SOUNDPAINTING
THE ART OF LIVE COMPOSITION

WORKBOOK I
BY WALTER THOMPSON

I dedicate this workbook to the memory of a great artist,
my father, Ron Thompson

CONTENTS

Soundpainting is the universal live composing sign language for the performing and visual arts. Soundpainting was created by New York composer Walter Thompson for musicians, dancers, actors, poets, and visual artists working in the medium of structured improvisation. Presently, the language comprises more than 750 gestures that are signed by the composer/conductor to indicate the type of improvisation desired of the performers. Direction of the composition is gained through the parameters of each set of signed gestures.

Soundpainting Workbook 1 addresses Soundpainting in the music discipline. It is organized in categories based on the Soundpainting syntax—*Who, What, How,* and *When.* Each gesture is listed by category and described both conceptually and physically. See the DVD for aid in signing the gestures.
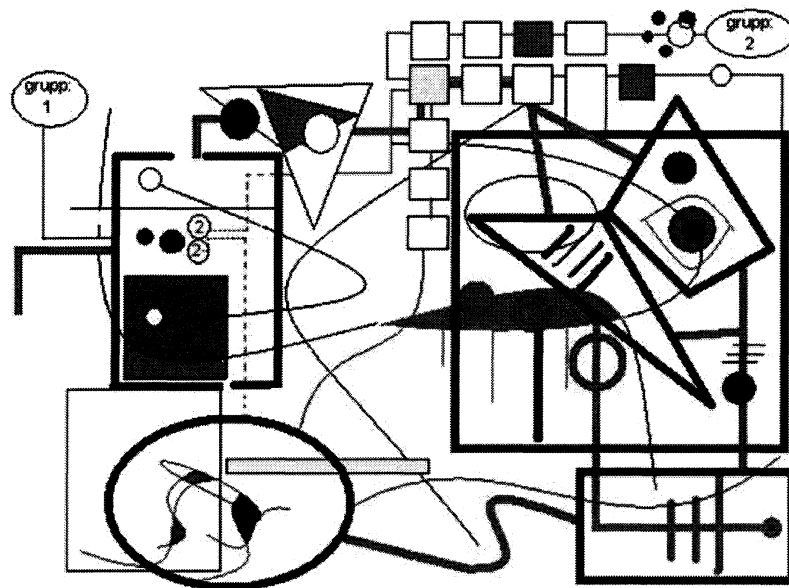
Your first step in learning Soundpainting is to read the **Structure of Soundpainting** and **Composing Soundpainting Phrase Outlines** sections of this book.

Begin composing simple Phrase Outlines. Be sure to adhere to the Soundpainting syntax when composing your Phrase Outlines. Practice your Phrase Outlines in front of a mirror to perfect your technique before using them with your ensemble. You can either memorize them or use them as a visual aid when first Soundpainting your ensemble. In fact, when I began Soundpainting I always used a Phrase Outline in my performance preparation—until I reached the point where I was able to think of the next gesture and how to physically sign it.

In the beginning stages of learning Soundpainting you will encounter the common difficulty of thinking of the next direction to take your composition and how to sign it. Practicing with your simple Phrase Outlines will greatly enhance your progress.

When you are ready to break away from using your Phrase Outlines as a visual aid, start by composing very simple Soundpaintings. Compose a minute-long Soundpainting using only Long Tones in different ranges and dynamics. Try this approach with other gestures as well, such as Pointillism, Point to Point, and Scanning. Once you have gained a level of comfort with composing minute-long Soundpaintings using only 1 gesture, increase the number of Sculpting gestures to 2, 3, 4, and so on.

Soundpainting is a sign language—you sign the ensemble and they respond with sound. Based on the response, you will determine in which direction to take the composition next. Soundpainting is a conversation between you and the ensemble.

Some of the Soundpainting gestures, such as Long Tone and Hits, achieve specific results; others, such as Point to Point and Scanning are chance gestures—the response of the performers to a gesture such as Point to Point is often a surprise to the composer. Working with surprise is key to mastering Soundpainting composition. The Soundpainting composer, or Soundpainter, must become comfortable in working with both types of compositional direction— specific results and surprises.
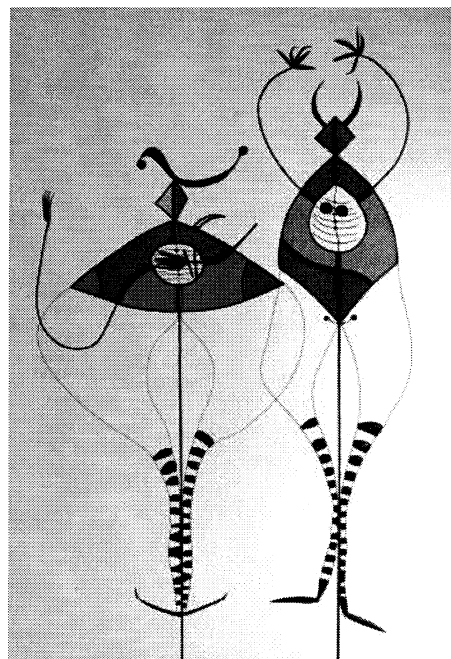
STRUCTURE OF SOUNDPAINTING

The 43 gestures in Soundpainting Workbook 1 fall under 2 general categories: Sculpting gestures and Function signals.

Sculpting gestures indicate *What* type of improvisation and *How* it is to be performed, and Function signals indicate *Who* performs and *When* to begin performing.

Who, What, How, and *When* comprise the Soundpainting syntax.

In other words, the gestures in Soundpainting first identify *Who* is going to perform, followed by *What* type of improvisation is going to be performed, *How* the improvisation will be performed, and *When* to begin performing. An example of this is Whole Group (Who), Long Tone (What), Volume Fader – pianissimo (How), Play (When).

Note: The *How* gestures are not always used. The Soundpainter often signs a phrase leaving out the *How* gesture—for example, **Whole Group, Long Tone, Play.** If the Soundpainter chooses to leave out the *How* gestures, then the performer is open to choose dynamics and quality of the performed material.

The gestures in a section of a Soundpainting may create phrases as simple as **Whole Group, Long Tone, Play;** or as complex as **Whole Group, Minimalism, Change; This Is, Memory 1; Whole Group, Off; Whole Group, Pointillism, Play; Stab Freeze; Whole Group, Memory 1, Play; Whole Group, Off.**

The Soundpainting syntax is further broken down into 6 parts:
1. Identifiers (*Who* is performing)
2. Content (*What* type of improvisation)
3. Modifiers (*How* to perform the improvisation)
4. Go gestures (*When* to begin performing)
5. Modes (a set of parameters affecting specific gestures)
6. Palettes (sections of notated or rehearsed music, text, choreography, or visual design)

Note: A more in-depth study of the structure of Soundpainting will be discussed in Soundpainting Workbook 3

To prepare yourself for composing with Soundpainting, start by composing at least 10 simple Phrase Outlines (see the examples below). Write out the gestures first and then practice them in front of the mirror, until you gain a fluency signing all the outlines you write—your own Soundpainting riffs, so to speak.

Always make sure to use the Soundpainting language syntax when writing your Phrase Outlines: *Who, What, How* (sometimes), and *When.* You may sometimes choose not to sign a *How* gesture, as illustrated in the first Phrase Outline example on the pages 6 and 7. If the Soundpainter wants a specific dynamic or quality, then the *How* gesture would be used. Otherwise, the performer chooses the dynamic and quality.

Your Phrase Outlines should be very simple when you begin, increasing the complexity as you become more familiar with the language. After practicing and learning your outlines separately, try them out with your ensemble. Practicing in this manner is fundamental to gaining the ability to quickly think on your feet while composing live. A fluent Soundpainter can respond to an ensemble immediately with numerous choices. The only way to achieve this level of proficiency is to keep it simple in the beginning and build a strong foundation on which to develop.

