacoustic (EA) partners precomposed by Roger (Group (d)), starts with the striking opening track T1, *Trumpet Pelog*. Here Phil plays with remarkable brilliance, as if responding to a new set of acoustic inputs, while still remaining

idiosyncratically consistent. *Fields* (T5) is the first studio recording of Phil's interactive performance with a pre-structured algorithmic sonic environment with overlapping and transitioning sounds of diverse natural and human-made environments. The overlap of sea and land prefigures the dangers of climate heating we face in the imminent future, and equally refers back to the rise in sea levels after the latest Ice Ages. This piece had been in our repertoire for some time, but even the EA sequence is variable, because of its algorithmic construction. T14, *Saxophone Flows*, has synthetic electroacoustic sounds that sometimes are reminiscent of goat bells, and transiently generate conventional regular rhythmic impulses. Sandy cunningly flows with everything. In *Indian Betsy* (T16) she fragments her saxophone (or at least, disassembles it!) in parallel with the ongoing disruption (lysis) of the electroacoustic sound, until eventually that subsides into the depths and crackles of acoustic frequency. Piano and precomposed EA comprise *Piano Stream Joins* (T18), and inside-the-instrument sounds are foregrounded, including 'sub-earthly' sounds near the end. Unlike the forceful trumpet and EA of T1, these final sounds could be viewed as the decay of a field of biological entities. This piece was made as a post-session montage, though using the pre-composed EA item #4.

Dualling Bonus Web Audio and Audio-visual Tracks

I'll identify these as Bn, and comment on them sequentially.

First is *Joins* (B1), which is solely an EA track, the same material as used in T18. Hearing it alone reveals more of its complex processes of assembly, using short segments of synthesised sounds. These are larger in scope than those of granular synthesis, and sometimes provide briefly repeating rhythmic patterns that may be overlaid. B2-4 are post-session constructs by Greg. In *Aftermath 1* (B2) the deviant rhythmic drumming, which I provided and is presented alone in the opening 25 seconds is then processed and substantially developed by Greg, who similarly develops an opening segment of my *Flow Mix* (EA used in T14) in B3, *Flow Processing*. Several brief segments of pre-recorded material are also used in B4, *DualPianoChord Processing*. The original material was almost entirely chordal, and the transformation results in much broader, quite differently articulated textures.

B5 *Piano Strings Move* (again constructed post-session by Greg) juxtaposes dynamic melodic and polyphonic strings with my lively AI, dominantly chordal, piano construct, as used in T7. Sometimes both components are hyper-dynamic, taking advantage of computational prowess. In *Joining the Links* (B6) Greg treats *Joins* (B1) to a similar expansion by means of dynamic strings. Here the hyperdynamic EA action spreads into minutely segmented almost continuous textures, while the strings retain their characteristic attacks and bowed or plucked separations.

For B7/8 I created algorithmic abstract computational video pieces (single and dual image, using Jitter) with which the musicians could create sound. *Textures of Sound* (B7) involves Sandy with her intact and deconstructed instruments dualling with the video, including some beautiful sustained multiphonics, and timbral/pitch oscillations. There were two preconstructed images—notably appearing towards the end of the piece—but most video was generated on the fly, and then montaged/edited. B8, *Blob Geometry* contains in the video the multilayered forms its title suggests. This is

accompanied by Greg's strings, again with impossibly clear virtuosic rapid string pizzicatos and other effects, but also with slow sustained, even reserved, melodic lines.

Notes by Roger Dean, australYSIS, 2024.

The complete text of *Unbalancing*, by Hazel Smith.

Unbalancing

It was one of those weeks when you think the calamities can't pile up anymore, until they do. Every day boasted a number, but I seemed to be counting down to my death. Every hour brought a throw of the dice that didn't fall my way. It was a game, punishable in the most painful manner.

On the first day, a man with wild hair and a beard approached me in the street. He said, 'you have to get married immediately, if you don't there will be irreversible consequences for you and everyone you love'. I said, 'I don't have anyone in mind, can't we go a little slower?' He said no, push the accelerator down, it has to be done now. Make a list. He claimed to work for the government.

The next day, a man called me and said that someone we both knew was taking me to court for defamation. His voice was low and muffled, so I didn't catch every word. But worse, I couldn't remember what I had said or understand why it had caused such offence. I could deny it, but that wouldn't necessarily convince him. I could hang up because maybe it was a scam. I kept trying to recall what I had said, there was even a part of me that actually believed him. I started to wonder about leaving the country, but it was then I was told that the borders were closing.

After that three men came to the door and said they were taking away my fridge. No explanation. I told them I couldn't live without it, but they said it had to go and promised that sometime in the near future they would bring me a new one. They were extremely evasive about the replacement which made me realise there wasn't one. The food was all on the counter and I knew it would soon start to rot. Just when it seemed as if that was my quota of bad fortune, my publisher rang me up to say he wouldn't be publishing my book. He seemed very unsure why, his voice was faintly tinged with regret but painted with the irreversible.

she has lived a life of unbalances

to be weightless is the ultimate grounding or so she believes

astronauts return to earth hungry for outer space

time zones bloom asymmetrically, a footstep tastes of champagne.

each morning brings a bag of tremors and a blessing

as the dawn sprays its cool invective

flow is pegged on flight lines

do not talk to me, you will disturb this poetic chattering

she has always been passionate about her own interiority

every misshapen nook, every slanting floor

in the real world adults are reading newspapers, outraged by violation

let's celebrate the squint, the limp, the suspended and the halting

a moment of composure opens like a lily, heroically out of control

no life can be paraphrased, every summation falls precipitously short

verticals collapse as they leave the 3D landing site

a sense of calm, a twisted sky, precede the penultimate feast

Advice is useful: it allows you to do the opposite.

The true revolution will come when people say what they mean.

He kept insisting it was a paradox, as if that was an explanation.

When each day is similar, life feels more secure, but secure spells monotonous.

Usually, the answers she received seemed to belong to a different question.

Everyone's sensitivity to risk is different: one person's comfort zone is another's anxiety trip.

A woman who was already pregnant conceived another child. Talk about the odds, talk about redundancy.

Should you tear down a tree because it would improve your neighbour's view?

Should you spill a secret to reveal a troubling root?

Thoughts were only thoughts until you acted on them but most of the time you didn't.

Guilt is brutal and untameable.

The satisfactions cancel out the hungers.

Somehow, he never had the conversation he wanted to have.

Somehow, you never wrote the book you longed to write or thought you could.

When the ending came, she felt it must be her fault. She had ruined lives. She should have acted differently. They told her the fallout had nothing to do with her, but the sadness trailed behind her, the shame would never stop. She was convinced, beyond all reasoning, of her culpability.

Acknowledgements

The creation and production of Dualling was supported by a grant from Create NSW, and the recording was supported by the facilities of the former Milperra performance space at MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development, Western Sydney University (this was the last 'Milperra Session', and antecedent sessions generated the 'Music of Science, Science of Music' video series available [online](#) on the Australian Music Centre Youtube channel (and elsewhere).

austraLYSIS is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW



