

Roger Cowen was an artist. I met him in hospital late in 2019 when we found ourselves in opposite beds, both seriously unwell.

On discovering the magical world that is Roger's website, I became fascinated by his mask paintings and began to imagine several of them comprising a parade. I started sketching material for *The Hidden Masks of Roger Cowen (Parade with Refrains)* – for flute (with piccolo) and oboe (with cor anglais) – while still in hospital. In return, Roger gave me one of his mask paintings. It hangs in my kitchen.

In the brief time I knew Roger, we became good friends. I gave him playlists; he painted my picture – not an external likeness, I should add. I visited him for the last time a few weeks before he died in July 2021. He gave me a second mask painting. This one hangs above a piano.

The following summer I decided to revisit my initial sketches for *The Hidden Masks* – a sequence of perambulatory representations of unspecified masks, interspersed with reflective moments of relative stasis. This was a familiar process for me: returning after a long gap to my initial manuscript-scribbled ideas and trying to imagine that I had not already made these into a piece of music. This time, of course, I had been seeing and reinterpreting two of these paintings every day; my memory sees others, along with Roger's studio in Finchingfield.

Roger told me that his masks are re-imaginings of himself, each an obscuration of the self that we all choose to present to others – and to ourselves – and that he always imagined himself with perfect teeth because his weren't. The teeth – the not-quite-a-smile – are in the music somewhere, perhaps represented by the note G or perhaps by not-quite-the-note G. So is what I knew of Roger's personality – the apparent reluctance to take life too seriously while, at the same time, taking it and his work very seriously indeed – the ever-present dichotomy of the creative mind.

I hope my music makes you smile, as Roger did me.