

Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf  
*Analysis of my Kurtág Cycle*

*I. Introduction*

In accordance with the three temporal modes, one can divide artists into three types. The first lives in remembrance of what has been and what has passed, usually mourning what has been lost; the second lives in expectation of a possible, “better” future, seeking to anticipate or help prepare for it through his work; the third lives in the here and now and cannot really understand the other two. I must admit that I do not belong to any one type alone; I am in two, perhaps even three minds as an artist. In contrast to the title of a late work—*La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura*—by Luigi Nono, however, whom I greatly revere, I abandoned the endeavor to reach a “synthesis” of these three attitudes in my work some time ago. Up until *Angel Novus*, the music theater work I composed at the Dantesque midpoint in my life, i.e., in my mid-30s, I had felt it necessary to do justice to all facets of my artistic existence—albeit in highly individualized ways—in every composition. I was interested in a consistent style referred to—hastily, and partly provoked by my own statements—as “complexist,” though I had always viewed my complexist style as one element of what, following on from Beethoven, whom I consider the greatest composer of all, could be termed multi-perspectivity: the ability to compose a Fifth Symphony and a Sixth Symphony in tandem.

After *Angelus Novus*, I reached a fork in my path. I felt the need to work separately through the different expressive areas I had previously sought to combine, in the form of cycles specifically conceived for this purpose, in order to gather the necessary experience so that, one day, my musical language would once again be able to reach some form of (higher) synthesis. Among these is my *Kurtág Cycle*, the first and essentially complete one.<sup>1</sup>

Kurtág represents this sad, mourning, remembering, “nostalgic” consciousness in relation to past culture. The miniaturization and concentration of material is reminiscent of Webern, while his roots in folk culture call Janáček to mind. He writes—using conservative means—a music whose conservative nature is experienced as non-conservative; no other composer achieved this. He is a miracle in the midst of modernity. It was in early 1998 that I recognized Kurtág’s central importance for my work. I was speaking to my friend Bernd Asmus—who went on to publish an instructive analysis of Kurtág’s music in issue 13 of

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1 See “Vergangenheit und Zukunft in der Musik” und “Arbeitsbericht 2006,” in Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, *Die Humanität der Musik. Essays aus dem 21. Jahrhundert* (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2007).



*Musik & Ästhetik*<sup>2</sup>—and the conversation came around to the subject of Kurtág’s music; I told him that it had lately become very important to me because it stood like no other for the remembrance of the culture of great music that had essentially been destroyed, and thus for the culture of humanism, because it was a non-conservative music created with conservative means, and hence a paradigmatic expression of that lost era. A few days later I learned that Kurtág had been awarded the Siemens prize and I was also to receive a grant. This and the encounter in Munich—both his joint performance with his wife of his own music and Bach’s and the awards ceremony itself—made a lasting impression on me. After returning to Rome, where I was living in the Villa Massimo, I had a vision of a very long piece that would be both melodic and harmonic, modest and unspectacular. This reawakened different old ideas: to write a piece over an hour long, and to write a guitar concerto for Jürgen Ruck, something we had agreed on some time ago. The fact that the very work by Kurtág that had been most important to me was a “guitar concerto,” in fact one that Ruck had premiered, suited the situation wonderfully.

At the end of 2000 I composed the *Kurtág-Duo*, after which I moved on to the other parts of this “poly-work,”<sup>3</sup> which reached their provisional completion in summer 2001. The *Kurtág-Duo* was premiered on 12 July 2002 by Elena Casoli and Jürgen Ruck in Darmstadt, *Hommage à György Kurtág* was given its first performance by the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra of the SWR, conducted by Johannes Debus and with Jürgen Ruck as the soloist, *Todesmusik II* was premiered on 27 August 2003 in Salzburg by the Austrian New Music Ensemble, conducted by Johannes Kalitzke, with the premiere of *Hommage à Mark André* by Jan Rokyta in the same concert. *Kurtág-Cantus I* (composed in 2005) was premiered on 19 December 2006 in Berlin by Jörg Widmann. The cycle consists of nine works:

*Hommage à György Kurtág* for guitar and ensemble [65'],

*Kurtág-Duo* for 2 guitars [12'],

*Todesmusik I* for 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, cimbalom and percussion [11'],

*Todesmusik II* for 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, cimbalom and 2 percussionists [11'],

*Hommage à Mark André* for cimbalom [8'],

*Kurtág-Cantus I* for clarinet in A [12'],

*Kurtág-Cantus II-IV* for violin, piccolo and horn [in preparation].

The *Kurtág-Duo* feeds off a dichotomy of expression, even language, distributed between a guitar with a quartertone tuning, playing virtuosic, aggres-

2 Bernd Asmus, “Wie ein Weg im Herbst. Versuch über György Kurtágs *Stele* op. 33,” in: *Musik & Ästhetik* 13 (2000).

3 See Wieland Hoban, “On the Methodology and Aesthetics of Form-Polyphony,” in Claus-Stefen Mahnkopf (ed.), *The Foundations of Contemporary Composition/Composing* (= New Music and Aesthetics in the 21st Century, vol. 3) (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2004).



sive and highly gestural music, and a guitar with six identical, but microtonally-displaced strings, which enable the production of eighth-, sixth-, twelfth-tones and other divisions within a narrow range—its character is melodic, quiet, delicate and introverted, almost absent-minded and lost. Five sections of the first type and eight of the second alternate without any transitions.

The centerpiece, *Hommage à György Kurtág*, is a homage to Kurtág's *Grabstein für Stephan* (for guitar and orchestra) and comprises the following layers:

- 13 guitar inserts corresponding to the sections of the *Kurtág-Duo* (with one change of order);
- 13 brass interjections, accompanied by bass drum and cimbalom;
- 5 cantilenas, connected freely in canon and divided into two sections, for piccolo flute, piccolo oboe, E flat clarinet, horn and violin; these use a reordered version of the melodic material of my piccolo oboe piece *Solitude-Nocturne* (1992/93);
- 6 blocks containing restless percussion sounds, which act as an accompaniment to passages of “nothingness” as composed silence;
- 3 + 13 harmonic fields with arpeggios by the harmonium, harp, celesta and cimbalom;
- 3 passages with sustained brass chords;
- 4 passages in which the “death rhythm” sounds;
- large-scale harmonic processes carried by the (seven) string instruments (without violins).

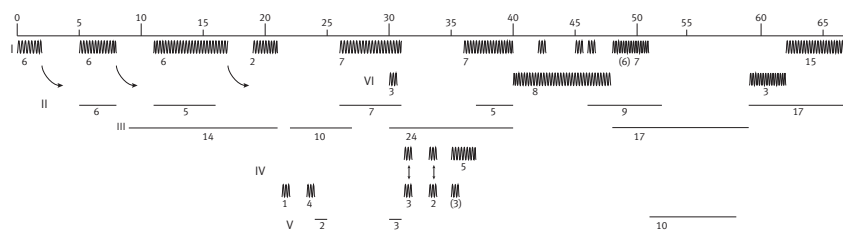
These layers of events are distributed within a non-dramatic overall dramaturgy according to idiosyncratic proportions (distorted Golden Sections [i.e., no longer golden]), leading to a non-developmental constellation in which length, stamina, slowness, but also intensity, a solid harmonic foundation and insistence are central.

The remaining eight pieces are derived from the concerto. The *Kurtág-Duo*—which now has two guitarists sitting mutely opposite each other—consists of the solo material from the *Hommage*. The four *Cantus* pieces are free rearrangements of the corresponding cantilenas. *Todesmusik I* combines the interjections and sustained passages of the brass with the “nothingness” material in the percussion; *Todesmusik II* is a variation of this in which a second percussionist independently plays the death rhythm quietly and continuously. Finally, *Hommage à Mark André* is an extract from *Todesmusik*; this time the sections are connected by sustained resonances; this piece was intended as a little gift for a true composer friend whose wild cimbalom outbursts have imprinted themselves deeply upon my memory.

