

Family Portraits

by

Doug Davis

- I. My Letter to the World (Emily Dickinson)
- II. Untamed Portrait (Shona Doyle)
- III. To be away (Adele Davis)
(Interlude)
- IV. There Is Only Love (Doug Davis)
- V. Alleluia (Doug Davis)

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Doug Davis: Family Portraits

Composition title and movements: Family Portraits (2000)

- I. My Letter to the World (Emily Dickinson)
- II. Untamed Portrait (Shona Doyle)
- III. To be away in May (Adele Davis)
Interlude
- IV. There Is Only Love (Doug Davis)
- V. Alleluia (Doug Davis)

The initial impetus for this song cycle was a poem from my daughter. It began:

Chaotic canvas gushing imprecise

I immediately recognized she was talking my language and began the most precise matter of notating music. Hearing my efforts, my wife Adele handed me a poem that she created after the untimely death of a friend from cancer. We were her principal care-givers during her final seven months when she required 24/7 assistance. This cathartic song seemed almost to be already written. The first song, Emily Dickinson's "My Letter to the World" seemed to encapsulate a perspective of which I'm familiar. The fourth song was written with the hope that its sentiments might help my student who was facing the most difficult time for any family, the death of a young child. The cycle concludes with an "Alleluia" which includes an entreaty to return from paradise only to extend its glory, certainly a point of view I don't plan to "top".

Complete Texts for vocal works:

- I This is my letter to the World
That never wrote to Me
The simple News that Nature told
With tender Majesty
Her Message is committed
To Hands I cannot see
For love of her
Sweet countrymen
Judge tenderly of Me
(Emily Dickinson)
- II "Untamed portrait"
Chaotic canvas
Gushing
Imprecise
Screaming hues need no explanation
Brush stroke blue
Precise, brilliant, still
Yearning
(Shona Doyle Milazo)

III To be away, in May
To be gone away, in May
Means to lose so much

To miss the spring
To miss the news
To trade away—
Forsaking friendship's binding force
To escape the pain of pending loss
While spring's eternal life flows forth
Perplexing though it may be to me-

Why my senses reel
Why my balance tilts
So strong I've always said I feel
That I wish to cry
In May.

(Adele Davis)

IV There is only love.
There is only peace.
All things abide in love.
Let our love surround you.
Let our care enfold you.
Let us hold and comfort,
we who so dearly love you....
for within you is the light of the world.

(Doug Davis)

V Alleluia, alleluia
Alleluia, alleluia
Take flight from Time's frozen light
And float again on breezes blown
By wings of the earth's revolving
By life's ever enfolding
Into yet another alleluia
Alleluia

(Doug Davis)

Review: "Doug Davis exhibited a nuanced lyricism, carefully fitted to poems of mourning and transcendence, disciplined in their craft but free enough to express deep feeling."

Mike Greenberg, San Antonio Express-News

Family Portraits, selected as part of the Society of Composers Incorporated (SCI) Performers Series, was recorded by Lynn Eustis, soprano and Elvia Puccinelli, piano, on the CD entitled "Portraits" and was released by Capstone Records. (CPS-8792) (2008)

Flexible and expressive **My Letter to the World**

Music by Doug Davis
Text by Emily Dickinson

♩ = 44

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is a single treble clef line with a 5/4 time signature, containing rests. The middle staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a 5/4 time signature, featuring a piano (*pp*) dynamic, a triplet of eighth notes, and a *rit.* (ritardando) marking. The bottom staff is a single bass clef line with a 5/4 time signature, containing a melodic line with eighth notes.

Ped. *Note: Sustaining pedal remains depressed until a new pedal (*ped.*) or release (*) is indicated

The second system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is a single treble clef line with a 4/4 time signature, containing the vocal line with lyrics: "This is my let - ter to the world That". The middle staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a 4/4 time signature, featuring a mezzo-forte (*mp*) dynamic and a *Ped.* marking. The bottom staff is a single bass clef line with a 4/4 time signature, featuring a *Ped.* marking.

