

The Superstar Composing Machine: Capitalism, Identity, Politics

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Abstract

The identity of the composer is pivotal to Western art music but the privileged model of the heroic/superstar composer stifles creativity. Drawing on Deleuze's concepts of assemblage and machine, the article situates the heroic/superstar composer assemblage in the capitalist framework. It discusses the case of composer John Adams (b. 1947) and Elena Kats-Chernin (b. 1958), suggesting for the latter that the instrument of gender mainstreaming subjugates the exceptionally gifted woman. New possibilities emerge when the composing assemblage becomes disengaged from the capitalistic machinic assemblage and the privileged site of the superstar identity. Two examples are highlighted: the Sydney-based community arts venue, The Red Rattler, and the Brisbane-based contemporary music ensemble, Topology.

Keywords: composer identity, Deleuze, assemblage, machine, superstar composer, capitalism, gender mainstreaming

1. Introduction

Identity matters a great deal to music and a composing identity is pivotal to the Western art music tradition. The historical narrative reveres, fetishizes and renders the composer supreme. This forms the trope of the heroic master composer, which has been described as music's central intelligence (Wilson, 2004). The ideology of the heroic composer is maintained in the present day but it has become a much more determined, ambitious figure. The success of the modern day composer is reliant on how well it performs in the competitive environments of funding institutions in the capitalist framework. This model of the composer, as I will argue, is locked into a system that restricts the flows of creative energy, and tightly regulates the ways in which music is practised and experienced. It has given rise to the phenomenon of the superstar composer, wherein a relatively small number of individuals dominate the world of music composition, making it difficult for innovative, new music to flourish. Further, the perpetuation of the superstar composer inhibits the productive functioning of women composers.

The concepts of 'machine' and 'assemblage', both drawn from the work of Deleuze and Guattari, are analytical devices that I will use for understanding how composer identities are formed, maintained and transformed. In the work of Deleuze and Guattari, a machine is never a closed system that works in isolation from other systems. Nor is a machine, as Barbour writes, 'an efficiently functioning automaton, working entirely on its own power to achieve a predetermined end' (Barbour, 2012: p 20). For Deleuze, a machine is an instrument of possibility which arises from the way it articulates or makes connections with other machines. In turn, this opens up the possibility for creating new assemblages. And yet, as Deleuze and Guattari state, 'machines work only when they break down, and by continually breaking down' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: p 8). Accordingly, it is where a machine breaks down, or falls apart, that it comes into contact with other machines (Barbour, 2012: p 20). The same is true for the composer assemblage. I want to suggest that the privileged model of the heroic/superstar composer, which has been perpetuated throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is beginning to break down. Viable alternative models of authorship are being assembled and tested in the new music concert scene.

In the third section of this article, I will attend to these new assemblages, showing that there are palpable shifts taking place in which co-compositional, collaborative, collective composer machines are emerging. In turn, these assemblages are opening up new ways of composing and listening to music, and presaging new kinds of music. These new assemblages are also challenging the recurring theme that has been sounding for the last several decades that classical music is a dying art form (Johnson, 2002; Hewett, 2003; Kremer, 2007; Letts, 2009). I will use Deleuze's concept of the assemblage to rethink the relationships between composers and their networks.

The assemblage, as developed by Deleuze, is a coded arrangement of ‘objects, bodies, expressions, qualities and territories that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning’ (Livesey, 2010: p 18). Deleuze and Guattari illustrate this idea with the example of the book which, they say, is both a closed and an open system: ‘there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata, and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: p 3). On one side (of the book) is a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject. On the other side, is a ‘*body without organs*, which is continually dismantling the organism’ (Ibid: p 4). To adapt their concept of assemblage from the book to the composer, I have inserted the word ‘composer’, illustrating how the composer functions as a machinic assemblage that forms connections with other machines:

As an assemblage, a [composer] has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a [composer] means, as a signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge. A [composer] exists only through the outside and on the inside. A [composer] is a little machine (Ibid: p 4).

Using this dynamic concept of the composer as machinic assemblage, I will suggest that there are multiple ways in which identity might be organised. Bodies are not fixed beings with identifiable and limited essences. Rather, they exist in a state of continuous change and are connected to multiplicities. According to Macgregor Wise, the concept of assemblage in the work of Deleuze and Guattari refers to the ‘play of contingency and structure, organization and change’ (Macgregor Wise, 2005: p 77). It is not a static concept. Rather, it is a *process* involving the ‘arranging, organizing, fitting together’ (Ibid) of that which is being assembled.

In this article, I will rethink the dominant model of the heroic/superstar composer. The strategy of enlisting the abstract machine facilitates a reading of the composer-figure that breaks with the traditional idea that the mind of the composer is the most important point of access for knowledge about the musical work. It shifts the emphasis to the question, ‘What does this composer assemblage enable it to do or to achieve?’ Schizoanalysis, as employed by Deleuze and Guattari (a concept that is counter to psychoanalysis), facilitates an investigation of the production, release and affirmation of desireflows across the composer assemblage. Schizoanalysis is a way of exploring how desireflows are organised (and organise themselves) at the individual level of the composer or in relation to large composer assemblages in a given community (Hickey-Moody and Malins, 2007: pp 14-18). In the work of Deleuze and Guattari, the assemblage of desire moves in at least two directions, producing, on the one hand, rigid social structures and hierarchies, and on the other hand, escaping these structures to open up the new. In musical composition, the hierarchical institutions in which the composer moves and works restrict desire-flows at an individual level. The institution might, for example, curtail the scope of the musical work being proposed or decide that a musical work is not worthy of performance. Countering these inhibitive forces, composers might then find other ways to release their music into the public domain and, in so doing, deterritorialize the hierarchical structures that govern musical composition. These two directions give rise to paranoiac and schizophrenic tendencies, an idea on which I will enlarge below (Hickey-Moody and Malins, 2007: p 15).

In the first section, I will situate the heroic/superstar composer assemblage in the context of the capitalist framework, exploring the ways in which schizophrenic and paranoiac tendencies within the capitalist framework impact on music composition. I will argue that the deterritorializing impulses of composer assemblages are threatened when they are reterritorialized for monetary profits. When money is made axiomatic to music it stifles innovation and creativity. In the second section, I will explore the ways in which the superstar composer emerges, discussing the case of composer John Adams (b. 1947) and briefly referring to the work of Elena Kats-Chernin (b. 1958). I will then suggest that the instrument of gender mainstreaming subjugates the exceptionally gifted woman composer within the hierarchically organised superstar composer assemblage. In the third section, I will explore some of the possibilities that emerge when the composing assemblage becomes disengaged from the capitalistic machinic assemblage and the privileged site of the superstar identity. I will refer to examples such as the Sydney-based community arts venue, The Red Rattler, and the Brisbane-based contemporary music ensemble, Topology. Each of these examples, in different ways, deterritorializes the fixity of the composer identity.

2. Schizophrenic Desire and the Capitalist Machine

Layers of complexity emerge in Deleuze and Guattari's critique of capitalism. In *Anti-Oedipus*, they explore the relationship between capitalism and schizophrenia, suggesting that the madness of the capitalist machine is also the source of its rationality (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: p 373). The contemporary Western art music composer can be understood as both the logic and the anti-logic of the advanced global capitalist system. In the schizophrenic sense, the capitalist system enables the composer to deterritorialize (or transgress the rules of) the composer assemblage to pioneer a new aesthetic or style. In the paranoid sense, the capitalist system reterritorializes the composer assemblage by converting schizophrenic desires that have given rise to new kinds of music into flows of money and profit (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: p. 303). Capitalism thus axiomatizes desire flows, making them directly necessary to the functioning of the economy (Hickey-Moody and Malins: 2007: p 15). When the composer assemblage is driven by paranoid impulses, it makes composers highly competitive in the rigid hierarchical structure of the funding arena, and engages them in aggressive marketing campaigns to promote their work. In contrast, the assemblage of schizophrenic desire opens up lines of escape and forms revolutionary micro-flows of creative musical energy (Ibid: p. 15).