My point of departure was a morphological analysis of Kurtág's *Grabstein für Stephan* with an overview of the piece (see Example 1); I identified six elements for which I sought equivalents in my own music, assigning the same number of appearances to each.



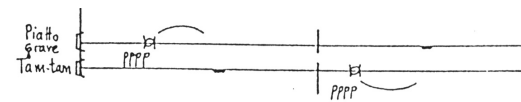
## Example 1



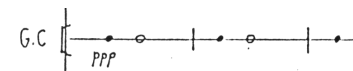
### Element I: guitar arpeggios (8 times)



### Element II: cymbal/tam tam sounds (6 times)



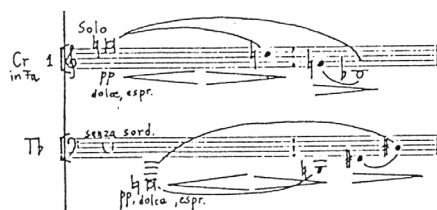
### Element III: death rhythm in the bass drum (4 times)



### Element IV: string outbursts "con dolore" (also with glissandi in the horns etc.)

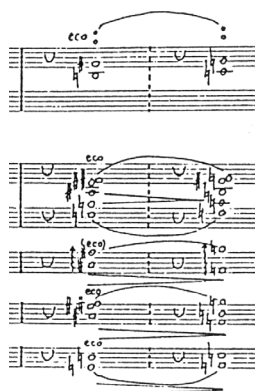


### Element V: "messianic line" (3 times)





## Element VI: chords in celesta, cimbalom etc. (3 times)



The instrumentation of my *Kurtág Cycle* is based on that of *Grabstein für Stephan*: I chose to use a chamber orchestra, likewise including two trumpets and two trombones, with only the lower strings; the bass drum, solo guitar, harmonium, harp, celesta and cimbalom were taken directly from it. Admittedly, however, *Hommage à György Kurtág* is characterized by major differences. The most obvious of these is its extreme length, which stands in stark contrast to Kurtág's miniaturist approach. In addition, I use string harmonies as a unifying element throughout most of the piece. Finally, in using cantilenas derived from the *Solitude-Nocturne*, I added some "content" of my own, albeit only after 15 minutes.

## II. Analysis

The form can be described on the one hand as a repeated interruption of time through interpolations, and on the other hand as a superimposition of independent layers. The interpolations are as follows:

- 13 guitar inserts corresponding to the sections of the *Kurtág-Duo* (with one change of order<sup>4</sup>); one must distinguish here between
  - a) 8 microtonal inserts with guitar 1 [corresponding to element I in *Grabstein für Stephan*] and
  - b) 5 "frenetico" inserts with guitar 2;
- 1 + 12 brass interjections, accompanied by bass drum and cimbalom [corresponding to element IV in *Grabstein für Stephan*];

4 The final two *frenetico* sections were swapped around, resulting in 1-2-3-5-4 (10"; 40"; 30"; 20"; 50").



The overlapping layers are:

- 5 cantilenas, and divided into two sections, for 5 sub-soloists: piccolo flute, piccolo oboe, E flat clarinet, horn and violin;
- 6 blocks containing restless percussion sounds, which act as an accompaniment to passages of “nothingness” as composed silence [corresponding to element II in *Grabstein für Stephan*];
- 3 + 13 harmonic fields with arpeggios, referred to as “keyboards” [corresponding to element VI in *Grabstein für Stephan*];<sup>5</sup>
- 3 passages with sustained brass chords, referred to as “sustain passages” [corresponding to element V in *Grabstein für Stephan*];
- 4 passages in which the “death rhythm” sounds, referred to as “metallico” [corresponding to element II in *Grabstein für Stephan*];
- large-scale harmonic processes carried by the strings (without violins).

The formal distribution of this material was carried out according to a particular system of proportions. The starting point was the Golden Section (division c. 61.8%); each layer was assigned a factor deviating from this, leading to different degrees of impurity, so to speak, in the Golden Section:

Layer	Number of formal sections	Factor	Proportion derived from Kurtág’s name <sup>6</sup>
Sub-soloists		64 %	21:11 (U : K)
Guitar—microtonal	8	87 %	7:1 (G : A)
Guitar— <i>frenetico</i>	5	75 %	15:5 (O : E)
Interjections 13 keyboard chords <i>archi</i> (strings)	13	72 %	18:7 (R : G)
Sustain passages	3	95 %	20:1 (T : A)
Quasi <i>niente</i> / nothingness	6	78 %	25:7 (Y : G) 18:5 (R : E)
Metallico	4	53 %	21:18 (U : K)
Keyboards	3	62 %	25:15 (Y : O)

The formal proportions, and hence the placing of the individual sections, were based on a length of 45 minutes (the work’s total duration of c. 65 minutes is reached through the addition of the supplementary, i.e., interpolated layers: 12 minutes of guitar + 3 minutes of outbursts + 2 minutes of “nothingness” at the start + fermatas). In some cases the proportions were applied several times, namely to the partial sections that resulted; here the complementary factor could also be used (x % or [100-x]%). Example 2 shows an example for the fac-

5 I felt that only three passages with “keyboards” were too few; I therefore added a second process with 13 fields.

6 According to the following formula:  $a > b$  and  $\frac{a}{a+b}$ .



tor of 75 (yielding 5 locations if one defines that the beginning and end should remain empty)

a is given (i.e., 45 minutes)

$$b = a \times 0.75$$

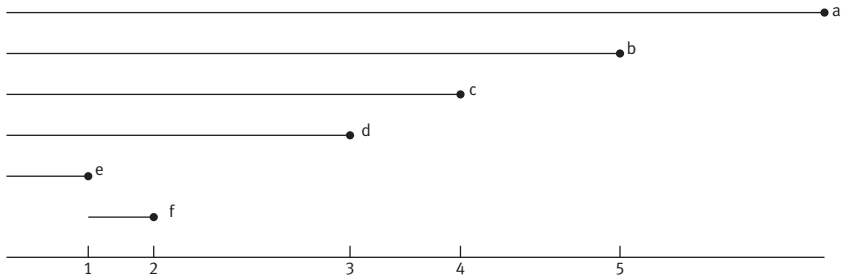
$$c = b \times 0.75$$

$$d = c \times 0.75$$

$$e = d \times (1 - 0.75)$$

$$f = (d - e) \times (1 - 0.75) + e$$

### Example 2



In this fashion it was possible to determine the placement of the guitar sections, the interjections, the 3 keyboard fields, the nothingness parts, and the sustain and metallico passages.

In the case of the sub-soloists, it was a central concern to combine the proportional points determined by the construction with the following considerations: in what order do the instruments appear, and what is the order of their two material categories (♂ and ♀) I decided on the following sequence:

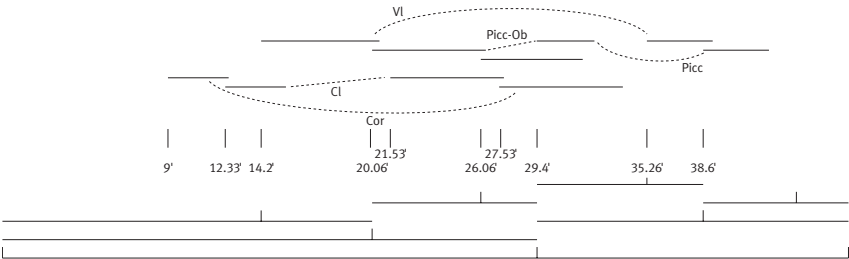
Cor ♂  
(Fr Hn) Eb Cl ♂ Vln ♀ Picc Ob ♀ Eb Cl ♀ Picc ♀ Cor ♀ Picc Ob ♂ Vln ♂ Picc ♂

As the ♂ parts are shorter, the ♀ parts lead to a concentration in the middle, and hence to an overall arch form. It was also important to ensure a degree of asymmetry; the clarinet thus appears for the second time before the piccolo has even begun. It was also relevant where, how often and with how many instruments overlaps would occur (I decided on a triple overlap [Picc., Picc. Ob., Cor] around the Golden section). Finally, it was also convenient that the sub-soloists were silent before the second violin entry (at 46'). This point is the conclusion of a thinning-out process that follows the work's climax. For the overall con-



struction, based on more or less pure/impure Golden Sections, causes a climax (before guitar/microtonal 5) at the Golden Section of the total duration (38'-40') through a concentration of the material. Example 3 shows the construction of the sub-soloists' sections.

