

String Quartet no. 2

opus 12

I. moderato

II. andante

III. largo-allegretto-presto-adagio-presto-tempo di barcarole-coda

composed

between 13th August 1996 and 2nd March 1998, revised in 2001

dedicated

to Han Bruinse, Arnold Wildschut & Arie de Wit

duration

ca. 29 min.

premièred

on 31st May 2000 at the theatre Lantaarn/Venster in Rotterdam (The Netherlands) by the Mondriaan Quartet

published

by Donemus

recorded

by the Mondriaan Quartet on Etcetera Records KTC 1219

scoring

2 Violins, Viola, Violoncello

Marijn Simons on *String Quartet no. 2*:

I composed the first movement of this quartet, the “moderato”, in August 1996. The second and third movements – the “andante” and the “largo” - were written after the completion, on 23 January 1998, of my first Violin Concerto, *Cuddly Animals*; it was on 2 March 1998 that I drew the last bar of my Second String Quartet.

“Moderato”, “andante”, “largo” - these terms seem to hint at a classical framework, and this supposition is confirmed if one looks at the work’s themes, harmonies and overall form. These classical forms, however, are not stencilled indiscriminately, as the sonata main form of the first movement; the theme and variations of the “andante”; and the third movement’s fugue. All instruments are almost continuously in action. The stratification is, at times, composed in three parts, often in two, and at times even in one part.

Rhythm predominates in this String Quartet. Its three movements contrast with one another. The number five plays an important role in the first movement, also as far as

harmony is concerned. The “andante” is dominated by a characteristic short/long rhythm, with the emphasis on short. The final movement is nothing if not syncopic.

The Quartet opens with an accumulation of five fifths in exceedingly broad position which determine the moderato’s harmonic colour. This chord formed of fifths shrinks more and more as the movement progresses. The attentive listener will recognise thematic elements from the first movement of Beethoven’s “ninth Symphony”. An identical undulatory motion is to be found in the development of the “andante”, but this time the chord notes are expanding. The chord of B-major has a pivotal function and is recurring again and again.

The intervals of the preceding movements’ principal motives are being put down – separately, and without metrics – in the introduction of the third movement. From this, the fugue-theme emerges; this “phony-fugue” forms the String Quartet’s climax. The fourth-intervals are surging upwards in the coda to the penetratingly-repeated octaves (a-a) of the first violin, in which they finally dissolve.

The *String Quartet no.2, opus 12* is dedicated to Han Bruinse, Arnold Wildschut and Arie de Wit.

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