

::: performance score :::

初生態 | Chū Shēng Tài | *Nascent States*
for E-flat sopranino saxophone & electronics

duration ca. 9'30"

Louis Goldford (2012)

初生態 *Nascent States for Sopranino Saxophone & Electronics* completes a cycle of pieces written from 2009–2012 in Taipei, Taiwan. These pieces concern themes of memory and decontextualization in various ways, and they all have Chinese names. *Nascent States* is my farewell to Taiwan for this chapter of my life, recalling the day I left in August 2012. Saying goodbye foreshadowed the loss of my uncle, who passed early this September. The difficult task of parting with him is mirrored in leaving Taiwan, which came suddenly, in the chaos of a typhoon, culminating in my flight taking off in harsh conditions and narrowly missing real danger.

I found myself suddenly saying goodbye to parts of the city from our taxi to the airport, and all at once I felt, “This is how we wish we could die: to be so excitedly wrapped up in life that it comes without warning, but with just enough time to realize it and still be excited for whatever unknown is ahead.” The title *Nascent States* refers to the feeling of separation from myself during this epiphany, and from the ground during takeoff.

The piece follows the general outline of ground, takeoff, and contemplation of various sound structures (I’ve never heard so many interesting sounds during a takeoff than this one, with all kinds of rain and wind pounding at the plane) until finally a quieter serenity is achieved in the higher altitudes. The soprano saxophone was chosen for its ability to mimic the sounds of the suona, 唢呐, the Beiguan Chinese oboe, frequently heard outdoors in Taiwanese processions and particularly at funerals. Since it’s most commonly heard in pairs and filtered by nearby buildings and spaces, both live and prerecorded soprano are diffused with complex delay and spatialisation.

Much of the solo part is improvised and based on the opening motive of 百鸟朝凤 *Homage to the Phoenix*, one of the most famous suona melodies often performed at funerals, recalling the themes of flight, ascent and ceremony. The phase vocoded sounds are of the soprano imitating birds, as is traditionally improvised by the suona during *Homage to the Phoenix*. It’s interesting that the Shandong tradition includes this melody in both weddings and funerals; that life and death are both “celebrations.”

Software for this piece was custom built by the composer in MaxMSP and utilizes both live and prerecorded sounds of the soprano sax. All sounds and textures are derived from synthesis methods such as ring modulation, delay filtering, and analysis/synthesis routines, including a patch that scales a live sinusoidal model with tuning ratios of the Chinese pentatonic scales. These ancient scales suggest the timelessness of the work’s *idée fixe*.

Louis Goldford
October 2012
Bloomington, IN

PERFORMANCE NOTES

All gestures are to be interpreted as a guide for improvisation. The performer should pay close attention to and make full use of the live signal’s relationship with the electronics; delays, harmonizations, etc. The performer should also familiarize his/herself with the sounds of the *suona* and apply similar articulations, vibrato, and inflection of notes when possible.

SETUP REQUIREMENTS

1. An onstage laptop running MaxMSP 5.0 or higher, positioned so the performer can see the screen
2. An audio interface with a single channel input for a condenser microphone (*suggested*: AKG C-414)
3. A USB “stomp box” pedal (to execute numbered cues in the score)
4. An 8-channel circular speaker array (All spatialization is designed and routed within the software.)
5. For inquiries about stereophonic or other multichannel versions of the piece, contact the composer.

Software is available by contacting the composer: ljpgoldford@gmail.com

The performer should be situated so that s/he can clearly see the computer screen, which will provide instructions throughout the piece. See facing page for sample screen shots of the software.

