

The Correct Proportions of Eva

(Partita for two women and a violin)

by Ryan McFadyen

Fifth Draft, September 2000
Copyright © Ryan McFadyen 2000

**Specially commissioned by Allen Hall,
Theatre Studies Department,
University of Central Otago.**

Materials used in this piece;
Ryan McFadyen
Johann Sebastian Bach (post-humus)
24 colouring pencils
the part of Eva originally performed by
Canon A4 40gsm Office High White

Notes;

The Correct Proportions of Eva came about after a writing experiment I invented and then tried out with a few other playwrights at World Interplay '99 to do with writing in direct response to music and visual stimuli.

I played a piece of music and the other writers and I responded to it with drawings, and then used these drawings as a direct 'map' for our words on the page. (Very roughly if someone was writing across the white page and encountered a blue, spiky shape, they would reflect this new dynamic in their sentence by using words they felt were bluer, spikier etc.)

The experiment was very successful for the playwrights and I who gave it a go, we found we were breaking out of our usual sentence structures, characterizations, use of language etc.

It occurred to me that to take the idea to it's total possibility, you could write a whole play through music-response, music-response, without ever making left-brained 'decisions' or censoring your instincts.

When Lisa Warrington contacted me to commission a piece for Allen Hall's lunchtime theatre, I had just had a bit of a grim time with audience response to *F'All* in Wellington. I was so scared of writing anything in case I got it 'wrong' that I found myself totally paralysed at my desk. Then I remembered the Interplay experiment and though it was the perfect opportunity to make something of my writing 'block' – to write a whole play where I didn't have

to, where in fact it was crucial that I wasn't *allowed* to make decisions about where it was going, what it was about.

I knew I wanted to write a piece for two women who shared a soul or who shared parallel lives somehow, but apart from that I had no real parameters.

I found a piece of music that evoked something in me that partly reminded me of the things I like about Dunedin, but also that sounded like it might be a person in itself. I used the Ciaccona of Bach's *Partita Number 2 in D Minor* as my starting point (all of my starting points) and lurched tentatively into it.

All of the stories, the structure, the characters and the imagery in the play came directly out of the music, or rather in my response to the music. From there I distilled the play down to a smoother, slightly more coherent piece.

I am deeply indebted to James Hadley, who so bravely directed the original season of *Eva* at Allen Hall, and also to Stayci Taylor and Clare Adams, who played *Eva* and *Eva2* respectively. Their enthusiasm and support was an absolute blessing, and their willingness to play with me during rehearsals made me feel cool. James' belief in the work and the working method, which he carried right through to production (even the set was in part comprised of gobos of Bach's original handwritten score for the music) was nothing short of a godsend for my writing confidence. Someone wants to give him a million bucks one of these days.

Ryan McFadyen,
September 2000

MUSIC: violinist tuning up

EVA and EVA2 are on opposite sides of the stage. Either the space is divided into two identical halves or they share the same environment but do not acknowledge each other. They do not necessarily look physically alike. In dress EVA2 is tidier than EVA. EVA has a punkish look about her.

Both are at work - EVA2 is in a life modeling pose before an art class, EVA works on a tattoo on a young man's shoulder, the tattoo pen buzzes in fits and starts.

EVA2 is counting aloud as she breathes to pass the time...the two women breathe in unison

EVA2: (with breaths) 99...98...97...96...95...94...93...(trails off, coughs, starts again)
99...98...97...96...95...94...93...92...91...90...79...78...

Pause

EVA2: Shit. I'm always doing that. I always forget the eighties.

MUSIC: 0.00-0.15

EVA: Sometimes, when things are quiet like this, I feel a sensation in my chest like an extra heartbeat under my own. I have this inexplicable unexplainable feeling that there is something in me hoping to get out. I often observe the swelling of sentences rising unguarded in my throat. Things are said in an unguarded moment, let slip like an accident and blurted out. I sometimes hear myself speak in a voice that seems not my own. Nobody else seems to notice it.

