



ERIC CRAVEN

ENTANGLED STATES

realised & performed by

MARY DULLEA

ERIC CRAVEN

ENTANGLED STATES

For this album, the order of the pieces has been determined by the performer, within the constraint that all the odd numbered tracks are low-order, and the even-numbered are a mix of middle- and high-order.

Craven's Non-Prescriptive systems do not specify any particular sequence, this is a freedom granted to the performer. Extending this direction of thinking, the listener might wish to construct their own personal ordering of the pieces for listening.

Disc/set 1

1	I	1:44
2	II	2:56
3	III	1:43
4	IV	3:08
5	V	3:02
6	VI	2:52
7	VII	1:57
8	VIII	2:38
9	IX	2:22
10	X	2:56
11	XI	0:58
12	XII	2:15
13	XIII	2:06
14	XIV	2:40
15	XV	1:34
16	XVI	2:19
17	XVII	2:32
18	XVIII	3:07
19	XIX	2:24
20	XX	2:23
21	XXI	1:46
22	XXII	3:08
23	XXIII	1:41
24	XXIV	2:21

Total duration 56:41

Disc/set 2

1	XXV	2:25
2	XXVI	2:37
3	XXVII	2:16
4	XXVIII	3:26
5	XXIX	1:36
6	XXX	2:31
7	XXXI	3:08
8	XXXII	3:38
9	XXXIII	1:29
10	XXXIV	3:38
11	XXXV	1:02
12	XXXVI	2:40
13	XXXVII	1:59
14	XXXVIII	2:00
15	XXXIX	1:44
16	XL	1:55
17	XLI	1:13
18	XLII	3:24
19	XLIII	2:00
20	XLIV	2:19
21	XLV	1:33
22	XLVI	2:40
23	XLVII	2:18
24	XLVIII	2:32

Total duration 56:14

ENTANGLED STATES (2014-16)

notes by scott mc laughlin

Eric Craven's *Entangled States* invokes the metaphor of quantum entanglement to comment on the highly symbiotic relationship between composer and performer whose 'roles become subsumed, [their] individual properties, identities are united in a common goal'. For Craven, the parallels between quantum phenomena and his 'non-prescriptive' method of composition offers rich inspiration, animating the music beyond the page and piano, and out into the world. Yet, for all the complexity of nature that physics steadily reveals, Craven's music seeks simplicity. Not the banal ease of the over-familiar, but a deeply personal and sometimes jagged intuition for new paths through old territories. Paths that bridge worlds of music.

Quantum entanglement is a phenomenon of 'superposition', a subatomic world where particles and forces are intertwined to a degree that would be completely counterintuitive on the human scale. At the quantum level, objects are superimposed upon each other like waves of water, amplifying or cancelling each others' characteristics as they collide. For Craven, the relationship between composer and performer is similarly fluid, with his sparse scores acting as mediator, accomplices to art that subtly drive the performer with suggestions and possibilities.

It's important to briefly explain Craven's 'non-prescriptive' method of notation: for a more expansive discussion, see the liner notes for his previous recording (*Piano Sonatas 7 + 8 + 9*, MSV 28544). Suffice to say here that these pieces are composed to allow a continuum of performer freedom, from the specific-but-flexible low-order scores (such as pieces 'I', 'III', 'IX', and 'XXVII') through to the extremely free high-order works (pieces 'VI' & 'XXIV' are from the same high-order score) where Craven pares back the data—as he prefers to call it—to only pitches, and the performer becomes essentially a co-composer. The principle of Craven's method is that he, as composer, limits the specificity of the scores, not to be vague, but to allow the performer to fill the gaps with their own intuitive responses, allowing the pieces to be shaped differently by each performer according to their own histories and experiences. The scores act as scaffolds, prompts with varying degrees of specificity: like a good mountain, the scores give the performer plenty of footholds, offering multiple paths forward (and backward).

The notation is sparse to varying degrees, leaving out dynamics, tempi, even rhythms, but always specifies pitches because Craven, as a pianist himself, must begin from that fundament: the black and white keys under his fingers are indented as the basis of 'thinking' through music. While pitches are Craven's starting point, the player is not always beholden to their specifics, meaning that in higher-order works the player may repeat, re-order, alter, or even disregard the notes. Rhythms are specified throughout in low-order scores, specified for short cells in middle-order pieces, and absent in high-order. Other expressive elements such as articulations, dynamics, colours, phrasing etc. are left completely open to the performer; though Craven's own preference is often hinted at by nuances in the notation, there for the player to ignore or follow.

