

# What Happened

for three voices and computer

Ethan Hayden  
2010

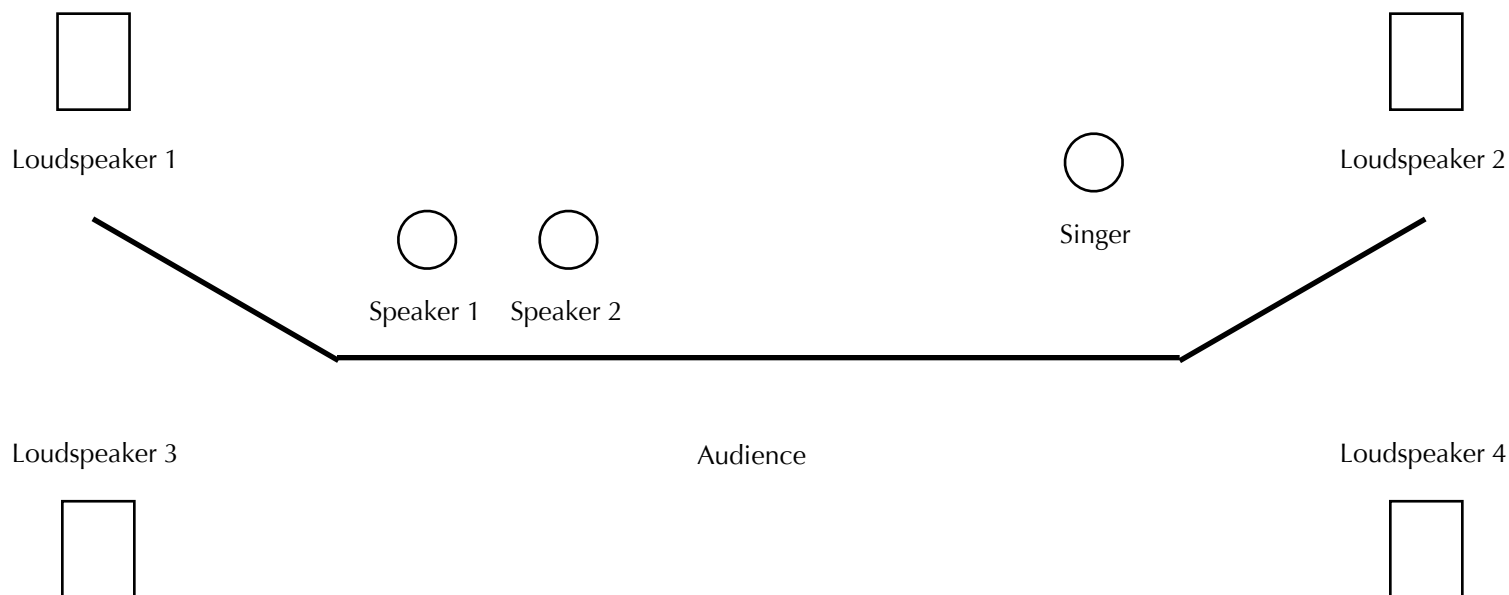
*What Happened* is a setting of the play of the same title from Gertrude Stein's 1922 collection, *Geography and Plays*. In this piece, the computer provides an interactive environment, or landscape, in which the speakers present the text and the singer acts as a commentator. Over the course of the work, the landscape provided by the computer becomes increasingly interactive, eventually taking on the role of presenting/representing the text; meanwhile, the singer's role shifts from background commentary to foreground narration, while the speakers' roles make the opposite shift. The work was composed for, and is dedicated to, Babel Vocal Ensemble.

**Instrumentation:**

2 Speakers/Narrators  
Singer (any voice type)  
Computer, 4-channels (Max/MSP)

**Duration: ca. 11'**

## Stage Setup:



## Performance Notes:

- As shown above, the two speakers should stand near each other in the foreground at one side of the stage, while the singer stands further back at the opposite side of the stage. Speakers should read from music stands or podia, singer may do the same or perform from memory. The four loudspeakers should be placed in each of the four corners of the performance hall, if possible. Loudspeakers 1 & 2 should be placed behind the performers, with 3 & 4 placed behind the audience.
- Time markings given above each system are general guidelines, and are not meant to be exact markers. The computer part takes its cues from the text and not the other way around.
- Speakers should intone the text in a very flat style, with little more than the vocal inflection common to every day speech. The only exception is in Act 4 ("the same use for bread...one regard in a season"), in which the vocal inflection should become exaggeratedly loud and dramatic.
- All sung texts should be sung in a very flat, expressionless manner, with no vibrato and little-to-no crescendo/diminuendo. Unless otherwise noted, all sung texts should be sung at a dynamic level of around *mp* - *mf*.
- Sung parts written in standard notation may begin on any pitch, as is suited to the singer's range (e.g., may be transposed lower for male voices).
- The speakers' sung text in Act 4 ("one hat...") may begin on any pitch, but both speakers should begin on the same pitch (or an octave above/below one another).
- Sung parts written on a three-line staff allow the performer to choose the specific pitch at which the text is sung, specifying only that the pitch is in the high, middle, or low part of the singer's range.
- The duration of the short pauses are to be decided by the performers, but should be within three to five seconds.
- The duration of the long pauses are to be decided by the performers, but should be within eight to twelve seconds.
- Vertical dotted lines show coordination between parts.
- Cue numbers for the computer part are given in the encircled numbers below the singer's part.