MUSIC: 0.16-0.28

EVA2: Pregnant. I'm pregnant. I'm three months in. Yeah. Hah – *no*. My mistake. Four months. Growing in me one tiny cell at a time. Amazing, it really makes your mind boggle how these things just happen. Unassisted. Well, obviously not to start with, but now. It's amazing. In the middle of all this skin there is a tiny, tidy parcel hammering and nailing and putting up a house for a soul. A brand new person. It'll be half shaped like me and half shaped like Eric. Heart shaped like Eric. My love. My partner. Fiancée.

EVA2 returns to her pose.

67...66...65...64...63...62...61...

EVA: (*unseen/half lit*) I get the feeling it is the extra rhythm in me beating itself out aloud.

EVA2: Only been doing this a couple of months now. Life modeling. Felt like a change. Helps that I've been on the other side of the picture as well. As a student I mean. Helps to know what I look like from the outside.

EVA: What am I talking about?

EVA2: Nothing worse than having to draw a big flat back with no limbs sticking out.

EVA: Fuck. I've...

EVA2: 59...58...57...56...55...54...(continues...)

EVA: I'm babbling in my head again. Concentrate on the work, Eva.

EVA goes on breathing with EVA2

Weird job.

EVA2 gets distracted, self conscious...loses count. She shuffles slightly, sighs fast and hard and makes a grumbling noise.

EVA: I fell into it as they say.

EVA2: I always loved drawing. As a kid. I did really well in art at school, then I went to study design at Polytech - wanted to be an illustrator. Children's books.

EVA: This isn't that much of a jump really. I mean, it's all illustrative, isn't it? It's quite creative in some ways.

Today for example I'm doing a (*looks at it*) naked chick holding a baby's rattle. (*EVA2 is definitely feeling self conscious now*) Yeah well.

EVA concentrates on what she is doing, EVA2 starts to stare hard into the floor. She is partly aware of the next section of dialogue

EVA: It's all linework this one. Just an outline. Like a cartoon. In between, where there should be everything there's just space. Hollow, flat, unreal naked chick. He probably got it out of a comic book. One of those porn ones with the cover of an airbrushed-woman-on-a-dragon-with-a-sword-and-a-crystal numbers. Shouldn't criticize really. How else should she be drawn? I mean, how *can* you draw a realistic picture of a person if you see of them is the outside? When I was back in school the lecturer used say 'suggest the masses at work inside the body', capture the 'interior movement', the 'unseen dimensions'. I could never quite understand what she meant by that.

What are we made of on the inside after all? What do you call the substance? What is it that fleshes out your existence?

EVA2: (*absentminded*) If I exist...even if such a term applies - where am I?

EVA: How might someone capture with a pencil this extra rhythm inside me. A secret, maybe realer me than what can be viewed from the outside? How can you draw 'me'? *If I exist...where am I?*

EVA2: (*decidedly*) I live inside my skull.

Over the next segment both EVAs re-enact segments of the memory (not necessarily naturalistically).... their movements get closer together until they coincide at the end.

MUSIC: 1.21-2.45 underneath...

EVA2: I remember a couple of years ago I got out of the shower and I looked at myself, naked in the bathroom mirror and I didn't recognise anything about what I saw. I don't mean I wasn't familiar, because I knew it was my face, arms, legs, breasts that I was looking at, the body I had had for years and the body that, in some form or another, I would have until the day I died. But I couldn't match up anything about this...mass that reminded me of who I felt I *really* was. On the inside I mean.

For a minute everything I called 'I' could have belonged to anyone, 'I' could have been anyone... someone from the showers at the local pool, caught unclothed out of the corner of my eye...

EVA: While I was drying my feet...

EVA2: ...or whatever.

EVA: I looked like a stranger.

EVA2: It was a foreigner looking out at me from the bathroom wall.

I started pulling at the skin around my eyes, you can see almost all of the ball of your eye if you move your eyelids right with your fingers.

I pulled back my lips and looked at the inside of my head, the skull hanging casually onto teeth through gums covered over with slimy pink flesh. Like a cadaver. I started to look for signs of myself, for signs of life - the place where the idea to move my hands was coming from. But of course I couldn't see it.

I started to get this amazing concept of my body being driven like a machine by my brain. And after a while, I started to feel the actual sensation of just *being* a brain driving around this collection of muscle and flesh, orchestrating my body like a little Martian driving a huge robot.

EVA: Like the Daleks.

