

Portals for solo violin/electric violin. James Fox (2015)

Performance Notes

Portals is a video score composed of a carefully selected and edited collection of recorded videos which document deliberate performative action in order to inform, not dictate, a fully prepared musical performance for solo violin or electric violin: the score should not yield any improvisation, real-time or other.

It is the hope that the performer will bring a highly subjective, stylised, and intimate personal approach to interpreting the visual material, creating music which is itself uniquely based on these individual experiences and realised through reactions to the semiotic visual stimulus which is presented; much like speaking one's own opinion. By presenting the performer with specific and instrumentally potent material it should be possible to provoke the imagination, leading to interpretation, which the performer can respond to on their instrument.

The material has been arranged to create a definite direction and structure which should be evident in the sonic interpretation also. By limiting the number of gestures presented to the performer clear and logical decisions should be more easily formed about how each visual gesture can translate into musical material from quite early in the process. These translations, once realised, should then be repeated as closely as possible whenever the performer recognises their presence: please attempt to reach a critical decision for each gesture and repeat this action as closely as possible each time the gesture is recognised.

The score communicates information such as bowing or basic fingering position but this information is intentionally ambiguous with critical elements being hidden from the performer: when fingerings are blurred, for example. When confronted with any uncertain or unclear information, the performer is asked to communicate an interpretation based upon current, previous, and surrounding visual information and experience. This should comprise primarily of idiomatic instrumental and musical

information, including pitch and rhythm, but will also include elements such as changes to size of image, and position of the image on the screen.

Please remember that when confronted with material which has been previously encountered, and for which a decision was made regarding an appropriate and authentic sonic realisation, the performer

must make every attempt to recreate this as exactly as was encountered in the first instance.

Your previous instrumental and musical experiences will guide you through this piece: trust that you will make the right decisions.

Please try to answer the questions presented in the video as fully as possible.

Structure

Portals has three clearly defined sections, divided by ten-second intervals, with each interval being followed by an introduction to the material for each section. Bowing information remains consistent throughout these three sections, except for section 3 which has some slight developments, and acts as one thread to bind material together. These intervals should be fully observed as well as being used as cues.

Summary

Rhythm, pace and tempo should flow at the natural pace which is given by the video, and the performer should make full attempt to follow all visual cues as closely as possible. All intentional sounds should be produced and transmitted on and through idiomatic instrumental interaction only, and not via any other means of sonic production. For example shouting (inside, outside, and away from the instrument) and percussion are not intended.

Portals attempts to acknowledge, respect, consider,

appropriate, and unite the efforts and work of composers and performers a-like, and to use these outputs to create a new piece of music.

Materials and Interpretations

It is important to remember that once a decision has been made regarding any aspect of sound for a gesture, this decision remains and must be adhered to as closely as possible throughout the piece: try to fix an idea/interpretation for each individual gesture for a final performance.

The Screen:

- Screen space (applicable to bowing only): if the image is closer to the left of the screen, bow closer to the bridge; if the image is closer to the right of screen, bow closer to the neck.
- Stopping and finger-string interaction: retrieve any pitch and articulation information required from the video gestures themselves.
- Glissandi: aim for clear trajectories at all times. Make a clear decision on starting and ending pitch and try not to deviate from this.

Processing Effects:

- Zooming could inform changes in dynamic range, bow pressure, finger-string pressure, or all of these. This should last for the duration of the visual stimulus, plus the speed or intensity of the changes should also be informed by the speed or intensity of the zoom effect, and whether this effect is linear.
- Play speed of the shot/cut/image could indicate changes to rhythm, articulation, and also pitch: tempo should flow at the natural pace which is given by the video.

Organisation of Materials and Narrative:

- Progression and development should be evident throughout the form of the video which attempts to inform a performable

musical structure and teleology.

- The natural motion of the video performer could also be considered when approaching other factors such as tone, timbre, and bow pressure.

Found Footage Credits

All footage retrieved from sources with Creative Commons licenses:

Little Joe - violin, nice Country play along. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUoUdUEXidl>

Sabina Rakcheyeva playing the violin at the 2012 SOAS Graduation Ceremony. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9CuYjMMHlc>

Layla Humphries Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/135605888>