



Brian Ferneyhough

Adagissimo (1983)

String Quartet

Duration: 1 minute 45 seconds

First performance: 28 June 1984, La Rochelle Festival, Arditti String Quartet

Composed in November 1983 as an eightieth birthday tribute to Sir Michael Tippett, this brief movement employs an array of prolational canonic techniques applied to the rhythmic structure of a five-measure passage for four horns extracted from my orchestral work *La Terre est un Homme*. The discourse is divided into two concurrent processual strata clearly distinguished by timbral and textual characteristics, the one - abrupt and mercurial - played by the muted violins, the other - far more melodically fluid and cantabile in nature - being presented by the viola and cello, which share frequent pitches in common. While the abrupt gestures of the violins are expressed in intervals based on a rigidly invariant octave disposition of tempered quarter-tones, that of the lower instruments demands continuous attention to subtle, contextually-based inflection and nuance similar to that encountered in the interpretation of Indian ragas.

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