

notes, etc.

In addition to playing their normal instruments, at least three of the players are required in the score to play what are called *trios*. These *trios* should be things **instrumentation** **performance note** as metaphorical a way as can be imagined. Players may play the same surface **program note** **bio** **credits** the surface parts may be divided up differently among the players than is notated in the score, if the theatrical needs of the performance require it.

Eighth Blackbird 1 david lang

david lang (b. 1957)

composition as explanation

1. there is singularly nothing (8:05)
2. those who are creating (4:16)
3. of course it is beautiful (4:34)
4. beginning again and again (4:19)
5. it is understood by this time (3:48)
6. and now to begin as if to begin (5:44)
7. and after that what changes (4:14)
8. intertext (4:52)
9. the problem from this time on (9:12)
10. this then (3:08)
11. the time in the composition (7:17)

TT: (59:38)

RECORDED LIVE

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING



contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| instrumentation and performers..... | v |
| performance note..... | vi |
| program note..... | x |
| bio..... | xiv |
| credits..... | xviii |



instrumentation

flute, piccolo

clarinet in Bb, bass clarinet in Bb

percussion

glockenspiel, marimba, vibraphone, various drums

and instruments ad lib, 1 tuned tom tom, kick drum

piano

violin

cello

and at least three amplified writing surfaces - see
performance note below

score is in C

the duration is about 60 minutes

performers

Dalia Chin: Flutes, Voice

Zachary Good: Clarinets, Voice

Maiani da Silva: Violin, Voice

Ashley Bathgate: Cello, Voice

Matthew Duvall: Percussion, Voice

Lisa Kaplan: Piano, Voice

**performance note
by david lang**

composition as explanation is a piece of music, and a piece of theater. It has a spoken and sung text that is divided among the players, making the players both musicians and actors at the same time, and it has several actions that are specified in the music.

Because of this, it has certain performance requirements:

- A proper performance of the piece must feel like it is occurring in a theatrical space and not in a concert space - it can and should incorporate staging, scenography, movement, lighting, costume, and sound design.
- A proper performance will require the engagement of professionals from the theater world. At the very least, it will require a theater director to shape the performance.
- A proper performance will require the performers to move and to speak, in other words, to become actors. It is recommended that the players engage movement and acting coaches to make these actions as natural as possible.

- The music and text must be memorized.
- The music and text must be amplified, and a sound designer may be called upon to adjust both the sound and the sound effects during a performance, as needed.
- It is imagined and encouraged that a stage director may wish to add instructions and actions and scenarios beyond those that are already notated in the text.
Have fun!

In addition to playing their normal instruments, at least three of the players are required in the score to play what are called "surfaces." These "surfaces" should be things that make us think of writing, in as literal or as metaphorical a way as can be imagined. Players may play the same surface together or different surfaces, and the surface parts may be divided up differently among the players than is notated in the score, if the theatrical needs of the performance require it.





program note
by david lang

I have had the pleasure of working with Eighth Blackbird for many years now. One thing that has always impressed me about them is that they like a challenge. They have a very wide definition of what a chamber musician should be able to do, and this wide definition has frequently led them into making work that employs staging, movement, speaking, and theater.

When Eighth Blackbird asked me, in 2016, to propose a project that they could perform at the Chicago Arts Club in conjunction with the Club's centennial year, I started thinking of other kinds of actions they might concentrate on that would transform them. I began to think of what it would be like to make a piece that required them not just to act, but to become actors: in order to perform it they would be forced to take acting lessons, to study diction, to study the art of theater. In other words, my piece would not just ask them to move and to speak, but it would ask them to commit themselves to a rigorous education process that would transform them as performers.

Upon doing a little research, I discovered that Gertrude Stein had spoken at the Chicago Arts Club in 1934, after she had already become famous for her writings. I started looking at her published speeches as possible texts for this piece and settled on using parts of Stein's 1926 lecture

“Composition as Explanation,” in which a yet-to-be-famous Stein explains to her audience what she is doing in her writing, in the same repetitive, plainspoken, and circular format that she uses in her writing. In other words, she has blurred the relationship between content, form, and performance — in much the same way that I have tried to blur the musicality of Eighth Blackbird.

I have used almost all of Stein’s text in my piece, except for a few stray lines here and there and the parts of her lecture that deal with details of specific books she had written, which seemed too literary for my purpose. In particular, I wanted to highlight her implication that the changes in her writing were, in some measure, a response to the First World War, which had ended only a few years before and had changed so many of the artists who lived through it.

I want to thank Janine Mileaf and the Chicago Arts Club, where primitive versions of a few movements of this piece were performed in 2016. I want to thank the Estate of Gertrude Stein for their permission to use this text. I want to thank Anne Bogart for her direction, her coaching, her dramaturgy, and her vision for the staging. And I want to thank all of the members of Eighth Blackbird, past and present, for asking me to create it.





Bio

Eighth Blackbird moves music forward through innovative performance, advocacy for music by living creatives, and its growing legacy of guiding an emerging generation of artists.

Accolades include: Four Grammy Awards for Best Small Ensemble/Chamber Music Performance | The MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions | The Concert Artists Guild Competition Grand Prize | Musical America Ensemble of the Year | The Chamber Music America Violisnary Award | The APRA AMCOS Art Music Awards Performance of the Year.

