

Samuel D. Loveless

Self-Portrait

For either: 8 Cellos, 8 Pianos or 4 Pianos [with four hands each]

Contents:

Write up: Pages 4-6

Directions for Performance: Pages 8-9

Cue Sheet: Pages 11-16

Audio Score contents [link & audio file names]:

Link:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Q6YXw6qq4PM_HdWLeFwbBKPLduXyci-

Audio Score:

- a. Full Score (Players 1-8) | Self-Portrait
- b. Physical Happenings (Players 1-2) | Self-Portrait
- c. Mental Happenings (Players 3-8) | Self-Portrait
- d. Player 1 score | Self-Portrait
- e. Player 2 score | Self-Portrait
- f. Player 3 score | Self-Portrait
- g. Player 4 score | Self-Portrait
- h. Player 5 score | Self-Portrait
- i. Player 6 score | Self-Portrait
- j. Player 7 score | Self-Portrait
- k. Player 8 score | Self-Portrait

(Piano) Performance Extract - August 27th [audio files]:

Score:

- a. Player 1 | Extract - August 27th | Self-Portrait
- b. Player 2 | Extract - August 27th | Self-Portrait
- c. Player 3 | Extract - August 27th | Self-Portrait
- d. Player 4 | Extract - August 27th | Self-Portrait
- e. Player 5 | Extract - August 27th | Self-Portrait
- f. Player 6 | Extract - August 27th | Self-Portrait
- g. Player 7 | Extract - August 27th | Self-Portrait
- h. Player 8 | Extract - August 27th | Self-Portrait
- i. Full Score | Extract - August 27th | Self-Portrait

Recordings:

- a. Player 1 | Performance of August 27th Extract | Self-Portrait
- b. Player 2 | Performance of August 27th Extract | Self-Portrait
- c. Player 3 | Performance of August 27th Extract | Self-Portrait
- d. Player 4 | Performance of August 27th Extract | Self-Portrait
- e. Player 5 | Performance of August 27th Extract | Self-Portrait
- f. Player 6 | Performance of August 27th Extract | Self-Portrait
- g. Player 7 | Performance of August 27th Extract | Self-Portrait
- h. Player 8 | Performance of August 27th Extract | Self-Portrait
- i. Full Score | Performance of August 27th Extract | Self-Portrait

Write Up

Self-Portrait

In a lecture in late 2018 Roger Redgate said to 'challenge yourself [as the composer] and the listener'. He went further on to say that we should 'find something that's never been done before'. I believe music, much like art, is something that should 'challenge, question and not just entertain'; 'it should make people think'. From my interest in Robert Rauschenberg and his portrait of Iris Clert – 'This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so', I have realised that what a piece of art or music is, is up to the creator/composer, and if it is true to their vision it will 'work'.

The Piece

Self-Portrait follows an audio score format, with a cue sheet for each player indicating when their audio score will be heard. It is written for either 8 cellos, 8 pianos or 4 pianos [with four hands each]. The audio score format works in the same way as a graphic score; the players hear the score (via headphones) and have to portray it as they feel is most appropriate. This might be done through mimicking the audio score sounds, or by reflecting the overall mood, such as to play something disjunct and raucous when shouting is heard. The performers play and interpret what is heard on the score.

Self-Portrait is comprised of various first-hand sound recordings that were taken at 12am and 12pm every day in August 2018. The recordings would perfectly capture myself and my surroundings at the 12 o'clocks. I felt it very important that the recordings spanned a full month consistently recording at every 12 hour integer. Firstly, it enables the piece to be a diary/self-portrait in its truest, purest and richest form. It also required me to rest, think and allow for a period of gestation, enabling me to think about what the aim and outcome would be with the recordings.

The performers are asked to play and interpret the score in an appropriate and sensitive way, to allow the piece to be effectively realised. For example, if a conversation is heard, the performers might try to convey the tone/nature/meaning of the conversation in culmination with the voice tones and textures. What they play and how they play it should fully and exclusively depend on what is currently going (or what has just gone) on in the audio score. As a result, all types of playing techniques, extended or otherwise are encouraged – with the use of additional apparatus if felt appropriate.

When playing this piece one should realise that in essence they are playing me - this score maps out a section of my life in its purest form.

The score is split into two categories: my physical and mental journeys within August 2018. The physical state is the unedited 12am & 12pm recordings heard in parts (players) 1 and 2 (lasting for 36 seconds per day). Player 1 plays the recordings at a normal volume, as to blend in and interact with the other parts. Player 2's part is quieter than Player 1's (and all other parts) and represents one not being fully immersed in the physical moment – through daydreaming, or thinking about other things for example.

This piece is meant to be a true diary and self-portrait. As a result, I have pulled out certain aspects heard in the recordings that are the main things that make up who I am - appearing in Players 3-8's part. This makes up the mental aspect of the piece. These are then split into seven categories: learning difficulties, religion, values, memories, how I perceive my brain and other nuances that make me up. These are explained below.