EVA2: I went and lay on the couch in the lounge and just felt the feeling of being a mind in a body.

They are facing each other, staring in as if at the mirror.

EVA: I thought about the words I make going out of my brain, out of my mouth, into the air, into my ears and back into my brain –

EVA2: the only part of me that was really aware I had spoken at all. Because there was no-one to listen, I said

BOTH: 'Hello in here'.

EVA: *(EVA2 mouths the words silently)* I am alone inside my skull. My brain is an interpreter for the information it is fed by my body. It digests it and then it responds to it. But I am not my ears or my mouth or my legs or my breasts, my hair my nails my eyelashes. *I* is a mind driving a robot.

EVA2: *(EVA mouths)* What is a body if not a life support system?

EVA: *(looks at what she is doing)* Jesus. Concentrate.

They both breathe and return to work

EVA2: (quietly) 99...98...97...96...95...(continues)

EVA: Just a couple of lines to go on this one and... fuck if I could just stop letting my mind wander off I swear I could get off work an hour early every day. Not that it really matters, I mean, we're paid by the hour. What would I do with the extra time anyway? Go home. Look at the wall. Make tea. What's in the fridge? Only got some eggs I think.

EVA2: Eggs. I'll have a...boiled egg. With soldiers.

EVA: Should buy some bread for soldiers. Still. Two eggs. That'll do me. Go home.

Eva's customer has gotten up and is paying her

Shit... concentrate. Thanks mate. Clean up here. Go home. Along the creek maybe.

EVA2: Be such a beautiful night tonight.

EVA: Go home, creek, smoke, eggs, eat, sleep.

EVA2: 32...31...30...29 (*looks up, the lecturer has told her the time is up*) That's it? Great.

EVA hurriedly packs up. EVA2 gets up and changes into her clothes.

For a minute EVA is alone.

MUSIC: 3.38-4.13 underneath...

EVA: I always try to come past the creek. Creek, smoke, eggs, eat, sleep. It's the creek you see that reminds me that something is changing, whether I am aware of it or not. It's the only thing that definitely...changes... every day. You can't walk past the same creek twice. Buddhist I think. Something like that. The only constant is change. Today the creek is swollen, like a boa constrictor stuffed with swallowed, stolen eggs. Fatly slipping along, cutting through the chocolate earth, stirring up smells like wet potting mix and new growth.

Here in amongst the bush, the last spines of sunlight skewering the canopy, the rata vines slinking down to earth - things make sense. Fantails giving it up for the end of the day, slipping into respectful silence. And the sound of the water. This is my favourite time of the day. Along this creek. Going home. Alone. When I was in my teens I used to think this was a magical time of the day. Like you were on the edge of something. Another world was lurking two centimeters to the left of reality. A world that promised hidden lives, dreams of darkened castles and candlelight. Gods and goddesses roaming the hilltops in bannered procession, spirits and angels tugging the clouds across the sky. Now I wonder if the magic thing this whole fandango heralds every sundown is there at all. Is it actually coming? Does it exist anywhere outside of my imagination? The Creek.

An old oven is revealed, a carton of eggs is nearby. EVA2 appraises two eggs sitting in the carton.

EVA2: Eggs.
Just enough water to cover.
Salt in case they crack.
Contain a good mix of minerals and proteins.
Good for baby, good for me.

She puts a pot of water on to boil.

EVA: (*unseen/half lit*) I sometimes wish there was something else, outside. But the idea of the magic is mine. I own it. Sometimes that's enough.

EVA2: Just what I feel like. Coupla eggs. Lovely. Might make a salad later, might have some dairy food. Never liked dairy food before this (*indicates her stomach*) one came along. These days I eat just about anything. Anything I'm told.

EVA comes in and looks at the pot of water boiling on the stove; she rubs her elbows, her stomach.

EVA2: It's not easy, you know. Getting bossed around by your tummy. Eric's been great about it – keeps the place stocked up. Well, gives me the money to keep the place stocked up.

EVA lights a joint off the element and climbs to the attic of the house.

EVA2: He works out on the boats you see? The ones that go out into the Straight? They go out for a week at a time fishing. Trawling. Leaving me here to fend for myself. Ha ha. Not that I mind. Plenty to keep up with here. I don't get a chance to be lonely now that there's so much to prepare for.

