



QUARTET

from TOUCHED BY MACHINE?

For String Quartet

Violoncello

Nigel Morgan

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About the piece

Between 1988 and 1991 Nigel Morgan created a sequence of four works, DUO (trombone/horn and percussion), TRIO (violin, clarinet and piano), QUARTET (string quartet) and EDGE (wind quartet). These pieces, forming a CD-length concert called *TOUCHED BY MACHINE?*¹, were part of a sustained project to explore computer-assisted composition using the tools of the MIDI studio.

QUARTET is the result of interaction with a suite of software tools. Such tools allow music to be assembled in a way that has similarities to the process engaged by some visual artists when creating a series of related images. Once the components of a 'design' have been assembled a free application can begin using practiced and improvised gestures. So too in music composition: the composer can interact with simulated performance and experiment with different aspects, emphasis and structure before creating a notated score. In composing QUARTET the element of pre-composition lies in the preparation of data for the software applications to store, process and then call up on cue during an improvisation.

In creating QUARTET the composer worked with Emile Tobenfeld's *Programmable Variations Generator* in Movement 1, *Fingers* in the latter parts of Movement III and IV, and *Tunesmith* in Movement V. David Zicarelli's *M* software was used for Movements II and the first part of III. Zicarelli's software is one of the most successful attempts to create a device that enables multi-part composing through improvisation. It has now become part of the IRCAM co-development MAX-MSP.

¹ This title comes from an article by Stephen Travis Pope called *Touched by Machine? – Composition and Performance in the Digital Age*. This text presents responses from composers who were asked the following questions: How have new technologies changed the process of composition and performance? What new possibilities are aesthetically and artistically relevant? How do the new tools allow us to use musical material differently?

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Cambridge MA. MIT Press.

Aside from the technical aspects of QUARTET's composition there is an important extra-musical element to consider. This originates from the composer's interest in the artist Bridget Riley, in particular her ability to engage the viewer actively in her monochrome paintings and then later her work with colour stripes. In these paintings squares, circles and lines are woven together into an optical symmetry that allows the pictorial space to oscillate and 'dance'. Riley has described how the source of this approach came from her mother who was '*. . . a great looker . . . who constantly described everything she could . . . the play of sunlight on a glass . . . the depth of texture in the sea and sky . . .*' In Riley's work the abstract shape becomes a living and vibrating expression of the natural world. It is the viewer's position in, and movement across, the pictorial space that appears to make the image 'move' playfully. The music of all the pieces in the *TOUCHED BY MACHINE?* sequence attempts something of the same, only with sound and the ear rather than the image and the eye. The five movements of QUARTET take their titles from a group of Riley's paintings from the mid 1960s: *Continuum, Shuttle, Fission, Late-Morning, Chant*.

QUARTET was commissioned with funds from the Eastern Arts Association for Sarah Coleman and the Demos Quartet for performance at the Norwich and Norwich Triennial Festival in 1989. It is the third work of a series to focus on professional musicians working in North Norfolk where the composer lived from 1986 to 1990 as Eastern Arts Association Composer in the Community.

Notes for Performance

The nature of this music requires a very particular approach to performance technique and interpretation. This string quartet is viewed predominantly as a democratic community of musicians who work together to create a 'play' of musical elements for the listener to interact with and enjoy. In many parts of the score the music contains long sequences that required a sustained working through of a musical process. Bar 29 to 62 of *Continuum* provides a clear example of such a process. Players are advised to treat such passages with clarity and simplicity of musical expression, focusing on the whole process rather than individual moments. Bowing, dynamics, articulation and expressive markings have been kept to a minimum to give more interpretative space than is usual in a late 20C composition. Such performance indications should be seen as a starting point for rehearsal, no more. That said, the overall sound envisaged for the work is one where lightness and deftness of bow on the string and a minimal use of vibrato common to Early and Baroque music is able to contrast with more expressive modes of playing found in late Classical and Romantic music.