Learning difficulties – dyslexia. Portrayed through use of making a recording 50% slower (how much extra time I get within academic assessments), occurs when myself or someone else is heard reading or explaining something.

Strive for perfection – music and creativity. Heard through the use of repetition, getting clearer and louder the more times something is heard. At some points within the score, the music is heard at 75% speed or less, commenting on the underlying learning difficulties and how it affects reading music.

Religion – God/beliefs. Once religion or God has been mentioned, that recording (or part of it) is heard in every 24hr period, sometimes being very clear, loud and resonant, and other times being distorted and faded.

Values – family/friends/ethics/morals. These are nuances that are very important to me, and that are always there. Effects are put on these moments within the score reflecting the mood of the conversation for example, as to make them stand out.

Memories – time. Certain things that have been previously heard, are repeated later on in the piece, as first heard or in a distorted/changed manner. This comments on memories and how we remember things of the past (consciously/sub-consciously or correctly/incorrectly remembered).

My perception of my brain – what I think about. This encompasses worries, negativity and positivity. These aspects are edited with use of repetition, portraying overthinking as the repetitions get quicker and more frantic. Seen within the score (more notably at the end) are rhythms and melodies created by buses, washing machines and various clicks/lost noises. Representing how to me the lost sounds become tunes in their own right, which I might start singing along with.

Other nuances that are heard and accentuated include technology, mentions of my home town and rhythms that got stuck in my head (from everyday objects).

The effects and manipulations of sounds used try to replicate what is going on in reality, or in my brain, with the seven factors above being the key foci. I felt this was necessary in order for the piece to effectively realised, and be able to tell a story and convey this self-portrait.

Self-Portrait is a through composed piece, with aspects and sound bites being heard throughout in different forms. As a result of the idea and nature of the piece, all eight parts interact together at different points. Sometimes this is to create additional melodies, and other times it is to accentuate what is going on within the audio score, thus two or more parts play it, or share it in a call and response format. Through the use of effects, and drawing out of various nuances, material is constantly developing, creating interest and allowing the piece to go through various transitions. The texture and density of the piece is ever increasing right up until the piece ends. The dynamic structure also follows this pattern, with a build and release in the middle of the piece. A huge range of sonorities and tones are present in the audio score, encouraging the players to be inventive and creative with their use of playing, and relationship with one another.

The instrumentation of either 8 cellos, 8 pianos or 4 pianos [with four hands each] was due to the huge possibilities available textually, tonally and with regard to range. Having the same instrument type allows them to sometimes meld wonderfully well and sound like one, and at others be so close or far away in tonal and textural colour that it is jarring.

Both the piano and cello have very large ranges which are flamboyant and can be easily manipulated. This is added to as there can be minimal tone imperfections/inflections as a result of them not being blowing instruments.

I deliberated quite a lot about whether to have the audio files left alone and un-tampered with, or whether to manipulate them. If I do an audio score again I would like to explore this concept more, and make some pieces where the audio scores will be changed and manipulated, and others where it is not. Some scores where it might just be me on a walk, and others when it might be telling a story of a life. As mentioned above the sounds making up the audio score in *Self-Portrait* have been manipulated in terms of length, order, texture and effects. I firstly thought about manipulating the natural recordings as a result of interest in the cubist movement, namely Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. In a more modern and contemporary sense I decided to manipulate the original recordings, as a result of watching Tacita Dean's hour film 'Antigone'. Here Dean displays various hours, days and even months on the screen (in the same frame – filmed with one camera and masking tape), some frames with permutations, and others without. I found this film absolutely captivating and very thought provoking, and felt I had to do something in the same realm but in music.

If I was to explore this style of music more in the future I would firstly like to record the audio score with higher resolution microphones, really allowing the surroundings to come into their own. Furthermore, if I was to expand this and make it a bigger work, I would like to split up the 8 different parts, as to access the full possibility of the audio score. This would be done through the use of one part playing foreground sounds (e.g. a conversation), and the other the mid or background sounds/'lost sounds' (e.g. a buzzing phone). I feel this aspect of the piece could really be explored and exploited.

Influences:

Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque and Tacita Dean have all been great influences for this concept and the composition itself. *Self-Portrait* is also heavily influenced by John Cage's *Radio Music* and art movements such as Dadaism and Neo-Dadaism and Fluxus, as well as Rauschenberg's 'Combines', and the process responding/capturing music in the form of drawing/painting/sculpting.

For this composition in particular I am trying to be in an 'art/film head-space' which will combine with my musical knowledge and expertise to hopefully create something very intriguing. This piece uses the ideals from Dadaism, employing existing items and makes them into a new piece of music. Rauschenberg stated that if an 'object itself was changed by its context, it therefore became a new thing'. Much like this, Marcel Duchamp used existing items to make new art – in this case my existing items are (live) sound bites. In an obscure yet quite clear way, I am trying to work in/find 'the gap between art[music] and life' – such as Rauschenberg did. The audio score is a direct transcription of my life in its purist, truest and fullest form.

