

Commissioned by IRCAM for the Arditti Quartet, *tracing metamorphosis* was composed between 2001 and 2002. Much of the work on the score itself as well as the technical aspects of the piece, were undertaken in the studios at IRCAM. The piece has been realised in collaboration with the assistance of Gilbert Nouno, who created the applications for effecting real-time computer transformation employed throughout the piece.

The fabric of *tracing metamorphoses* is built around a basic musical idea, a line, which weaves through the sound-world of the work. At certain times this linear thread and its developments are expressed in simple, melodic form, whilst at other points it is dissolved, fragmented or splintered by textures which focus on predominantly rhythmic and timbral features. In terms of the overall form of the piece, the music unfolds as a series of elaborations on musical gestures, characterised by certain contours, rhythms and colours. In so doing so, the work's six large formal divisions alternate two types of music; one where the emphasis is placed on individual utterances by particular instruments, and their real-time transformations, and the other, where the quartet and electronics act as a collective.

The piece works with two, apparently, contradictory aspects which lie at the heart of combining 'live' and electronic elements. On the one hand there are the flexible and irrational features - inherent in what one could call the human dimension - associated with chamber music and on the other, there is the comparatively fixed, calculated, approach implied by the employment of a computer resource. The writing (for both quartet and electronics) attempts to preserve traditional elements of interaction and exchange, characteristic of instrumental music, through the manner in which the computer transformations relate to the quartet; the transformations of the quartet's music both interact and work with the live material, extending musical elaboration into a kind of acoustic development and exploration of the musical material. On the other hand, the writing for the quartet itself uses basic processes, for example pitch-shifting, delay and reverberation, associated primarily with electronic transformation of sound.

The title of the work refers in a literal sense to the processes which underlie the music's construction and, in an anecdotal sense, to the relationship between the live and electronic elements, one which is perhaps best summed up by the following quotation, presented by the Oxford English Dictionary: "A fourth...will begin to change them in his fancy...and lose his grasp of the scene in fantastic metamorphosis" (1856 Ruskin *Mod. Paint.* III. iv. xvii. Sect.6).