

Threats and Declamations (2005)

The title Threats and Declamations was suggested by a reading of a book of 'forgotten' English - antique words and archaic expressions; such books have always piqued my interest. Two words specifically caught my attention:

Commination - a threat or denunciation.

Joc-partit - a poetic form developed by Provençal troubadours; a challenger proposes a theme whilst an opposing attitude is also propounded. After three rounds of debate an arbiter decides who the more persuasive combatant is in this verbal joust.

The musical structure, as well as the grouping of instruments in the ensemble, unfolds with the above definitions in mind. The first section is built from the development and different orderings of three short gestures - a rhythmically angular series of chords with a melodic fragment, a simple figure of four notes and a more leisurely rising gesture. The subsequent portion of the work follows without a pause, specifically, in measured silence. It is built on two themes; the first theme is angular and improvisatory, the second a seven-note figure (heard first on horn) in more regular note values, and in canon with itself. Three presentations of these themes, the first generally the same on each subsequent return, the second more and more varied in each section, leads finally to a 'denouement' using both themes. The final gesture, the four-note figure from the beginning of the work, brings the piece full circle and to its close.

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