Example 3



With the entry points determined in all layers, the following formal plan results (Figure 1):

Point in time Measure	Inter- jection	"Nothing- ness" (duration)	Guitar micro- tonal	Guitar <i>frenetico</i>	Sustain Passages (duration)	Key- boards	Metallico (rest)	Sub- soloists
0' (m. 1)	1.							
0.11' (m. 2)		1. = 2'						
2.11' (m. 14)			1.					
4.47' (m. 25)	2.							
5.78' (m. 31)					1. = 0.66'			
7.58' (m. 33)						1.		
7.88' (m. 41)					2. = 1'			
8.03' (m. 43)	3.							
8.43' (m. 45)				1.				
9.8' (m. 53)			2.					
11.26' (m. 61)	4.							
11.79' (m. 65)							1. = 4.66'	
13.29' (m. 73)				2.				
14.41' (m. 87)	5.							
15.01' (m. 92)								Fr Hn
15.22' (m. 94)		2.						
16.51' (m. 105)						2.		
16.96' (m. 110)			3.					
19.02' (m. 125)	6.							



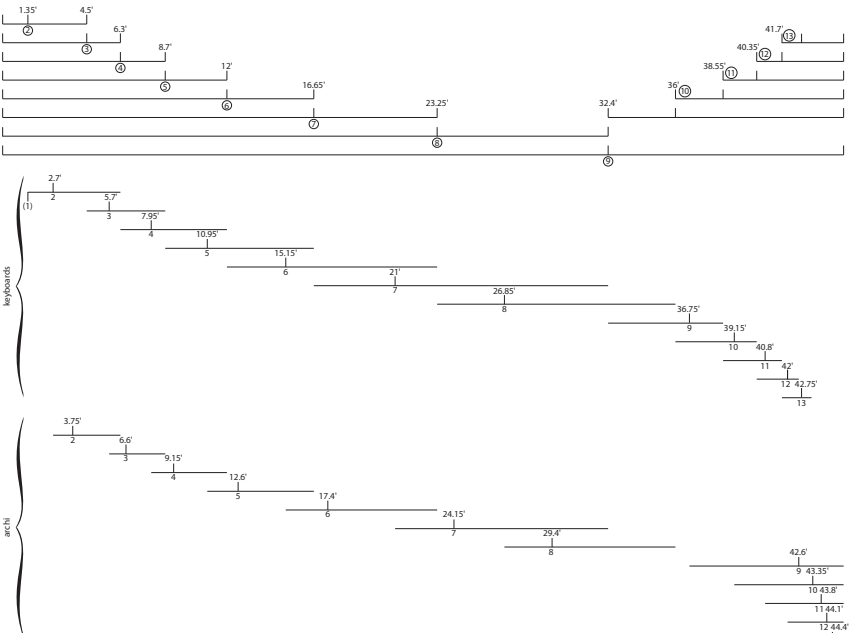
Point in time Measure	Inter- jection	“Nothing- ness” (duration)	Guitar micro- tonal	Guitar <i>frenetico</i>	Sustain Passages (duration)	Key- boards	Metallico (rest)	Sub- soloists
19.42' (m. 128)								E flat Cl
19.73' (m. 130)							2. = 3.33'	
21.33' (m. 143)								Vln
21.92' (m. 147)		3.						
22.43' (m. 152)			4.					
24.11' (m. 163)	7.							
26.92' (m. 187)				3.				
28.43' (m. 203)								Picc Ob
29.57' (m. 213)							3. = 8'	
29.9' (m. 214)								E flat Cl
31.62' (m. 226)	8.							
33.9' (m. 245)				4.				
34.94' (m. 256)								Picc
36.41' (m. 270)								Fr Hn
36.78' (m. 271)						3.		
38.28' (m. 285)								Picc Ob
39.16' (m. 290)		4.						
40.38' (m. 300)			5.					
42.46' (m. 314)	9.							
44.16' (m. 329)				5.				
46' (m. 349)		5.						
46.2' (m. 350)							4. = 5.66'	
46.51' (m. 352)								Vln
46.65' (m. 354)			6.					
48.43' (m. 365)	10.							
51.28' (m. 386)	11.							



Point in time Measure	Inter- jection	“Nothing- ness” (duration)	Guitar micro- tonal	Guitar <i>frenetico</i>	Sustain Passages (duration)	Key- boards	Metallico (rest)	Sub- soloists
51.66' (m. 389)								Picc
m. 396					3.			
52.96' (m. 400)			7.					
54.6' (m. 411)	12.							
55.96' (m. 423)	13.							
56.24' (m. 424)		6.						
57.12'					3. end (= 3.33')			
59.37' (m. 442)			8.					

The construction of the work’s harmonic processes (“keyboards” and “*archi*”) was more complicated. Example 4 shows the graphic solution: the 13 “locations” and the derivation of the 12 keyboard chords (omitting m. 1) and the 12 *archi* chords (for *archi* 1 see below). This leads to a relative thinning-out in the middle and a concentration at the end (even more so in the *archi*).

#### Example 4





The following strategic ideas for formal perception were formulated:

1. The first 15 minutes form a closed unity, and could therefore stand alone: different forms of material are presented and connected harmonically. This means, however, that either nothing further will happen—in which case the piece can end here—or a new formal element must appear. The latter indeed occurs with the horn entry after 15 minutes, introducing a decidedly melodic element (as well as a new instrumental color) into the music, which had previously abstained from any form of melody. At this point the listener knows that the music will continue—and qualitatively so—but cannot anticipate how long the piece will actually be. From here on, time—the clock indicating where one is in the piece, so to speak—is forgotten.
2. Just as nothing happens in the first 15 minutes—in the sense that the actual events, namely the melodies of the five sub-soloists, are yet to come—there is a nadir at 46 minutes: the sub-soloists pause, the strings die away in the low register, a general pause, a hesitant entry of the “nothingness” and “metallico” elements, then the start of the second violin solo, which is immediately interrupted, however, by guitar/microtonal 6. From here on, the music becomes increasingly discontinuous, perforated, fragmented, desperate and lonely; the string harmonies, which had promised deliverance and reconciliation and created solidarity, now recede. This dissolution is heightened from the final interjection (at 56 minutes) on: the piccolo is now also finished, and the strings are only playing the bare minimum; the sustain passages in the brass reach their conclusion, and the nothingness in the percussion remains as the last intimation that there was once a fuller sound—and prevents the guitar from performing its final solo undisturbed.
3. At the same time, as mentioned above, there is an overall climax; the conductor is permitted to lead up to this with an increase of tempo. This intensification (until m. 299) is not a gestural one, however, rather resulting from the accumulation of three sub-soloists and a corresponding increase of dynamic level. The decisive factor here is that this climax is not followed by anything that could be viewed as an effect thereof; the intensification essentially remains inconsequential. After a fermata, the guitar appears with a further microtonal passage. Following this (from m. 306 on) the strings fall silent, and the three sub-soloists

### Example 5

The image displays a musical score for four instruments: Flute (Flc), Piccolo (Picc), Clarinet (Clar), and Percussion (Perc). The score is written on a grand staff with four staves. The Flute and Piccolo parts are in the upper staves, while the Clarinet and Percussion parts are in the lower staves. The music features a variety of notes, rests, and dynamic markings, including 'pppp' and 'ppp'. The score is divided into measures, with some measures containing multiple notes and others being rests. The overall structure of the score suggests a complex, multi-layered musical composition.



intone their melodies using timbres characterized by a low pitch content and a high noise content, accompanied by the nothingness layer in the percussion (Example 5).

