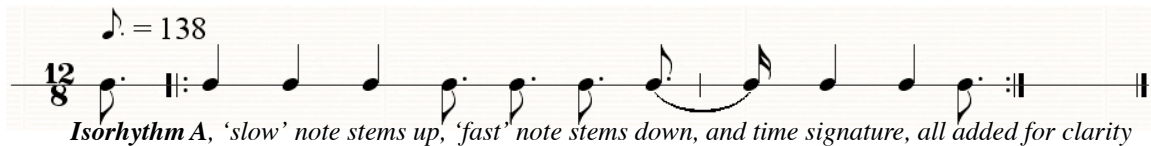


Commissioned by Company Amy Cox in 1999, the 30-minute score for *Vailala Madness I & II* is conceived as recorded music. Its pitches and harmonies are conventional and its timing mostly metrical, so it *could* be notated, but no notated score was made.

**PART I** is a 16-minute passacaglia or set of variations on an (oddly-phrased) 8-bar chord progression. For convention call it  $\frac{12}{8}$  at tempo  $\text{♩} = 138$ . A number of systems were used to determine the timing of the various parts, yet each note whenever it falls always conforms to the rigid harmonic grid. This is true even for the lengthy ( $3\frac{1}{2}$ -minute) introduction, in which noise gates reveal tiny flashes of a pre-recorded band, at random times and separated by long silences.

**Isorhythm A** enters at about 3:36; it was conceived as a pattern of ‘fast’ and ‘slow’ notes, 3- and 4- 8<sup>th</sup> notes in duration, respectively, as follows: 4+4+4 + 3+3+3 +4+4+4 + 3. At  $1\frac{1}{2}$  bars in length, **Isorhythm A** repeats in relation to the 8-bar progression once every 3 chord cycles (24 bars).



In some isorhythms, as the fixed rhythm repeats mechanically, so too does a melody of a different number of notes than that rhythm, so that the two patterns offset differently for each cycle, making in effect a phase pattern. Here, however, pitches are extracted from the chord pattern, according to an algorithm chosen by ear from among a large set programmed in Max/MSP. This method retains the variation inherent in isorhythm (same beat, different tune); it retains also the ‘systematic’ feeling of phase patterns or quasi-phase patterns (i.e. isorhythm), but it also preserves the underlying harmonic pattern (the passacaglia), which the old motets, and a lot of minimalist music, do not. Pattern and algorithm were chosen to weaken the cadence in the chord pattern; there is effectively no downbeat, in fact no particular beat is inherently stressed within the rhythmic scheme (meter and bar lines above are for readability). Rests, rather than notes, usually fall on the harmonic downbeats, which are implied by the chord pattern. **Isorhythm A** is joined by an accompanying 3-bar isorhythm at 5:27.

**Isorhythm B** enters at 7:47; it construes the overall meter as compound rather than simple, thus implying 2-against-3 while driving home the feeling of 7.



It repeats in relation to the 8-bar progression once every 7 cycles (56 bars). As above, pitch choice supports the systematic feeling of isorhythm while maintaining the passacaglia, and pattern placement avoids hitting the downbeat of the 8-bar progression.

Together, the two isorhythms repeat in relation to the overall chord cycle once every 21 cycles or 168 bars (almost 5 min). They are set against various sounds, including a pulse grid at 138 bpm, the shortest note value both meters have in common. Once the passacaglia reaches maximum density, the parts are mangled together by granular synthesis yet still stay within the chords, until all rhythm dissolves into the wash, and only the harmonic rhythm of the implacable passacaglia remains.

**PART II** was described by the choreographer, Amy Cox, as “one long holy orgasm.” A chord is elongated by granular synthesis and embellished with sine waves and percussion.