> **Note:** When working with gestures such as Point to Point and Scanning, you first sign a Who gesture and then Scanning or Point to Point (see Phrase Outline examples 2 and 3 on pages 6 and 7). A Play gesture is not needed.
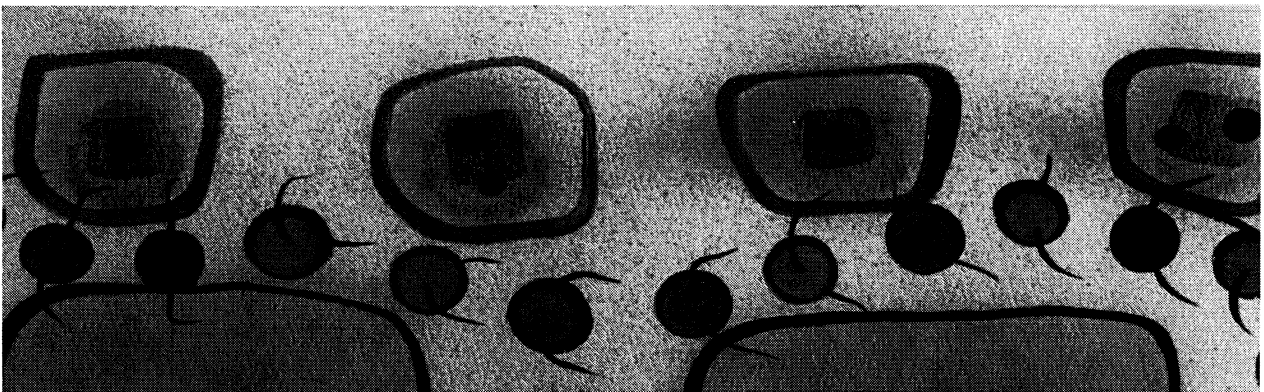
Examples of Phrase Outlines

Note: It is your choice of how long to perform each Sculpting gesture.

1

Whole Group (*Who*)
Long Tone (*What*)
Play (*When*)
Whole Group
Off

2

Whole Group
Point to Point (an Off gesture is not needed since
      the performer stops when the Point is removed)

3

Whole Group
Scanning (an Off gesture is not needed since the
      performer stops when the Scanning arm has passed by)

4

Whole Group (*Who*)
Long Tone (*What*)
Play (*When*)
Pitch Up
Play
Pitch Down
Play
Volume Fader (experiment with dynamic changes)
Whole Group
Pointillism
Play
Continue
Whole Group
Long Tone
Play
Whole Group
Off

5

Whole Group (*Who*)
Pointillism (*What*)
Volume Fader (*pp*) (*How*)
Play (*When*)
Whole Group
Long Tone
Play
Pitch Up
Play
Pitch Down
Play
Whole Group
Off
Whole Group
Scanning, With, Pointillism
Whole Group
Point to Point, With, Long Tone
Whole Group
Minimalism (cue ensemble to enter)
Change (maintain minimalism)
Change (maintain minimalism)
This (Is), Memory 1 (the last Change is the Memory)
Brass, Continue
Rest of Group
Off
Rest of Group
Long Tone
Pitch Up, Up, Up
Whole Group
Off
Whole Group
Memory 1 (count it in)
Change
Change
Stab Freeze
Tempo Fader – gradually down to slow
Volume Fader – gradually to *pppp*
Whole Group
Exit Slowly

Rehearsal Notes

Soundpainting is a sign language for creating live composition from structured improvisation. Clarity of signing the gestures is key to your success. The Soundpainter may practice each gesture separately with the ensemble—Long Tone, Pointillism, Scanning, or Point to Point, for example—until the desired quality of each gesture is achieved.

Key Phrases to the Ensemble

When in doubt, don't lay out!
No matter what, don't stop playing unless you are clearly cut off by the Soundpainter. It often happens that while you are performing one gesture and watching the Soundpainter sign a set of new gestures, you will lose the integrity of the current gesture or sometimes even stop.
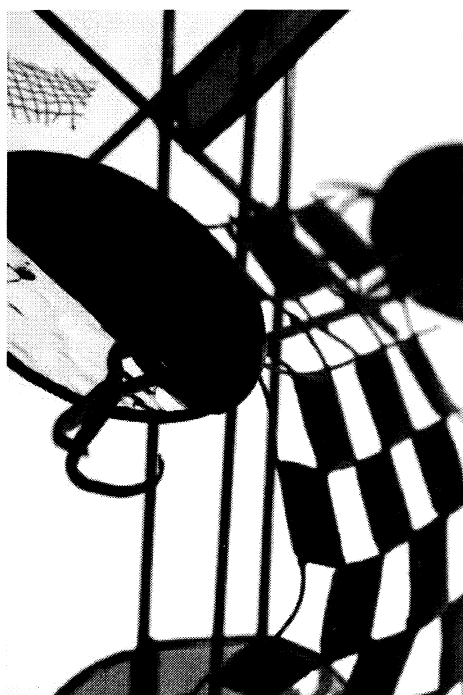
There are no mistakes!
If you accidentally come in with Pointillism when the Soundpainter signed Long Tone, stick with Pointillism instead of switching to Long Tone. It will be stronger musically than sneaking out and sneaking back in with Long Tone. Don't purposely try to achieve this, but if it happens, stay with your choice and wait for the next gesture to get back on track.

### Don't sneak in, don't sneak out!
Come in right at the end of the Play gesture and keep playing until the Off gesture or until the next Play gesture. When given a Go gesture such as Play, it is important to make your entrance hard-edged—like changing the channels on a television set. The same can be said for Point to Point and Scanning—you respond immediately and stop once the gesture has been removed.

Soundpainter: Use Point to Point as a way to warm up the ensemble!
Use Point to Point as a warm-up. Point to different members of the ensemble multiple times. This will help them get used to the idea of performing the first thing that comes to mind—the root of improvisation! Once the performers are comfortable with this, ask them to come up with something different every time they are Pointed to. This can be very challenging and is instrumental in preparing the ensemble to offer multiple choices during the Soundpainting.

> Note: *Point to Point, With, Change* is the way to sign the performer to offer different choices each time they are Pointed to.
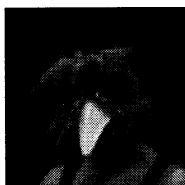
One of the wonderful aspects of Soundpainting is that an ensemble may comprise any number of musicians performing on any combination of instruments. It can be used with more traditional combinations such as SATB choruses, jazz big bands, string quartets, symphony and chamber orchestras, or with an ensemble of 20 guitarists, an ensemble made up of 5 drummers; or an ensemble of 1 guitar, 4 trombones, 1 vocalist, 3 accordions, 1 laptop player, and 6 flutes. I'm sure you get the picture—any combination works!