4. Although—or precisely because—*Hommage à György Kurtág* is concerned with the presence of sensitive, soft, melodic, harmonic and microtonal elements, it was necessary to infiltrate the overall form—rarely, but conspicuously—with opposing material. At a conceptual level I was working with the duality of polarized material, and not only in the solo part. The following overview shows the “pairs:”

Guitar	Microtonal	<i>Frenetico</i>
Sub-soloists	♀ material	♂ material
Brass	Sustain passages	Interjections
Percussion	Quasi niente	Metallico
Strings	Harmonics (♢), <i>flautando</i> (⇔)	High bow pressure (⬤), <i>molto sul pont.</i>

5. The basic tempo is ♩ = 30: static, but at the same time fluid. The conductor is explicitly requested to use *rubato* in his interpretation. Fermatas at various points act as temporally-fixed points of repose and breathing spaces.

The five sub-soloists play material from my *Solitude-Nocturne* (1992-3) for piccolo oboe. For use in this piece, the middle section with multiphonics (mm. 88-110) and the postlude (mm. 121-143) were removed. Then the ♀ and ♂ sections distributed there were brought together.<sup>7</sup> For the piece is based on two types of material that only differ very subtly from each other: firstly in the dual allocation of sub-melodic parameters:

♀ sections: color fingerings, *vibrato*, color trills and *smorzato*

♂ sections: repetition, diaphragm attacks, fluttertongue and *glissando*; secondly—and more significantly—through the permutational logic of the eighth-tones available for each morpheme. The ♂ material only permits uniform ascending or descending movement, i.e., no permutation, while this latter, by contrast, is precisely what makes the ♀ material genuinely melodic.

Joining the sections results in two parts of differing lengths. The melodic element is based on morphemes assigned to particular pitch centers (of which there are 24):

♀: 6, 2, 4, 5, 10, 14, 13, 11, 17, 18, 19, 22, 21, 18, 17

♂: 1, 3, 7, 12, 9, 8, 16, 15, 24, 23, 22, 20, 15, 3, 7, 22, 23

7 See Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, “Vermag Musik die Zeit vergessen zu machen? Überlegungen zur Künstlichkeit musikalischer Zeit,” in *Aisthesis. Zur Erfahrung von Zeit, Raum, Text und Kunst*, eds. Saskia Reither & Nikolaus Müller-Schöll (= Zeiterfahrung und ästhetische Wahrnehmung, vol. 3), (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2005).



All five sub-soloists play this material, which leads to canons. These, however, are modified:

- The sections are always interrupted by the interpolations of the guitar and the outbursts;
- this results in minor rhythmic modifications, as all instruments follow the same meter;
- each morpheme is transposed individually (as shown in Example 6);
- the sub-soloists form textures with a maximum of three parts; checking for harmonic consistency led to changes of certain pitches or further transpositions of morphemes or parts of morphemes;
- finally, the dynamics are adapted to the respective context (see Example 7 [at the beginning of each ♀ section]).

The harmonic framework follows a projection<sup>8</sup> of the 24 pitch centers for the piccolo oboe onto the respective ranges of the four other sub-soloists (with certain rearrangements to avoid octaves; the goal was for all 24 pitches to be used); subsequently a degree of internal adaptation was also necessary for harmonic reasons (rhomboid note-head) (Example 6).

#### Example 6

8 Projection of a chord means its compression or expansion with a retention of the proportions between the intervals.



## Example 7

### VI (m. 143)

VI (m. 143) musical score. The staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 12/8 time signature. The music begins with a 'poco vibr.' marking. Above the staff, there are fingering and bowing indications: 'm. v.' (movable) and 'n. v.' (natural) with various fingerings (III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II). The dynamics are marked as *p*, *pp*, *mf-p*, *mp*, and *p*.

### E♭ cl (m. 214)

E♭ cl (m. 214) musical score. The staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 12/8 time signature. The music begins with a 'poco vibr.' marking. Above the staff, there are fingering and bowing indications: 'm. v.' (movable) and 'n. v.' (natural) with various fingerings (III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II). The dynamics are marked as *p-ppp*, *p*, *ppp*, and *pp*.

### Picc ob (m. 203)

Picc ob (m. 203) musical score. The staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 12/8 time signature. The music begins with a 'poco vibr.' marking. Above the staff, there are fingering and bowing indications: 'm. v.' (movable) and 'n. v.' (natural) with various fingerings (III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II). The dynamics are marked as *p*, *pp*, *p*, *ppp*, and *sub.*.

### Cor (m. 270)

Cor (m. 270) musical score. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a 12/8 time signature. The music begins with a 'poco vibr.' marking. Above the staff, there are fingering and bowing indications: 'm. v.' (movable) and 'n. v.' (natural) with various fingerings (III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II). The dynamics are marked as *ff-mf*, *p*, *mf-pp*, *mf*, *pp*, *mf*, *ppp*, and *mf*.

### Picc (m. 256)

Picc (m. 256) musical score. The staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 12/8 time signature. The music begins with a 'poco vibr.' marking. Above the staff, there are fingering and bowing indications: 'm. v.' (movable) and 'n. v.' (natural) with various fingerings (III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II, III, II). The dynamics are marked as *mf*, *ppp*, *p*, *mf*, and *p*.

The overall harmonic framework of *Hommage à György Kurtág* is derived from the ranges of the guitar, the sub-soloists and the brass. Eliminating all octaves and transposing F#<sub>3</sub> up by an octave produces a twelve-note disposition; mirroring this via the only quartertone found in the pitch range limits (B<sub>♭</sub>6) and transposing the F#<sub>1</sub> up by two octaves produces a 24-note total disposition (Example 8).

As far as the chords are concerned, I worked with the five "Angelus chords" already employed in my *Angelus Novus* cycle. They are derived from the piccolo multiphonics in the *Solitude-Nocturne* and form a series extending from "spectral" (1) to "non-spectral" (5) (Example 9).



### Example 8

Example 8 is a musical score for a piano accompaniment. The score is written for a grand piano (Gt) and includes parts for Piccolo Oboe (Picc-Ob), Piccolo Clarinet (Pcl), Violin (Vl), Piccolo (Picc), Cor Anglais (Cor), Trumpet (Tr), and Trombone (Trbn). The score is divided into two systems, each with five staves. The first system covers measures 1 through 15, and the second system covers measures 16 through 24. The music is in a key of B-flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time. The piano part features a complex, rhythmic pattern in the right hand, while the left hand provides a steady, pulsing accompaniment. The instrumental parts enter at various points, with some instruments playing sustained notes or short phrases. The score is numbered 1 through 24 at the bottom.

### Example 9

Example 9 is a musical score showing five chords, numbered 1 through 5, in a single system. The chords are written for a grand piano (Gt) and are arranged in a sequence. The first four chords are in the right hand, and the fifth chord is in the left hand. The chords are complex, featuring many notes and accidentals. The score is numbered 1 through 5 at the bottom.

The entire work is pervaded by harmonic fields that always lie in the background. When—as during the first 15 minutes, in which the sub-soloists have not yet entered—these stand alone, they give the impression of an accompaniment without anything to accompany. This form of background harmony, used in the strings, can be traced back to my piece for chamber orchestra *Interpéné-*



trations (1987/88). It is reused in the third part of *Prospero's Epilogue* (2004).<sup>9</sup> There are three layers of harmonic progression:

- 1) “Keyboards”
- 2) “*Archi*”
- 3) “Sub-soloists’ harmony.”

1. Keyboards: morphologically speaking, this is a field consisting of ascending arpeggiated chords in the celesta and harp (the latter being the only instrument in this group tuned partly in quartertones) and static chords in the harmonium and cimbalom based on element VI in Kurtág’s *Grabstein für Stephan*. There are two distinct chord progressions:

a) the “keyboards” layer in the strict sense, with three sections, albeit cut by interruptions: keyboards 1 by interjection 3 and *frenetico* 1, therefore has three subsections; keyboards 2 by guitar/microtonal 3 and outburst 6, thus also with three subsections; keyboards 3 without any divisions. The seven sections are labeled T [for *Tasten*, i.e., keyboards] A-G.

b) keyboards [T] 1-13, the layer that was added. T 1 was omitted, however, as it coincides with the *archi* cycle (m. 17, after guitar/microtonal 1).