Yet for all this freedom, the composer's influence on the performance is still palpable. It is never a free improvisation, the score is still the impetus for a performance, and 'the piece' is a thread that winds through many different possible interpretations. Structure is perhaps the most challenging level of freedom for the player. While the low-order pieces offer only one path through the piece (to be coloured as the player chooses), the more-free pieces do not specify the order of events. Middle-order pieces give the player short cells (a second or two of music) to organise, repeating and omitting material as they desire, while high-order pieces simply present a long sequence of stemless notes, spaced on the page to allude to a possible organisation. Where the low-order pieces imply their expressive shape through the tension and release patterns in the harmonic and melodic figures, the higher orders are more like Rohrschach patterns, pareidolic puzzles where each new performer sees what patterns they want to see. The learning process proceeds by grasping at a loose strand of material from anywhere in the score, feeling how that connects to the player's own repertoire, and striking out from there. The performer's years of experience of playing other musics is diffracted through the gaps made by Craven's sparse notes.

The above-noted expansion of contrasts from the earlier sonatas also plays out in the notation. Many of the 48 are either entirely written-out (low-order) or have varying degrees of freedom (middle- and high-order), but equally many are hybrids that begin in one mode-of-performance then slip into another, or mix modes across their realisation. Craven's dimensions become porous and slide into each other. This recording takes advantage of this lack of fixedness by including two realisations of each of the middle

and high-order scores: pieces 'II' & 'XL' are the same middle-order score, 'VI' & 'XXIV' are the same high-order score, and there are others. 'IV' & 'XXXIV' are the same hybrid score that mixes low- and high-order elements, so the pieces have the same starting material—the low-order elements are movable but should be played as written—yet the character is so different; one sounds meditative and mysterious, the other pensive and restless. The styles too become more blurred, expanding the dichotomy of tonal progressions for the low order and spiky dissonances for the higher orders. Craven's language does not sit still. Some low-order pieces like 'XXV' move elegantly through a range of surprising versions of the same shape, while others like 'XXIX' run around in circles trying to find a way to resolve the inherent tension in their materials; until one personality overruns the others. In some of the hybrid pieces such as 'IV' and 'XXXIV', the high-order freedom is driven and structured by careful deployment of low-order motives within it, imprinting their character across the plateaus of stemless noteheads. By reducing the detail, even the smallest change in position or density can be read as meaningful; Craven can imply difference, changes of shapes and direction, to the player without explicitly specifying what these changes may be. In the hybrid pieces, the more specific middle-order motives cast a shadow on the less specific high-order material, which may be read by the player much like the 'tune' is understood in performing a jazz standard, on a continuum of possibilities as something that leads the player, or as something to push back against.

This connection to jazz is simply not metaphorical. Craven's music occupies an interesting tension between classical schools of piano composition (Chopin, Bach, Brahms and others in his case) and jazz schools (Brubeck, Basie, Lousier etc.) But unlike many jazz/classical crossover artists, Craven's music doesn't add a surface of jazz inflections to a classical model, rather he takes the interpretive freedom and impetus of jazz as a formal starting point, a ground that supports all of his subsequent decisions. Equally, his jazz influences are often audible in the harmony of the pieces, which range from lush neotonicity evident in the chord-extensions and rapid modulations of 'I' or 'VIII'. But for most of the pieces, the ghosts of Craven's non-Classical influences are incorporated into his own multifaceted voice(s). The Scriabin-like distended tonalities of 'II', the almost parodic (Bartok-like) broken fourths of 'III', to the spiky and cluster-driven soundworld of 'XLVI'. Even Schoenberg's iconoclastic serial technique rears its head, in the high-order score realised as pieces 'VI' & 'XXIV'. This marks a singularly unusual technique in Craven's writing, yet somehow feels at home here as another way of generating 'data'.

The sparse score—12 lines of 12 pitches each, presented without clefs (reminiscent of Cage and Wolff's open-clef pieces)—is pulled in startlingly different directions by Dullea's performances, one stark and reverberant, the other a flood of notes interspersed with distant palm-strikes to the bass strings of the instrument. The piece, and the work as a whole, ends with a locked-groove of the same 12-tone sequence fading into the reverberant distance.