Composers do not usually occupy a shared physical workplace but, employing the Deleuzian concept of 'territorial assemblage', they do claim a composing territory. A composer territorial assemblage is formed through the habitual activities of the members of the assemblage. It functions like an abstract machine and is capable of moving across multiple spacio-temporal sites. The abstract machine of Western art music is a large-scale assemblage that operates in a regime of other assemblages, such as funding bodies, educational institutions, performance groups, publishers, audiences, critics, and recording, broadcast and marketing institutions. The Western art music assemblage emphasises composer autonomy, freedom and individual difference but the paranoid dimension of the machine, as I will argue, stifles originality.

In this article I explore some of the contradictory concepts and practices that underscore the heroic/superstar composer assemblage. The capitalist system promotes individual freedom and autonomy, relying 'on the multiplication of desire-flows in order for it to function' (Hickey-Moody and Malins, 2007: p 15). Hickey-Moody and Malins point out that capitalism's 'primary movement is one of de-stratification and deterritorialization' but it capitalises on the connection between desire and lack, deliberately 'organising wants and needs amid an abundance of production' such that desire teeters and falls victim 'to the great fear of not having one's needs satisfied' (Ibid: p 15).

Applying this notion to musical composition, the system harnesses the energy of the creative, deterritorialized composing machine and reterritorializes it, converting it into flows of monetary profit. Gorecki's *Symphony No. 3* vividly exemplifies this process. The work was premiered in 1973 to a lukewarm reception. It was not until the 1990s that a CD by the London Sinfonia with singer Dawn Upshaw tapped into, following Goldmann (2011), the 'psychosocial framework' and sold 700,000 copies world-wide. The CD went on to top the US classical charts for 138 weeks and sold more than a million copies. It has been deemed the best-selling contemporary classical record of all time (Steinberg, 1998).

According to Hickey-Moody and Malins, 'capitalism does not prevent the desire-flows of bodies, but instead seeks to ensure that those flows are always already functioning for capitalism' (Hickey-Moody and Malins, 2007: p 15). Following Rosen (1981), I want to now suggest that in an oversaturated population of art music composers only a minority are truly successful. Only a very few manage to make comfortable livings as freelance composers. This minority is accorded superstar status. The majority of professional composers, by whom I mean individuals who compose for a living, are caught up in the paranoid flows of desire, striving for recognition and the ability to make a living, but struggling to achieve it (Goldmann, 2011). The problem with the superstar composer assemblage is that it makes composers who are not superstars financially vulnerable when they lack recognition or are excluded. In particular, the inter-assemblage of the woman composer is made particularly susceptible to paranoid flows of desire. The superstar composer assemblage works against the production of an inclusive and diverse composing experience and, instead, produces repetitions of the same. The paranoid tendencies of capitalism mean that the superstar composer assemblage struggles to deliver innovative music. In order to make a living, composers have always had to produce marketable goods. But under advanced capitalism, there is increased pressure on the superstar composer assemblage to deliver music that will appeal to a wide audience. Popular taste manifests as the desire for the familiar and the already known.

Since, as I will argue, the superstar composer assemblage dominates the world of music through its connection with a carefully orchestrated regime of other assemblages that ensure it has maximum exposure, the majority of composers outside the superstar assemblage jostle for a position in the hierarchical system of concert music, and its commissioning and performance processes. Such composers, like women composers, are vulnerable to the whims of capitalism's desire-flows.

