notes, etc.

In addition to playing their normal instruments, at least
three of the players are required in the score to play
what are instrumentation wr performance note as
metaphorical a way as can be imagined. Players may play the
same su program note if bio sur credits he 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 I 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) the problem from this time on (9:12) 9. 10. this then (3:08) the time in the composition (7:17) 11. TT: (59:38)

RECORDED LIVE

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING



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instrumentation

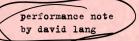
flute, piccolo
clarinet in Bb, bass clarinet in Bb
percussion
 glockenspiel, marimba, vibraphone, various drums
 and instruments ad lib, 1 tuned tom tom, kick drum
piano
violin
cello

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



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:

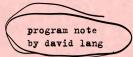
- A proper performance of the piece must feel like it is occurring in a theatrical space and not in a concert space - it can and should incorporate staging, scenography, movement, lighting, costume, and sound design.
- A proper performance will require the engagement of professionals from the theater 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.







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.

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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 Vioisnary 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, <u>Thirteen Ways of</u> <u>Looking at a Blackbird</u>: "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 Ysaguirre and the entire Court Theatre team.

And to Anne Bogart and Chris Murrah, 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

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