



Objects of Curiosity (SuperCity)

For String Quartet (with digital media)

Nigel Morgan

*Scenario from Will Alsop's SuperCity exhibition 2005
at the Urbis Centre for Urban Culture*

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About the Music

In the past twenty years the medium of the string quartet has been reimagined thanks to the Kronos Quartet. They have inspired a new generation of string players who have commissioned new work, made collaborations with musicians from other cultures, explored improvisation and devised work, adopted amplification, sound projection and electronic treatments, and most recently worked with digital visual media and communications technology.

Objects of Curiosity is composed to suit this new kind of string quartet, but does not altogether rule out more traditional approaches to the medium.

The genesis of what is an expanding collection of single movement works for strings (with or without external / additional performance elements) comes from the work of the architect Will Alsop who, like the Kronos with the string quartet, has re-defined many people's experience of architecture. Alsop's often visionary work is not just about buildings: it focuses a concern for the whole environment and the quality of lives people lead. This is often first expressed in a web of collaborative practice using painting, sculpture, music, poetry, documentary, and the latest in digital visualization. In his 2005 exhibition SuperCity at Manchester's Urbis Centre for Urban Culture Alsop presents a vision for the future of the North of England, a SuperCity development stretching from Hull to Liverpool.

Just the concept of SuperCity is a departure from traditional urban planning, the exhibition is a departure from traditional exhibition shows – instead of architectural models, presented here are the windows into the experiences the SuperCity could contain. Will Alsop sometimes refers to his buildings as “objects of curiosity” (and wonder) – structures that are meant to inspire people and animate the landscape. The giant sculptural forms found throughout the exhibition are not answers to what the future will be like, but objects to encourage dreams of what could be, and, most importantly, encourage the spectator to ask “what if . . . ?”

The notion of Alsop's 'objects of curiosity' and the Urbis exhibition has provided a kind of scenario – as well as a subtitle – for this quartet piece. The music explores a variety of tempos and '*affections*' punctuated with sequence of backdrops, when the music drops into real-time to be filled with 'objects of curiosity'. These real-time backdrops may be realized in a number of different ways – depending on circumstance, resources and performers' intentions.

- a sequence of visuals of objects of curiosity that have some kind of link to them (exhibits in an imaginary museum, forms under magnification, etc);
- a sequence of sonic objects, curious and not immediately identifiable;
- a combination of both visual and sonic objects mentioned above;
- improvised or devised sonic objects produced live by members of the quartet or guest improvising musician or musicians;

In the SuperCity quartet the 'objects of curiosity' are presented as scored musical material in small type – to be played as though a distant musical presence, literally a backdrop against images and sounds from the SuperCity exhibition. In amplified performances this musical material should be imaginatively projected and electronically treated. The backdrops may even be pre-recorded and 'dropped in' to enable the performers to devise their own 'objects' in the sonic foreground.

Objects of Curiosity (SuperCity)

A ♩ = 105 *with spirit and edge*

Violin I *f* *mf* *mf*

Violin II *f* *mf* *mf*

Viola *f* *ff* *mf*

Violoncello *mf* *ff* *mf*

Object of Curiosity A

4

♩ = 30 *con sordini ad lib.*

B ♩ = 45 *like a slow dance*

mp *pp* *mp*

con sordini ad lib.

pp *mf* *f*

f *pp* *mf*

f *pp* *mp*

7 (3 + 2 + 3 + 3 + 2)

mp

mp

stacc.

stacc.

mp

mp

Object of Curiosity B

8 $\text{♩} = 30$

C $\text{♩} = 75$ full of light and colour

pp

pp

pp

pp

stacc.

stacc.

stacc.

stacc.

mf

mf

mf

mf

sf

sf

sf

sf

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

arco

arco

arco

arco

7

16

7

16

12

mp *piu mf* *mp* *mf*
mp *piu mf* *mp* *mf*
mp *poco risonare* *mp* *mf*
mp *poco risonare*

16

f *mp* *mf*
f *mp* *mf*
f *mp* *poco risonare*
f *mp* *poco risonare*

20

Musical score for measures 20-22. The score consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The time signature changes from 2/4 to 8/8 to 3/2. Dynamic markings include *f* and *mf*. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a 12/4 time signature.

Object of Curiosity C

23

Musical score for 'Object of Curiosity C', measures 23-26. The score consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The time signature is 12/4. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 30$. Dynamic markings include *pp*, *mp*, and *mf*. A section starting at measure 25 is marked with a box containing 'D' and the tempo $\text{♩} = 90$ *nervous and excited*. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a 12/4 time signature.