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I. Continuum

allegramente con guistezza ♩ = 80

accelerando from ♩ = 80 to ♩ = 160 at bar 7

Violoncello

p (tasto)

5

mp (normale)

9

12

15

p (tasto)

19

22

mp (normale)

25

28

29 *egualmente con diligenza* ♩ = 150

mf

31



34



37 **37**



40



43



46



49



52



55



58

Musical staff 58: Bass clef, starting with a whole rest, followed by eighth notes with accents (v) and slurs.

61

62

Musical staff 61: Bass clef, starting with a whole rest, followed by eighth notes with accents (v) and slurs. A box labeled "62" is above the staff. A crescendo hairpin and "ff" are below the staff.

64

Musical staff 64: Bass clef, eighth notes with slurs. A "f" dynamic marking is below the staff.

67

68

Musical staff 67: Bass clef, eighth notes with slurs. A box labeled "68" is above the staff.

70

Musical staff 70: Bass clef, eighth notes with slurs. A "poco cresc." dynamic marking is below the staff.

73

Musical staff 73: Bass clef, eighth notes with slurs. A "molto" dynamic marking is below the staff.

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II. Shuttle

75 *risentito da ballo* ♩ = 140

Violoncello

78 *mf* **80**

81 *poco risonare*

84 **85** *mp quasi solo ed animato*

87

90 **90** *poco scherzando e staccato*

93 **95** *f (subito)*

96

99 **101** *pizz.* *mf*

102

105

108

Musical staff 108: Bass clef, starting with a whole rest, followed by quarter notes G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. A fermata is placed over the G1. The staff ends with a quarter note G1, marked *arco* and *f*.

111 **111**

Musical staff 111: Bass clef, starting with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The staff ends with a whole note G1, marked *ff*.

114

Musical staff 114: Bass clef, starting with a whole note G1, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The staff ends with a whole note G1.

117 **117**

Musical staff 117: Bass clef, starting with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The staff ends with a whole note G1, marked *mf poco scherzando e staccato*.

120

Musical staff 120: Bass clef, starting with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The staff ends with a whole note G1.

123

124

Musical staff 123-124: Bass clef, starting with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The staff ends with a whole note G1, marked *mp quasi solo ed animato*.

126

Musical staff 126: Bass clef, starting with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The staff ends with a whole note G1.

129

Musical staff 129: Bass clef, starting with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The staff ends with a whole note G1.

132 **132**

Musical staff 132: Bass clef, starting with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The staff ends with a whole note G1, marked *p*.

135

Musical staff 135: Bass clef, starting with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The staff ends with a whole note G1.

138



141

141 *pizz.*



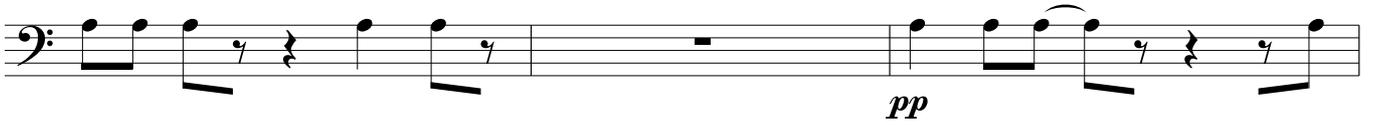
(*sul pont*)

144



147

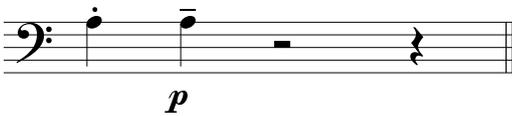
148



150



153



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III. Fission

intimo ♩ = 100
con sord.

Violoncello

154

mp

158

162

166

170

174

mf

178

182

intimissimo

mp

186

f

190

mf

266 268 (V) (M) 276
Bass clef, 3/8 time signature. Dynamics: *f*, *mf*, *(cantabile)*.

277
Bass clef, 3/8 time signature.

285 288
Bass clef, 3/16 time signature. Dynamics: *f*.

