

half-life

overpaintings for violin, double bass and soundtrack

for Helge Slaatto & Franck Reinecke

half-life is a collection of 40 40-second vignettes for violin, contrabass and soundtrack (comprising mainly of field recordings).

The piece is however designed in such a way that certain sub-sets of the total can be performed separately - like a pack of cards from which one only selects a few. (The total duration of all 40 sections is 26 min 40 seconds (excluding the small pauses between each section).)

There are however certain restrictions - at least eight sections must be played within a given concert and while they need not be consecutive, they should maintain the order of appearance in the score. The piece may also be split into two parts, played before and after the pause in a concert. In this case I suggest a grouping of sections 1-25 and 26-40.

Each of the 40 sound files is triggered by the violinist using a footpedal. This allows for a slight pause (a few seconds) in between each section, the precise length of which can be determined by the players.

The CD provided with the score is intended for rehearsal and orientation purposes and includes a fixed 2 second pause between each sound file. In performance higher quality (48Khz, 24 bit) soundfiles are triggered from a computer with a high quality soundcard.

The loudspeakers should preferably be high quality active monitors - e.g. Genelec 8030 or 8040 or similar - placed next to the musicians and slightly receded.

The recorded sounds provide a matrix - a canvas against which the instrumentalists place their sounds: Sometimes drawing precise lines or making tracings in order to bring out specific aspects of the field recordings, sometimes painting over those recordings with broad gestural strokes that emphasize their physicality; sometimes reinforcing a mood or resonance hinted at in the recordings, sometimes throwing in contrasting (musical) material.

In most cases loudspeakers are used in a performance situation as a means of amplifying the voice or musical instruments. In this case however the roles are somewhat reversed. The instrumentalists have the task of mediating the recorded sound into the performance space: Amplifying resonances, drawing attention to specific details, providing a physical presence even when they are not playing.

