Cello Suite

This work centres on the premise that computer music should allow a composer to write music that is impossible for a human performer, but of the same acoustic quality as a live expressive performance. This cello suite proceeds as if it is a real solo cello recital, gradually twisted into impossible aspects by computer rendering and editing. The source audio is a large number of takes of a human performer (Adam Spiers), with databases of single and grouped notes executed in different techniques. There is a three octave pitch set idiomatic to the work, with associated themes scored in advance. The composer's great joy is in ignoring the performer's fatigue level, rendering incredibly quick runs too fast for human fingers and leaps that disregard the laws of physics, via algorithmic composition and speeded up human expression captured via MIDI.

The piece begins as a live human performance, and only gradually does the computer rendering take over until there is a whirlwind of notes. The suite continues through other thematic groups, each with its developed recapitulation further on. Digital editing allows one to play with the continuity expectations of the audience. In a move indicative of the work's character, the piece ends with a one and a half minute bow, constructed by smoothly editing out the changes that the performer would otherwise be forced to make. No cellist should listen to this without squirming!

The ethos is in evoking a real cello performance, albeit with unsettlingly impossible moments. The use of signal processing is therefore subtle, though the editing may be very explicit for compositional effect. Some slight imperfections of the original recording have been retained for their humanity, amongst some inhuman cello playing.