25

Musical score for measures 25-28. The score consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The time signatures are 5/8, 2/4, 5/4, 7/16, and 13/8. Dynamics include *mf*, *mp*, and *f*. The word *legato* is written above the first two staves. The word *stacc.* is written above the third and fourth staves. The piece is in a key with one sharp (F#).

Object of Curiosity D

(3 + 3 + 3 + 4)

Musical score for measures 29-32. The score consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The time signature is 13/8. Dynamics include *mf*, *p*, and *pp*. A tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 30$ is present. The piece is in a key with one sharp (F#).

31 **E** ♩ = 75 *full of light and colour*

Musical score for measures 31-33. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of four staves: two treble clefs and two bass clefs. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 75. The first staff (top) has dynamics *mp*, *piu mf*, and *mp* \curvearrowright *mf*. The second staff has dynamics *mp* and *piu mf*. The third staff (bass clef) has dynamics *mf* and *mp* \curvearrowright *mf*. The fourth staff (bass clef) has dynamics *mp* and *mp* \curvearrowright *mf*. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Measure numbers 31, 32, and 33 are indicated at the beginning of their respective systems.

34 *pont. poco a poco sul tasto*

Musical score for measures 34-37. The score is in 4/2 time and consists of four staves: two treble clefs and two bass clefs. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The first staff (top) has dynamics *p*, *ppp*, *mp*, and *mf*. The second staff has dynamics *p*, *ppp*, *mp*, and *mf*. The third staff (bass clef) has dynamics *p*, *ppp*, *mp*, *mf*, and *mf*. The fourth staff (bass clef) has dynamics *p*, *ppp*, *mp*, and *mf*. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Measure numbers 34, 35, 36, and 37 are indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. Performance instructions include *pont.*, *poco a poco*, *sul tasto*, and *stacc.*

38

Musical score for measures 38-41. The score consists of four staves. The first staff (Treble 1) starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains a melodic line with dynamics *pp* and *mp*, and the marking *cantabile*. The second staff (Treble 2) also starts with a treble clef and 4/4 time, with dynamics *mf* and *p*. The third staff (Bass 1) starts with a bass clef and 4/4 time, with dynamics *mp* and *p*. The fourth staff (Bass 2) starts with a bass clef and 4/4 time, with dynamics *mp* and *p*. At measure 40, the time signature changes to 3/2. The score ends with a repeat sign at measure 41.

42

Musical score for measures 42-46. The score consists of four staves. The first staff (Treble 1) starts with a treble clef and a 9/8 time signature. It contains a melodic line with dynamics *p* and *mp*. A box labeled "E1" is positioned above measure 44. The second staff (Treble 2) starts with a treble clef and 9/8 time, with dynamics *p* and *mp*. The third staff (Bass 1) starts with a bass clef and 9/8 time, with dynamics *mp* and *p*. The fourth staff (Bass 2) starts with a bass clef and 9/8 time, with dynamics *mp* and *p*. At measure 43, the time signature changes to 3/4. The score includes performance markings *stacc.*, *ord.*, and *tasto non vib.*. The score ends with a repeat sign at measure 46.

47 (3+3+3+2+2) *cantabile*

mp *mp* *mp* *mp*

tasto non vib. *p* *tasto non vib.* *p*

stacc. preciso *stacc. preciso* *stacc. preciso* *stacc. preciso*

50 *poco a poco cresc.* (2+2+3+2+2)

mf *mf* *mf* *mf*

stacc. *stacc.* *stacc.* *stacc.*

poco cresc. *poco cresc.* *poco cresc.* *poco cresc.*

E2

54

54

p *p* *mp* *mp*

11 8

11 8

11 8

11 8

(3 + 2 + 4 + 2)

Object of Curiosity E

59

59

mf *f* *mp* *mf* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

mf *f* *mp* *mf* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

mp *f* *mp* *mf* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

mf *f* *mp* *mf* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

11 8

11 8

11 8

11 8

$\text{♩} = 30$

63 **F** ♩ = 90 *nervous and excited*

63 *mf* *stacc.* *(pizz.)* *legato* *(pizz.)* *stacc.*
mf *mp* *mf* *mf* *p* *mf*
mf *mp* *mf* *mf* *(pizz.)* *stacc.*
mf *mp* *mf* *mf* *(pizz.)* *stacc.*
mf *mp* *mf* *mf* *(pizz.)* *stacc.*

70

70 *legato* *stacc.* *legato*
mp *mp* *mf* *p* *f*
legato *stacc.* *legato*
mp *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *mf* *p* *f*
legato *stacc.* *legato*
mp *mp* *mf* *p* *f*
legato *stacc.* *legato*
mp *mf* *p* *f*

76 (3 + 3 + 3 + 2)

Musical score for measures 76-78. The score consists of four staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2. The time signature changes from 11/8 to 3/2 and then to 9/8. Dynamics include *mp*, *mf*, *stacc.*, and *f*.