The movement Fluxus was a late, but in the end very crucial influence, and changed the direction the piece was taken in. Fluxus' purpose as the founder George Maciunas said was to 'promote a revolutionary flood and tide in art, promote living art, anti-art'. It opened up the definitions of what art can be. This is partly what I wanted to achieve in presenting a score through the medium of sound. If it can create something wonderful, interesting and new, then why not explore it. Maciunas valued simplicity and anti-commercialism, with chance and accident playing a big part in the creation of works. As a result of recording where I am and what I'm doing at 12 o'clocks, chance and accident play a vital role in the composition of the audio score.

Furthermore, from a slightly different angle, Oliver Messiaen was a big influence to the idea of an audio score. He used to notate bird calls and write pieces around this. The BBC says Messiaen is 'the bird-mad composer who used birdsong to create some of the most startlingly original music of all time'. I think what I have done in *Self-Portrait* is not just listening and noting down the birds to create a piece, but have used my complete surroundings (both mentally and physically) to create one.

When starting out on this creative journey I wasn't sure whether this form of score (in the way I had planned to execute it) had the potential to create a cohesive and coherent piece. However, I took inspiration from Cornelius Cardew who stated, 'a composer who hears sounds will try to find a notation for sounds. One who has ideas will find one that expresses his ideas, leaving their interpretation free in confidence that his ideas have been accurately & concisely notated'.

Please Note: A rough recording extract of one 24hr period [August 27th] has been submitted, as performed on 8 pianos. This gives an idea of what the whole piece would sound like. With more rehearsal time, these eight pianos would combine to create a new interesting and exciting sound world.

Please Note: A complete recording is available, however due to lockdown circumstances the realisation and recording of it is not at the best possible quality. This is available on request.

Performance Notes

Performance Directions

Instrumentation

Written for either 8 cellos, 8 pianos or 4 pianos [with four hands each].

Please Note: The use of additional apparatus' as well as all types of playing techniques, conventional or otherwise, are welcome.

Technical Requirements

Equipment Summary: headphones x8, audio players x8.

How the score works

The audio score requires each player to listen to the score via earphones or headphones. Each player has a different audio score which directly corresponds to their individual part. As a result, each player needs their own audio player (MP3 player/phone/tablet/laptop/CD player) from which to play their score.

The Audio Score

The audio score format works in the same way as a graphic score; the players see or hear the score (in this case via headphones) and have to portray it in an appropriate and sensitive manner. This might be done through mimicking the audio score sounds, or perhaps by reflecting the overall mood. For example by playing something disjunct and raucous when shouting is heard. The performers should play and interpret the score as they feel is appropriate, in order for the piece to be effectively realised. This is a diary and self-portrait, I am made up of so many experiences, people for example, and so it is important this piece is as well.

An example: If a conversation is heard, the performer might mimic the tones/textures/pitches/flamboyance of the conversationalists' voices; or, might deem it appropriate to reflect the overall mood/tone/nature/meaning of the conversation and play something that portrays this. Alternatively, the performer may deem it appropriate to combine both the above aspects in order to effectively realise their part.

As in a traditional score you might have marks such as 'cantabile' or 'free', here these markings are evident within the score - from the tone of ones voice or a rash beep of a horn.

What the performers play and how they play it should fully and exclusively depend on what is currently going (or what has just gone) on in the audio score. As a result, all types of playing techniques, conventional or otherwise, are welcome – with the use of additional apparatus' if felt appropriate.

Cue Sheet

The cue sheet is in the format of a grid with 1 second integers in which every 5 seconds has been clearly marked. It indicates (via the orange boxes) when the audio score for each player is heard - thus when the players should be playing. Space is left on the cue sheet for the players to notate it if needed.

The cue sheet is minimal as to not distract from the audio score; it is there as a helping guide for the performers.

Dynamics

Due to the audio score format, each player is able to adjust their own audio player dynamic. As a result, I have indicated what the initial dynamic for each part is. The players should play their part in relation to this starting dynamic - when the audio score gets louder/quieter or harsher/softer, the player should play louder/quieter or harsher/softer.

Starting dynamics (as marked on the score):

Player 1 - mf
Player 2 - p
Player 3 - mf
Player 4 - mf
Player 5 - mf
Player 6 - mf
Player 7 - mf
Player 8 - mf

The Start

The piece should start with one performer signifying the start, perhaps through a breath - each player in unison should then press 'play' on their audio player (as to start the audio score). Alternatively, an application could also be downloaded onto the audio devices to link them up - meaning only one person needs to click play.

Once the audio scores have been started, 5 seconds of silence is heard (in all parts), allowing player 1 time to get ready to play after starting their audio score.

Performance Layout

STAGE:	P.I	P.VI	P.VII	P.IV	P.V	P.VIII	P.III	P.II
Audience				Audience				Audience

Key: (P. = Player)

Cue Sheet

Self-Portrait - Cue Sheet









