

Troubadour Songs (1991), string quartet & electric guitar, commissioned by the National Endowment of the Arts for the Kronos Quartet, Boosey & Hawkes - 1992. (14')

Troubadour Songs and Physical Property program note

Troubadour Songs and **Physical Property** were written in 1990-92 as the second and third parts of a trilogy for electric guitar and string quartet. **Troubadour Songs** was inspired by the rhythms and rhetoric of storytelling, such as the opening request to suspend disbelief ('Once upon a time . . .'); the cycle of action/adventure and return as the hero fulfills the tasks required to marry the princess, get the gold, or save the family; and, of course, the ending that gently releases the listener into a state of ' . . .happily ever after.'

Troubadour Songs does not tell a particular story and it has no concrete words or familiar syntax. It is more like listening to a story in a foreign language where the content is inferred by how the story is being told. To this end, and adding to the fairy tale quality of **Troubadour Songs**, is the use of microtones (notes between those of the familiar chromatic scale).

Between the ages of eighteen and twenty, I was a professional freestyle skier. My vision of perfection was to careen down the mountain, head over heels, arms and legs flailing, on-lookers gasping and somehow end up at the bottom with a smile on my face and not a snowflake on me. This aesthetic finds its musical analog more in **Physical Property** than in any of my other works. As the title suggests, this piece is about the physicality of performing fast-paced, action-packed chamber music.

Where **Troubadour Songs** creates a strange fictional landscape in which the electric guitar (symbol of adolescent rebellion) and the string quartet (quintessential ensemble of refined chamber music) must find ways to cooperate, **Physical Property** pits the crunchy sound and rhythmic drive of the electric guitar against intricate virtuoso fiddling.

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