

Abstracts

Jörn Peter Hiekel: Horizons of experience, traces and the expression of a »true aesthetic freedom«. Reflections on the non-purist aesthetics of György Kurtág

The aesthetics of György Kurtág's music are probably best appreciated when one considers both its elements alluding to the music of earlier times and the moments that recur strongly to the new approaches in composing after 1945. The emphatic side of this music is its ability to connect the most diverse horizons of experience in a constantly unconventional way, and in doing so, to allow the idea of an »aesthetic freedom« to take hold, as Friedrich Schiller's aesthetic writings, for example, tell us. In a kind of ramble, this article sketches some of the characteristic contexts, ideas and constellations in Kurtág's compositional work, but also identifies productive paradoxes. This is done with a view to individual exemplary chamber music and vocal works, in which different historical points of reference appear, some of which have a homage character, as well as to the music-theater work *Fin de partie*, which Beckett interprets in a thoroughly idiosyncratic manner that deviates from Beckett's style. In all these areas of the work, playful and strongly pointed, but also lapidary moments as well as existential primers emerge. It is typical of Kurtág's music that, supported by very different degrees of dosages and accentuations, it is able to interweave disparate elements – and remains far beyond any kind of one-dimensionality.

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Anna Dalos: Attracted by Darmstadt. György Kurtág and the musical Avant-garde around 1959

The compositions written in Kurtág's first Avant-garde period beginning with his first String quartet to the *Sayings of Péter Bornemisza* between 1959 and 1963 (from op. 1 to op. 6) were almost neglected by analysts. These early compositions however can be interpreted as signs of Kurtág's reception of Darmstadt's new music and up-to-date compositional techniques. My study tries to reveal the connections between the music and writings of the main figures of Darmstadt (Boulez, Ligeti, Stockhausen) and Kurtág's new works, and aims at pointing out the »fruitful misunderstanding« that allowed the composer to find his own path.

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Lukas Haselböck: »... le tout petit macabre«. György Ligeti's influence on the music of György Kurtág

Ligeti and Kurtág are two main figures of the music of the 20th century. From the beginning, their artistic formation and development were connected closely. Therefore, Kurtág's music is full of obvious or hidden traces which confirm this influence. In this context, two crucial aspects can be emphasized: the relation between musical space and sound and the inner affinity of language and music. Following these perspectives, selected passages of the following works are analyzed: ... *quasi una fantasia* ... op. 27/1 for piano and instrumental groups (1988–89), ... *pas à pas – nulle part* ... op. 36 for baritone, string trio and percussion (1993–97), and the *Hipartita* op. 43 for violin solo (2000–04).

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Tobias Bleek: »... believe the notation ...?«. Reflections on György Kurtág's notation

Over a long period the issue of musical notation played a central role in Kurtág's work and thinking. Since the 1950 s the composer had been searching for forms of notation that could represent his strongly gestural music in an appropriate way. At the same time, through close collaboration with performers, he began to establish a personal performance tradition, as he feared that the scores of his works alone did not adequately represent his actual intentions. This text examines Kurtág's handling of notation with reference to selected works (String Quartet op. 1, 8 Duos op. 4, *Játékok*, *Attila-József Fragments* op. 20) and source materials from different stages of his life. It aims to demonstrate that the problem of notation is relevant not only to the interpretation and transmission of his music but also to the understanding and analysis of his works.

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János Bali: Games? About the series *Games* as well as *Signs, Games and Messages* by György Kurtág

As the language of the neo-avantgarde is so fragile, it is extremely important to keep in mind the original context of the works in order to understand their meaning. The author has been in close contact with the Kurtág family for forty-five years and the text of the article was checked by the composer himself. The introduction explains the basic lines of Kurtág's artistic thinking by means of a short film by his granddaughter, the visual artist Judit Kurtág. The six chapters deal with 1) the corpus and genesis of *Games*; 2) the

piano as Kurtág's sense-organ; 3) the sphere of Kurtág's activity; 4) the most important influences on the birth of *Games*; 5) sign and meaning in Kurtág's art; 6) Kurtág and the frustration of deadlines.

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Tom Rojo Poller: Between appropriation and dedication. On some aspects of György Kurtág's Beckett settings

Starting out from the well-established observation that the work of György Kurtág is essentially distinguished by the role of both the artistic subject and referenced objects, the article sets out to examine Kurtág's settings of texts by Samuel Beckett, particularly focusing on aspects of dedication and appropriation. In Kurtág's Beckett settings, so the main thesis holds, both of these aspects are given in a particularly intertwined way, so that figures of the self and the other are blurred and effectively become indistinguishable.

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Roland Moser: STEPS. ENDINGS. *On voyait le fond. Si blanc. Si net.* About *Fin de partie, scènes et monologues, opéra en un acte* by György Kurtág, after Samuel Beckett's play *Fin de partie* (1957)

Point of departure in this text is the contrast between difference and identity. Prerequisite conditions are already inherent in the various possibilities of drama and opera. Identity is the composer's attempt and goal to transfer the strict intention of a composition of words into one of sounds. Not only the spoken words of the text, but also all of Beckett's stage directions have been literally adopted by Kurtág in the score of his opera. The selection of texts for the opera also reveals the composer's individual reading.

In this text, the author does not intend to take a scientific appraisal, but rather to identify characteristic points of contact between the two works. He bases this on documents and on personal discussions with György and Márta Kurtág that took place during the long period of the work's creation.

