

## *Photosynthesis*

James A. Fox

### Intention

*Photosynthesis* is a composition for a solo performer which focuses on documenting the sounds that result from physical actions such as physically applying paint to a canvas, dragging an object across a floor, or making cuts into wood with a chisel. The piece is concerned with the sounds produced and the outcome of the action. Inspiration came from James Saunders *Surfaces* where the performer has to enact physical instructions given in the score.

The interaction between certain objects will leave behind evidence of their interaction as a bespoke score of that interaction: a score of the event. Be mindful of this.

Also keep in mind that volume and dynamic is relative; *loud* is only as loud as *quiet* is quiet, and that *loud* can still be intricate/delicate.

Performance of the piece is split into five objectives listed below. Please complete them all.

#### 1) Instrument

Choose your items to construct an instrument:

**IMPORTANT:** The items must be capable of leaving behind a *permanent visual* representation of your activity and give clues or indications as to how the sound was created and what interactions took place. For example using a chisel to interact with hard wood (in the way chisels were designed to interact with hard wood) would produce both wood carvings and shavings, as well as other evidence that is suggestive that wood was carved with a tool.

**SAFETY:** Ensure you wear appropriate safety gear if sharp, dangerous or hazardous materials or tools are being used.

The instrument may consist of several items combined to form one instrument. Some examples of these could be rubbing items, hitting/striking/impact items, scraping items, liquids, pitch-focussed, pencil and paper, rhythm...

Use any combination of items you wish.

When choosing your item or items, give detailed consideration to the initial intention for the items design, or the reason the item was invented and what this means to you. For example, a knife is designed to cut or stab (depending on the knife), and might be used to cut different things: what things can it cut? In what ways can it cut? How can I interact with it (considering these intentions) and another object to make sound?

Having an understanding of how the items can be used and combined for interactions is very important.

Create your instrument.

## 2) Space and Environment

Find a calm and quiet room or space in which you can sit or stand comfortably with your chosen instrument. Now go to that place with the instrument and any safety precautions you may need, and remain there for the duration of the performance.

## 3) Visualisation:

Read the material below, allowing your mind to visualise the scenario:

Imagine a cold night, a cold summer night. The preceding day was very hot, and there is no cloud cover in the sky, so it is a cold night; cold but pleasant with very still air. Although the air is cold, the soil holds some of the residual heat from the sun. Plants, grasses and trees are still responding to it and have been heavily active in the sun all day. Their activity is not yet completed; as long as the residual heat still lingers there is movement within the body of the plant; liquids and membranes responding to heat, moving slowly between tiny spaces.

As the night gets cooler, the activity slows to an almost meditative, static state. They must remain here for a while. Small bits of activity occur inside the plant, but it remains cool. Cool and still: waiting, but still active. Time does not stand still but the plants must remain here in this state for a while.

Slowly, the sun peeps over the horizon and morning arrives, bringing with it glorious summer sun and gentle warming rays. The rays hit the leaves of the plant, gently stimulating activity inside them. This activity gently increases, swells and becomes more active: slowly and slowly growing in intensity. This increase in activity is a slow and gradual process, one which is so gradual, it is almost undetectable but it is there: **evident in the existence of the plant.**

As midday approaches, the activity and energy inside the plant is continuing to grow. With the arrival of midday, nothing more fierce or frenzied will ever occur; an explosive, turgid experience, barely able to be contained by the body: violence!

This period is short-lived, and soon the activity in the plant diminishes to a less violent, frantic, but still active state: slowly ebbing and fading away into the golden dusk. This experience is not symmetrical to that of the morning, as now the heat lingers into the darkness, beyond the sunset, until the ground is cool again.

## 4) Creation

After reading this fourth point, visualise that same scenario from point three in your mind, this time without reading the material as you do this. As you visualise, attempt to interpret the plants response to the growing and fading light and heat, allowing these interpretations to become physical interactions via your chosen instrument. Focus only on the visualisation and the physical interactions, increasing and decreasing activity when you feel it is necessary. Try not to respond to or interpret any sound you make, just allow yourself to control the instrument in response to the visualisation. After reading this sentence, take a short pause to centre your thoughts, remaining in the space with your instrument. Now begin the visualisation and interaction, taking as long as you need to complete the visualisation.

## 5) Reflection

Once you have completed the performance, take some time to examine the outcome.