

**Concertino for Clarinet and String Orchestra** was composed at the invitation of the Northern Sinfonia for performance by Robert Plane, clarinet, and the Northern Sinfonia on June 4th 1997 at Lyons Concert Hall, University of York. The Concertino is a recomposition of *Invisible Places*, the clarinet quintet which I wrote in 1986. The new work doesn't replace the old, but allows it to have two lives, as I had always hoped it would: one in the intimate world of chamber music, the other in the more public forum of the orchestra. I enjoyed the chance to re-interpret the string quartet music for the larger sonority of a string orchestra, which in turn releases the clarinet to create a more wide-ranging persona.

The Concertino preserves the qualities of *Invisible Places* which were most important to me: it is elusive, understated, and suggestive, rather than didactic. It plays continuously for eighteen minutes, and is made up of sixteen brief movements. They offer fleeting glimpses of a world that is always there if we stop to listen for it. The clarinet is most often an individual, apart from the string group; it may get caught up with them, but is usually a person pursuing an independent train of thought: sometimes conversational, sometimes contemplative, sometimes singing to itself.

The Concertino, like its predecessor, is indebted to one of my favourite authors, Italo Calvino. The inspiration of Calvino's *Invisible Cities* was twofold. First, it offered a model of how to create a continuous narrative through many tiny, discontinuous ideas. In my piece, each fragment has its own cyclic path, now expanding, now contracting. Second, and most important, was the image from the closing words of Calvino's book. The Great Khan senses the nightmare of our 'brave new world.' Marco Polo urges him to cherish those who, in the midst of the inferno are not of the inferno: