

STRING QUARTET no 2

I thought of the form of this quartet as like a concise poem, a musical equivalent to a sonnet. Just as a sonnet presents a continuous train of thought across its internal divisions, so my quartet unfolds, playing as a concise single movement created by a number of distinct sections. The musical thought is carried forward in a succession of changing images, contrasting but organically related. Points of unison act like punctuation in a poem; these unisons and their associated cadences are like the rhymes -hidden rhymes and line-end rhymes- which create the characteristic scheme of a sonnet.

The musical material is created by a number of closely related modes; they are sometimes inflected by quarter-tones, but are mostly characterised by a diatonic outline which expands into a simple chromaticism.

The quartet lasts about nine minutes. It was composed in April 1996 while I was in residence at Annaghmakerrig in Ireland, thanks to a bursary from the School of Irish Studies Foundation. It is dedicated to the memory of my parents William LeFanu (1904-1995) and Elizabeth Maconchy (1907-1994).

The quartet was commissioned for the 1997 London International String Quartet Competition.

Nicola LeFanu