

*Invisible Places* for Clarinet and String Quartet lasts about sixteen minutes, and plays continuously although it is made up of sixteen small movements. The four string players form a group throughout; sometimes the clarinet is caught up with them, but more often it is like a person pursuing an independent train of thought: sometimes talking to itself, sometimes conversational, sometimes singing,

The starting point for my quintet was Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (I am grateful to two people for introducing me to Calvino's writing: my father, William LeFanu and my friend Liz Till.) The inspiration of Calvino was twofold. First, he 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:

*cercare e saper riconoscere chi e cosa, in mezzo all'inferno, non è inferno, e farlo durare, e dargli spazio.*

'seek and learn to recognise who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not of the inferno, then make them endure, give them space.'

The quintet is dedicated to Hugh Sargent, who commissioned it. Damaris Wollen and the Brindisi String Quartet gave the first performance in the chapel of Southampton General Hospital on June 4th 1986.

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