3. *Composing the Superstar Composer Assemblage*

Under the guise of excellence, the marketing machine catapults the gifted composer to stardom, creating the superstar composer assemblage. The 'superstar effect', as coined by Rosen (1981), rewards the few, and thus gives them the creative edge. As Rosen argues, the phenomenon of the superstar means that 'relatively small numbers of people...dominate the activities in which they engage' (Ibid: p 845). For the few, 'success breeds success.' The majority struggle to be recognised although they may be very talented. According to Goldmann, the psychosocial framework creates the 'superstar effect' on the basis of its cultural relevance (Goldmann, 2011). From a Deleuzian perspective, the psychosocial assemblage taps into the collective assemblage of enunciation which accounts for the social character of the music. The collective assemblage of enunciation is an indirect discourse, and is always already constituted as a set of acts and statements, and includes aesthetic judgements, musical categories, and stylistic rules. For Deleuze and Guattari, what a given individual says is already part of the collective unconscious. These pre-existing actions and statements infiltrate the languages and statements of the individual and the collective (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: pp 80; 85; 88).

In a Deleuzian sense, the superstar composer assemblage is actualized when the schizophrenic flows of desire deterritorialize the music and reterritorialize it to connect it to flows of money and profit. To recall the Gorecki example, schizophrenic desire reproduces the Symphony No. 3, a work which is the antithesis of serialism: it is constructed on simple, tonal folk melodies and concludes with twenty-one repetitions of an A-major chord. The Symphony is reterritorialized in the form of a recording in the 1990s in which it becomes connected to flows of income and profit. Capitalism produces fees, royalties and other kinds of material rewards to the composer who, in this case, from virtual oblivion, was made famous by these reterritorializing impulses.

Another case in point, as I will now argue, is the North American, John Adams (b. 1947), a composer who is nowadays invested with considerable influence, power and prestige in the world of concert music. Constituted in the heroic composer assemblage, Adams made an impact when he initially deterritorialized minimalist music, coining the term 'post-minimalism' to signal his distinctive contribution to the genre. To extrapolate from Deleuze and Guattari, Adams initially imitates the 'species-specific' sounds of minimalism and then extends them. He both imitates and 'occupies corresponding frequencies' in the minimalist camp of the heroic composer assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: pp 330-31). Adams' unique approach to minimalism is traced to *Shaker Loops* (1978), which arguably launched his superstar career.

There are several recordings and versions of this work, not least on Youtube (Adams, 1978). *Shaker Loops* makes use of 'greater dynamic contrasts and a more fluid and layered sound' than the other minimalists, Philip Glass, Steve Reich and Terry Riley (Entwistle, 2013). The collective assemblage of enunciation probes Adams' psychology to suggest that while he saw minimalism as 'the most important stylistic development in Western art music since the Fifties', he was aware of its limits, given that repetition was its foundation' (Entwistle, 2013). From the 1980s, Adams is constituted in the superstar composer assemblage. The Adams machine produces music that is performed internationally to great acclaim (see Adams Official Website). It publishes a memoir, *Hallelujah Junction* (Adams, 2008), and discusses the accomplishments of the composer at length in a number of significant books on twentieth and twenty-first century music, including *The John Adams Reader* (May, 2006). The Adams machine has its own website, which is linked to several others, including publishers, CD and DVD outlets. A number of important interviews with Adams also feature in the popular press. The size of the global market for Adams is considerable. The collective assemblage of enunciation capitalizes on his superstar status, describing him as 'a Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer'. It says that John Adams has:

a unique position in the world of American music. His works, both operatic and symphonic, stand out among contemporary classical compositions for their depth of expression, brilliance of sound, and the profoundly humanist nature of their themes. Over the past 25 years, Adams's music has played a decisive role in turning the tide of contemporary musical aesthetics away from academic modernism and toward a more expansive, expressive language, entirely characteristic of his New World surroundings (Adams Official Website).

Since acquiring superstar status, Adams has made a stronger link to a wider audience, and this is epitomised in his work, *On the Transmigration of Souls* (2002), composed in memory of those who lost their lives in the 9/11 terrorist attack (Adams, 2002). An important element of the superstar assemblage is that, following Goldmann (2011), once it has attained superstar status, it becomes conservative and backward-looking. It undergoes a crystallisation process. The cumulative effect of the crystallisation process is that it strongly resists any deterritorializing impulses that would put it out of business. Once established, the superstar assemblage tends not to forge radically new aesthetic terrain. This is arguably the case for Adams, exemplified by the work *On the Transmigration of Souls*.

Rosen ascribes two common elements to the 'superstar effect'. The first is the close connection between personal reward and the size of one's own market; and the second is the strong tendency for both market size and reward to be skewed to the most talented people in the activity (Rosen, 1981: p 845). In Deleuzian terms, the habitual activities of the superstar composer assemblage are designed to ensure that the market is clearly identified, marked and closely guarded: it is potentially increased through the accumulation of more prestige, performances, publications, and broadcasts. Economic standard theory as used by Rosen is able to explain the relationship between sales and earnings (that is, the more one sells the more one earns), but it is unable to account for the elusive quality of 'box office appeal' (Ibid).

In a Deleuzian sense, 'box office appeal' is like an abstract machine that operates through desire. As a multiplicity, it is shaped by, and acts on, the flow of money and prestige that passes through it. The Adams machine exemplifies this process. The appeal for Adams' music is predicated on the income he procures from the number of sales of performances, recordings and broadcasts of his music, and to a greater degree on other symbolic measures, such as prizes and awards, critical acclaim by experts and peers in the popular and academic presses, and a following that leads the composer to becoming highly sought after. Adams provides the psychosocial, majoritarian taste machine with an endless supply of what it desires. Rather than breaking new ground and forging new territory, the Adams machine effectively closes down the innovative potential of the music.

There are echoes of this phenomenon in the work of Elena Kats-Chernin (b. 1958) who is arguably one of Australia's superstar composers. As a woman composer, however, she is also caught up in the paranoiac impulses of capitalism's instrument of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for ensuring neutrality while championing equality in the workplace and guiding people to conduct themselves according to norms. It emerges from the equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation of Western governments. In 2012, the Australian Government's Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 was renamed the Workplace Gender Equality Act, 'to put a focus on promoting and improving gender equality and outcomes for both women and men in the workplace' (Workplace Gender Equality Agency).

Braidotti argues, however, that gender mainstreaming 're-essentialises the specificity of women's condition as the terrain on which power politics is fought' (2009: 6). This has the effect of reducing the capacity for women's conditions to improve. She argues that gender mainstreaming is an anti-feminist mechanism that perpetuates the marginalization of women (2006: 45). It is a classic master- and pro-capitalist narrative because it considers financial success as the sole indicator of the status of women. It reintroduces the syndrome of the 'exceptional woman'. The pernicious part of this syndrome is that it 'fosters a new sense of isolation among women and hence new forms of vulnerability' (Braidotti 2006: 45). The 'exceptional woman' syndrome is nowhere better illustrated than in the category of the 'woman composer'. Such composers are publicly celebrated. A powerful indicator of the 'exceptional woman composer' status is its prominence in international new music performance. The exceptional individual is given the sense that she is in control of her own destiny and that she has no need to align with the collective class interests of women composers. But such an individual is simultaneously disabled by her isolation from the collective group of other women composers.

The 'exceptional woman' is propelled into the limelight when her exceptional achievements come to the notice of the psychosocial assemblage. Elena Kats-Chernin secures a place in the superstar composer assemblage. She is resilient and adaptable, and displays considerable entrepreneurial flair. She is hailed as one of Australia's 'leading and most versatile composers' (Jones, 2010: p 1). She is also of 'foreign', thus exotic, heritage. Like Adams, Kats-Chernin trained in the languages of serialism before breaking out of it almost entirely in the twenty-first century in order to capitalise on her market. Her music, like Adams, has become increasingly tonal and, arguably, backward-looking. Although Kats-Chernin is a permanent Australian resident, she has a formidable international following and her works are regularly performed overseas. As the media machine noted, Kats-Chernin is as at ease writing for the Sydney Olympics as she is for the operatic stage:

If you watched the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics you heard her music in a ravishing Deep Sea Dreaming sequence; if you're a fan of Phillip Adams' Late Night Live program you hear her theme introducing it; if you listen to ABC Classic FM her compositions fit into just about every slot (Jones, 2010, p 1).

The theme introducing the ABC Late Night Live Program is from her ballet suite *Wild Swans* (Kats-Chernin, 2002).

4. Deterritorialising the Superstar Composer Assemblage

Crockett states that 'schizophrenic desire does not lend itself to capture and self-repression which makes it fundamentally different from capitalism. Schizophrenia offers an alternative to capitalism, and shows how capitalism is caught up in its own death drive. Capitalism represses and stifles desire' (Crockett, 2012: p 82). In the previous section, I mapped the ways in which schizophrenic desire is captured by the paranoid tendencies of the capitalist machine, exemplified by the operations of the superstar composer assemblage. I suggested that the superstar composer assemblage is based on a hierarchy and linked to the psychosocial taste machine, which converts schizophrenic desire into monetary flows. It was argued that each of the composers discussed succumbs to the whims of the psychosocial, majoritarian taste machine, producing music that is familiar. In this section, I will investigate the potentialities of assemblages that disengage from the paranoid impulses of the capitalist machine. To recall Barbour, I am interested in where the superstar composer machine breaks down, or falls apart. With what other machines does it articulate or make contact (Barbour, 2012: p 20)?

My first example, the Sydney-based community arts venue, The Red Rattler, presents an array of music and performance art, moving across the whole spectrum of music to include popular genres, jazz and new art music, and traversing disciplinary boundaries to forge connections with other art forms. The venue has a non-capitalistic policy, envisaging the queer community it serves as central to its activities but, nonetheless, as in a ceaseless state of flux. My second example, the contemporary music performance-cum-composing-cum-improvising ensemble, Topology, has gradually eroded the heroic composer figure by making interventions into its singular, fixed identity, opening up the possibility of a co-compositional, collaborative approach to musical composition.

According to Braidotti, the imagination plays a major role in the process of conceptual creativity. It is 'a transformative force that propels multiple, heterogeneous "becomings", or repositionings of the subject (Braidotti, 2000: 170). She goes on to suggest that the process of becoming is collectively driven. It is 'relational and external; it is also framed by affectivity or desire, and is excentric to rational control' (Ibid). Deleuze and Guattari point out that capitalism does not always succeed in axiomatizing desire, stating that 'the deepest law of capitalism is that it continually sets and then repels its own limits, but in so doing gives rise to numerous flows in all directions that escape the axiomatic' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: pp 472-73). For Chesters, 'the entropic tendency of force, towards dispersion and disorganization, can be accelerated through minoritarian becomings, leading to the deterritorialization of key elements of the social and political field' (Chesters, 2007: p 246). I will argue that The Red Rattler arts community and Topology contemporary music ensemble actualize two such minoritarian becomings. The Red Rattler rejects the capitalistic machinic assemblage that privileges profit flows as a prime motivating force for its existence. In so doing, it transforms the superstar composer assemblage into a becoming queer (schizophrenic) assemblage. Topology dismantles the identity of the heroic composer, blurring the boundaries between composer and performer, and innovation and crystallisation, proposing a model of music-making that is co-compositional and collaborative.

The Red Rattler, then, tends to promote the artistic work of the queer community in a way that disengages it from the entropic forces of paranoiac capitalism (Golden, 2013). The venue was established as a 'collective partnership governing model' (Red Rattler Website) and a not-for-profit, owner-operated venue in 2008 with 'a mission to produce and host fringe and queer music and performance-arts events' (Golden, 2013: p 3). According to Golden, it existed as a volunteer-run organisation between 2008 and January 2013 (Ibid), during which time it fostered and performed a diverse array of performance art and music that was chosen, not on the basis of its innovation and excellence, but according to its capacity to serve the interests of the queer community (Red Rattler Website). The Red Rattler enabled events to be staged at minimal costs which allowed for 'artistic risk-taking and for the presentation of subversive and politically loaded content, and therefore for the flourishing of an arts scene' (Golden, 2013: p. 9).