To put Craven's work into a historical context is no easy task. His polystylism is partially the product of an innate facility for mimicry, but like Stravinsky before him, the allusions to other styles are always in Craven's own voice. His 'non-prescriptive' method then adds entirely new dimensions and multiplicities by pulling the performer into a co-creative role that is not normally broached in the 'Classical' world. Non-prescription bears similarities to some other experimental music approaches, most notable perhaps is Earle Brown, the 'New York School' composer best known for his extremely abstract graphic scores such as *December 1952*. But Brown was also a trained jazz musician for whom the input of the musicians as content-creators was paramount. Brown said that his graphic scores are 'an activity rather than a piece by me, because of the content being supplied by the musicians.'

Craven's wide-ranging use of performer-freedom can be related to many post-Cagean Experimental Music composers who expect the player to make their own decisions about materials and structure, such as Cornelius Cardew or Michael Pisaro. Those schools of composition generally expect the performer to leave the basic material as it is, not allowing them to disregard it. Equally, Craven's music is palpably different to the experimental musics which expect performers to simply play the part as written without expressionistic embellishment. Craven's music is all about the performer making the score their own, as an energy form that propels the pieces. That said, Eric Craven is not a part of any of these scenes, his work has developed largely in isolation, striving for a superposition of creative impulses.

'I love squeezing things out of an idea, a motif, I think that's the most wonderful thing! [but] now I've had to say something succinct'

After the expanses of his previous album, especially the vast landscapes of Sonata no. 8, this new set of pieces focusses on brevity; as Arnold Schoenberg said of Webern's miniatures, they 'express the world in a grain of sand'. While Craven's pieces are far from miniature, their focussed motivic construction gives each one a singular character, and across the 48 pieces these characters shimmer and change, each bringing out the facets of his language in a different light. In another way, this entire collection also harks back to Sonata no.7 as a precursor in miniature-writing. That 5-movement sonata's alternating low- and high-order movements contrasted a motoric passacaglia in its outer movements with spikier and more fragmented inner movements. In this new collection this same relationship plays out on a much larger canvas. The change of scale is palpable, as the direct contrasts of the earlier piece—necessarily direct when there are only five movements to contrast—become here a world of subtle difference and nuance where hard edges fray and certainties evaporate.

In this new set, the low-order pieces especially are often strongly motivic, driven by a spine-like rhythmic figure that supports the taut winding of Craven's harmonic thrusts and lunges. The Debussyesque suspended-pathos of 'XIX' undergoes myriad twists and turns of its kaleidoscopic harmony as it rides on an unchanging waltz-time tuplet. 'XI' follows the same form of twisting modulations, but with a different flavour of harmony where bright metallic chords ring their way along two different ascents of the same tonal peak. 'V' on the other hand is more like a spring coiling and uncoiling across its length; with even the slow and quiet receding of the final minute sounding like it could explode into motion again in a hair's breadth. Despite the lack of notational detail, motifs are still present in the higher-order works, they have simply been fragmented more by the increased entangling of the performer's influence. Here, the motives are often more timbral in nature because the reduced notation opens-up the possibilities for manipulation of playing techniques. The high-order 'XXXII' takes this to an extreme, dramatically contrasting two materials; ringing sustained sounds underpin biting staccato attacks. In 'XXXII', the sustained material is manifest across a range of techniques from strummed piano strings at the opening, to crashing clusters, all the while staccato gestures dart between and across the sonorous backdrop. The influence of the pianist Mary Dullea is critical here in taking Craven's open notation as an invitation to expand the piano palette across many timbral planes.

This is an album of ghosts, allusions to other composers, to old friends, to all the sounds that pass through the Stravinskian ‘vessel’ of Eric Craven’s mind and fingers. As ghosts are a reflection of ourselves, so Craven’s ghosts are a reflection of him through the lens of his interpreter, pianist Mary Dullea. By his will, the pianist is given free-rein to shape and colour the ‘dots’ as she sees fit; guided both by the hints of the composer’s notation, but also by her own ghosts, brought to the surface through Craven’s subtle invocations.

All the odd-numbered tracks are realisations of Low-order scores.