To date, some of the traditional and non-traditional performer combinations Walter Thompson has Soundpainted with include ensembles of 60 cellists, 12 tubas, traditional jazz orchestras, symphony orchestras, chamber orchestras, choruses of all sizes, 25 poets, 100 dancers with 25-piece orchestra, 15 actors, 125 circus performers with 32-piece orchestra, and 1500 audience members, to name a few.
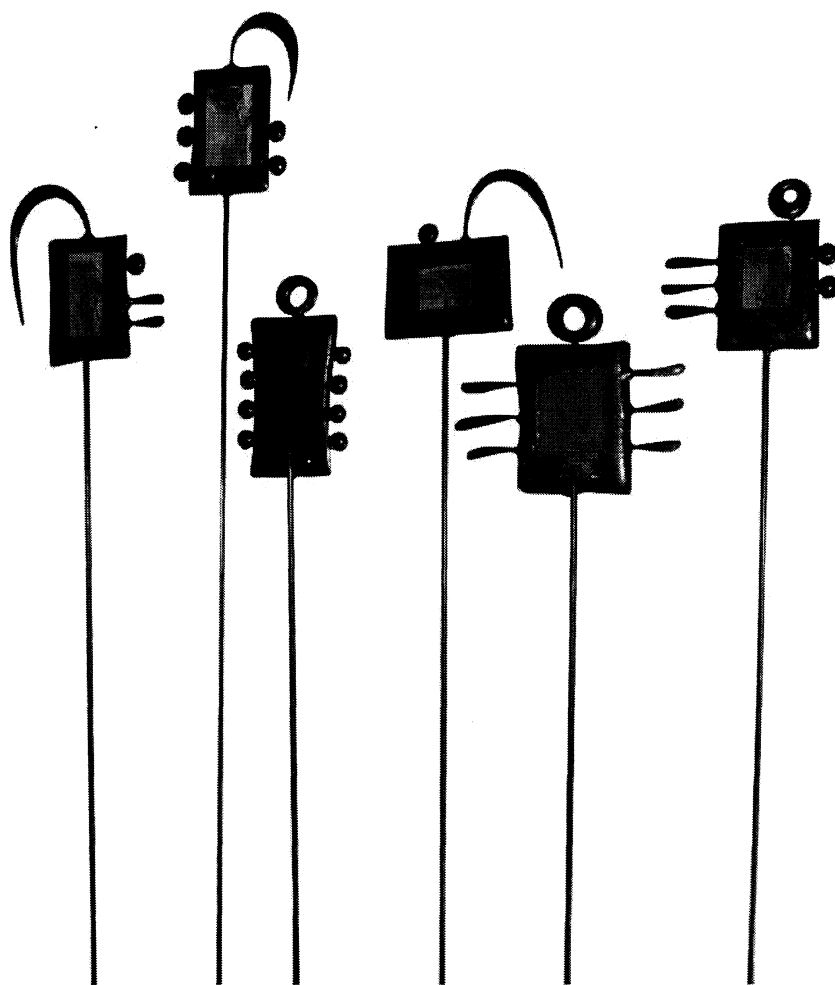
THE DVD

The Soundpainting Instructional DVD illustrates all the gestures contained in the Workbook and also contains a Soundpainting composed by Walter Thompson and performed by The Walter Thompson Orchestra. The Orchestra represented on the DVD comprises musicians and actors/vocalists.

While the DVD does not verbally describe the concept or physicality of the gesture, viewing it will greatly aid you in the signing of each gesture and enhance your understanding of the performance response to be elicited.

> *Note:* Soundpainting, like any language, can produce a multitude of results. The Soundpainting represented on the DVD is only one of the myriad directions a Soundpainting may take.
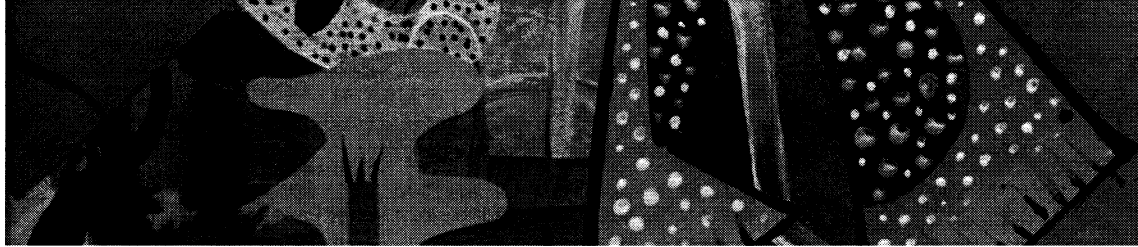
Credits:

Members of the Orchestra (on DVD)

Walter Thompson – Soundpainter
Todd Reynolds – Violin/Associate Soundpainter
Rolf Sturm – Guitar/Synthesizer
Gil Selinger – Cello
Steve Rust – Double Bass
Jim Whitney – Double Bass
Rob Henke – Trumpet
Sarah Weaver – Trombone/Associate Soundpainter
Julie Ferrara – Oboe
Michaël Attias – Alto Saxophone
Bohdan Hilash – Bass Clarinet
Andrea Ariel – Dancer/Vocals
Vera Huff – Dancer/Vocals
Leese Walker – Actor/Vocals
Michael David Gordon – Actor/Vocals
Nicole Poole – Actor/Vocals
Christian Brandjes – Actor/Vocals

Directed and edited by Joshua Taylor
Produced by Martine Capalbo
Sound engineer and editor: Frank Fagnano
Recorded November 10, 2004, at Bennett Studios in Englewood, New Jersey

WALTER THOMPSON
AND THE HISTORY OF SOUNDPAINTING

Walter Thompson
Composer, Conductor, Woodwinds, Educator

Born in West Palm Beach, Florida, Thompson spent his early years studying guitar, drums, and saxophone. He made his professional debut at age 12 playing drums with a trio that performed at parties. Every summer from age 6 on, Thompson traveled with his family to Woodstock, New York. There, he studied drawing at the Arts Student League and acting at the Woodstock Playhouse. Thompson's teenage years were spent performing in improvising rock bands. In 1970, Thompson began his studies at Berklee School of Music in Boston, Massachusetts.

In 1974, after attending a few years at Berklee School of Music, Thompson moved to his family's summer house in Woodstock, New York. While there, he received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to study composition and woodwinds with Anthony Braxton. Thompson's work over the next 5 years with Anthony Braxton was the most important of his life. During this period, he also studied dance improvisation with Ruth Ingalls in Woodstock. Woodstock in the '70s was a very exciting time for music. The Creative Music School (CMS), founded by Karl Berger, Don Cherry, and Ornette Coleman, was going strong. Great composers and performers such as John Cage, Ed Blackwell, Carlos Santana, Don Cherry, Anthony Braxton, and Carla Bley gave 2-week workshop/performances with the students. The CMS was closed during summers, but many of the students remained in Woodstock. Thompson organized jam sessions with these students. Out of these sessions Thompson formed his first orchestra and produced a series of concerts at the Woodstock Kleinert Gallery. The focus of the orchestra was on large-group jazz-based improvisation. It was during these early days that Thompson began experimenting with signing improvisation. He created very basic gestures, asking for a long tone or improvisation in a pointillist style, for example.

Thompson moved to New York City in 1980 and formed The Walter Thompson Big Band (now The Walter Thompson Orchestra) in 1984. During the first year with his orchestra, while conducting a performance in Brooklyn, New York, Thompson needed to communicate with the orchestra in the middle of one of his compositions. They were performing a section of improvisation where trumpet 2 was soloing. During the solo, Thompson wanted to have one of the other trumpet players create a background. Not wanting to emulate bandleaders who would yell or speak out loud to their orchestra, Thompson decided to use some of the signs he had experimented with during his Woodstock days. In the moment he made up these signs: Trumpet 1, Background, With, 2-Measure, Feel; Watch Me, 4 Beats. He tried it and there was no response!

But in the next rehearsal, members of his orchestra asked what the signing was about—and he told them. The orchestra members thought it was a very interesting direction and encouraged Thompson to develop the language further. Over the next 10 years, Thompson continued to develop Soundpainting into a comprehensive sign language for creating composition from structured jazz-based improvisation. And in the early '90s, Thompson began expanding Soundpainting for use with actors, dancers, poets, and visual artists.

Over the past 15 years Thompson has taken Soundpainting into music and art education, to conservatories, universities, and schools throughout the world. Soundpainting has evolved into a universal sign language for live composition in which music, theater, dance, and film scores can be realized spontaneously.

