



Brian Ferneyhough

Second String Quartet (1980)

String Quartet

Duration: 11 minutes 30 seconds

First performance: September 1980, South West German Radio, Arditti String Quartet

Commissioned by South West German Radio

This piece is about silence – not so much literal silence (although this, too, is an obvious feature of the opening section) but rather that deliberate *absence* at the center of the musical experience which exists in order that the listening subject may encounter itself there.

Since all forms of silence can only be approached via their own proper negatives, the organization of this quartet concentrates on the definition of several, ever-tighter concentric paths focused upon this core of stillness.

The labyrinthine path over which the approach is made attempts to suggest a number of possible implications at one and the same time; the dense webs of organization involved in the act of composition sink below the surface, thus becoming deliberately absorbed into a flickering interplay of surface gestures which, while the work's most immediately apparent feature, are designed to remain *permeable* to other areas of insight whose salient features are located at many points along the line of descent towards the center (which is not necessarily marked by the center-point of the work itself).

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