A Quartet of Daydreams

For String Quartet

Ian Percy
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c. 13-14 minutes

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This single movement, approximately 13-14 minutes in length, was composed within material coloured by natural resonance theories and elements of the harmonic and sub-harmonic series. Initial work evolved from the planning for two entirely different pieces:

Melancholy Daydreams for solo piano: A set of four movements subtitled: What, Where, Why and When. These generic questions (or daydreams) offer a variety of connotations. They can be perceived as interrogations or exclamations, passive or aggressive. This ambiguous extra-musical influence captured my imagination, inspiring me to conceive a meta-formula from which multiple pieces evolved.

Natural Resonance for string quartet: A single movement dealing with the acoustic phenomenon of resonating natural resonance. Natural resonance seems to describe the timbral characteristics of a string quartet quite accurately. It implies an organic phenomenon: acoustic vibration. It is as old as nature and is often discussed in relation to space and time, even the origins of the universe itself.

In literal terms, natural resonance refers to the additional sympathetic tones produced when sustained resonances vibrate against each other. These heterodyning frequencies can be produced above the pitches as combination tones (sum of the two frequencies), or as difference tones (the difference between the two).

Having allowed the idiomatic properties of the instrument to shape heterodyning frequencies, harmonics and multiphonics within previous works, this quartet adopts a more considered and reproducible approach to the phenomenon of natural resonance as a compositional resource.

The pitch of D is treated as a 'primary thought' from the moment it opens the piece and all material is generated from and around it.

The meta-formula for this quartet can be subdivided into four forms:

1. Chromatic pitch wedge around D
2. Modal cells
3. Whole-tone scales and chords
4. Heterodyning frequencies relative to the pitch of D

Although a complex movement at first glance, it can be subdivided into a handful of compositional units:

1. Exploration of pitch wedge
2. Ostinato/Pedal tone
3. Motivic gestures and natural resonance material
4. Dance adaptations (mini sonata form)
5. Melodic daydreams (transitional lyrical interludes)

As a guiding extra-musical influence, I considered the definition of a daydream as 'a fantasy indulged in while one is awake' and through analogy and metaphor, allowed this to influence the character, atmosphere, pacing, texture, rhythm and interaction of the writing as I aimed to compose an acoustic interpretation of the natural thought process: A collection of daydreams...
Quartet of Daydreams Form

Bars 1 - 59
Pitch-wedge: Exploration & realisation
Bars 60-67
Heterodyning

Bars 78 - 90
Heterodyning
Bars 91 - 102
Dance 1

Bars 111 - 128
Dance 2 & cresc.
Bars 129 - 159
Dance 3 & cresc.

Bars 68 - 77
Melodic Daydream
Bars 100 - 113
Melodic Daydream

Bars 160 - 182
Dance 4 Exposition
Bars 183 - 220
Dance 4 Development
Bars 221 - 243
Dance 5 Recapitulation

Bars 160 - 243
Pseudo sonata form
Bars 238 - 261
Pitch-wedge & reprise

A
B1
C
B1
B2i
B2ii
B2iii
B2iv
B2v

A
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\[ \text{\textit{l}} - 69 \] As if drifting into the subconscious...

\[ \text{\textit{A}} \quad \text{\textit{l}} - 96 \] A discreet beginning: Two musical thoughts emerge in conversation...

\[ \text{\textit{l}} - 69 \] poco rit.

\[ \text{\textit{l}} - 60 \] poco rit.
poco accel.

[48] 48

pizz.

[55] 55

pizz.

[p] poco rit.,

[p] poco accel.,

[p] poco rit.,

[p] poco accel.,
H. – 96 A persistent thread...

m

mf

mf

mp

mf

f

mf

poco rit.

flageolet tone

pp

mf

a niente

pp

solo

pp

solo

pp

pizi

pp

p

mf

p

mf

pp

pp
6 \( \text{j} = \text{96} \) A recurring theme: A nagging concern... poco accel. \[ \text{j} = \text{104} \] poco rit.

85 \( \text{k} = \text{92} \) Resistance is futile: A persistent thought must be addressed... poco accel. \[ \text{j} = \text{100} \] poco rit.
N  j = 69  A sentimental recollection...
 poco rit.  .....................  [j = 56]  accel.  .....................

All things considered: A dark possibility emerges...
O  j = 84  poco rit.  .....................  [j = 72]  j = 84  poco accel.  .....................
P 96 Exploring the imagined improbable... poco accel.

Q 96 A deliberate interruption to negative momentum... An uneasy compromise: An awkward dance between unwilling partners... poco accel.
With determination & aggression...

A dark daydream...

poco accel.
A final release of negative thought...
A positive thought...
A brief wave of positive energy...

A loss of concentration...

poco rit.

poco accel.
One final consideration...
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