Thompson has composed/conducted Soundpaintings with contemporary orchestras in many cities around the world including Barcelona, Paris, Oslo, Berlin, Bergen, Copenhagen, and Reykjavik and has taught Soundpainting at the Paris Conservatoire, Eastman School of Music, Iceland Academy of the Arts, University of Michigan, University of Iowa, Oberlin College-Conservatory of Music, and New York University among many others. Thompson is founder of and composer/conductor for The Walter Thompson Orchestra, based in New York City. The Orchestra has been together for more than 20 years and has been the key vehicle for Thompson's Soundpainting.

Thompson has received awards from various organizations, including the Rockefeller Foundation; The University of Iowa ("Ida Cordelia Beam Distinguished Visiting Professor"); the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation ("Artist as Catalyst"); the Jerome Foundation; Meet the Composer/Reader's Digest/Lila Atchison Wallace Commissioning Program; the National Endowment for the Arts; the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust; The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers; and the New York State Council on the Arts. In 2002 Thompson was presented with the prestigious Aplaudiment from Premis FAD Sebastià Gasch d'Arts Parateatrals in Barcelona, Spain, for his work with Soundpainting.
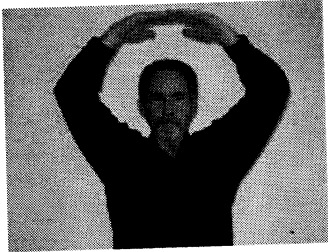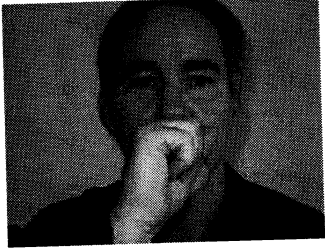
The Walter Thompson Orchestra (WTO), founded in 1984 as a vehicle for Thompson's compositions and adaptations, has expanded beyond the core ensemble of world-class musicians to include actors, dancers, and visual artists. The WTO is on the vanguard of live performance, exploring the interdisciplinary potential of composition through Soundpainting. At a time when most art forms are still bound by strict definitions, the WTO brings a fresh approach to the conventions of music, drama, dance, or visual arts.
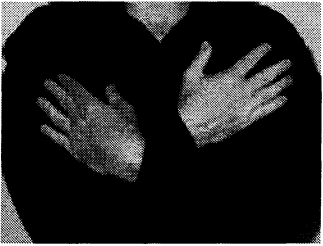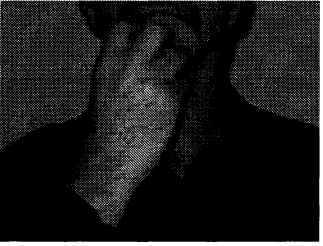
The Walter Thompson Orchestra has performed in club and concert venues in the United States and Europe, including HERE Arts Center, Lincoln Center, the Knitting Factory, Galapagos Art Space, Roulette, Eastman School of Music, Sweet Basil, La Ma Ma, The Kitchen, Brooklyn Museum, BimHuis (Amsterdam), Jacobs Pillow, and on National Public Radio's *Fresh Air*.
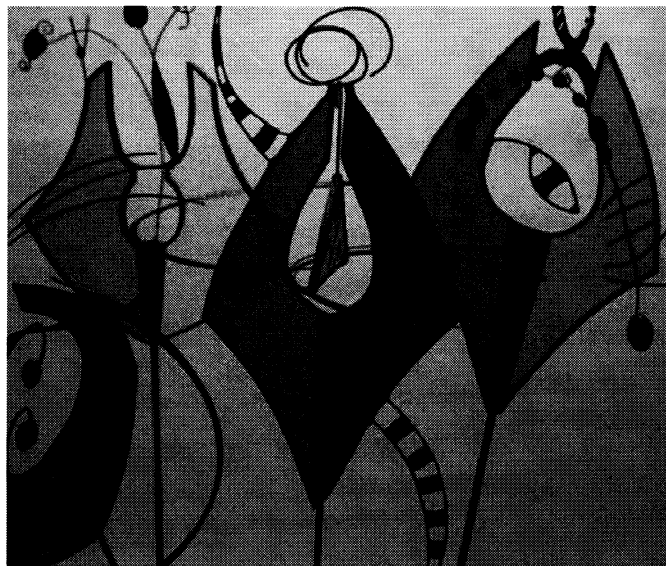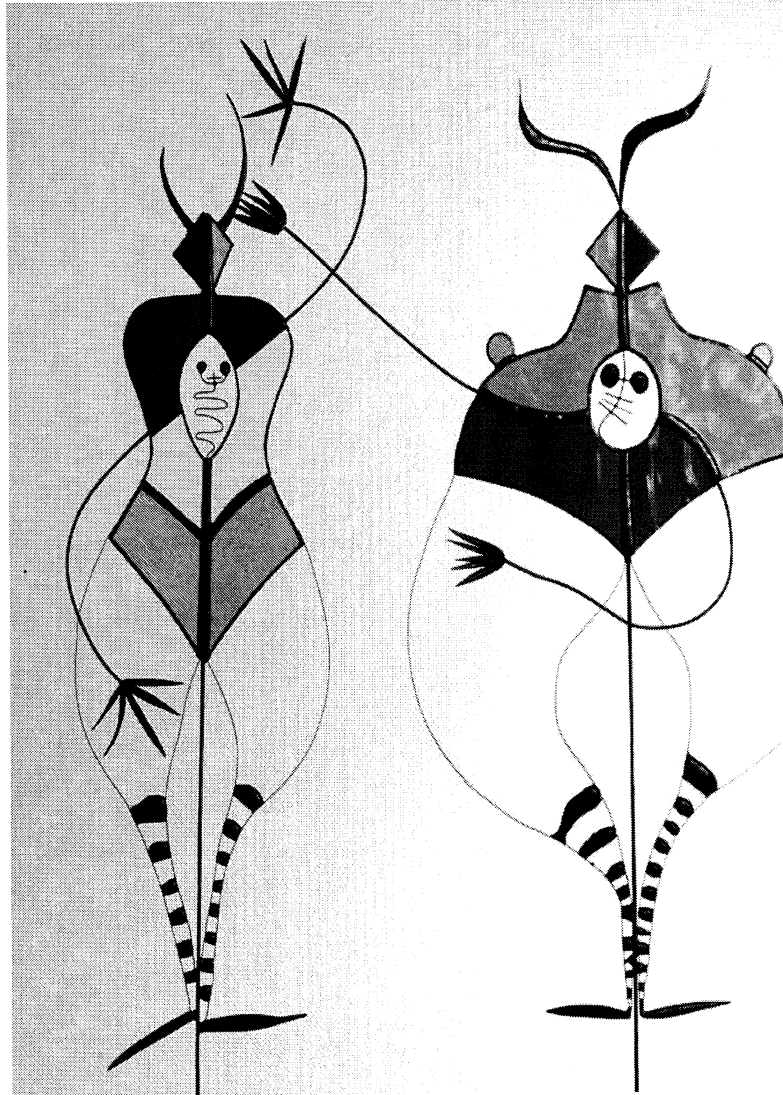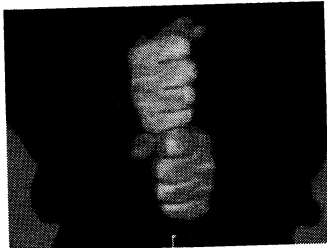

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	(PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

	WHO —— FUNCTION

WHOLE GROUP
 	
  Syntax: Who
  Category: Function
	All performers—the entire ensemble.
	
	PD: Hold both arms over your head creating a circle with fingertips barely touching.

BRASS
 	
  Syntax: Who
  Category: Function
	All Brass players.
	
	PD: Hold a closed hand to your mouth, like blowing a trumpet.

