Velocity

For String Quartet

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Velocity

*Velocity* (composed in 2012) is a companion piece to my earlier *Vertigo* quartet (based on Bernard Herrmann’s film music). *Velocity* doesn’t quote directly from Herrmann but does emulate the ‘sighing’ cadential gestures which are a striking characteristic of Herrmann’s score.

The title refers to one of the simple ideas behind the work, namely that closer objects appear to move more quickly than distant ones, so in the music the fast passages are in the foreground at a louder dynamic level than the slower passages, to create a dynamic, three-dimensional quality where surprise and inevitability co-exist.

The opening of *Velocity* contrasts the fast, loud music in the viola and the soft, sustained sounds of the others; it establishes D as tonal centre and outlines the minor third as an important structural unit. Contrasting musical ideas form a steady processional, interrupted at bar 60 by the first extended loud passage. This template (a montage of slow, soft elements leading to explosive outburst) is applied in successive cycles. The longest passage of soft music is abruptly interrupted by the final extended explosion of hocketing monody; the intensity subsequently subsides into a return of the opening music and loud outbursts become momentary interjections rather than foreground activity.

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Duration: 10 minutes
* alt = freely alternate pizz, spicc, col legno, battuto, sempre pp