

James Clarke String Quartet

Year of Composition: 2002-03

Duration: 10'

Premiere: 23.11.03 at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival by the Arditti Quartet

String Quartet was written in 2002-2003 for the Arditti String Quartet. It is a joint commission by the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival and Ars Musica, Brussels.

The music takes the form of a whirling, rotating dance, in which the rhythms emerge, collide and recede, appear to move into and out of focus, splinter, distort, deform. The work is in a single movement lasting ten minutes.

James Clarke String Quartet

String Quartet a été composé en 2002-2003 pour le Quatuor Arditti. Il s'agit d'une commande conjointe du festival de musique contemporaine de Huddersfield et d'Ars Musica.

La musique prend la forme d'une danse tournoyante et virevoltante où les rythmes, tantôt émergent, tantôt se heurtent et s'éloignent, semblent apparaître puis disparaître, se fragmenter, se déformer, s'altérer. L'œuvre est d'un seul mouvement et dure dix minutes.

James Clarke String Quartet

String Quartet werd in 2002-2003 voor het Arditti Quartet gecomponeerd. Het is een gemeenschappelijke opdracht van het Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival en Ars Musica, Brussel.

De muziek neemt de vorm aan van een wervelende, draaiende dans waarin ritmes ontstaan, met elkaar in botsing komen en zich terugtrekken, als het ware van en naar het middelpunt bewegen, versplinteren, vervormen, ontvormen. Het werk bestaat uit een deel van tien minuten.

James Clarke

James Clarke was born in London on 15th October 1957. After studying at Southampton University and the City University, London, he was awarded a Finnish Government Scholarship to study composition with Usko Meriläinen in Helsinki. In 1979 he co-founded the influential London-based new music group, Suoraan, but for much of his

career his work has attracted most attention beyond the British Isles, beginning with significant performances at the International Gaudeamus Music Week and subsequently at the ISCM World Music Days. His works have since been performed in almost all the major new music venues worldwide and have won several major prizes, including the Clements Memorial Prize, the PRS Award for Composition and the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis.

His compositions, all published by Ricordi, include *North*, *Maailma* and *Pascal, pensée 206* for orchestra; *Verstörung*, *Oboe Quintet* and *La violenza delle idee*, for ensemble; *Afterglow* and *Deformierte Texte* for voice and instruments. Works for solo instrument include *Independence* for cello, *Isolation* for violin, *Island* and *Landschaft mit Glockenturm I* for piano. Four works for ensemble, *Delirium*, *Delmenhorst*, *Delos* and *Night*, can be collected together to form *Kammersymphonie*, which was premiered in three choreographed performances by the Efva Lilja Dance Company and Ensemble Ars Nova in Sweden in 2001, and played in concert in Freiburg by Ensemble SurPlus, conducted by James Avery, in 2003.

James Clarke's *String Quartet*, written for the Arditti Quartet, was commissioned jointly by the Huddersfield Festival and Ars Musica, Brussels, in 2003; *Final Dance*, a work for fifteen instruments written for Klangforum Wien, was commissioned by Southwest German Radio for performance at the Donaueschinger Musiktage in the same year. *Landschaft mit Glockenturm II*, for seventeen European and Chinese instruments, was commissioned by the Viennese organisation 'Asian Culture Link' and premiered in 2004 at the Berliner Festspiele. Clarke was a featured composer at the 2004 Ars Musica Festival in Brussels, where ten works were performed, to enormous public acclaim.

James Clarke has been a guest professor at universities in various countries, including Azerbaijan, where he was appointed honorary Professor of Music at the Baku Music Academy; Russia, at the Moscow Conservatoire and the University of Ekaterinburg, and Sweden at the University of Lund in Malmö. He has led the composition courses at the Time of Music Festival in Viitasaari, Finland, and at the Festival junger Künstler Bayreuth. Between 1994 and 1997 he was Composer-in-Residence at the Queen's University of Belfast, where he directed the Sonorities Festival. Since 1997 he has lived in London. He is currently engaged on a major new radiophonic work in collaboration with Harold Pinter, commissioned by the BBC and written for nine actors and the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Elliott Carter

String Quartet No. 5

Date of composition: 1995

Duration: 21'

Premier: 19.9.96 Antwerp by the Arditti Quartet

This work is in one continuous movement, but in several sections which break down as follows:

Introduction

Giocososo

Interlude 1

Lento espressivo

Interlude 2

Presto scorrevole

Interlude 3

Allegro energico

Interlude 4

Adagio sereno

Interlude 5

Capriccioso

One of the fascinations of attending rehearsals of chamber music, when excellent players try out fragments of what they later will play in the ensemble, then play it, and then stop abruptly to discuss how to improve, is that this pattern is so similar to our inner experience of forming, ordering, focussing and bringing to fruition and then dismissing our feelings and ideas. These patterns of human behaviour form the basis of the 5th String Quartet. Its introduction presents the players one by one, trying out fragments of later passages from one to the six short, contrasting ensemble movements at the same time maintaining a dialogue with each other. Between each of the movements the players discuss in different ways what has been played and what will be played.