GESTURE Syntax Category	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)
WOODWINDS **Syntax:** Who **Category:** Function	All Woodwind players. **PD:** Cup both of your hands together in front of your body, like crushing walnuts.
STRINGS **Syntax:** Who **Category:** Function	All String players. **PD:** Cross your arms over your chest.
VOCALISTS **Syntax:** Who **Category:** Function	All Singers. **PD:** Grab your chin with your thumb and fingers and then quickly let go in a slightly outward motion.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	(PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

PERCUSSION
 	
  Syntax: Who
  Category: Function
	All Percussionist(s), including pianists.
	
	PD: Put your right hand over your heart.

GROUPS
 	
  Syntax: Who
  Category: Function
	Specific Groups of performers set prior to rehearsal or performance.
	
	EXAMPLE: Half the ensemble may be Group 1 and the other half Group 2.
	
	PD: Close both hands, making fists. Using the bottom of one of your fists, lightly tap it on top of the other and then show a number with the fingers of the top hand to indicate which group.

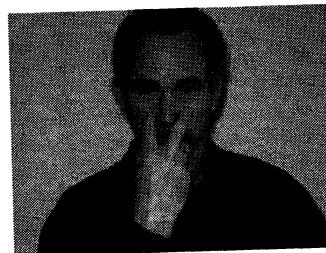| GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

REST OF GROUP
 	
  Syntax: Who
  Category: Function
	Identifies those who are not performing or were not just signed.
	
	NOTE: While this gesture is half the shape of Whole Group, it is not used to indicate half the group (see Groups).
	
	EXAMPLE: The Soundpainter signs **Strings, Minimalism, Play; Rest of Group, Long Tone, Play.** In this example, the Rest of Group includes any non–String players who, at the moment of being signed, were not performing anything. In another example, Rest of Group indicates the performer(s) who wasn't just signed. Here, the Soundpainter signs **Whole Group, Pointillism, Continue.** Then the Soundpainter signs **Point to Point** and points to a performer and signs **Continue; Rest of Group, Off.** In this example, everyone stops except the person to whom the Soundpainter just pointed.
	
	PD: Hold one arm above your head creating half a circle.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	(PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

WATCH ME **Syntax:** Who **Category:** Function	Used to raise the attention of the ensemble to a heightened level. **PD:** In the shape of a letter "V," point the index and middle fingers of either hand at your eyes, a couple inches away.

GESTURE Syntax Category	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)
WHAT —— SCULPTING	

LONG TONE

Syntax: What
Category: Sculpting

A long, sustained pitch or sound.
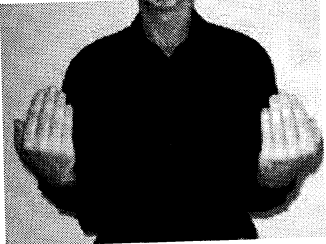
NOTE: Guitarists and pianists may choose to perform a Long Tone by striking a pitch and letting it ring out or using tremolo.
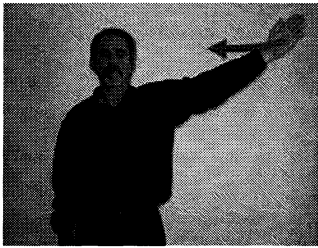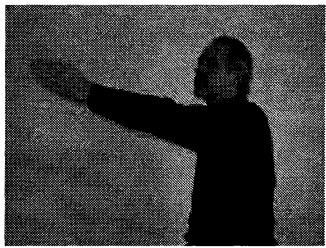
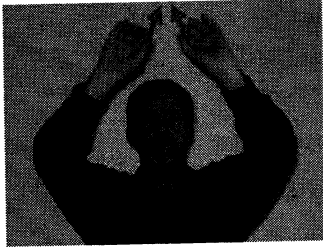**EXAMPLE:** The Soundpainter signs **Whole Group, High Long Tone, Play.** Musicians choose a high pitch and maintain it.

PD: Holding your hands a little out in front of your body, pinch the thumb and index finger of both hands together. Keeping your other fingers closed and facing the ensemble, bring your hands together and pull them apart along a horizontal plane. End the motion after pulling out to the side approximately 2½ feet (0.75 metre).
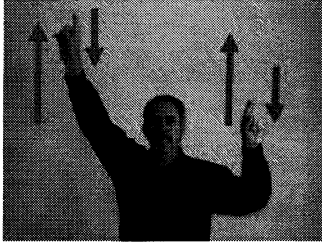
Long Tones are signed on an imaginary music staff in front of the Soundpainter. Drawing a Long Tone in the middle of your chest indicates a mid-range Long Tone and drawing high above your head or low in front of your body indicates a high or low Long Tone, respectively.

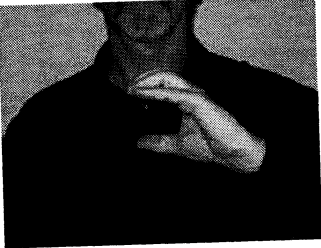| GESTURE Syntax Category	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)
PITCH UP/PITCH DOWN Syntax: What Category: Sculpting	Raise/lower pitch a half or whole step—the interval choice is up to the performer. **NOTE:** There are 2 ways to initiate Pitch Up/Down: 1. A Play gesture is given to initiate either a Pitch Up or a Pitch Down. 2. Maintaining the shape of either Pitch Up or Pitch Down, shove your arms forward. The pitch changes when your arms are fully extended. This second use of Pitch Up/Down allows the Soundpainter to rapidly change pitch. **PD:** For Pitch Up, partially extend both arms about a foot in front of your chest, shoulder width apart. Keep your fingers together pointing upward, with the backs of your hands facing the ensemble. Pitch Down is the same except your fingers are pointing downward. You may also simultaneously sign Pitch Up with one hand and Pitch Down with the other, to have both halves of the ensemble moving in different directions.

(Pitch Up)   (Pitch Down)

GESTURE Syntax Category	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)
SCANNING **Syntax:** What **Category:** Sculpting	Performers respond with open improvisation as the Scanning arm passes over them in either direction. Performers stop immediately after the Scanning arm has passed by. **NOTE:** If the Soundpainter stops on a performer, she/he develops her/his improvisation slowly—at the same rate of development as in Point to Point. Scanning does not need a Play gesture; the gesture, by itself, initiates an automatic response from the performer. Many modifications can be used with Scanning. For instance, you can use the Continue gesture in conjunction with the Scanning arm to indicate to a performer or performers to Continue. **EXAMPLE:** The Soundpainter signs **Scanning, With, Pointillism; or Scanning, With, Laughter;** or **Scanning, With, Hits.** In these examples, only Pointillism, Laughter, or Hits, respectively, are performed when Scanned. If the Soundpainter stops on a performer the improvisation parameters of Scanning are always maintained; performers develop their material slowly. **PD:** Hold your arm straight out to one side, about a foot above shoulder height, with fingers together and flat palm facing the ensemble. Keeping your arm rigid, pass it just over the heads of the ensemble. You can use either or both arms when Scanning.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

POINTILLISM
 	
  Syntax: What
  Category: Sculpting
	Arrhythmic, staccato notes and bits of longer notes performed rapidly.
	
	PD: Pinching your fingers together and holding both hands a little out and above your head, make a drumming-like single stroke motion a few times.

GESTURE Syntax Category	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

POINT TO POINT (PTP)

Syntax: What
Category: Sculpting

When pointed to, the performer immediately begins performing, slowly developing her/his choice of a single idea. The type of improvisation is an open choice of the performer. The performer immediately stops performing when the Point is removed.

NOTE: To avoid unclear entrances, be very direct with your pointing motion. PTP may be modified using other Sculpting gestures.

EXAMPLE: The Soundpainter may sign **PTP, With, Long Tone.** Performers then perform only a Long Tone when Pointed to. Other examples include **PTP, With, Pointillism;** or **PTP, With, Memory 1.** There are many possibilities.

PD: This gesture is signed in 2 parts: Preparation and Action. First, point your index fingers up in a slow back and forth piston-like motion just above your head—this is the preparation. Then, step forward with one foot in a lunging motion and point to the performer(s) you want to perform.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

RELATE TO
 	
  Syntax: What
  Category: Sculpting
	Relate To another performer. The performer Relating To may choose any way in which to relate—imitate, synchronize, abstract, support—unless signed a specific Relate To by the Soundpainter.
	
	NOTE: The Relate To gesture is initiated with a When gesture such as Play or Enter Slowly.
	
	EXAMPLE: The Soundpainter may sign a specific way in which to relate, such as **Relate To, With, Long Tones.** The performer then makes her/his entire Relate To based on Long Tones.
	
	PD: With your arms in front of your chest, make a back-and-forth, piston-like motion with one of your index fingers pointing at the performer playing and the other pointing to the performer you want to Relate To.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

MINIMALISM

  Syntax: What
  Category: Sculpting

Continuous, rhythmic cycling of the same several pitches without change.

NOTE: The Soundpainter may want to beat a pattern to bring the ensemble in together to perform Minimalism. The beat is not an indication of the meter in which the performers are to play. The Soundpainter may beat a 4 pattern and the performers may choose to come in with repeated material in 7, 5, 3, or any other meter, including in 4. To maintain a pulse in Minimalism, the Soundpainter need only keep a pattern-less beat.

The Change gesture is often used with Minimalism to indicate changing the material either by altering it or making a completely new choice. The performer maintains Minimalism with the Change. While Minimalism is being performed, sign the Change gesture (see Change) and then give an obvious entrance point.

PD: With the backs of your hands together in front of your chest, push your hands down toward the floor, causing your elbows to rise, creating a "V" shape.

GESTURE Syntax Category	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)
CHANGE **Syntax:** What **Category:** Sculpting	The performer Changes her/his improvisation. The performer may choose something brand new or modify the material being performed. **NOTE:** This gesture is often used with Minimalism. **PD:** With closed fingers, cup either hand to make a letter "C."

28

Gesture
  Syntax
  Category
	Description of Gesture
	(PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

Memory

  Syntax: What
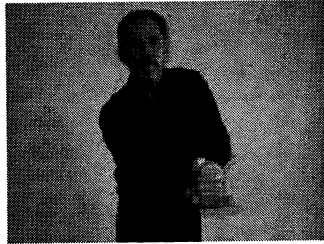 **Category:** Sculpting
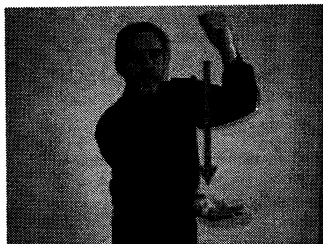
Performers memorize the material being performed at the moment the Soundpainter signs Memory.

Note: A Memory may be created from anything—there are many possibilities. If the performer can't memorize exactly what is being performed, then she/he can memorize the quality of what is being performed. For example; If the Soundpainter signed Memory during Pointillism, then the performer memorizes the quality of the Pointillism being performed and brings it back in the Memory.
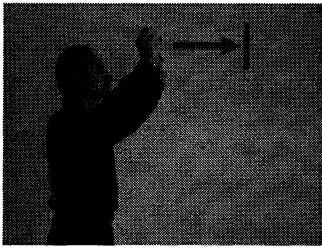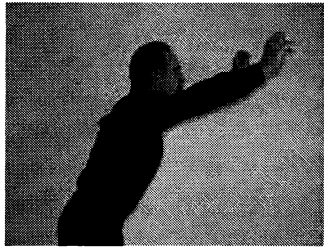
Example: The Soundpainter signs **Whole Group, Long Tone, Play, This (Is), Memory 1; Whole Group, Off.** To call back the Memory 1 later, the Soundpainter signs **Whole Group, Memory 1, Play.** The ensemble comes back in with the exact Long Tone being performed at the time the Soundpainter signed Memory 1.

PD: Hold either your right or left arm straight out in front of your body, palm down and parallel to the floor. Now make a sweeping side-to-side motion a couple times (the This (Is) gesture). Then hold the index finger of that hand to your temple. While keeping this finger on your temple, use the fingers of your other hand to identify the number of the Memory—1 finger for Memory 1, 2 fingers for Memory 2, etc.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

STAB FREEZE
  Syntax: What
  Category: Sculpting
	A CD-like skip with the material being performed.
	
	NOTE: If a performer is playing an accented phrase when Stab Freezed, she/he bounces on the accent being played at the exact moment of being Stab Freezed. If a performer is playing a Long Tone at the time of being Stab Freezed, she/he freezes on the Long Tone, holds it until the Stab Freeze is removed, and then goes back to what she/he was doing before the Stab Freeze. If a performer is silent at the moment of being Stab Freezed, she/he remains silent until the Stab Freeze is removed. Performers should maintain their tempo at the time of being Stab Freezed and stay true to what is happening in the moment.
	
	EXAMPLE: The Soundpainter signs **Whole Group, Pointillism, Play; Stab Freeze, Continue.** In this example, the Continue gesture indicates to remain in the Stab Freeze. The Stab Freeze will catch the performers executing various styles of material as mentioned above.
	
	PD: This gesture is signed in 2 parts. First, you prepare the ensemble for a Stab Freeze by fully extending either arm in front of you with your palm up and fingers together. Then, to Stab Freeze the performer(s), make a fist with your other hand and bring it down onto your open palm with a stabbing motion. The contact of the stabbing hand with your palm is where the Stab Freeze is initiated. When Stab Freezed, the performer(s) gets stuck in a bouncing-like motion with the material she/he is performing—imitating a CD-like skip. As soon as you lift the stabbing hand off your palm, the performer(s) goes back to the previously performed material and continues it. The stabbing gesture is done without creating any slapping sound when contacting your palm. When adding Continue to Stab Freeze, it is important to sign the Continue gesture immediately after removing the Stab Freeze—keeping each gesture physically close to one another.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

EXTENDED TECHNIQUES
 	
  Syntax: What
  Category: Sculpting
	Doing something uncharacteristic with your instrument.
	
	EXAMPLE: Extended Techniques can include a Saxophonist popping the reed, a Pianist playing on the soundboard, or a Vocalist rolling *RRs* or doing tongue clicks.
	
	PD: Cup either hand to make a circle. Hold it up to your eye and look through. With the other hand, wiggle your index and middle fingers in a scissor-like motion in front of the cupped hand while looking through.

GESTURE Syntax Category	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)
HIT **Syntax:** What **Category:** Sculpting	A very short, punching, staccato sound. **NOTE:** If a Hit is interjected during the performance of another gesture such as Long Tone, the performers would perform the Hit on cue and then immediately return to the exact Long Tone they were performing prior to the Hit. Another way a Hit may be signed is **Hit, Off,** where the performer immediately comes to silence after the Hit. The Hit, as in Long Tone, is pitch related according to the vertical plane position in which you sign the Hit—high, middle, or low positioning indicates the approximate pitch range. To sign **Hit, Off,** sign a small Off gesture with just your hands immediately after giving the preparatory sign for the Hit. **PD:** Signed in 2 parts: Preparation and Action. Pinch together the index fingers and thumbs of both hands, leaving your other fingers open. Raise your hands slightly above your head and a little out in front. Maintaining this shape with your hands, give a short forward stabbing motion—this is the preparation for the Hit. To initiate the Hit, step forward in a lunging motion with one foot while simultaneously throwing your hands directly out in front of you—quickly opening your hands once your arms have fully extended. The Hit is performed at the opening of your hands.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

IMPROVISE
 	
  Syntax: What
  Category: Sculpting
	Perform a solo. This is the only gesture in Soundpainting asking for an all-out solo to be performed. The Soloist has the freedom to fully go in any direction she/he chooses.
	