The concept of 'queer' is often used as an instrument of gender mainstreaming in which it is normalised, homogenised, and simultaneously marginalised (Golden, 2013: pp 13-14). The concept of 'queer' as adopted by The Red Rattler resists being tied to a stable essence, and refuses the idea of a unified community who identify as 'queer'. In this sense, the queer community of The Red Rattler, to invoke Agamben, is founded on the sense of its belonging without identity, a community of singularities, fragments, a community that is 'mediated, not by any condition of belonging...nor by the simple absence of conditions...but by belonging itself' (Agamben, 1993, p 85; Devadas and Mummary, 2007, p 1). This idea of community disrupts the norm. In a Deleuzian sense, The Red Rattler opens up the concepts of singularity and multiplicity, and that of differentiation, which is the idea that difference is continuous and ceaseless.

Agamben's concept of the 'coming community', the idea of a community continually under construction and in perpetual motion (Golden, 2013: 30), resonates with Deleuze's concept of 'becoming' and applies to The Red Rattler. Every performance event in the venue is marked by difference. The participant performers are never the same people. The kind of music performed is never locked into one category, for the music presented constantly ranges across art music and popular music genres, and mixes these to generate new kinds of sub-genres. The standard of performance is never predictable, for on some occasions it is technically deficient while concentrating on performing from the 'heart', and on other occasions it is exemplary, exhibiting inventiveness and technical expertise. And the audience is never the same group of people (Golden, 2013). The Red Rattler thus eschews the fixed identity and hierarchical structure of the superstar composer assemblage. In this sense, The Red Rattler activates a minoritarian becoming, understood as a set of activities rather than a set of fixed identities. In this sense, following Agamben, it is 'an absolutely unrepresentable community' (Agamben, 1993: pp 24-25).

In contrast to the 'coming community' of The Red Rattler, the contemporary quintet, Topology, founded in 1997 and comprising saxophone, piano and strings, creates original work that traverses genre boundaries and blurs the divisions between composer and performer. The collective assemblage of enunciation states that Topology is 'undaunted by stylistic barriers' and has 'created stunning new work with partners in theatre (Geoffrey Rush, Neil Armfield), classical music (the Brodsky Quartet, the Southern Cross Soloists), contemporary art music (Terry Riley, TaikOz), ballet (the Queensland Ballet), contemporary jazz (Misinterprotato, Loops), popular songwriting (Kate Miller-Heidke, Katie Noonan), comedy (the Kransky Sisters, Gerry Connolly), Asian music (Dheeraj Shrestha, TaikOz, Tony Prabowo, Ubiet) and indigenous Australian music (William Barton)' (Topology Website). Unlike The Red Rattler, however, it does this with a view to making a profit from its activities. Yet, capitalism does not entirely succeed in axiomatizing the desire associated with the music it performs. The five musicians in Topology set up desire flows that run off in different directions, challenging the limits of the singular individual and moving beyond the stratified boundaries of the composer. In so doing, the group enters into lines of flight that threaten the fixity of the composer identity.

Recently, the Topology machine has cultivated a following for its inventiveness as an improvising/composing machine. Topology's recent album, *Ten Hands*, takes improvisation into new territory by using it as a basis of a co-composition process (Topology, *Ten Hands*). In some ways, there is nothing particularly new about the co-compositional, collaborative model of identity proposed by the group in that its new approach is typified by many popular music and non-Western music ensembles. I would argue, however, that the co-compositional model tends to be rare in the context of contemporary Western art music ensembles. According to the publicity machine, *Ten Hands* is 'an epic 1-hour journey into the collective imaginations of 5 musicians' (Topology Website).

