

Ariadne's Thread **Roger Reynolds**

Ariadne's Thread, for string quartet and computer generated sound, arose out of a longstanding interest in line, whether evoked as sound or inscribed graphically by such masterful hands as those of Sengai, Klee or Rembrandt. Continuity, directionality, inflection, intensification, rarefaction, whimsy, even violence are subsumed in the manifestations and depictions that line allows. Ariadne's Thread is for string quartet and computer generated sound, which supports, augments, alternates with, and occasionally replaces the instrumentalists' efforts, expanding the range of what an unaided string ensemble can accomplish.

Elements from the myth of the piece—the Minotaur's vertiginous rage, the number seven, the strategy of surreptitious substitution, and Dionysus "in the wings"—but, after all, it is not meant as illustration. Having composed two earlier works that address the quartet traditions, I allowed a less reasoned obsessiveness to invade this one, an obsession that requires a particular sort of unanimity.

Ariadne's Thread was written for the Arditti Quartet and was premiered by them in Messiaen Hall at Radio France in December, 1994. The piece was jointly commissioned by Radio France, the Florence Gould Foundation and Les Ateliers UPIC. The computer materials were realized in Paris at the UPIC studios and assembled at the University of California, San Diego, where Timothy Labor was my musical assistant. Michael Theodore was my musical assistant in the quadraphonic version.
(http://www.americancomposers.org/oti_programnotes.htm)

- OUTLINE -

Written in eight short, continuous movements:

- I.
 1. Slowly developing lines, - long notes
 2. sudden rapid melodic outbursts about 1 minute in (half-way through the movement) and near the end.
 3. No prevalent use of electronic sounds
- II.
 1. Melodic lines continue to develop, increasing in activity
 2. Electronic sounds are introduced immediately – (long, droning high frequency sounds)
 3. Electronics are not present in the latter half of the movement
- III.
 1. Melodic activity increases dramatically, wider range utilized
 2. Electronics introduced immediately – (low frequency drone slowly shifts upward and then back down again)
 3. Electronics are not present in the latter half of the movement
- IV.
 1. Sudden sound-mass
 2. Electronics are present throughout attributing to the massive collage of sound
- V.
 1. Extremely active and varied melodic lines
 2. glissando's are a prominent feature
 3. Electronics enter in the latter portion of the motion (echoing the glissando filled texture)
- VI.
 1. Texture settles from previous movement – less dense downward gliss texture
 2. melodic activity gradually increases for about a minute
 3. tremolo-like texture introduced in electronics along with a sudden shift to a solo melodic figure in the violin (at 1'20")
 4. tutti tremolo in the strings alternates with electronics
 5. A call and response continues between electronics and strings, altering rhythmic motives throughout the rest of the movement. (ends with electronics)
- VII.
 1. Begins with strings sustaining pitches against downward glissandos.
 2. A sustained electronic sound is introduced at about 1'15"
 3. Gliss-like electronic sounds introduced around 2'00"
 1. strong prominence of electronics throughout the next minute of music
 4. Ends with strings only
- VIII.
 1. Quiet sustained notes and trills – no notable electronics used.