For this purpose, the five Angelus chords were transposed to steps 1-19 of the overall harmonic material (Example10).

The chords were distributed in two curves, one convex and one concave (the smaller lettering shows the permutational scheme of the five chords):

	T 2	T 3	T 4	T 5	T 6	T 7	T 8	T 9	T 10	T 11	T 12	T 13
	2 1-2-3- 4-5	5 1-5-4-2	9 2-3-4- 5-1	12 3-1-5- 4-2	14 4-5-1- 2-3	17 5-2-1- 3-4	19 2-1-3- 5-4	15 4-1-3-5	10 4-2-1- 3-5	6 2-3-5- 4-1	4 3-5-2- 4-1	1 5-2-3- 1-4

T A	T B	T C	T D	T E	T F	T G
18 3-1-5-4-2	11 3-4-5-1-2	7 4-2-5-1-3	3 3-1-5-4	8 2-4-5-1	13 3-1-5-4-2	16 1-2-3-4-3-2-3-1

9 The idea of slow ascending arpeggios also returns in this work (e.g. in mm. 236-243).



# Example 10

Chord 1 2 3 4 5

The musical score for Example 10 consists of 19 staves, each representing a different instrument or voice part. The staves are labeled as follows:

- T 13 (1)
- T 2 (2)
- T D (3)
- T 12 (4)
- T 3 (5)
- T 11 (6)
- T C (7)
- T E (8)
- T 4 (9)
- T 10 (10)
- T B (11)
- T 5 (12)
- T F (13)
- T 6 (14)
- T 9 (15)
- T G (16)
- T 7 (17)
- T A (18)
- T 8 (19)

The score is organized into five measures, each corresponding to a chord. The notation includes various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and dynamics (e.g.,  $\delta^{va}$ ,  $\delta^{va}-$ ,  $\delta^{va}-$ ,  $\delta^{va}-$ ,  $\delta^{va}-$ ). The staves are written in both bass and treble clefs, with some staves having multiple lines of music.



Example 11 shows T 2 (mm. 33 ff.).

Example 11

Example 11 is a musical score for four staves: Arm, Apr, Cel, and Climb. The score is written in 2/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like ppp, poco, and Ped. The Arm staff has a 2-measure rest at the beginning. The Apr staff has a 1-measure rest at the beginning. The Cel staff has a 1-measure rest at the beginning. The Climb staff has a 1-measure rest at the beginning.

2. The chords „archi 2-13” were constructed in analogous fashion:

Archi chords	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Step of the overall harmonic material <sup>10</sup>	20	19	15	11	7	4	2	5	9	13	17	21
Permutational scheme <sup>11</sup>	1-2-3-4-5	1-5-4-2	2-3-4-5-1	3-4-5-1-2	4-5-1-2-3	5-2-1-3-4	2-1-3-5-4	4-1-3-5	4-2-1-3-5	2-3-5-4-1	3-4-2-4-1	5-2-3-1-4





*Archi 1* was developed individually in the sense of an exposition:

Section	Measure Duration		
α	m. 17 30"	Field disposition below D4 12+13, 2, 3, 1, 4, 7, 6, 5, 8+9, 10+11	 (see Example 12)

10 In order to reinforce the concave shape, steps 20 and 21 of the overall harmonic material were also incorporated.

11 It is identical to that of “keyboards.”



Section	Measure Duration		
$\beta$	m. 19 21"	5 Angelus chords, projected between F1 and D4	$\beta$ 
$\gamma$	m. 22 15"	Angelus chords 2-5 extend- ing upwards	$\gamma$ 
F1 F2	m. 23 15"	Field disposition high 20-24 then 20-14	
$\delta$	m. 28 24"	Angelus chords 1-5 extending downwards	$\delta$ 
$\epsilon$	m. 29 21"	Inwardly- shrinking band	$\epsilon$ 
sustain passage 1	m. 31 8"	Adaptation to the brass	

### Example 12



Example 12 shows a musical score for a section involving Violins 1-3, Violas 1-3, and Cellos. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pppp* and *ppp*, and performance instructions like "sempre anacronicamente senza vibrato". The notation includes various musical symbols, including notes, rests, and articulation marks.

(1-2 measures needed to be filled directly before A 2 [mm. 35/36]; chord 5, transposed to step 2, was placed here.)

3. The third layer of harmonic progression follows the actions of the sub-soloists. A space was defined between the beginning of each sub-soloist's first sec-



tion and the end of the second section. The respective field dispositions (Cor-F, Eb Cl-F, Vln-F, Picc Ob-F and Picc-F; see Fig. 6); appear at the beginning and end, and between them 13 chords<sup>12</sup>:

- Cor 1 to cor 12,
- Eb Cl 1 to Eb cl 13
- Vln 1 to Vln 11
- Picc Ob 1 to Picc Ob 12
- Picc 1 to Picc 9

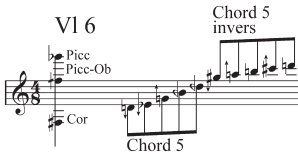
Each instrument was assigned one of the Angelus chords:

- Picc: chord 1
- Picc Ob: chord 2
- Eb Cl: chord 3
- Cor: chord 4
- Vl: chord 5

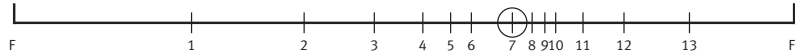
At the corresponding points<sup>13</sup> (e.g. vl 6) the harmonic material of the sub-soloists was examined to find important pitches (e.g. in m. 289 Gb6 in the piccolo, F<sub>5</sub> in the piccolo oboe and F#3 in the horn):



In addition, three pitches were defined into which the corresponding chord would be projected: from the lower to the middle note and from the latter to the highest (inversely, i.e., symmetrically in relation to the middle note):



- 12 Chords appearing within the interjections or guitar interpolations were not counted. Hence the horn has 12 chords, the violin 11, the oboe 12 and the piccolo 9; only the clarinet has 13 chords.
- 13 The individual points were calculated as follows: the passage between the end of the first section and the beginning of the second, i.e., the tacet, is divided into the proportion of 64% (or complementary value). This yields the midpoint (the 7<sup>th</sup>). The individual parts of this stretch are divided using the same proportion, which leads to a concentration towards the middle, e.g.:



This ensures that the harmonic material of the respective sub-soloists is also present when the corresponding instrument is not playing.



This was followed, finally, by the orchestration and exact rhythmic, gestural, tectonic and timbral definition in the 7 strings (Example 13).

Example 13

III. The individual layers

1. Kurtág-Duo

The guitar part of *Hommage à György Kurtág*, which—distributed between two players—forms the *Kurtág-Duo*<sup>14</sup>, consists of two diametrically opposed, unmediated gestural types:

- a) microtonal
- b) “frenetico”

The *Kurtág-Duo* has the following overall structure:

Duration of macro-sections	3.83' = 32%					5.55' = 47%							2.53' = 21%	
Section	1		2		3	4		5		6		7	8	
Microtonal	60"		60"		60" ^	20"		71"		71"		71" ^	152"	
<i>Frenetico</i>		10"		40"			30"		50"		20"			
Section		1		2			3		4		5			

14 There is one change of order; see footnote 4.



This duration of approximately 12 minutes is distributed in the following manner: guitar 1: 565"  $\approx$  9.5" and guitar 2: 150" = 2.5".

Guitar 1 (microtonal) uses six B-strings tuned down to B flat and then micro-tuned upwards by the intervals of an eighth-tone, a sixth-tone, a quartertone, a third-tone and three eighth-tones. It uses the pitches up to the fifth fret, i.e., within a tritone (+ octave harmonics) (Example 14<sup>15</sup>).

Example 14

The image shows a musical score for six staves, numbered 1 to 6. Above the staves, there are labels for intervals: a circle with a dot (representing a sixth-tone), I, II, III, IV, and V. Each staff contains a series of notes with these interval markings above them, illustrating the microtonal tuning of the instrument.