EVA sighs long and tired.

EVA: Oh fuck, Eric. I sit here in the top of the house every night and look out across the bay. Have a joint. Look out as far as I can see. Somewhere behind those hills out on the cold sea there's a boy hauling in nets, gutting fish with tired calloused hands, sleeping on a shelf bed pressed close to the ceiling. I wonder if he'll come home the same. I wonder if he'll come home. Baby baby boy. A sailor whose name I got tattooed on the inside of my heart. Was that a good idea? Does that go away when he does? Breathe in, breathe out. And wait. For him, for it. Doesn't matter. Wait to be whole again? Wait. Observe. Listen to this tiny fist hammering inside me.

MUSIC: 4.41-5.58 underneath...

EVA2 is busying herself in the bottom drawer of the stove, clattering things loudly, pulling out silvery domestic objects – pots, silver trays, a candelabra, a teaset, napkin rings, cutlery – everything is very shiny looking. Twee and considered. She keeps pulling objects out of the bottom drawer during...

EVA2: I used to worry about whether it really was love, used to run around in circles worrying, wondering if he was going to leave me, if he was sleeping with other people, if he was looking at other people - neurotic

EVA: And now, on my own, I all of a sudden look down and I can *feel* the depth of myself. All of the multitudes of possibilities. It blows me away, the depth of me. Like a well.

More and more crap is coming out of the oven, EVA2 is very nearly disappearing inside trying to find something...

EVA2: Of course it means Eric is out working more than he was and I've had to start this whole new thing life modeling – but it was a decision we made together, you know. We

can afford it if we try. And we'll be as good parents as any. In a lot of ways it's made me have to sort my shit out a bit you know. I've got something to be here for now. Everything used to be... to seem so futile. What was I doing in Dunedin, what was I doing with my life, where were Eric and me going?

EVA: And I wondered 'what are all these feelings for? Are they for anything?' We speak of feelings as if they are so important. Like they validate us somehow.

EVA2: (*getting more frustrated with not being able to find something*) Used to worry about silly things. STUPID things. Is there an actual, tangible POINT in working so fucking hard, in feeding myself. Why do I plod along for? And there aren't answers to those kinds of questions. No point even getting started asking them really...

EVA: There isn't an end point. It goes up and down all the way along. You get to a down and you feel as if the up part was cheating you.

EVA2 finally comes out with an eggcup, she is frantic and panting for breath. She places the eggcup down and tries to compose herself.

EVA2: I feel a lot better now. A lot clearer. I know where I'm going now.

She leans over and slowly curls down her head. A metronome or some sort of rhythm, a clock maybe? Maybe an egg-timer.

EVA: Aropax is a medicine classed as an SSRI, or selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor. It is most commonly used to treat sufferers of mild to moderate depression stemming from chemical imbalances in the brain. Specifically when natural levels of serotonin – a chemical carrier of electromagnetic information within the brain, have become diminished. Side effects may include headache, dizziness, tremor, hypotension, lethargy, loss of mental alertness, insomnia, agitation, nervousness, anxiety, confusion, mania, vomiting, constipation, diarrhoea, anorexia, abdominal pain, pain or numbness in the hands or feet., indigestion, respiratory disorder, rashes, palpitations, taste perversion, visual impairment, orgasm dysfunction, libido decrease, weakness, heart palpitations. It should be used with caution in pregnancy as the full side effects are not yet fully known.

EVA2: I can hardly believe it. It's incredible. This little thing somewhere inside me growing one tiny cell at a time. Tells me what it needs and I give it to it. Tells me what to do next. A framework for a new life. A blueprint. Another chance.

They are both holding eggs.

EVA: If I had kept going the way I had before I went on the medication I'd be dead by now. Either that or I'd be with some kind of new crutch or other. I'd have found some other bullshit thing outside of myself to give me an excuse to keep going. Anything to not take responsibility for myself. Some other distraction. Just like drinking. Just like smoking, exactly like the junk. Just another something to fill my spare time up with other

than thoughts. Other than myself. Something to give my life substance. Give it a reason to be. Just another addiction.

EVA stares intently at the egg, EVA2 starts to sing to hers.