Object of Curiosity F

79 $\text{♩} = 30$

G $\text{♩} = 60$ calm and sensuous

Musical score for measures 79-82. The score consists of four staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2. The time signature changes from 9/4 to 3/2, 7/8, 4/4, and 3/4. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, *mp*, and *mf*. Performance markings include (solo) and (ord.).

Object of Curiosity G

83 (ord.) (3 + 3 + 2 + 3) $\text{♩} = 30$

p $\text{p} \text{pp}$ *p* *p* *p* *p* *f* *pp*

p $\text{p} \text{pp}$ *mp* *p* *p* *f* *pp*

p $\text{p} \text{pp}$ *p* *mf* *p* *p* *f* *pp*

p $\text{p} \text{pp}$ *p* *mf* *p* *f* *pp*

88 **H** $\text{♩} = 45$ like a slow dance *poco a poco ritardando*

pp *pp* *mp* *p*

stacc. *poco a poco ritardando* *poco a poco ritardando*

pp *mp* *p*

pp *p* *mp* *poco a poco ritardando*

Object of Curiosity H

91

$\text{♩} = 30$

$\text{♩} = 75$ full of light and colour

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

stacc.

f mp

f

mp

stacc.

f mp

f

mp

stacc.

f mp

f

mf

stacc.

f mp

f

mp

95

trem. pont.

poco a poco

sul tasto

(2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 3)

poco rit.

mf

mp

pp mp p

trem. pont.

poco a poco

sul tasto

mp

mf

poco rit.

trem. pont.

poco a poco

sul tasto

pp mp p

mf

poco rit.

trem. pont.

poco a poco

sul tasto

pp mp p

mf

poco rit.

Object of Curiosity I

98

$\text{♩} = 30$

J $\text{♩} = 105$ with spirit and edge

Musical score for measures 98-102. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of four staves: two treble clefs and two bass clefs. Measures 98-102 are marked with dynamics *pp*, *mp*, and *f*. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. A repeat sign is present at the beginning of measure 98.

103 (2 + 2 + 2 + 3 + 2)

Musical score for measures 103-107. The score is in 13/8 time and consists of four staves: two treble clefs and two bass clefs. Measures 103-107 are marked with dynamics *f*, *mf*, and *p*. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. A repeat sign is present at the beginning of measure 103. Performance instructions include *pizz.* (pizzicato) and *arco* (arco). The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

107 (3+2+3+3+2)

Musical score for measures 107-110. The score is written for four staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 13/8 to 4/4 to 3/2 to 2/2. The dynamics are marked as *mp*, *f*, and *pp*. The performance instructions include *poco a poco crescendo*, *port.*, and *(ord.) poco a poco crescendo*.

J1

110

(2+2+2+2+3)

Musical score for measures 110-114. The score is written for four staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 2/8 to 4/4 to 11/8 to 9/8 to 11/8. The dynamics are marked as *f*, *p*, *mf*, and *pp*. The performance instructions include *(solo)*.

114 (2+2+3+2+2) J2

mf \triangleright *mp* \triangleright *p*
mf \triangleright *mp* \triangleright *p*
pp
mf
mf \triangleright *mp* \triangleright *p*
mf
pp

ord.
(solo)
(ord.)

Object of Curiosity J

117 *poco a poco cresc.* $\text{♩} = 30$

mf \triangleright *f* \triangleright *pp*
mf \triangleright *f* \triangleright *pp*
mf \triangleright *f* \triangleright *ff* \triangleright *pp*
f \triangleright *ff* \triangleright *pp*

poco a poco cresc.
express.

121 **K** ♩ = 75 *full of light and colour*

stacc. trem. (3 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2) pizz.

p *p* *mf* *f* *mf*

stacc. trem. pizz.

p *p* *mf* *f* *mf*

(as though continuing the previous solo) trem. pizz.

p *f* *p* *mf* *f* *mf*

stacc. trem. pizz.

p *p* *mf* *f* *mf*

126 arco *senza ritardando*

p *pp* *p*

arco *senza ritardando*

p *pp* *p*

arco *senza ritardando*

pp *p*

arco *senza ritardando*

pp *p*

for the Kronos String Quartet

January - February 2005