This *scordatura* enables the following intervals: third-tones, quartertones, sixth-tones, eighth-tones, twelfth-tones, twenty-fourth-tones, and even certain 5/24- and 7/24-tones.

Each of the 8 sections (with the exception of 4) consists of 5 measures (later on also more) with one morphological type:

Section Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Quasi arpeggio	m. 1 	m. 8	m. 24		m. 39	m. 57	m. 66	m. 73 74 75
2 lines poly-phonic	m. 2 	m. 9	m. 25		m. 40	m. 58	m. 67	m. 76 77
Chords	m. 3 	m. 10	m. 26		m. 41	m. 59	m. 68	m. 78 79

15 ♭ = a sixth-tone lower, ♮ = an eighth-tone lower, ♯ = an eighth-tone higher, ♯ = a sixth-tone higher, † = a quartertone higher.



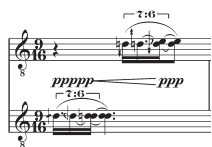
Section Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Harmonics	m. 4 	m. 11	m. 27		m. 42 43	m. 60	m. 69	m. 80
							m. 70	
Quasi arpeggio intensified	m. 5 	m. 12	m. 28		m. 44	m. 61	m. 71	m. 81
(l.v.)			m. 29				m. 72	
Extension				m. 30				
„Coda“								m. 82 83

Morphological type 1 can be followed throughout the sections:

m. 1 (section 1)



m. 8 (section 2)



m. 24 (section 3)

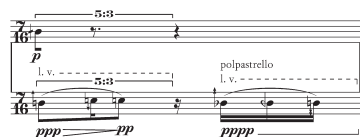




m. 39 (section 5)



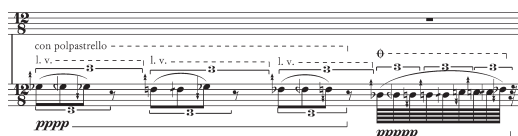
m. 57 (section 6)



m. 66 (section 7)



m. 73 (section 8)



Each section is dominated by a particular intervallic constellation (two types are pitted against each other):

1<sup>st</sup> section: semitones against third-tones (strings 6 / 2) [see m. 2 above]

2<sup>nd</sup> section: quartertones against sixth-tones (strings 3,6 / 2,4) [m. 9]



3<sup>rd</sup> section: third-tones against eighth-tones (strings 2 / 1,3,5,6) [m. 25]

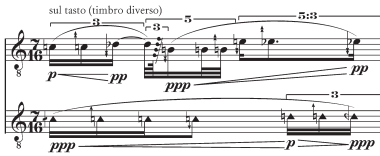




4<sup>th</sup> section: 5/24-tones against 7/24-tones [start of m. 30]



5<sup>th</sup> section: sixth-tones against eighth-tones [m. 40]



6<sup>th</sup> section: eighth-tones against twelfth-tones [start of m. 58]



7<sup>th</sup> section: quartertones against twenty-fourth-tones [m. 67]



In the 8<sup>th</sup> section the intervals increase once more: from twelfth-tones (m. 73) to eighth-tones (m. 76) to sixth-tones (m. 78) to quartertones (m. 80) to third-tones (m. 81) to semitones (m. 82); at the same time a structurally-descending line from E to Bb. M. 82/83 is also the “coda,” the surprising change (for which the listener has to wait for over an hour in *Hommage à György Kurtág*): an ascending melody in harmonics is played on the 6<sup>th</sup> string (the only one not “out of tune”), going into regions that were always out of bounds to guitar 1. This turn of events is an expression of hope, the prospect of something “behind,” an “other:”





The following particularities should be mentioned:

– Quasi *pizzicato*, very narrow downward motion (m. 12)



– Two chord chains intersect (m. 41)



– Chord chain with a sustained Db (m. 78)



The metric scheme is derived from the first name “Gyoergy”: 7, 25, 15, 5, 18 (9 + 9), 7, 25; these numbers were assigned to 16<sup>th</sup>-notes; then repetitions, sometimes with cuts at formal boundaries (the durations of individual sections were predetermined). The metric scheme for guitar 2 (“*frenetico*”) was generated from the last name: 11, 21 (19 + 2), 18, 20, 1 and 7 in 48<sup>th</sup>-notes (instead of 16<sup>th</sup>s), i.e., read at three times the tempo, which led to recalculations: e.g.  $2/24 = 1/12$  or  $18/24 = 6/8$ .

The sections featuring guitar 2, which are completely opposed in character (*frenetico*) to those of guitar 1, use 5 elements:

1. Bartók *pizzicato* with *glissando*

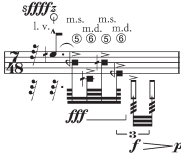


2. Repetitions with wide leaps; pitch content gradually disappears through damping

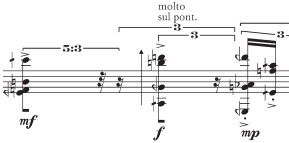




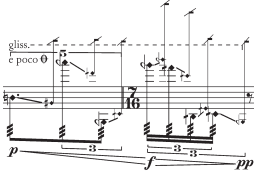
### 3. Combination of Bartók *pizzicato* (open string), i.v., tamburo stroke / tamburo tremolo and arpeggiated finger percussion chords



### 4. Chords, partly arpeggiated



### 5. Half-harmonic *glissando*

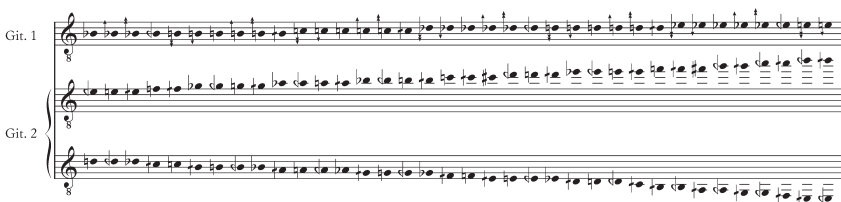


These elements were distributed as follows. 5 lines were formed, growing from short (part 1) to long (part 4); there the 5 elements are interwoven in zip-like fashion. Element 1 has 6 subdivisions (element 2 has 5, etc.), which, displaced, are reused and varied in the next line (subscript letters). For example,  $1_f$  is a quintuplet rhythm that returns at the beginning of part 5.

1. Part 1 –  $1_a, 1_b, 1_c, 1_d, 1_e, 1_f$
2. Part 5 –  $1_p, 2_a, 1_a, 2_b, 1_b, 2_c, 1_c, 2_d, 1_d, 2_e, 1_e$
3. Part 3 –  $1_e, 2_b, 1_p, 3_a, 2_c, 3_b, 1_a, 2_d, 3_c, 1_b, 2_e, 1_c, 3_d, 2_a, 1_d$
4. Part 2 –  $1_d, 2_c, 1_e, 3_d, 4_a, 2_d, 3_a, 1_p, 4_b, 2_e, 3_b, 1_a, 2_a, 4_c, 1_b, 3_c, 3_b, 1_c$
5. Part 4 –  $1_c, 2_d, 5, 1_d, 3_c, 4_c, 2_e, 3_d, 1_e, 4_a, 2_a, 5, 3_a, 1_p, 2_b, 4_b, 1_a, 3_b, 2_c, 1_b$

The pitches of guitar 1 are assigned to guitar 2 according to the key in Example 15.

### Example 15





The notes of guitar 1 are gradually taken over; for each of its notes there are two notes available to guitar 2, normally characterized by considerable distances between them, which is morphologically significant for the 5 elements.