In this score the matter of human cooperation with its many aspects of feeling and thought was a very important consideration.

String Quartet No. 5 was composed during the winter and spring of 1995 in New York and Southbury, Connecticut and was commissioned for the Arditti Quartet by Antwerp, City of Culture, 1993; Wittener Tage für Neue Musik, Festival d'Automne á Paris; and Lincoln Centre, New York.

-- Elliott Carter

Felder Quartet 2 Stuck-stücke

Stuck-stücke was composed for the Arditti String Quartet in 2007 on commission from the Siemens Foundation. It is a work of thirteen small pieces in three discontinuous, though related, streams of musical material. The title refers to the incessant repetitive iteration of small gestures that characterize some, but not all, of the streams in the work. And the cultural form of the omnipresent commercial 'spot' (with its strident sloganeering and designed advertising 'campaigns') is the archetypal model mini-form of the composition.

The work is dedicated to the extraordinary Irvine Arditti and the members of the Arditti String Quartet. Irvine's indefatigable energy, and vision and that of his colleagues have inspired my work for over twenty years now, and this work is offered in friendship and deepest admiration.

HILDA PAREDES: Cuerdas del destino

Cuerdas del destino is my second work for the medium. In this work I have treated the string quartet as a mega instrument, in contrast with my first string quartet written in 1998 in which I treated the instruments as characters who propose and characterize their own material.

In *Cuerdas del destino* the concept of consequence is the principle from which all materials develop by creating the direction, dramaturgy and structure of the work. The choice of the title (*strings of destiny*) derives from this.

As in many of my recent works, the instrumental treatment in this piece is as important for defining the character of the material, as those harmonic, rhythmic and dynamic parameters.

From the introductory opening, two contrasting materials follow each other: *glissando tremolo* and *pizzicato*. While a third, on a white note harmony played *col legno tratto* interrupts the discourse between the other two. Consequently, the first section of the piece grows out of this white note harmony and develops slowly into harmony coloured microtonally.

The dramatic treatment of these three materials sets up the principles, which will develop throughout the piece.

Each of the four main sections of the piece are defined by their harmony, instrumental colour and gestures.

In the second section a combination of harmonics, *col legno battuto* and left and right hand *pizzicati* interact. The rhythmic and percussive character of the third section grows out of the *col legno battuto* and left hand *pizzicati*, which appeared in a different context in the second section.

Each section is linked to the next one by a transition in which toneless sounds (*tonloss*) prevail. In the last transition into the fourth section there is further development of the subtle bow pressure of the toneless sounds into various different colours produced by varying bow pressures. This leads to the climax in the quartet, which acts as a link into the last section, built out of elements previously heard but in a different more rhythmic and virtuoso character.

Cuerdas del destino was written in 2007-08 commissioned by Traeittoria Festival (Parma) and Ultima (Oslo) and it is dedicated to my most loyal colleagues in the Arditti Quartet.

Ferneyhough Dum Transisset

Dum transisset I-IV

In common with many of his contemporaries the Renaissance composer Christopher Tye wrote a number of polyphonic compositions for viol consort which were among the most notable of his time. For some years I have been taking selected pieces from this collection as the basis for new works, the most recent of which, four movements for string quartet, takes the four consort pieces based on the plainchant fragment dum transisset sabbatum as the starting point for highly contrasted re-imaginings. The subtitles I have given the movements are: 'Reliquary'; 'Totentanz'; 'Shadows' and 'Contrafacta'.

In 'Reliquary' the fleeting fragments of Tye's original materials are heard only as grace-note figures inside a containing structure not derived from Tye at all. Only in the second half of the movement do these figures begin tentatively to come into focus.

'Totentanz', with its rapidly mutating techniques and textures, is a 'black scherzo' suggested by church frescos representing Death dancing with his victims.

'Shadows' allows the reference materials to come to the fore in many different forms, but always veiled and fluidly immaterial, a luminously shadowy dream sequence.

Since the plainchant fragment around which the Tye pieces were composed is not a particularly profiled or memorable one I permit myself - perhaps somewhat irreverently - to suggest a series of possible 'improvements'. Since none of these attempts proves particularly stable, the work fades into a slightly perplexed and anxious attempt to re-propose Tye materials as the remedy for the onset of chaos.

'Dum transisset sabbatum I-IV' was commissioned by the Salzburg Festival and is dedicated to Peter Ruzicka.

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Brian Ferneyhough

Brian Ferneyhough

Exordium -

Elliotti Carteri in honorem centenarii

composed in 2008 duration: 6.5 min
first performance: Arditti String Quartet, January 2008, Paris
Commissioned by the Cité de la Musique

In common with many medieval grimoires and books of spells, *Exordium* elevates the non-sequitur to a formal principle. Consisting of more than forty independent fragments, the work might thus be seen as a special case of 'sympathetic magic'. It is dedicated to Elliott Carter on the occasion of his 100th birthday.

Brian Ferneyhough