

Joshua Parmenter: Theta (IV. Ritardando) – for viola and live electronics (2006-7)

Program Notes:

Theta for viola and live electronics is the fourth and final piece in a series of pieces exploring musical changes: crescendo, decrescendo, accelerando and ritardando. In Theta, the violist is required to constantly slow down their tempo for almost the entire piece. This subtle and constant changing of pulse moves the piece through its five sections that grow in length as the piece moves towards its final tempo of a quarter note beating at 60, where the sixteenth note's rhythm (4 Hz, the Theta rhythm) is the same as our brain's rhythm as we reach sleep. All material in the computer part comes from the live performance of the viola. Since no two consecutive notes are really the same exact duration and are constantly slowing down, the rhythmic relationship with the past and present becomes quite complex. Sounds from the past slowly become more and more distant, and the spectral quality of the viola slowly disappears into whispers as the piece drifts to its end.

Theta was composed for violists Melia Watras and Garth Knox, who have both contributed greatly to the composition of the viola part.

--Josh Parmenter