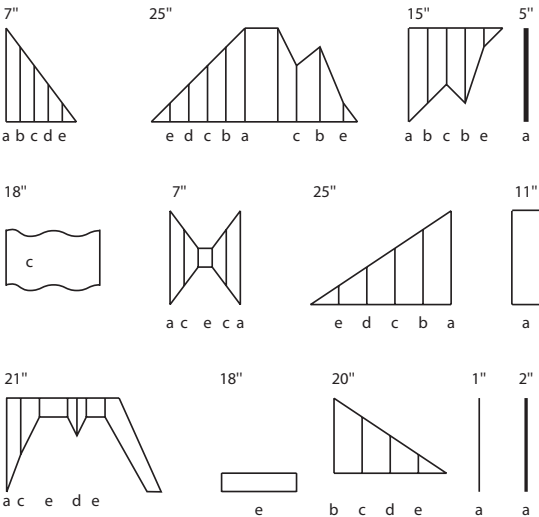
## 2. Interjections

These are performed by the brass, cimbalom and bass drum. In accordance with Kurtág's name there 13 (a number that is also significant in the “keyboards” and “*archi*” layers). They are structured as follows:

Number	Time point	Duration in seconds (= 16 <sup>th</sup> s); corresponds to letter
1	0'	7 = G
2	4.47'	25 = Y
3	8.03'	15 = O
4	11.26'	5 = E
5	14.41'	18 = R
6	19.02'	7 = G
7	24.11'	25 = Y
8	31.26'	11 = K
9	42.46'	21 = U
10	48.43'	18 = R
11	51.28'	20 = T
12	54.96'	1 = A
13	55.96'	7 = G

Each interjection has a particular „envelope“ (Example 16).

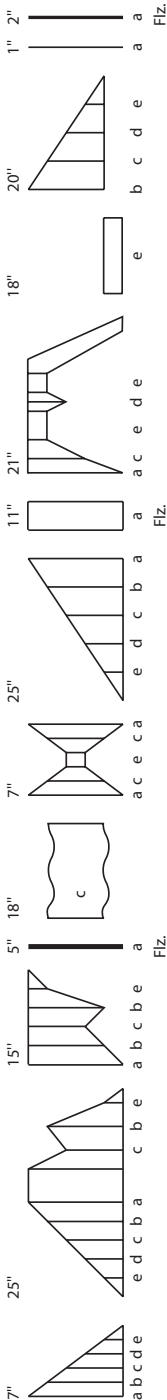
### Example 16



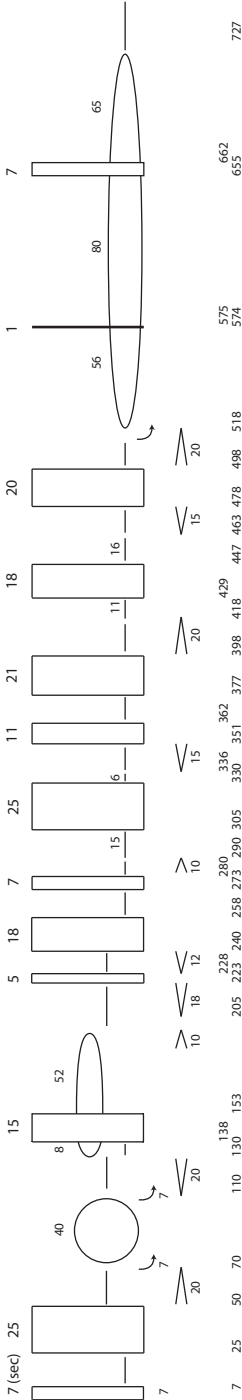


In combination this produces Example 17.

Example 17



Example 26





The letters a-e indicate the size of the chords:

Angelus chord	5	4	3	1	2
Size	a	b	c	d	e

The first outburst, the beginning of *Hommage à György Kurtág*, has the shape of a collapse, and therefore uses a series of shrinking chords (a, b, c, d, e); their microtonality is adapted to the instruments and they are connected through “passing notes” (Examples 18 and 19).

### Example 18

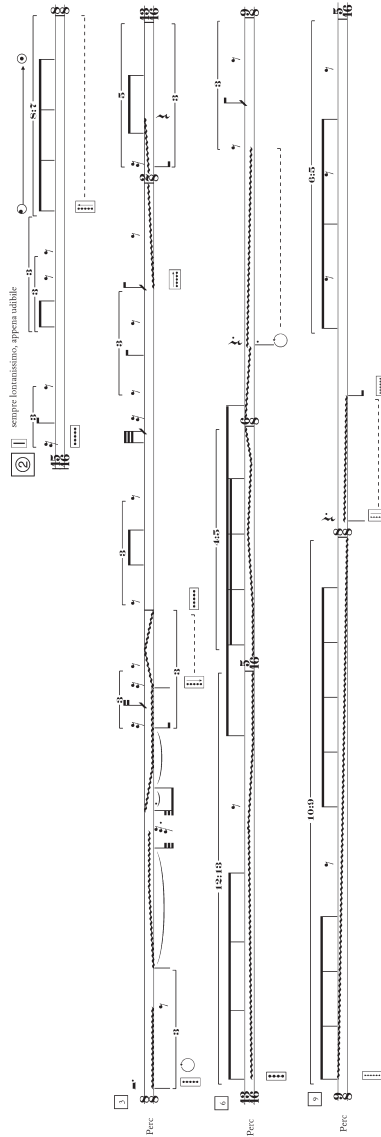
### Example 19



### 3. “Nothingness”

This layer consists of extremely quiet sounds on the bass drum (e.g. drawing a small chain across the head, letting a ball roll around it or using a serrated wooden stick; very soft strokes). They are presented right at the start (m. 2 [Example 20]), and are deliberately overlong at 2 minutes, which is intended both to cause uncertainty (one begins to wonder what the first outburst [m. 1] was supposed to mean) and to accustom the listener to long durations and near-silence.

Example 20





At times, this layer moves into the background: when it is not soloistic (e.g. in m. 94 after the first horn entry), it makes its presence felt as a form of sonic pollution:

②

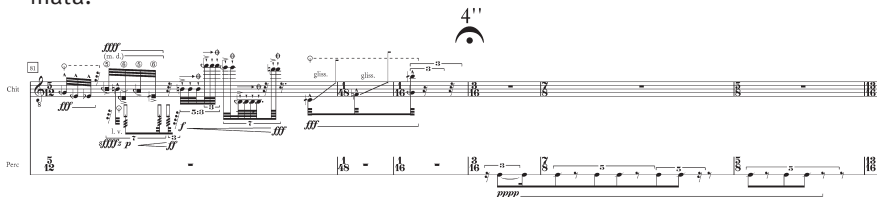
—

sempre molto sostenuto



Then it also appears when it is the only audible element, i.e., when the rest of the ensemble is silent; these points are formally important:

– m. 84, after the second *frenetico* in the guitar, separated by a 4-second fermata:



– m. 349, after the strings' drop into the low register and a 4-second fermata, where one could assume that the piece was already finished (Example 21)

Example 21





– from m. 432 (separated by a 4-second fermata) as the noise layer that “fills” the gaps between the string chords (Example 22).

### Example 22

## 4. Metallico

Here the “death rhythm” (long–short–long, based on quintuplets) is played on a muted metal plate, as in m. 65:

The speeds vary:

Metallico 1: (10:8) (mm. 65-119) [MM = 37.5]

Metallico 2: 10:11 (mm. 130-156) [MM = 27.27]

Metallico 3: 10:13 (mm. 213-281) [MM = 23.07]

Metallico 4: 10:9 (mm. 350-414) [MM = 33.3]

## 5. Sustain passages

In the three sustain passages, chords are individually interpreted: in terms of their harmonic, but also melodic possibilities. In the case of chord 3, which was spread between G<sub>3</sub> and C#<sub>5</sub> (Example 23), I was interested in the tritone A<sub>4</sub>–E<sub>4</sub>, but also the melodic phrase G<sub>3</sub>–G<sub>4</sub>; for the harmonies, the eighth-tones were approximated to quartertones—this was made clear through a *glis-*