# What Happened

-A Five Act Play-

for Babel Vocal Ensemble

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## Act One

0"

10"

30"

Speaker 1:

(One.) Loud and no  
cataract. Not any  
nuisance is depressing.

Silence is in blessing and chasing  
and coincidences being ripe. A  
simple melancholy clearly precious  
and on the surface and surrounded  
and mixed strangely. A vegetable  
window and clearly most clearly  
an exchange in parts and complete.

A tiger a rapt and surrounded  
overcoat securely arranged with  
spots old enough to be thought  
useful and witty quite witty in a  
secret and in a blinding flurry.

**-short pause-**

Speaker 2:

(Five.) A single sum four  
and five together and one,  
not any sun a clear signal  
and an exchange.

Singer:



Computer:

①

-Turn on ADC/DAC

②

-Turn on Reverb  
-Send Reverb to Pan

45"

1'10"

1'20"

Speaker 1:

Length what is  
length when silence  
is so windowful[?]

**-unison-**

**-short pause-**

A shutter and only shutter and  
Christmas, quite Christmas, an  
only shutter and a target a whole  
color in every center and shooting  
real shooting and what can hear,  
that can hear that which makes  
such an establishment provided  
with what is provisionalary.

Speaker 2:

Length what is  
length when silence  
is so windowful[?]

**-long pause-**

What is the use of a sore  
if there is no joint and  
no toady and no tag and  
not even an eraser[?]  
What is the commonest  
exchange between more  
laughing and most[?]

Carelessness is carelessness  
and a cake well a cake is a  
powder, it is very likely to  
be powder, it is very likely  
to be much worse.

Singer:



(Five.)

Computer:

③

-Disconnect Reverb  
-Turn on Filter

④

-Begin Record (Buffer 1)

⑤

-End Record

⑥

-Begin Record (Buffer 2)  
-Reset Filter

1'40"

2'

2'20"

Speaker 1:

A silence a whole waste  
of a [dessert] spoon, a  
whole waste of any  
little shaving, a whole  
waste altogether open.

A special sense a  
very special sense  
is ludicrous.

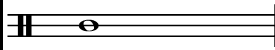
Suggesting a sage  
brush with a turkey  
and also something  
abominable is not the  
only pain there is in  
so much provoking.  
There is even more.

Speaker 2:

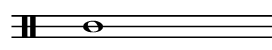
Urgent action is not in  
graciousness it is not in  
clocks it is not in water  
wheels. It is the same  
so essentially, it is a  
worry a real worry.

Paralysis why is  
paralysis a  
syllable[?] Why is  
it not more lively[?]

Singer:

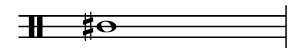


(Two.)



(Two.)

-1/2 step above previous note-



(Three.)

Computer:

7

-End Record  
-Reset Filter

8

-Reset Filter

9

-Reset Filter

2'30"

2'50"

3'

Speaker 1:

Any hurry any little  
hurry has so much  
subsistence,

it has.

-unison-

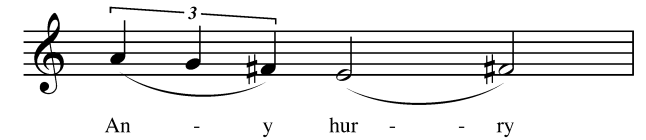
Speaker 2:

To begin a lecture is a strange way of taking  
dirty apple blossoms and is there more use in  
water[?] certainly there is if there is going to  
be fishing, enough water would make [dessert]  
and even prunes, it would make nothing throw  
any shade because after all is there not more  
practical humor in a series of photographs and  
also in a treacherous [sculpture?]

Any hurry

it has and  
choosing,

Singer:



Computer:

10

-Turn on Delay  
-Reset Filter  
-Send Filter to Pan

11

-Disconnect Delay

12

-Begin Record (Buffer 3)

13

-End Record

# Act Two

3'10"

3'25"

3'40"

Speaker 1:

One and a left hand lift  
that is so heavy that  
there is no way of  
pronouncing perfectly.