	NOTE: The Improvise gesture may also be used in conjunction with other gestures.
	
	EXAMPLE: The Soundpainter signs **Brass 1, Improvise, With, Long Tones.** Brass 1 uses Long Tone as the main focus of her/his improvisation but may also include other related or unrelated ideas.
	
	PD: With palms of both hands facing the ensemble, and fingers together, make a triangle in front of your chest by bringing together your thumbs and index fingers.

GESTURE Syntax Category	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

SHAPELINE

Syntax: What
Category: Sculpting

Performers musically perform the physical shape the Soundpainter creates with her/his body—physical graphic notation. The performer may choose to play a glissando or something more staccato-like in response to the different points in the graph-like movement being physically drawn by the Soundpainter.

To get in Shapeline, you first sign the Shapeline gesture and then stand rigid in a neutral upright position. The ensemble interprets with sound any movement following the rigid neutral stance of the Soundpainter. To remove yourself from Shapeline, go back to the neutral position and then sign a Watch Me gesture to the ensemble—you are now out of Shapeline.
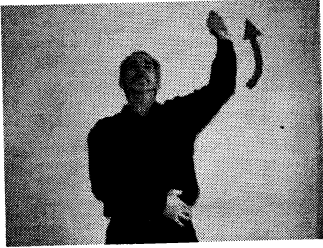
NOTE: The Shapeline gesture may be modified using other Sculpting gestures.

EXAMPLE: The Soundpainter may sign **Whole Group, Shapeline, With, Laughter;** or **Whole Group, Shapeline, With, Pointillism;** or **Whole Group, Shapeline, With, Long Tone;** to name a few.

PD: Assume an upright rigid stance—the neutral position (Silence). Using either arm, make a wavy, snakelike motion going from right to left or left to right passing at chest height in front of your body.

GESTURE Syntax Category	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)
SYNCHRONIZE **Syntax:** What **Category:** Sculpting	Synchronizing specified material with specific performer(s). Synchronize does not need a When gesture. The synchronization begins the moment your fingers are interlocked—lasting as long as you hold your hands in this position. When you have achieved the level of synchronization desired, use the Continue gesture to maintain it. To break the synchronization, quickly pull your fingers apart. Performers go immediately back to what they were doing before the Synchronize. **NOTE:** In some instances synchronization may easily be replicated, but in others, because of the complexity of the material to be Synchronized, the performer Synchronizing may have to search around to find another performer(s) with whom to Synchronize. The Soundpainter may have either outcome in mind; however, in the latter case, it is imperative that the performer maintains the integrity of what is being performed while she/he is searching for someone with whom to Synchronize. In complex synchronizations there are times when only searching will take place—this is a very effective use of Synchronize. **PD:** Interlock the fingers of both of your hands—backs of your hands facing the ensemble.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	(PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

LAUGH
 	
  Syntax: What
  Category: Sculpting
	Laugh continuously in the style of a stage laugh (not real).
	
	PD: Put either hand on your stomach. Keeping the fingers of your other hand together, palm open and facing the ensemble, bring that arm up and out to the side even with your shoulder forming a 90-degree angle at the elbow. Maintaining this shape, lean backward a little, with your upper body bending at the waist. Do this once.

SPEAK
 	
  Syntax: What
  Category: Sculpting
	Speaking.
	
	NOTE: A Speaking topic may be set before the performance. The performers come in immediately, speaking with intensity, as if turning on a radio and immediately hearing a loud crowd speaking at once.
	
	PD: Cup both hands and hold them up to your mouth, like calling out to someone.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

AIR SOUNDS
 	
  Syntax: What
  Category: Sculpting
	Air Sounds made with the mouth, such as wooooosh, sssssss, haaaaaa—but not whistling or breathing.
	
	PD: Like saluting with either hand, but coming straight out from your mouth.

WHISTLE
 	
  Syntax: What
  Category: Sculpting
	Whistling.
	
	NOTE: Improvise—do not quote any songs.
	
	PD: Place both of your index fingers pointing up on either side of your mouth.

GESTURE Syntax Category	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)
WHAT —— FUNCTION	

CONTINUE
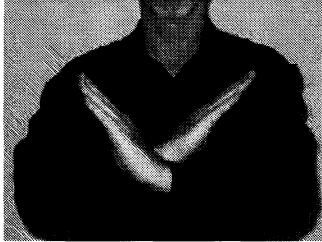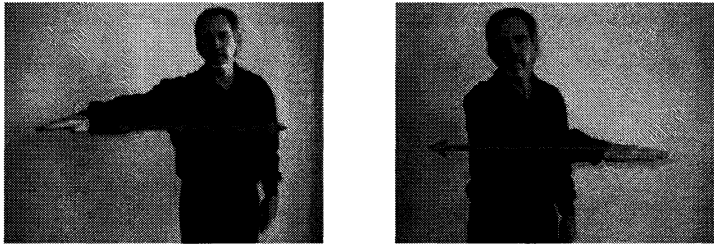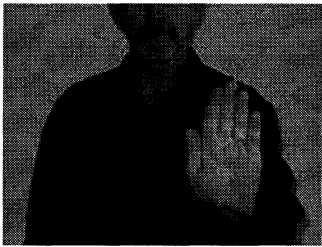
    Syntax: What
    Category: Function
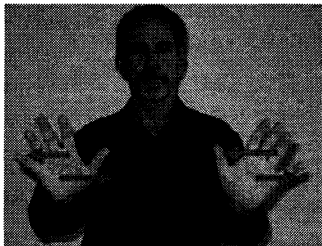
Performer Continues with what she/he is performing.

NOTE: Continue may also be signed using just one hand in conjunction with another gesture, such as Point to Point or Scanning. In this example, the one-handed Continue gesture is signed right next to the other hand doing Point to Point or Scanning, indicating to the performer to Continue with the performed material after the Soundpainter removes the Point or the Scan.

PD: One hand in front of the other at chest level, fingers together, with palms facing your chest, make a clockwise (away from your body) circular motion by rotating one hand over the other.

Gesture / Syntax / Category	Description of Gesture (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)
With **Syntax:** What **Category:** Function	Conjunction—a link between gestures. **Note:** The With gesture is important in Soundpainting in that it gives the performer a delineation between Sculpting gestures. **Example:** The Soundpainter signs **String 3, Improvise, With, Extended Techniques, Enter Slowly.** **PD:** Cross your arms at the wrists, about 6 inches out in front of your chest, with fingers together and palms facing away from one another.
This (Is) **Syntax:** What **Category:** Function	Pertains to whatever is going on at the time the This (Is) gesture is signed. **Example:** The Soundpainter signs **Whole Group, Long Tone, Play; This (Is), Memory 1.** In this example, the Long Tone is Memory 1 and was identified with This (Is). **PD:** Hold either your right or left arm straight out in front of your body with the palm down, and make a sweeping back-and-forth motion a couple times.

39

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

ERASE
 	
  Syntax: What
  Category: Function
	The Soundpainter uses this gesture to tell the ensemble the previous gesture(s) is canceled.
	
	PD: With both palms facing toward the ensemble, fingers apart, give a slight waving off gesture.

WAIT
 	
  Syntax: What
  Category: Function
	A gesture given by the Soundpainter instructing a group or an individual to Wait.
	
	EXAMPLE: The Soundpainter signs **Whole Group, Pointillism; Brass 1, Improvise, Wait; Whole Group, Off.** Immediately after the Off gesture is given, the Soundpainter points to Brass 1 to begin improvising.
	
	PD: Hold both hands at chest level with your fingers open and palms facing the ensemble.