The third system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is a single treble clef line with a 2/4 time signature, containing the vocal line with lyrics: "nev - er wrote to Me". The middle staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a 2/4 time signature, featuring a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, a *Ped.* marking, and markings for right hand (*r.h.*) and left hand (*l.h.*) in the piano part. The bottom staff is a single bass clef line with a 2/4 time signature, featuring a *Ped.* marking.

9 *mp* *f*

The sim - ple News that Na - ture told with ten - der Maj - es -

p rit. ----- *a tempo* *f*

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

12 *f* *p* *mf*

ty Her Mes - sage is com - mit - ted To

mp *p* *a tempo* *cresc.*

Red. *Red.* *Red.*

15 *f*

Hands I can - not see To Hands I can - not

f *mp* *f* *rit.*

r.h. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* (similar to grace notes)

18 *mp* *mf* *rit.* *mp*

sec. For love of Her Sweet coun - try - men Judge

a tempo *molto rit.* *p* *rit.*

*Sixteenth becomes the eighth note at the return to tempo

Red. *Red.* *Red.*

21 *a tempo*

ten - der - ly of Me

a tempo *pp*

Red. *Sub.* *Red.* *Sva.*

24

(*Sva.*)

rit.

Untamed Portrait

Music by Doug Davis
Text by Shona Doyle

Piano

$\text{♩} = 92$
l.h. r.h. l.h. r.h.

f
And. sempre
(held down throughout)

10

Pno.

2

l.h. r.h. sim.

*

* Grace notes are always an upbeat to the precisely notated pitch of "arrival". Speed of grace notes is generally identical to the notated "flurries" of 7 to 12 notes per beat.

10

Pno.

3

10

Pno.

4

l.h. r.h. l.h. sim.

10

Pno.

6

l.h. r.h. l.h.

10

Pno.

7

p tr (4) *f* *mf*

Pno.

9

5

5

f *p tr*

l.h. r.h.

S

11

Pno.

11

3

f *p tr*

l.h. r.h.

S

13

mf *f*

cha - ot - ic can - - - - - vas

Pno.

13

mf *f*

7

l.h. r.h.

S 15

gush - - - - - ing

Pno. 15

3

sim.

9

9

l.h.

l.h. im - pre -

S 17

cise

Pno. 17

l.h. r.h. l.h. r.h. l.h. r.h.

6

5

12

ff

f

S 19

mp

Pno. 19

mp

mp

f

mp

f

f

sim.

S 22

f

scream - ing hues need

Pno. 22

24 *ff*

S no ex - - - pla - - na - tion

Pno. 24 l.h. r.h. l.h. r.h. 12 11 *ff* *p tr (#)*

26 *mp*

S brush strokes

Pno. 26 *mp* *f* *mp* 3/4 3/4

29 *mf*

S blue pre -

Pno. 29 *mp* 6 3 5 3 l.h. r.h. l.h. r.h. 3/4 3/4

31 *f*

S
cise
bril - 6 - - - - - liant

Pno.
l.h. r.h. *mf* l.h. r.h. *mp* *f*

34 *mf*

S
still

Pno.
mp 10

37

S
yearn - - - - - ing

Pno.
mf 3 *f* 9

(commence at vocal release)

40 *f* 12 *rit.*

Pno.

To be away

Music by Doug Davis
Text by Adele Davis

$\text{♩} = 52$

p

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

5 *mp* — 3 —

To be a - way, to be a - way in May, To be

p

Ped. Ped. *

8 slightly slower ----- $\text{♩} = 60$ (with motion)

gone a - way, gone a - way in May Means to lose so

p

slightly slower ----- $\text{♩} = 60$ (with motion)

pochiss.

Ped.

11 *mf*

much. To miss the spring; to miss the news; To trade a -

mp *mf mp*

Leo. Leo. Leo. Leo. 3 Leo.

14 *f*

way.... For-sak - ing friend-ship's bind - ing

mf

Leo. 3 3 3 3 3

16

force.

f

Leo. 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

(to D-D#)

(to B tr.)

25

forth.

25

(l.h.) *p*

mp

f

8^{vb}

Ped.