Creative Output Includes: Commissions and World Premieres of hundreds of works by established and emerging composers | Fully Produced Theatrical Chamber Music Productions | Chamber Ensemble Concertos with both orchestras and bands | An Extensive Recording Catalog.

In addition to chamber music performance, the members of 8BB value their roles as curators, educators, and mentors. Beginning exclusively as a chamber music ensemble, 8BB has expanded in recent years to represent multiple mission-driven initiatives: Eighth Blackbird | Blackbird IV | The Blackbird Creative Lab | The Chicago Artists Workshop | Blackbird Productions.

eighthblackbird.org



The name "Eighth Blackbird" derives from the eighth stanza of Wallace Stevens's evocative, imagistic poem, Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird: "I know noble accents / And lucid, inescapable rhythms; / But I know, too, / That the blackbird is involved / In what I know."

Lisa Kaplan is a Steinway Artist. Matthew Duvall proudly endorses Pearl Drums and Adams Musical Instruments, Vic Firth Sticks and Mallets, Zildjian Cymbals, and Black Swamp Percussion Accessories.

Appreciation and gratitude to Jen Liang-Chaboud and Shure Microphones.

Eighth Blackbird thanks their families for their love and support. Special thanks also to the generosity of Angel Ysaquirre and the entire Court Theatre team.

And to Anne Bogart and Chris Murrain, thank you for your vision, trust and respect.

composition as explanation was co-commissioned for Eighth Blackbird by the Arts Club of Chicago on the occasion of its centennial, and by Duke Performances at Duke University, with additional commissioning support from Richard Replin and Elissa Stein, and from the Modlin Center for the Arts at the University of Richmond. Support for the recording provided by Cedille Records.





Credits

Producers Matthew Duvall, Lisa Kaplan, Emily Lazar, Bill Maylone

Recording Engineer Bill Maylone

Live Performance Engineer Matthew McCabe

Editing and Mixing Bill Maylone

Editing for Movements 5 and 11 Matthew Duvall

Mastering Engineer Emily Lazar at The Lodge

Steinway Piano Technician Josh Younger

Recorded September 28–October 1, 2023,
Court Theatre at the University of Chicago

Publisher Copyright ©2022 by Red Poppy Ltd. (ASCAP)
Represented Worldwide by G. Ricordi & Co./Universal Music
Publishing Classical

Photos Ryan Bennett pp. iii, ix (right), xii, xiii, xvi, and xvii
Alex Boerner pp. iv, viii, and ix (left)

Artwork original decoupage by Lisa Kaplan

Graphic Design Bark Design

Cedille Records is a trademark of Cedille Chicago, NFP, a not-for-profit organization devoted to promoting the finest musicians and ensembles in the Chicago area. Cedille Chicago's activities are supported in part by contributions and grants from individuals, foundations, corporations, and government agencies including MacArthur Fund for Culture, Equity and the Arts at Prince, The Negaunee Foundation, Sage Foundation, Irving Harris Foundation, and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. This project is partially supported by a CityArts Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events.

Illinois
ARTS
Council



CONTRIBUTIONS TO CEDILLE CHICAGO MAY BE MADE AT
CEDILLERECORDS.ORG OR 773-989-2515

CDR 90000 230 ©&©2024 CEDILLE RECORDS, trademark of Cedille
Chicago, NFP

4311 N Ravenswood Ave., Suite 202, Chicago IL 60613 USA
773.989.2515 tel • 773.989.2517 fax • CedilleRecords.org

CEDILLE PRODUCERS CIRCLE

Honoring the generosity and loyalty of those individuals and foundations who have supported our recordings through their repeated, major annual gifts to Cedille Chicago

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Anonymous | Eva Lichtenberg and Arnold Tobin |
| Douglas G. Baird | Priscilla Ruth MacDougall |
| Constance P. Beaty | Judy and Scott McCue |
| Beech Street Foundation | Graci and Dennis McGillicuddy |
| Barbara and Frank Easterbrook | Bonnie McGrath and Bruce Oltman |
| Kristina Entner and Edward Malone | Mesirow Financial |
| Marian and M. Carr Ferguson | Ginger and Jim Meyer |
| Frances and Henry Fogel | The Negaunee Foundation |
| Kent S. Dymak and Theodore N. Foss | Kathleen Peratis |
| Sue and Paul Freehling | Rachel Barton Pine and Gregory Pine |
| Janet Gilboy and John Schmidt | Pumpkin Foundation/ Joe Reich |
| Jane Ginsburg and George Spera | Jim Rogers |
| Susan and Sanford Greenberg | Beverly and Bill Rosoff |
| Barbara Greis and Howard Gottlieb | Sage Foundation |
| Irving Harris Foundation | Sybil Shainwald |
| Barbara Haws and William Josephson | Laraine and David Spector |
| The Julian Family Foundation | Claire and Edward Stiepleman |
| Barbara Julius and Marc Silberberg | Melanie and Ryan Uteg |
| Patricia Kenney and Gregory O'Leary | Peggy and Gene Wedoff |
| Rebecca and Arnie Klein | Eileen and David Zampa |
| Christine and Bill Landuyt | Jia Zhao and Hongyi Chen |