Accordingly, the music of *Ten Hands* was gradually evolved through the rehearsal process. The musicians recorded their improvisations. They then transcribed these to the score. At each rehearsal they brought the scored fragments from the previous improvisation session to use as the basis for generating more material in their next improvising session, ‘mining’ the material for new ideas. Gradually, the group co-composed the music for the whole album as a collaborative collective, a move which saw it dissolve the singular identity of the composer while tracing a line of flight from the superstar composer assemblage and, in so doing, enacting a minoritarian becoming. In so doing, Topology makes an intervention into the idea of the fixed, singular genius at the centre of the musical work. As one commentator remarked, the work has ‘ten hands, five minds – working together as one’ (Eastside 89.7). The collective assemblage of enunciation says that ‘there’s nothing else quite like this happening today’ (Topology, *Ten Hands*, 2012).

5. Conclusion

In this article, I have explored the ways in which the superstar composer assemblage is formed and maintained. I argued that as an intra-assemblage of the heroic composer assemblage, the superstar composer assemblage is initially distinguished as an innovative, creative thinking machine. It comes to the notice of the music world by making a mark through its deterritorialization of a musical style or genre. The John Adams composing machine, for example, was catapulted to stardom when it pioneered a new style of minimalism, expanding the vocabulary of the early minimalist music of Reich and Riley. The psychosocial taste machine together with the collective assemblage of enunciation reinforced the composer’s superstar status, dubbing his music ‘post-minimalist’. The superstar composer assemblage, however, is also driven by paranoid tendencies: it makes composers highly competitive in the funding arena, and engages them in sophisticated entrepreneurial activities to promote their work. The funding and marketing assemblages plug into the superstar composer assemblage, and force the music towards mainstream tastes. The psychosocial taste machine pulls the music of superstar composers, such as Adams and Kats-Chernin, into the territory of popular taste, thus shutting down its capacity to open up the new. The superstar composer assemblage stifles creativity because it panders to the majoritarian taste machine.

I also argued that the inter-assemblage of the woman composer, which is formed from the heroic composer assemblage, is made particularly susceptible to paranoid flows of desire. The gender mainstreaming implication of the ‘exceptional woman syndrome’ serves the double function of isolating the woman composer from other women composers while making her subordinate to gifted men. Women composers have been formed by default as members of the woman composer assemblage in the Western art music tradition even although, as the point has often been made, women’s music is not a genre. The woman composer assemblage is linked to the heroic/superstar composer assemblage as an inter-assemblage. Women composers with exceptional talent deterritorialize the woman composer assemblage but through the mechanics of gender mainstreaming they are made subordinate to male superstar composers.

I have explored two possible sites in which the superstar composer assemblage potentially activates a becoming through the formation of two inter/intra-assemblages. The first inter/intra-assemblage is opened up by the queer community in which the stratifications of sexuality are dismantled. Following Agamben, I suggested that The Red Rattler can be conceived as a ‘coming community’, understood as a set of activities rather than a set of identities. Eschewing the innovative funding agenda, and capitalism’s paranoid dimension, The Red Rattler is conceived as a minoritarian becoming of queer. The performative dimension of the queer community at The Red Rattler was argued to be in perpetual motion rather than being based on a fixed, stable identity. And finally, the idea of the heroic identity of the composer is challenged by the co-compositional activities of the performing musicians, also understood as composers, in the group Topology.

In this article, I have demonstrated the ways in which assemblages create musical territories. I have shown that territories are more than just a space. They have a stake or a claim. The territorial assemblage of the superstar composer is not about to disappear. But I also suggest that there are deterritorializing impulses at work. These are challenging the fixity of the heroic masculine subject of musical composition. What is at play in this paper, then, is the striking contrast between schizophrenic and paranoid tendencies, and the ways in which desire flows, in the present and imagined futures, interact through a regime of capitalistic machinic assemblages. In the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari, it has been my aim to erode the superstar composer assemblage, positing it as an idea of an unknown, open future, and as an openness that is imagined as a becoming, which is the virtual ground of all change.

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