26

26

mf

p

pp

(8^{vb})

Ped.

29

29

3

3

3

3

(slightly holding back)

31 *p* *mf* 3 *p*

Per-plex-ing though it may be to me...

31 *p*

Red.

poco rit. *mf* $\text{♩} = 52$ *f*

Why my sen-ses reel; why my ba-lance tilts So

34 $\text{♩} = 52$ 3

poco rit. *p* *mp* *mf*

* *Red.* * *Red.*

37 (slight broadening) *rit.* $\text{♩} = 44$ *f*

strong I've al-ways said I feel That I wish to

37 $\text{♩} = 44$

(slight broadening) *rit.*

* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

(slightly faster)
♩ = 60

40

cry... in May.

(slightly faster)
♩ = 60

f

mp (l.h. thumb)

Sub-
Ped.

43

43

rit. - - - - *poco a poco* - - - -

Sub-
Ped.

47

47

rit. - - - - (♩ = 44) (slightly faster) ♩ = 52

mf *mp* *p*

(8^{vb})

Interlude

(A flexible musical flow should be maintained throughout)

Doug Davis

(♩ = 76)

p (gently accelerate into tempo)

(slightly slower)
(always with a subtle ebb and flow)

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. (Pedal each half note except where indicated)

This system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The lower staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature, containing a bass line with half notes. Pedal markings are placed under the first four half notes of the bass line. Performance instructions include a piano (*p*) dynamic and a tempo of 76 beats per minute. The first half of the system is marked 'gently accelerate into tempo', and the second half is marked '(slightly slower) (always with a subtle ebb and flow)'.

3

(softer)

mp

Ped. Ped. (as before)

This system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet of eighth notes. The lower staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature, containing a bass line with half notes. Pedal markings are placed under the first two half notes of the bass line. Performance instructions include a 'softer' dynamic and a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic.

5

(slower)

(pushing forward)

This system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The lower staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature, containing a bass line with half notes. Performance instructions include '(slower)' and '(pushing forward)'.

7

mf

Ped. Ped. (as before)

This system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The lower staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature, containing a bass line with half notes. Pedal markings are placed under the first two half notes of the bass line. Performance instructions include a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.

Slower tempo

(♩ = 54)

Musical score for measures 9-10. Measure 9 starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is marked *mp*. Measure 10 is marked *f* (intensely and slowly accelerating) and includes a 3/2 time signature change. A *ped.* instruction with a downward arrow is placed below the bass staff, with the text "(keep pedal depressed until the end)" to its right.

Musical score for measures 11-12. Measure 11 starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked (♩ = 63). Measure 12 includes a *rit.* (ritardando) marking with a dashed line and a hairpin indicating a gradual deceleration.

Musical score for measures 13-14. Measure 13 starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked (♩ = 44). The melody is marked *mp* and decelerates to *pp* (pianissimo) by measure 14. Measure 14 has a tempo marking of (♩ = 40).

Musical score for measures 15-16. Measure 15 starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is marked *p* (piano) and includes a *rit.* (ritardando) marking with a dashed line. Measure 16 is marked *pp* (pianissimo) and includes a hairpin indicating a gradual deceleration.

To Susie

There Is Only Love

with infinite care and tenderness

Doug Davis
(text by the composer)

1 $\text{♩} = 60$

pp

Ped. *Note: Sustaining pedal remains depressed until a new pedal (ped.) or release (*) is indicated

6 Slightly faster $\text{♩} = 72$
p

There is on-ly love. There is on - ly

Ped.

10

peace. All things a-bide in love, in love.

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.*

14

Let our love sur-round you. Let our care en-

18

slight caesura () rit. Slower = 63

fold you. Let us hold and com-fort, we who so dear-ly love you.

Ped. Ped. Ped. *

22

Slower = 60 = 52

for with-in you is the light of the world.

rit. rit. Sub-Ped. *

Alleluia

Doug Davis
(text by composer)

♩ = 96

ppp

p

Ped. (next pedal m. 45)

5

poco rit.

a tempo

10

10

14 *pp*

Al - le - lu - - - - - ia

18 *mp*

al - - - - le - lu - - - -

22

ia

26

mf 3 3 3 mp

29

al - le -

p

33

lu - - - - - ia

p ppp sub

37 *mf*

al - le - lu -

mp *mf*

8vb

41

ia

3

45 *mp*

al - le - lu -

f

8vb
Ped.