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Simone Hohmaier: György Kurtág's *Kafka Fragments* in the context of vocal works. About the usefulness of analysis for interpretation

Analytical engagement of interpreters with their subject is still not a matter of course. In order to get closer to the interpretation of the *Kafka Fragments* in an analytical way, the paper attempts to put it into the context of Kurtág's

other vocal works with respect to selected aspects: open work vs. predetermined sequence of fragments, relation between voice and instrument (echo and shadow), theatrical and inner gesture and several texture models like funnel structures and atonal cadence types. Finally, the predominance of musical text or rather tradition of interpretation is discussed in respect to Kurtág's oeuvre.

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William Kinderman: On the compositional process of the *Kafka Fragments* op. 24

György Kurtág's *magnum opus* of the 1980 s, the *Kafka Fragments*, is closely connected in its genesis to Kurtág's chamber music work, *Hommage à R. Sch.* The documentation of the compositional process held at the Sacher Foundation in Basel shows that the ordering of the 40 song settings of the *Kafka Fragments* involved collaboration with the Hungarian musician András Wilhelm. Certain additional Kafka settings not contained in the published cycle are held in Basel, such as a setting of »Du bist die Aufgabe«, which is documented in a series of sketches and drafts and a fair copy. This study explores aspects of the compositional genesis, and assesses the ironic animalistic imagery that is conspicuous in both Kafka's tale *The Metamorphosis* and in Kurtág's cycle.

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Martin Zenck: Attempt on gesture in György Kurtág's *Kafka Fragments*

This article focusses on two fundamental aspects: on the one hand on the pantomimic and animal-like gestures revealed particularly in the fragments »Stauend sahen wir das große Pferd« (III, 11) and »Szene in der Elektrischen« (III, 12) through the analysis of the score and sound text; on the other hand on the context of the body's own gestures and these animal gestures appearing in Kafka's diaries, texts and parables, in which we – according to Walter Benjamin – from time to time do not know, whether we are staying amongst humans or rather amongst animals. This impression is reinforced by drawings which Kafka occasionally added on the margins of his diaries referring to a choreography of bodies and thereby opening up a meta-linguistic semantic field which is not reachable through meaningful language, but is expressed in Kurtág's music with its connections to circus, variety and operetta.

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Christian Utz: Continuities out of Discontinuities. Dimensions of Performed Form in Interpretations of György Kurtág's *Kafka Fragments*

Building on a comprehensive corpus of quantitative data from 14 recorded performances of György Kurtág's 40-movement *Kafka Fragments* (1985–87) and employing a method that integrates music analysis, historical research, and close and distant listening, the present essay aims to demonstrate the substantial differences among performers in communicating the cyclic form of this work. Despite the composer's insistence – as evident in his rehearsal practice – to establish an »idiomatic« performance practice for his works, the relative openness of his notational practice and the complexity of the cyclic organization lead to profound differences in marking or weighting performed form, ranging between ironical and dramatic, between processual and architectonic (or »punctuating«) concepts. The »bottom-up« concept of the compositional process and the composer's consistent focus on musical detail establishes a tension with the complex »top-down« shape of the full cycle that is translated into sound by performers with great variance.

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Majid Motavasseli: »A kaleidoscope in a classical frame«. On the cycle problem in György Kurtág's *Kafka Fragments*

The cyclic arrangement of György Kurtág's *Kafka Fragments* op. 24 as it appears in its printed form is not a direct product of the compositional process but is based on a layout suggested by musicologist András Wilhelm. This circumstance enables an analysis of the work both as a collection of fragments, disregarding any concept of concatenation, as well as a cycle featuring a strictly calculated juxtaposition of its contrasting individual parts. Following the results of a previous detailed examination of each fragment's architectonic form, this paper investigates how different formal categories derived from analysis can act as a unifying factor for both concepts. Furthermore, this essay aims to examine how the positioning and interconnection of the individual fragments within the cycle can potentially be justified by their architectonic form as well as their framing tones.

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Thomas Glaser: »(...) building large, extensive musical forms (...) from more or less jagged fragments«. Performance-shaped macroform in sound recordings of György Kurtág's *Kafka Fragments* for soprano and violin op. 24

György Kurtág's *Kafka Fragments* for soprano and violin op. 24 (1985–87) feature 40 individual musical fragments arranged in a complex quadripartite order (19 – 1 – 12 – 8 pieces). A thorough quantitative and qualitative analy-

sis of eight complete recordings of the *Kafka Fragments* dating from 1990 to 2017 offers a promising case study to examine and categorize performers' strategies in regard to their form-shaping characteristics. By starting from the analysis of ›performed form‹, this article is guided by the hypotheses that varying conceptions of the performance of the large-scale form can shape both the perception and (music-theoretical) analysis of this form.

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Cecilia Oinas: Hearing György Kurtág's legacy in sound recordings. An examination of the five released recordings of the *Kafka Fragments*

This article examines the five existing commercial recordings of György Kurtág's *Kafka Fragments* op. 24 (1987) for soprano and violin. I will consider their differences between musical shaping, text and music relationship, interaction between the violinist and the soprano, and the ways in which the subsequent fragments are connected (or disconnected) in the recordings. By combining music analysis with close listening, I propose the recordings of *Kafka Fragments* stand out as independent artefacts, thus showing us an even more versatile view how a two-dimensional score can be realized in sounds.