The 12 middle- and high-order scores all have paired realisations (two realisations of the same score):

II/XL	Middle-order
IV/XXXIV	Low-order + High-order (hybrid)
VI/XXIV	High-order
VIII/XLIV	Middle-order
X/XX	Middle-order
XII/XLVI	Middle-order + High-order (hybrid)
XIV/XXXVI	Middle-order
XVI/XXXVIII	Middle-order
XVIII/XXVIII	Low-order + High-order (hybrid)
XXII/XXVI	Middle-order
XXX/XLII	Middle-order
XXXII/XLVIII	High-order

Scott Mc Laughlin

PERFORMER'S PERSPECTIVES

notes by mary dullea

A performer's relationship with the score and their relationship with the composer of that work do not necessarily offer the same starting points when it comes to learning and preparing new work. And in the case of working with and performing Eric Craven's *Entangled States* this certainly rings true. It is an experience that delves deeply into the musical histories of the pianist with possible hints at the musical histories of the composer.

Craven's DNA (so to speak) is to be found in every note and how he presents this information. Hints are provided through the crystallising of material into a few pitches with a carefully crafted amount of space in between. He pays attention to where motifs are placed in order to offer the potential of catching the eye of the pianist and other almost subliminal messages encourage the performer to engage with elements of the material. Yet the performer knows that it is truly up to him/her alone as to where the interpretation will go, where to take it, what to do with it.

Improvisation, or the suggestion that performances and interpretations of these non-prescriptive scores could be classed as same (considering the decisions left up to the pianist), does constitute a period of 'play' in the potentially open-ended preparation and practice period as the pianist becomes intimately acquainted with the notes on the page, discovering the messages they contain and where they might lead. This could last indefinitely. But there are constraints ranging from durations to deadlines. And this necessitates objectivity and reflective practice in order to ensure a performance that is worthwhile and credible: one that is unique but not an indulgent musing better kept indoors in the privacy of a practice studio.

There are references to and obvious suggestions of influences, both absorbed by Craven and that are important to him. In the high-order pieces, the performer is constantly reminded too, by the nature of the notation, of the duty to create something new, and *pastiche* is not something that the pianist necessarily seeks to employ nor indeed is qualified to do well.

The actual real time event of performing these pieces is one that taps into previous experiences, repertoire, knowledge base and musical life. There is an almost symbiotic relationship with the input of the composer: it challenges yet encourages the best from the performer in drawing out tautness of structure (in the case of these pieces, of a short duration) and, with an intimate knowledge of the notated scores and their open-ended suggestions, the freedom to let the interpretation ‘fly’.

Any performance is a forward moving event. The pianist moves on from what they have just played or from the point on the score on which they have been focusing. No two versions are ever the same in terms of pitch and rhythm with this high-order approach and even though it is possible to write out a more clearly scripted set of instructions, which would allow for one possible ordering of data, there is a certain frisson to be felt in the moment of alertness and responsiveness to this multi-layered information. The performer has to, in a sense, ‘find’ what they are looking for.

‘Flow’ is a term which can be applied or assessed on a number of levels such as: state of mind during performance; lack of impediments both physically and cognitively; the compositional process; improvisation; playing from memory. The experience of working with the scores of *Entangled States* could be understood as similar to opening a conduit into this moment at which the performer has arrived. There simply cannot be barriers of unfamiliarity, indecision of physical movement or keyboard manoeuvres, restrictions in encompassing the orchestral palette of the piano’s capacity or anything less than 100% commitment to each little structure, even more telling in the twice interpreted high-order pieces in this collection.

Exploring and creating performances from the amount of material presented in these 48 pieces in a concentrated fashion allows for, and indeed propagates, a sense of cross-referencing. This is both on a conscious and unconscious level. It is not a process that can be accelerated. There is a point at which the performer needs to allow him/herself to be almost taken over by the scores. The more time spent with the material, the more possibilities there are. And that is the challenge in creating and arriving at performances that are truly representative of the craft of the composer and the collaboration with the performer. One cannot serve the other, but together can arrive at something unique and hopefully worthwhile.

Mary Dullea

MARY DULLEA

As soloist and chamber musician, Irish pianist Mary Dullea performs internationally at venues including London's Wigmore Hall, Casa da Musica (Porto), Shanghai Oriental Arts Centre, Phillips Collection Washington D.C., Symphony Space New York City, Palazzo Albrizzi Venice (Italy), Johannesburg Music Society and National Concert Hall Dublin. Festival appearances include City of London, Cheltenham, St. Magnus International Festival, Huddersfield, Aldeburgh, Sound Scotland as well as Lodi Festival (Italy), TRANSIT Festival (Leuven) and National Arts Festival (South Africa). Her frequent broadcasts include BBC Radio 3, Radio 4, RTHK, RTÉ Lyric FM, WNYC, Radio New Zealand and Sky Arts, Irish, French, Austrian and Italian television. Concerto appearances include RTÉ Concert Orchestra, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and KZN Philharmonic Orchestra.

Mary's recordings have been released on several labels including labels NMC, Delphian Records, Resonus Classics, Altarus, Col Legno, MNR, Naxos, Lorelt and Divine Art/Métier. Recent collaborations include premiere recordings of Philip Glass for Orange Mountain Music and projects in 2018 include a second instalment of French piano trios for Resonus Classics, a Gerald Barry portrait album for Mode Records and the release of *Marlaco* by Simon Mawhinney.

A sought-after interpreter of new music, Mary's expansive repertoire covers the standard piano literature as well as an ever-increasing amount of 20th- and 21st- century compositions, many of which are dedicated to her. Her piano trio, Fidelio Trio, are passionate advocates for piano trio repertoire around the world. Constantly commissioning new works, composers that the Trio have worked closely with include Johannes Maria Staud, Gerald Barry, Donnacha Dennehy, Joe Cutler, Judith Weir, Kevin Volans and Charles Wuorinen, to name but a few.

Mary was the curator of Soundings (an annual UK/Austrian collaborative new music festival) at the Austrian Cultural Forum London from 2008 to 2016. She has served on the jury of 'Schubert und die Musik der Moderne' International Chamber Music Competition in Graz, Austria.

In 2014 she founded 'Chamber Music on Valentia', an annual chamber music festival in Co. Kerry, Ireland, with the aim of bringing chamber music performances of international standing, innovative programming and outreach and engagement programmes to this unique place.

Mary's own studies were at The Royal College of Music, London on the Edith Best Scholarship, Goldsmiths, University of London (MMus in Contemporary Music Studies) and her PhD in Performance is from Ulster University. Mary was on the piano faculty of Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama for 9 years. She previously held the position of Director of Performance at University of Sheffield and since 2015 she has held this position at Royal Holloway, University of London.



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ERIC CRAVEN

In the March 2013 edition of *The Wire* Philip Clark includes Eric Craven in an article titled "Composers Anonymous". He might just as well have added "invisible" to that title. He leaves very little musical footprint and offers no history other than he taught music and mathematics in secondary schools in his home town of Manchester. He has composed music since his teenage years but, until recently, rarely sought to introduce his music to a wider audience either through performance or publication.

His preference has always been to work in isolation without reference to or connection with any other musicians.

In 2011, the late and deeply missed Anthony Goldstone, who had kept in touch with Eric since their college days, introduced him to me and after some encouragement and the addition of magic by Mary Dullea, the first album of Craven's music – SET for piano – was released on Métier and the score published by our associate company Brandon Music.

For many years Craven has exclusively focused his attention upon the development of the compositional and performance techniques associated with his Non-Prescriptive style of music which, in essence, seeks to realign the relationship between composer and performer. Essential to SET, this technique was also used to wonderful effect in Craven's piano sonatas, recorded again by Mary and released in 2014, to substantial critical praise.

This new collection, *Entangled States*, reflects Eric Craven's fascination, which I share, for the wonders of modern quantum physics and its related theories about the underlying and very weird nature of existence – in which he sees a parallel to the relationship between composer and performer. Quiet and unassuming but with an ineffable and inextinguishable wit, Eric is not only a Divine Artist but I am honoured to call him a dear friend.

Stephen Sutton
CEO, Divine Art Recordings Group





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Photos of Eric Craven on page 12 by Peter Vodden (upper)
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Music by Eric Craven performed by Mary Dullea



SET FOR PIANO MSV 28525

"Craven's 12 pieces possess more than a modicum of musical interest ... I was intrigued ...and recommend it to those prepared to take a punt."

★★★★★

Robert Matthew-Walker (Musical Opinion)



PIANO SONATAS 7,8 & 9 MSV 28544

"The sureness of touch, variety of nuance, and impressive flexibility that Dullea brings to her gorgeously engineered performances reveal a deep level of commitment and care to Craven's aesthetic"

Jed Distler (Classics Today)

"Enormously interesting work, full of fine moments, played brilliantly by Mary Dullea realising Craven's ideas to remarkable effect."

Bruce Reader (The Classical Reviewer)