57

lu - - - - - ia

f

8^{sub}-

59

3

3

3

3

61

3

7

5

ff

8^{sub}-

63 *ff*

al -

slight broadening

65 = 80

le - - - -

67 = 72

lu - ia

fff *f*
(slightly slower) (♩ = 144)

Red.

69 ♩ = 116

To give the proper cross-rhythmic effect, one should feel the eighth-note as the underlying "beat". (Tenuto marks to clarify)

69 ♩ = 132 ♩ = 116 (as 3 against 2 rhythmically)

ff > *mp* < *f* < <

(slightly slower)

mp (slightly slower)

8vb -----

71 *f* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Take flight from Time's fro-zen light and

71 *p* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

mf

74 float a - gain on bree - zes blown by

74 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

76 wings of the earth's re-vol - ving, by

78 life's ev - er, ev - er en - fold - ing

80 in - to yet an - oth - er,

82 *ff*

yet an - oth - er, al - le - lu - - - ia,

f *mp*

ff

Measures 82-83: The vocal line begins with a melodic phrase in 4/4 time. The piano accompaniment features complex textures with triplets in both hands. Dynamics range from *ff* (fortissimo) to *mp* (mezzo-piano).

84

Measures 84-85: The piano accompaniment continues with rhythmic patterns and triplets. The dynamics are *f* and *mp*.

85

mf (Release implied eighth-note pulse)

Measures 85-86: The piano accompaniment features a melodic line with triplets. The dynamic is *mf* (mezzo-forte).

86

Al - - - le - - -

f

87

lu - - - ia.

ff

88

(*8va*)

Composition title and movements: Family Portraits

- I. My Letter to the World (Emily Dickinson) 2:06
- II. Untamed Portrait (Shona Doyle) 2:00
- III. To be away in May (Adele Davis) 4:13
- IV. Interlude (piano only) 2:02
- V. There Is Only Love (Doug Davis) 2:59
- VI. Alleluia (Doug Davis) 4:25

Date of Composition: 2000

Duration: 15:43 without piano interlude; 17:45, full song cycle

Biography: A summa cum laude graduate of the University of Tennessee studying with David Van Vactor, Doug Davis went on to complete his Ph.D. degree from Harvard University where he studied with Earl Kim and Leon Kirchner. At Harvard, he was selected by Leonard Bernstein as the student member of the Norton Lectures Discussion Group. Recent performances include "Psalm for an Orange Angel" by the Hungarian Symphony and "Token" for voice and orchestra featured at the Ukrainian "Contrasts" festival. Several of his compositions have been recorded by jazz greats including Chick Corea, Larry Coryell, and Bennie Wallace. Davis is a Professor of Music at California State University, Bakersfield. Davis was selected the outstanding professor at California State University, Bakersfield where he is the director of theory, composition, and jazz studies. In 2003, he received the WANG Family Excellence Award that is given to four faculty members chosen from the entire 23 campuses in the California State University system.

Program notes: The initial impetus for this song cycle was a Christmas present from my daughter. It was a framed poem that began:

Chaotic canvas gushing imprecise

I immediately recognized she was talking my language and began the most precise matter of notating music. Hearing my efforts, my wife handed me a poem that she created after the untimely death of a friend from cancer. We were her principal care-givers during her final seven months when she required 24/7 assistance. This cathartic song seemed almost to be already written. These two settings became the second and third songs in this emerging cycle. The first song, Emily Dickinson's "My Letter to the World" seemed to encapsulate a perspective of which I'm familiar. The fourth song was written with the hope that its sentiments might help my student who was facing the most difficult time for any family, the death of her young child. The cycle concludes with an "Alleluia" which includes an entreaty to return from paradise only to extend its glory, certainly a point of view I don't plan to "top".

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