295
Bass clef, 2/16 and 3/16 time signatures. Dynamics: *mf*.

305 *senza sord.* 310
Bass clef, 3/8, 3/16, 4/8, 3/16, and 3/8 time signatures. Dynamics: *mp*, *mf*.

314 Vn.I
Violin I staff, 3/8 and 3/16 time signatures. Dynamics: *f*.

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IV. Late Morning

317 *lusingando me articolato* ♩ = 120-130

330 13 343 6

Violoncello

349 Va.

352

356 356

mf

360

364 365

f

368 *poco a poco accelerando a con esaltazione ed energico* ♩ = 75

ff sempre

371

375 377

Musical notation for measures 375-377. The piece is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 375 is in 2/4 time. Measure 376 is in 3/4 time. Measure 377 is in 10/16 time. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and a fermata over the final note of measure 377.

379 380

Musical notation for measures 379-380. Measure 379 is in 10/16 time. Measure 380 is in 3/16 time. The notation includes sixteenth notes, eighth notes, and rests, with accents (>) and a fermata over the final note of measure 380.

387

Musical notation for measures 387-391. Measure 387 is in 2/4 time. Measure 388 is in 3/4 time. Measure 389 is in 3/4 time. Measure 390 is in 3/4 time. Measure 391 is in 3/4 time. The notation includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests, with accents (>) and a fermata over the final note of measure 391.

392

Musical notation for measures 392-395. Measure 392 is in 3/4 time. Measure 393 is in 3/4 time. Measure 394 is in 3/4 time. Measure 395 is in 3/4 time. The notation includes quarter notes, eighth notes, and rests, with accents (^) and a fermata over the final note of measure 395.

395 396

Musical notation for measures 395-399. Measure 395 is in 10/16 time. Measure 396 is in 3/16 time. Measure 397 is in 3/16 time. Measure 398 is in 3/16 time. Measure 399 is in 3/16 time. The notation includes sixteenth notes, eighth notes, and rests, with accents (>) and a fermata over the final note of measure 399.

403 406

Musical notation for measures 403-407. Measure 403 is in 2/4 time. Measure 404 is in 2/4 time. Measure 405 is in 2/4 time. Measure 406 is in 10/16 time. Measure 407 is in 14/16 time. The notation includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests, with accents (>) and a fermata over the final note of measure 407.

408 *molto ritardando*

Musical notation for measures 408-411. Measure 408 is in 14/16 time. Measure 409 is in 14/16 time. Measure 410 is in 14/16 time. Measure 411 is in 14/16 time. The notation includes quarter notes, eighth notes, and rests, with accents (^) and a fermata over the final note of measure 411.

V. Chant

410 *piacevole e flautando* ♩ = 120

Violoncello

414

418

422 **422** *ritardando.* (')

426 **426** *a tempo* (h)

430

434

438 *ritardando* (')

442 **442** *a tempo*

mf (a suo comodo)

447

f

451

455

458

ritardando () *a tempo*

p

459

pizz. *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

p

463

467

467

mp *mf* *p* *mp*

471

ritardando () *a poco allargando*

mf *mp* *mf* *mf*

474

475

479

a poco a poco calando *a tempo*

mp *p* *mp*

482

483

p *mp*

487

490

Musical staff 487-490: Bass clef, starting with a whole rest. Measures 487-488 contain eighth notes with accents. Measure 489 contains a half note. Measure 490 contains a quarter note with an accent. Dynamics: *p* (measures 489-490), *mp* (measure 490).

491

Musical staff 491-494: Bass clef. Measure 491: quarter note with accent. Measure 492: quarter note with accent. Measure 493: eighth notes. Measure 494: quarter note with accent. Dynamics: *p* (measures 493-494).

495

Musical staff 495-498: Bass clef. Measure 495: quarter note with accent. Measure 496: quarter note with accent. Measure 497: eighth notes with *pizz.* marking. Measure 498: quarter note with *arco* marking. Dynamics: *pp* (measures 497-498), *p* (measure 498). Includes *ritardando* marking above the staff.