EVA2: Polly put the kettle on,
Polly put the kettle on,
Polly put the kettle on,
we'll all have tea.
Sookie take it off again,
Sookie take it off again,
Sookie take it off again,
they've all gone away.

EVA: I remember Mum, a long time ago. Back before everything went wrong. I remember being at home before I was old enough to go to kindy. I have a memory of Mum back then. I remember looking out of the window of the house and seeing her hanging clothes up. Pressing my face against the glass. She had on a red skirt I used to love to look at. She still wears it sometimes. Around the hospital...

A long silence. EVA drops her egg. EVA2 grabs her stomach and gasps...

EVA2: Must have dropped something. Where was I? (*looks at the egg in her hand*) Oh. Where was I? Must have drifted off somewhere for a second. What was I saying? I, uh. I was thinking about something... just then... I was thinking about. It'll come back to me in a minute. Shit. The eggs. I feel all dizzy. Shh. Shh. Settle down. Oh my little heart. My heart is going a mile a minute. Shh. Shh baby. Come on. Come on we'll go out for some air. Come on. Out into the back garden. You're just a bit dizzy, that's all – a bit of fresh air will do you good. Come on.

EVA: Bare feet. Spikes of grass, frosted already in the evening cold. Stepping out on nimble toes. Each blade of grass etched precisely, coldly on the bottom of my feet. How did I get out here? What am I doing out here? Concentrate. Just breathe. Just breathe and wait.

They both sink down to the ground.

EVA2: 99...98...97...96...95...94...93...92...91...90

EVA: The musty smell of fallen apples... lying like forgotten children amongst the grass. Going brown.

EVA2: 89...88...87...86...85...84...

EVA: Falling down. Forgotten. Lost. Unimportant.

EVA2 gets up.

EVA2: What am I doing?

EVA: Concentrate.

EVA2: What am I doing out here? This is crazy...

EVA: Wait for things to change...

EVA2: I am acting like a crazy person.

EVA: Listen to this tiny rhythm hammering inside me. Just observe. And wait.

EVA2: I don't want to be a crazy person.... I want... I want Eric to come home. Why can't I just get on with things? Why can't I just do one normal thing just have one normal day in my life? Jesus I fucking...

EVA: I feel sick...

EVA2: Why do I have to feel so sick all the time?

EVA: How did I get here? How did I come to be this, how did I grow up to be this woman? Why not somebody else? Where am I? What is it, this thing I call I? Where do I begin and end? I have no real shape, I cannot guess at my size, do I spill outside of my body? Have I coloured outside my lines?

EVA2: (*talking almost to EVA*) Just for someone to notice would help. Just for someone to look sideways and notice that hey, I'm not doing ok, I'm not alright. I fight and I fight and I fight to be real, to be a real, normal person. What do I even mean by that?

EVA: Most people don't realise there are people in the world who work really hard just to seem normal.

EVA2: Just pull the threads together for one more day.

EVA: Nobody sees us, nobody is ever aware of who we are, of what we are inside. Yet we keep the dream of accidentally bumping into the person that can see clean to the middle of you, can sense the presence of the layers of you, the correct proportions of your existence. We look at each other and we perceive one tiny facet, we try and draw similarities, we scan ourselves for a similar facet and hope to 'click'. I am large. I contain multitudes. How can words ever describe one to another?

EVA2: (*frantic, searching*) I wanted something for myself. I needed a reason to...to... for fuck's sake. What else would I be doing now? I'd still be working in the fucking tattoo parlour, that wasn't going anywhere – drawing pictures that mostly aren't even my own.

How can you measure your importance in the world? You can't. You can't without something to refer to yourself against. A measuring stick. I wanted to be something and I accidentally became something. I am expecting. I am expecting to be a mother. It's not being afraid of nothing, it's about choosing to be something. Isn't it? You do your best. Fuck.

EVA: We plod along in these dreary little half-lives, continually looking away from the dreams. For fear of being disappointed. We just look the other way and say...

BOTH: 'well I used to be so naive and idealistic, I'm much more realistic now, I'm much more grounded than I used to be'.

EVA: What do we mean by that? It got too hard and I gave up. I was tired. I was getting older. Other things just got more important than whether I was fulfilled in my own life. Satisfied. I am not satisfied. But at least I know that.

