

**György Ligeti: 'SIPPAL, DOBBAL, NÁDIHEGEDŰVEL' ('With Pipes, Drums,  
Fiddles')  
(2000)**

- I. Fabula / Fable
- II. Táncdal / Dance Song
- III. Kínai templom / Chinese Temple
- IV. Kuli / Coolie
- V. Alma álma (Tizenkettedik szimfónia) / Dream (Twelfth symphony)
- VI. Keserédes (67. magyar etüd) / Bitter-sweet (67<sup>th</sup> Hungarian etude)
- VII. Szajkó / Parakeet

*Síppal, dobbal, nádihegedűvel* (With Pipes, Drums, Fiddles), composed in 2000, is a cycle of seven Hungarian songs for low mezzo-soprano and four percussionists, whose diverse instrumentarium includes non-percussive instruments such as slide whistles and chromatic harmonicas. As so often in my life, I have put to music poems of the great twentieth-century Hungarian poet Sándor Weöres. He was a unique virtuoso of the Hungarian language and his poetic subjects are sometimes trivial or obscene, occasionally sarcastic or humorous, tragic or desperate, and even include artificial myths and legends. Some of his works are large-scale frescoes, which are worlds within themselves. It is, however, to the countless, equally profound and playful short poems that I have always turned for my composition.

In the first song *Fabula* (Fable), a pack of wolves shudder with fear as two mountains approach each other, crushing them without pity in their wake. The text of *Táncdal* (Dance Song) may sound meaningful, but actually the words are imaginary, having only rhythm and no meaning. In *Kínai templom* (Chinese Temple) Weöres succeeds in conveying the contentment of the Buddhist view of life by using only monosyllabic Hungarian words. *Kuli* (Coolie) is a poetic portrayal of an Asian pariah's monotonous hopelessness and pent-up aggressiveness. In *Alma álma* (Dream) I have embedded the voice into the sound of four harmonicas, creating a strange, surreal atmosphere. The poem describes how the branches of an apple tree gently sway in the wind and an apple dreams of journeys in distant, enchanted lands. *Keserédes* (Bitter-sweet) is like a "fake" Hungarian folk song. I sought to express this rift by combining artificial folk music with a pop-like melody and an artificially sweetened accompaniment. Even if the text of *Szajkó* (Parakeet) does have a meaning, the poem is in effect a nonsensical play on words, but one which produces a rhythmic swing.

The title of this cycle is not from Weöres: it is a line from a Hungarian children's verse (a kind of counting rhyme), which dates from the time of the Turkish occupation of Hungary.

*György Ligeti*

*(Translation: Louise Duchesneau)*