



NOTES FROM PAUL STANHOPE:

Qinoth for string orchestra (2011) Paul Stanhope (b.1969)

“When a person cries, [they make] a noise that slides downward and then leaps to an even higher pitch to begin the slide again. Not surprisingly, something similar happens in musical laments around the world.”

The musical material of Qinoth (pronounced ‘Key-Nought’ – meaning “lamentations”) plays with the various notions of the Lamento figures mentioned by Alex Ross in his book *Listen to This*, namely descending scalic passages found especially in the affect-ridden music of the early seventeenth century. These resemble tears on the page as well as the physical act of crying mentioned by Ross. In addition to the Lamento figures, the piece refers to two Jewish cantillations which are traditional chants from the book of Eykchah (or the Lamentations of Jeremiah). These are fragmented, augmented and developed in various ways.

In the piece’s opening, an chant from the Ashkenazi tradition is first heard as a cello solo, enveloped in string clusters formed by descending ‘tears’ passages in the violins before hurtling headlong into an extended dance-like contrapuntal section. Later, in a central slow section, a second chant from the Sephardic (or Arabic) tradition of Judaism is introduced in a passage featuring a violin solo against the rest of the orchestra. Other solo and chamber-like textures emphasize the more intimate nature of the music. The two strands of chant material are then integrated in the energetic music that follows. In this way, there is a juxtaposition and integration of various traditions and ideas, rather like the melting pot that is contemporary Australia. Eastern and Western sources of music interact in a sort of eclectic counterpoint. Although the Baroque ‘tears’ notion is always in the background, the musical sources are approached very abstractly, producing some surprisingly vigorous and upbeat music at times, in contrast to the plaintive tone suggested by the title. The piece is in a single, palindromic movement in five sections with alternating slow and fast tempo sections. Qinoth was commissioned by the Creative Music Fund for these premiere performances by ACO2.