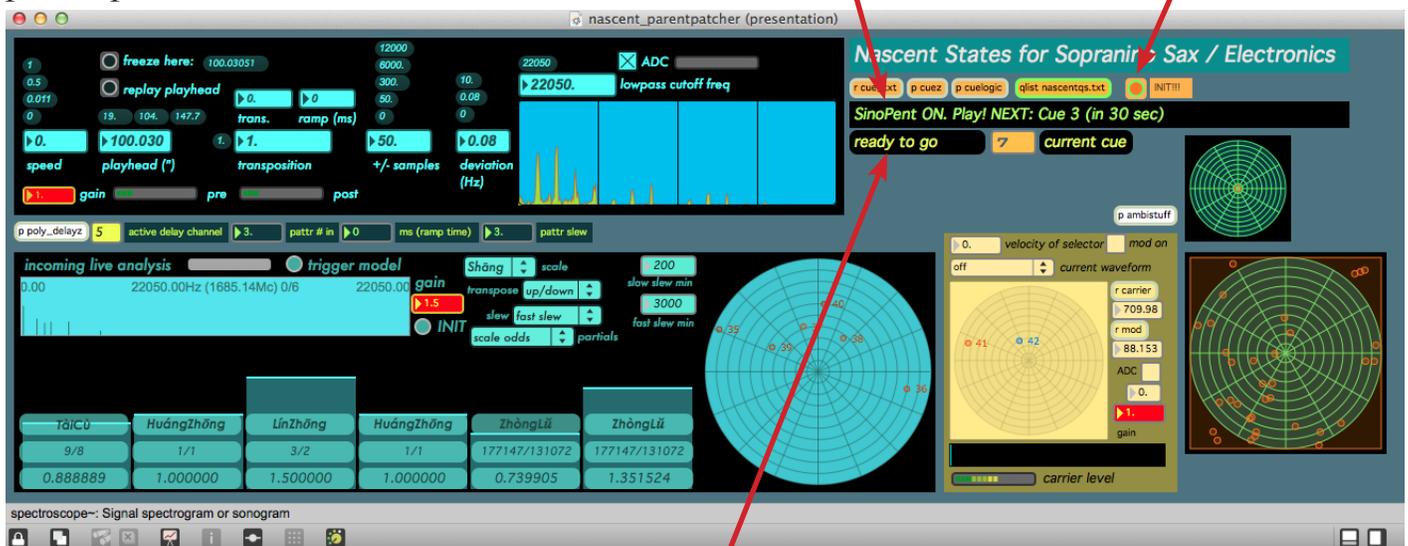
FEEDBACK CUES

The software provides the following instructional cues to the live performer, which also appear in the score:

- ☐ "Ring mod OFF (dry solo)." Indicates an expected cue in the feedback window in the upper-right corner of the *parent patcher* (see interface design below), with quotations around the specific instructions to appear. Execute the events in the score when this cue appears on screen.
- ▶ "Watch playbar!" Indicates a fixed element in progress (e.g. sound file playback). The performer should watch the playbar in the *transport controls window* and coordinate live events the playbar, or with what is generally notated in the electronics part.
- △ "4" "Stomp" on the pedal to execute the numbered cue in the electronics.

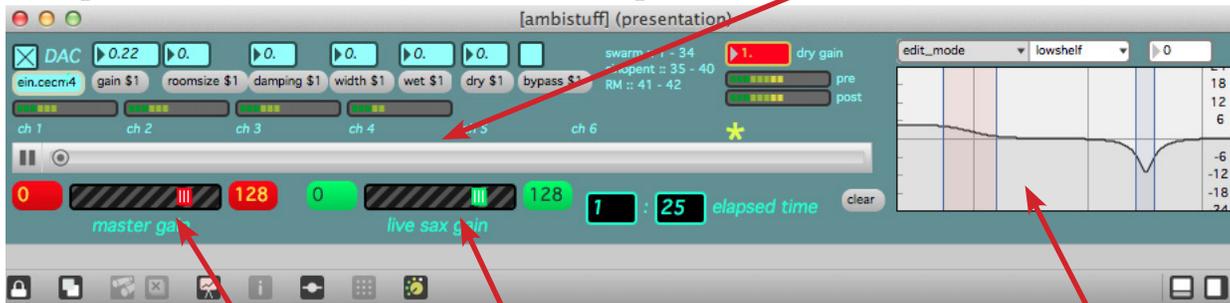
SOFTWARE INTERFACE (open nascent_parentpatcher.maxpat)

feedback window: provides instructions to the performer throughout the piece
parent patcher window (main) **INIT (initialization) button:** must be pressed before starting the piece!



Before initialization this window will read, "NOT INTITIALIZED." Once the *INIT* button has been pressed, "ready to go" will appear here.

transport controls window (beneath main patcher) **playbar:** watch as timed fixed elements pass



master gain slider

live saxophone gain slider

master EQ curve

These parameters can be adjusted to accomodate the performance space.

transposed score
duration ca. 9'30"

for Uncle Dave
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⏻ Before starting the piece, press "INIT" button and be sure "ready to go" appears on screen.

ca. 6" ca. 16" ca. 18" ca. 13" ca. 7" ca. 7"

Electronics* *ppp* *p* *phase vocoder continues:*

Sopranino Sax. *p* "Dry gain on. Start playing blips..."
p improvise on given pitches; may be used motivically; let delays take over...

Elec. *p-voc & delays continue...*

Sax. ca. 7" ca. 7" ca. 10" ca. 10" ca. 16" ca. 16"

"Delay changed to 65 ms." ca. 7" ca. 10"

"Arrived pattr #3. Long F#s!" *mf*

Elec. *n*

Sax. ca. 20" *f* (light, birdlike improvisation) *pp* "Ring mod ON." *fz* UGLY! wide suona vibrato

*MaxMSP patches are available from the composer with further explanation of individual modules (e.g. "Ring Mod," "Pvoc" and "SinoPent"), although no further explanation is necessary in order to operate the electronics in live performance using a USB pedal "stomp box."