Simon Cummings

Intense quick dream of sentimental groups with people of all possible characters amidst all possible appearances

for string sextet
instrumentation
2 Violins • 2 Violas • Cello • Double Bass

performance notes

= Bartok pizzicato = excessive bow pressure: pitched but distorted = utmost bow pressure: pitchless scraping

= beyond the bridge of the specified string (indeterminate pitch)

= arco battuto accent, the wood striking the string through the hair, without ricochet

c.l. = col legno (always battuto: applies only to the note indicated)

= tremolando (as fast as possible) or jeté, as indicated

= harmonic fingering; harmonics should be played precisely as written, regardless of the clarity of the resultant sounding pitch

= vibrato may be used freely; reminders of this—contrasting with passages for open strings or harmonics—are occasionally indicated

duration: c. 6 minutes

13 December 2010: Interrobang, Simon Cummings, Recital Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire
Composed in late 2009, this piece took its inspiration from a short poem by E. E. Cummings, from his collection *73 Poems*:

*wild(at our first)beasts uttered human words*
*—our second coming made stones sing like birds—*
*but o the starhushed silence which our third’s*

Like the poem, the piece explores three behavioural states, the first of which is loud & ferocious, the players attacking their open strings with brute force. Later, this develops into milder, more lyrical material, before finally yielding to sparse, faint harmonics. Rather than dividing the piece into three clear sections, these three states evolve & bleed into each other, their respective characters gradually taking shape, but ever in flux.

The title is a phrase found in Arthur Rimbaud's poem *Vigils*, from his well-known collection *Illuminations*; it describes perfectly both the universality and the drama i have sought to capture in the piece.

S. C.
to P. J. with gratitude

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