A point of accuracy, a  
point of a strange stove,  
a point that is so sober  
that the reason left is all  
the chance of swelling.

-overlap/in canon-

Speaker 2:

Four and nobody wounded,  
five and nobody flourishing,  
six and nobody talkative,  
eight and nobody sensible.

One and a left hand lift  
that is so heavy that  
there is no way of  
pronouncing perfectly.

Singer:

-short pause-



Computer:

14

-Begin Record (Buffer 4)

15

-End Record



4'

4'10"

4'35"

Speaker 1:

-short pause-

Speaker 2:

A wide oak a wide enough oak, a  
 very wide cake, a lightning [cookie],  
 a single wide open and exchanged  
 box filled with the same little sac that  
 shines. The best the only better and  
 more left footed stranger. The very  
 kindness there is in all lemons  
 oranges apples pears and potatoes.

Singer:

(The same three.)

(The same three.)

Computer:

16

- Begin Record (Buffer 5)
- Turn on Delay
- Reset Filter

17

- End Record
- Disconnect Delay

18

- Turn on Delay
- Reset Filter

19

- Disconnect Delay

4'50"

5'

5'15"

**Speaker 1:**

A same frame a sadder portal, a singular gate and a bracketed mischance.

**-short pause-**

A rich market where there is no memory of more moon than there is everywhere and yet where strangely there is apparel and a whole set. A connection, a clam cup connection, a survey, a ticket and a return to laying over.

**-long pause-**

**Speaker 2:**

**Singer:**

**Computer:**

20

-Reset Delay

21

-Turn on Delay/Reverb  
-Send Delay to Pan

22

-Disconnect Delay

23

-Fade in Buffer 2  
-Fade in Bass Recordings  
-Reset Filter  
-Turn off Pan

# Act Three

5'25"

5'45"

Speaker 1:

A cut,

what is the occasion for representing a cut and a slice[?]

A cut is a slice,

The reason that a cut is a slice is that if there is no hurry any time is just as useful.

A cut and a slice has no particular exchange it has such a strange exception to all that which is different.

**-seamless back-and-forth-  
(as if spoken by one person)**

Speaker 2:

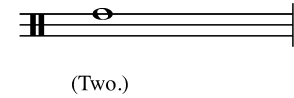
a cut is not a slice,

What is the occasion for all that[?]

a cut is the same slice.

A cut and a slice is there any question when a cut and a slice are just the same[?]

Singer:



Computer:

24

- Begin Chucker Record
- Fade out Buffer 2
- Reset Pan

5'55"

6'05"

**Speaker 1:**

only a cut and  
only a slice,

A cut and an  
occasion,

all this is so  
reasonable when  
every thing is clear.

**Speaker 2:**

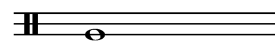
A cut and  
only slice,

the remains of a taste  
may remain and  
tasting is accurate.

a slice and a substitute  
a single hurry and a  
circumstance that  
shows that,

All alone with the best reception, all alone with  
more than the best reception, all alone with a  
paragraph and something that is worth  
something, worth almost anything, worth the best  
example there is of a little occasional archbishop.

**Singer:**



(Four.)

**Computer:**

25

-End Chucker Record  
-Fade out Bass Recordings

6'25"

6'40"

Speaker 1:

This which is so clean is  
precious little when  
there is no bath water.

A long time a very long time  
there is no use in an obstacle  
that is original and has a source.

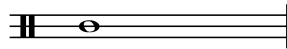
-unison-  
(spoken quickly)

Speaker 2:

A long time a very long time

Singer:

-short pause-



(One.)

-short pause-

Computer:

26

-Fade in Bass Recordings

# Act Four

6'55"

7'10"

Speaker 1:

A birthday, what is a birthday[?] a birthday is a speech, it is a second time when there is tobacco, it is only one time when there is poison. It is more than one time when the occasion which shows an occasional sharp separation is unanimous.

Speaker 2:

A blanket, what is a blanket[?] a blanket is so speedy that heat much heat is hotter and cooler, very much cooler almost more nearly cooler than at any other time often.

Singer:



Computer:

27

- Turn on Delay
- Turn on Filter
- Turn on Pan
- Fade in Reverb

7'25"

7'40"

**Speaker 1:**

A blame, what is a blame[?] a blame is what arises and cautions each one to be calm and an ocean and a masterpiece.

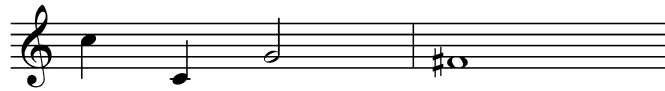
The objection and the perfect central table, the sorrow in borrowing and the hurry in a nervous feeling, the question is it really a plague, is it really an oleander...