EVA2: Even though he's far away, you know, he thinks about me. I know he does because I can feel it like he's with me. Even when he's away.

It wasn't just a reaction to the baby.

EVA: This blackness of 'nothing meaning anything' is simmering away underneath me all the time and I jump out of it or I crawl out of it or I wait a week and I fall out of it and all of sudden I feel that my life is an amazing thing.

EVA2: So full of possibilities.

EVA: Do a bit of study.

EVA2: I'm a clever girl.

EVA: Could go anywhere.

EVA2: Could go a long way.

EVA: I get so excited because you can see what it could be, the potential. I can feel the person I would be if there was no fear, no unnecessary limitations. If I held onto the dream and I just went 'yes' and just went for it, and that when things went wrong I could just accommodate them, realise the lesson and carry on towards my goal unimpeded.

EVA2: And before you even start to get used to that idea, you're on your way down again. The motor starts up 'you don't live in a perfect world, Eva. You can't everything that you want. It's more complicated than that. You have to get real. There are other factors to consider, where do you think you're running away with these dreams? You can't make a living as an artist in this country. You can't be so selfish. Where would you live, what would you eat? Why don't you just get *sensible*? You should get *sensible*.

EVA: (sarcastic) Get something *long term*. Something with a *future*.

EVA2: You can't be a mother if you behave like this.

EVA: You can barely look after yourself. And you wonder which one is truer –

BOTH: ...the up or the down.

EVA2: And whos whens wheres whats whys

EVA: All the tiny loopholes

EVA2: For the his hers its theirs ours

EVA: All the lonely people

EVA2: Is it going to be fine

EVA: It is going to be fine

EVA2: Better make some more time...

EVA: For...

EVA2: ...for forgiving myself to the end of my pieces that have...

EVA: Cracked

EVA2: And soon there will grow in me a stronger, silent...

EVA: Child

EVA2: It's here now, and I'm here now, and there's really not a lot that can be

EVA: Done

EVA2: ...to change that. Fighting isn't going to make it

EVA: Change.

EVA2: Can't do anything but wait...

EVA: Observe.

EVA2: Listen to this tiny fist hammering inside me.

EVA: Here am

BOTH: I

EVA: A woman surrounded by

BOTH: Flesh surrounded

EVA: By dreams.

EVA2: Adream surrounded by

BOTH: Flesh surrounded

EVA2: By a woman.

BOTH: Here is I

EVA: Falling in and out of memories. Musing.

EVA2: Is that what you call this?

EVA: thinking so hard...

EVA2: Trying so hard to be...

BOTH: Just to be.

EVA2: And

BOTH: All day

EVA2: And

EVA: Everyday day to see it change.

EVA2: To watch it sliding by

EVA: And to think

BOTH: What is it this thing that I am?

EVA2: Is it alright?

EVA: Am I alright?

BOTH: Right compared to what?

They can see each other. EVA2 talks to EVA directly.

EVA2: I wish my sanity would disappear I wish my common sense would disappear I wish my limits would disappear I will make my punishments disappear My end has disappeared I want my fear to disappear I want my edges to blur I am a sun there are no more decisions to be made.

Big pause.

EVA: I know.

EVA2: I'm so tired.

EVA2 absentmindedly drops her egg, EVA catches it.

EVA2:Something. There was something...that Mum used to say when... when things were going wrong...what was it? That there was someone two inches to the left of her watching her. Watching out for her. Like a guardian angel or...something. I just felt that then like something just happened... just then...just like...shit. Like the earthquakes that you don't feel but they make you dizzy. Like something two centimeters to the left of reality went all wobbly and...and...stopped (she laughs) like something was just about to break inside me. Do you ever get that?

EVA places her hand on EVA2's stomach. She hands her back the egg.

Blackout.

Music

BOTH: Sometimes, I'm pregnant. I feel a sensation in my chest like I'm in, growing an extra heartbeat under my own. My mistake. I have this feeling that there is something amazing in me hoping to get out unassisted. Unguarded, in my throat, in the middle of all this skin. Hammering and nailing, blurted out. Half shaped like me and half shaped like an accident. A voice that seems not my own. A brand new person. Nobody else seems to notice it.

My love.