Figure 2

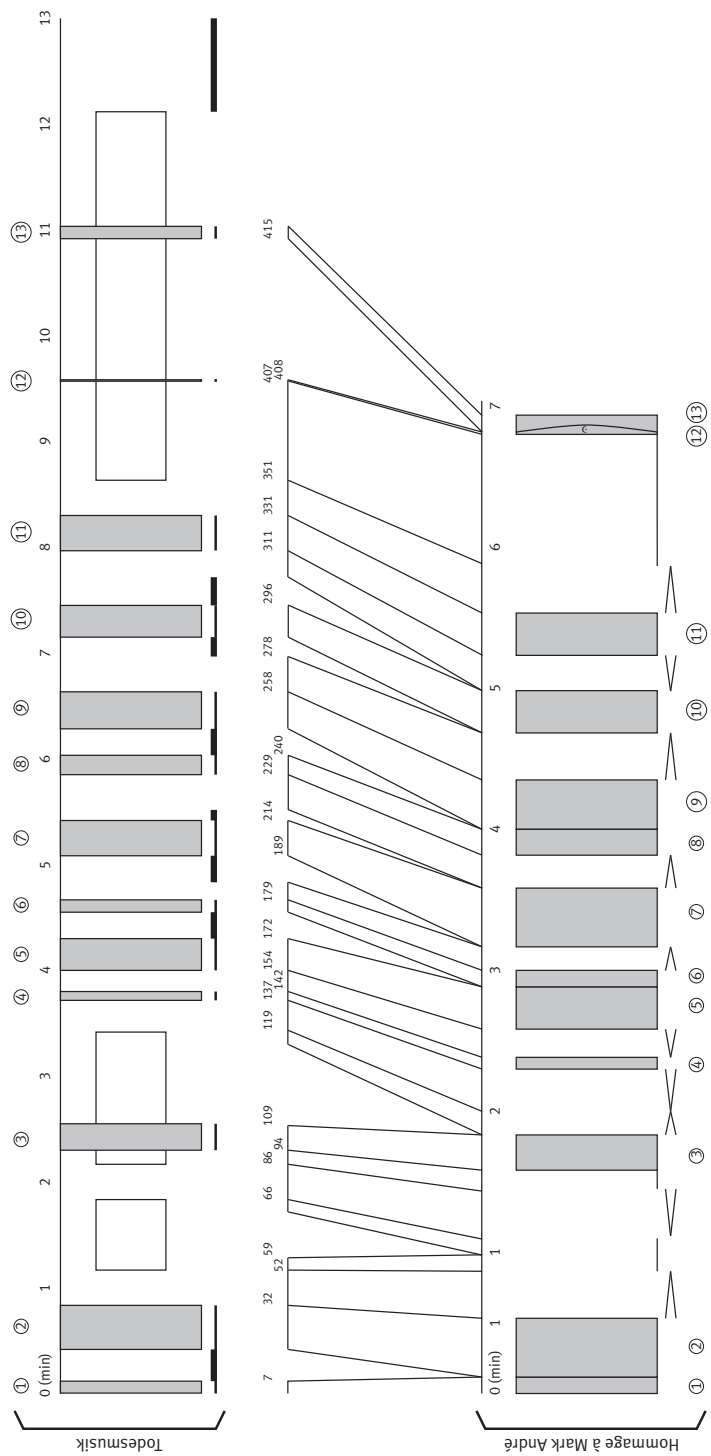
Interjections	Sustain passages	Cimbalom (extension)	Percussion
1: m. 1 (= m. 1)			
			mm. 2-3
2: mm. 4-5 (= m. 25/26)			
		mm. 6-8 (= m. 9/10)	
	mm. 9-14 (= mm. 31-34)		
		mm. 15-19 (= m. 13/14)	
	mm. 20-21 (= m. 41/42)	(m. 20/21)	
3: m. 22 (= m. 43)			
	mm. 23-28 (= m. 44-50)		
		mm. 29-31 (m. 27/28)	
4: m. 32 (= m. 61)			
		mm. 33-34	
5: mm. 35-36 (= m. 87/88)			
			m. 37
6: m. 38 (= m. 125)			
		mm. 39-40	
			m. 41
7: mm. 42-43 (= m. 163/164)			
			m. 44
		mm. 45-47	
8: m. 48 (= m. 226)			
			m. 49
9: mm. 50-51 (= m. 314/315)			
		mm. 52-54	
			m. 55
10: mm. 56-57 (= m. 365/366)			
			m. 58
		mm. 59-61	
11: mm. 62-63 (= m. 386/387)			
		mm. 64-66	
	mm. 67-74 (= m. 396-399, 407-410)	(67-74)	
12: m. 75 (= m. 411)			
	m. 76-86 (= mm. 412-422)		
13: m. 87 (= m. 423)			
	mm. 88-94 (= mm. 424-430)		
			mm. 95-101







Example 28



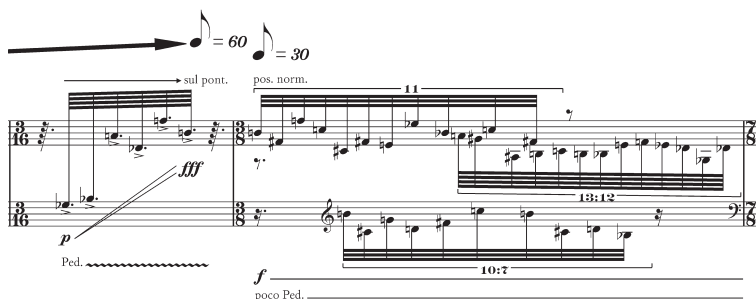


## Example 30

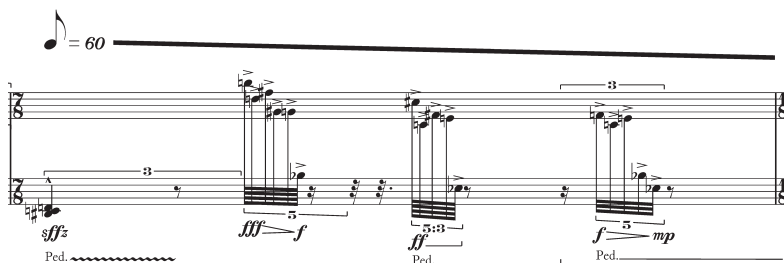


The extensions that connect sections are concerned with:

a) preparations for the subsequent outbursts, in the manner of upbeats (e.g. from m. 47 to 48):



b) allowing the gestures to fade out (e.g. m. 4):



c) sound fields using special playing techniques, for example:

- pedal *tremolo*: a fast, irregular *tremolo* between ped. and quasi non ped.
- dead stroke: damp the string by keeping the mallet on it after the stroke
- dead stroke with pedal: produce a strong resonance
- muting stroke: like a dead stroke, but silent
- silently damp the string indicated with the hand or the mallet
- with plectrum
- “quasi *rasgueado*”: pluck the four strings with the indicated pitch in rapid succession
- rub / scrape the winding of the string horizontally with the plectrum
- rub / wipe the string horizontally (back and forth) with the wooden side of the mallet



- rub / wipe the string horizontally (back and forth) with the felt side of the mallet
- strike the body with the wooden side of the mallet
- *tremolo* on the body with the wooden side of the mallet

Example 31 shows mm. 53-56 as an example.

Example 31

### 3. Kurtág-Cantus

The cantilenas of the sub-solists in *Hommage à György Kurtág* form a variation on my *Solitude-Nocturne* for piccolo oboe. Just as they are based on an original piece, the four *Cantus* pieces are second-degree derivatives. They take the material from *Hommage à György Kurtág* and vary it a second time through rearrangement of phrases, transposition, extension and timbral alteration. The aim was to create autonomous works that stand apart from the *Solitude-Nocturne*, even if their eighth-tone melodic substance is the same.

The deviation is particularly clear in the case of *Kurtág-Cantus I*, as a clarinet in A rather than E flat was chosen; this extended the pitch range downwards by a tritone. Here I interpolated 35 measures of increasing and subsequently decreasing length; this reinforced the character of the formal progression, which consists of permuted, as it were dissected phrases (see mm. 16, 20 and 22; Example 32). Like the *Solitude-Nocturne*, the work is of a cantabile, melodic nature, but also—corresponding to the possibilities of the clarinet in the *piano* dynamic range—introverted. The music keeps rising from the depths, drawing its “grounding” from there, but cannot emancipate itself from it. This is why the score bears the marking “*cantabilissimo, in modo tragico introverso.*”

Example 32

*Cantus II-IV* will explore further possibilities of re-individuation.