**Speaker 2:**

A clever saucer, what is a clever saucer[?] a clever saucer is very likely practiced and even has toes, it has tiny things to shake and really if it were not for a delicate blue color would there be any reason for every one to differ.

The objection and the perfect central table...

**Singer:**



(Four and four more.)

**Computer:**

7'30"

**Speaker 1:**

...is it really saffron in color, the surmountable appetite which shows inclination to be warmer, the safety in a match and the safety in a little piece of splinter, the real reason why cocoa is cheaper,

**Speaker 2:**

...the sorrow in borrowing and the hurry in a nervous feeling, the question is it really a plague, is it really an oleander, is it really saffron in color, the surmountable appetite which shows inclination to be warmer...

**Singer:**

and ev - en has toes, it has ti - ny things to shake

**Computer:**



7'45"

8'10"

Speaker 1:

the same use for bread as for any breathing that is softer, the lecture and the surrounding large white soft unequal and spread out sale of more and still less is no better, all this makes one regard in a season,

*f*

one hat in a cur - tain that in ris - ing high - - - er, \_\_\_\_\_

one landing and many many more, and many more many more many more.

**-spoken quickly, dramatically, eventually shouted-**

Speaker 2:

...the safety in a match and the safety in a little piece of splinter, the real reason why cocoa is cheaper,

the same use for bread as for any breathing that is softer, the lecture and the surrounding large white soft unequal and spread out sale of more and still less is no better, all this makes one regard in a season,

*f*

one hat in a cur - tain that in ris - ing high - - - er, \_\_\_\_\_

Singer:

(Four and four more.)

Computer:

28

-Disconnect Delay 1

29

-Disconnect Delay 2

30

-Begin Record (Buffer 6)  
-Turn on Delay  
-Turn on Pan

8'15"

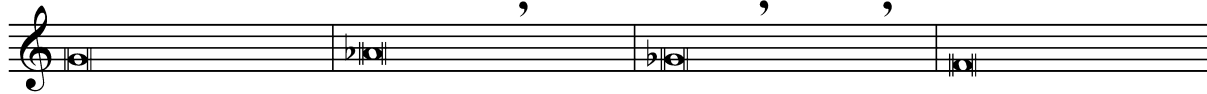
8'30"

Speaker 1:

Speaker 2:

one landing and many  
many more, and many  
more many more many  
many more.

Singer:



one landing and                      many many more, and                      many more, many more,                      many many more.

-long pause-  
(to interlude)

Computer:

31

32

- Begin Record (Buffer 7)
- Turn on Delay
- Turn on Pan
- End Records

**Interlude**

8'40"

8'45"

8'50"

8'55"

9'

9'15"

**Speaker 1:** -tacet-

**Speaker 2:** -tacet-

**Singer:** -tacet-

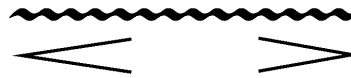
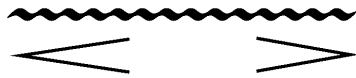
**Computer:**

**-with reverb-**

"A cut is and a slice (etc.)..."

"a cut and a slice (etc.)..."

**-bell sounds-**



**-bass sounds-**

33

34

35

36

37

38

9'25"

9'40"

9'45"

9'55"

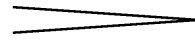
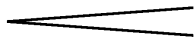
Speaker 1:

Speaker 2:

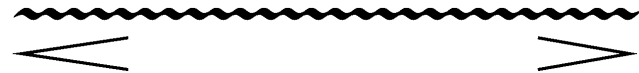
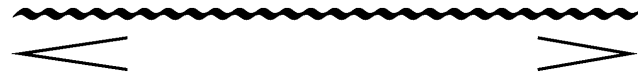
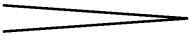
Singer:

Computer:

"A shutter and only shutter and Christmas, (etc.)..."



"...a cut and a slice (etc.)..."



39

40

41

42

# Act Five

10'

10'10"

Speaker 1:



(Two.)

**-unison-**

**-long pause-**

Speaker 2:



(Two.)

Singer:

A regret a single regret makes a  
door way. What is a door way[?]  
a door way is a photograph.

**-spoken slowly-**

Computer:



43

-Turn on Reverb  
-Send Reverb to Pan

44

-Play (Buffer 4)

45

-Freeze Playback

46

-Play (Buffer 1)

47

-Freeze Playback

10'25"

10'45"

11'00"

Speaker 1:

Speaker 2:

Singer:

What is a photograph[?] a photograph is a sight and a sight is always a sight of something. Very likely there is a photograph that gives color if there is then there is that color that does not change any more than it did when there was much more use for photography.

**-long pause-**

Computer:

"Five..."

48

-Play (Buffer 5)  
-Cycle through Snapshots

49

-Fade out Everything

50

-Mute and Reset