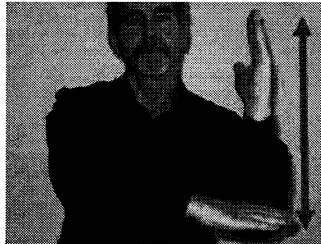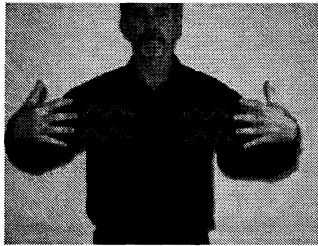| GESTURE Syntax Category	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)
HOW —— SCULPTING	
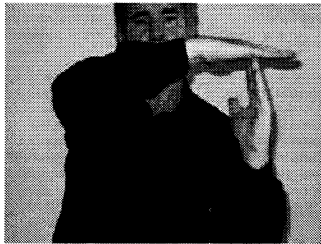
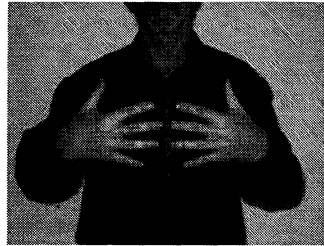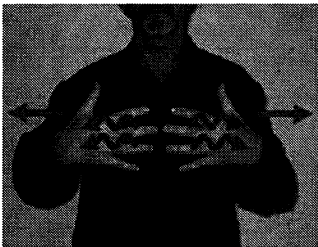**VOLUME FADER**
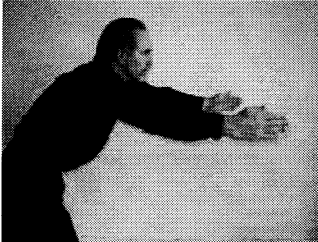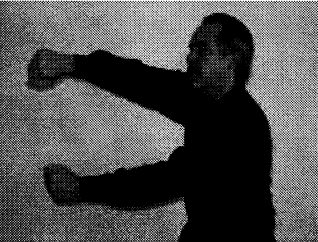
Syntax: How
Category: Sculpting

Increase or decrease the volume.

PD: Bending either elbow at a 90-degree angle to the floor, with the outside of your forearm facing the ensemble, make a fist. This is the fader arm. With the other hand form a letter "V" with the index and middle fingers, closing the rest of the fingers. Holding the meaty part of your thumb against the outside of the fader arm (the part facing the ensemble), slide the "V" fingers up or down the Fader arm to indicate the volume. The top of your fader arm indicates *ffff*, and the bottom, near your elbow, indicates *pppp*.

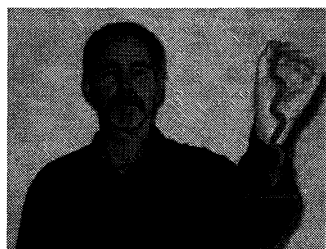| GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

TEMPO FADER
 	
  Syntax: How
  Category: Sculpting
	Increase or decrease the tempo.
	
	PD: Bending either elbow upward at a 90-degree angle to the floor, hold the fingers of your hand upright and tightly together, keeping an open palm facing right (for the left hand) or left (for the right hand). This is the fader arm. Keep the fingers of the other hand together, palm flat and facing the ground, and place it a little out front and on top of your fader arm creating a letter "T" shape—similar to the time-out gesture in sports. Slide your hand down and up the fader arm to indicate tempo. The top of the fader arm indicates a very fast tempo, and the bottom, near your elbow, indicates a very slow tempo.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

WHEN —— FUNCTION	

PLAY

   Syntax: When

   Category: Function

The immediate initiation of signed material. The performer must come in right at the end of the gesture and come in immediately, without hesitation

PD: Bring your arms straight back behind your body and parallel to the floor. Keeping your arms rigid, and with a smooth but rapid motion, bring your arms directly out in front of your body and stop parallel to the floor, giving a slight flick of your wrists to indicate the exact point at which to enter.

OFF

   Syntax: When

   Category: Function

Whole Group or individual performers stop playing.

PD: With open palms facing the ensemble at about shoulder height, and keeping one hand vertically above the other, bring your arms over to either side of your body. Keeping your palms facing the ensemble, bring them quickly across the front of your body in a sweeping motion to the other side of your body, closing your hands at the end of the movement as if grabbing an imaginary vertical pole. The grabbing of the imaginary pole is the cut-off point.

43

Gesture
  Syntax
  Category
	Description of Gesture
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

Enter Slowly
 	
  Syntax: When
  Category: Function
	Enter the composition within approximately 5 seconds.
	
	PD: With palms apart facing your chest, thumbs pointing up and fingers slightly apart, wiggle your fingers slightly while bringing your hands together, fingertips almost touching. Then stop wiggling.

Exit Slowly
 	
  Syntax: When
  Category: Function
	Exit the composition within approximately 5 seconds.
	
	Note: Exit Slowly is not an indication to decrescendo but to quickly find a conclusion to your improvisation.
	
	PD: The reverse movement of Enter Slowly: With fingertips almost touching, palms facing your chest, thumbs pointing up, and fingers slightly apart, wiggle your fingers slightly while moving your hands apart. Then stop wiggling.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

FINISH YOUR IDEA

  Syntax: When
  Category: Function

The performer finishes the material being performed, bringing it to a natural conclusion within about 1 minute.

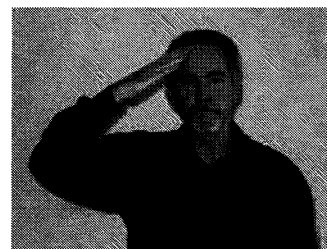**PD:** With either hand, draw a downward snakelike motion using a closed (pinched) index finger and thumb.

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

	ENSEMBLE GESTURES **WHO —— FUNCTION**

PERFORMER DOESN'T UNDERSTAND

(ENSEMBLE GESTURE)
  Syntax: Who
  Category: Function

The performer didn't see or doesn't understand the gesture(s) signed and is asking the Soundpainter to re-sign the gesture(s).

NOTE: The Performer Doesn't Understand gesture may be used in rehearsal to let the Soundpainter know the performer doesn't know the meaning of the gesture, but not in performance or you're fired! Just kidding!

PD: Performer briefly holds her/his hand to her/his forehead.

45

GESTURE
  Syntax
  Category
	DESCRIPTION OF GESTURE
	  (PD = Physical Description of Gesture)

PERFORMER CAN'T DO THIS
 	
(ENSEMBLE GESTURE)
  Syntax: Who
  Category: Function
	Any performer unable to Continue with what she/he is performing may give the Performer Can't Do This sign to the Soundpainter to indicate—usually for physical reasons—that she/he can't keep doing what she/he is performing.
	
	NOTE: The Soundpainter may choose to have the performer go to neutral or sign the performer to Change to something more physically doable. If, after trying, the performer is unable to get the Soundpainter's attention, then the performer may Change or stop on her/his own.
	
	PD: Performer briefly holds her/his hand to her/his throat.

Soundpainting Workbook Series

Soundpainting Workbook 1: Basic 43 Soundpainting gestures – Music language only (Available in English and French)

Soundpainting Workbook 2: Basic 43 Soundpainting gestures – Multidisciplinary language for actors, dancers, musicians, and visual artists; Interdisciplinary Soundpainting

Soundpainting Workbook 3: Use of palettes (composed material); Soundpainting structure; More language

Soundpainting Workbook 4: More multidisciplinary Soundpainting; More language

Soundpainting Workbook 5: Simple and complex phrasing; More language

Contact

For more information about Soundpainting or Walter Thompson, please use the contact information below:

Walter Thompson
P.A.C.C.
P.O. Box 36-20631
New York, NY 10129

info@soundpainting.com

http://soundpainting.com