

Steven Webb

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Webb', with a horizontal line underneath.

Coded | De(c)oded

(2020)

Electric Violin
Electronics

Program Notes:

Coded | De(c)oded was created out of a fascination with the data-storage methods of the 1980s, in particular, cassette tape data storage. The discovery that data was stored through analogue sound-waves encoded in magnetic tape was immediately appealing, and I began wondering what this data actually 'sounded like'. This led me to begin exploring the spectral possibilities found in encoded visual data from early 1980s video games. Through spectral-imaging software I extracted audio samples from a number of well-known video games from the era, including: Pac-Man, and The Legend of Zelda.

The resulting data ended up sounding both as expected, (computer beeps and boops), and more haunting/evocative in quality. Through the piece, I tried to match the violinist to both the pitch/timbre and rhythmic material generated from the data and to juxtapose it through small romantic bursts, or through contrasting dynamics or rhythmic material. Finally, the idea that machine and human are unable to communicate through the same auditory language led to the creation of a dialogue throughout the piece. An attempt to understand one another through pure sound without the means to decode the information.

Duration: 9 min, 4 sec

Technical Setup:

Required Materials:

- Stereo Speakers
- Mixer
- External Sound Card
- Headphones with extended cable
- Laptop running Ableton Live or equivalent DAW
- 1 Distortion Pedal
- 1 Reverb Pedal
- 1 Delay pedal
- 1 Looping pedal capable of doing at least 3 loops
- 4 XLR cables
- 4 1/4inch patch cables

Click track along with electronics may need to be used with headphones to help keep the performer synced with the electronics. For live performance pan the click track 100% to the left channel, and use the remaining right channel for audience playback.

About the Composer:

Originally from South Africa, Steven Webb (b.1989) is a Toronto based performer, composer, and audio engineer.

Steven has written music for a wide variety of ensembles, and his repertoire includes choral, chamber, and orchestral music. His compositions and arrangements have been performed by: The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, The Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Thin Edge New Music Collective The University of Guelph Symphonic Choir, Exultate Chamber Singers, and Prairie Voices, among many others.

As a film composer, Steven has worked on a number of noteworthy projects including 'Chopin's Heart' for The National Screen Institute and 'Period Piece', winner of the best Canadian Short Film at the Toronto After Dark Film Festival. Steven is a member of SOCAN, an Associate Composer at the Canadian Music Centre, and a member of the Screen Composers Guild of Canada.



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Written for Camilla Caldwell as part of the 2020 1:2:1 Program

Steven Webb
(b.1989)

Violin

Reverb 75%
Distortion 25% → Sul Pont.

Haunting $\text{♩} = 60$ Sul A

pp *p* *pp* *p*

00:00 Panning Tapes

Electronics

Vln.

9 S.P. ord. arco

pp < mf p f

00:46 Tape Swish

Elec.

Vln.

16 Switch strings when needed Overpressure Very light bowing

ff *f* *ff* subito *pp* *f*

Elec.

Vln.

24 Flick body of violin B Reverb 50% Distortion 50% poco S.P. → S.P. sul tasto

p *mf* *p* *fp* *mf* *f* *ff*

01:38 Tape Data Beep

Elec.

3

32 *poco S.P.* *ord.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco* *Flick body of violin* *S.P.* *Flick body of violin* *ord.*

Vln.

Elec.

C Reverb 25%
Distortion 90%
Delay 50%

Groovy, Aggressive ♩=72

Loop 1

37 *Flick body of violin*

Blurry - freely, not strictly in time

Vln.

Elec.

02:29

Pacman Groove

Elec.

Loop 3

40 *poco S.P.*

Loop 2

Vln.

Elec.

Improvise overtop using short rhythmic bursts

42 *molto S.P.*

Vln.

Elec.

A tempo ♩=60

Fade Loop Pedal

D Reverb 50%
Distortion 90%
Delay 50%

Harmonic Glissandi

46

Vln. *p* *f* arco gliss. gliss. 3

Elec. 03:10 Distorted Rise

54

Vln. *ff* *ff* poco sul pont. gliss. gliss. 6 5 3

Elec.

E

Random Ad Lib. Glissing
Multiple, zig-zagging, overlapping slides down

F

Reverb 90%
Distortion 20%
Delay off

Slides get lower and softer

58

Vln. *p* gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss.

Elec. 03:39 Chaos 04:02 Tape Swish

G

Reverb 50%

S.P. → molto S.P. Trill slowly speeds up

66

Vln. pizz. arco *p* *f* *pp*

Elec. 04:38 Long Rise

75

Vln. *mf* *f* *mf* 5

Elec.