

Hommage à Robert Schumann Op 15/d
for clarinet, viola & piano.

György Kurtág (born 1926)

I Vivo (merkwürdige Pirouetten des Kapellmeisters Johannes Kreisler)
(The strange pirouettes of music director Johannes Kreisler)
II Molto semplice piano e legato (E[usebius]: der begrenzte kreis ist rein)
(Eusebius: the limited circle is pure)
III Feroce agitation (...und wieder zuckt es schmerzlich F[lorestan] um die Lippen)
(...and again it jerks Florestan painfully around the lips)
IV Calmo scorrevole (Felhó valék, már süt a nap)
(I was a cloud, the sun is shining)
V Presto (In der nacht)
(In the night)
VI Adagio poco andante (Abschied: "Meister Raro entdeckt Guillaume de Machaut")
(Farewell: "Master Raro discovers Guillaume de Machaut")

Born into a Hungarian Jewish family in northern Romania, Kurtág moved to Budapest in 1946 when he was twenty. The year after the 1956 uprising, he spent in Paris ostensibly to study with Messiaen and Milhaud, but in fact being psycho-analysed by Marianne Stein and "self-purifying" himself by eating only rice and performing angular gymnastics. He copied out Webern scores and made stick figures out of matches, dust-balls and cigarette butts, read Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and felt as a "cockroach striving to change into a human being, seeking light and purity". He returned to Budapest, discarded his previous compositions and produced his "Opus 1," a string quartet dedicated to Stein.

Although Kurtág's style is distinctively his own, many of his compositions allude eclectically to others: *Hommage à Nancy Sinatra*, *Homage to Tchaikovsky*, *In Memory of a Just Person*, *Omaggio a Luigi Nono* and tonight's piece *Hommage à Robert Schumann* which is based on *Märchenerzählungen* and uses the same instrumentation. Kurtág wrote the first movement in 1975 and completed it in 1990.

The movements of this short (10 minute) work refer to Schumann's *alter egos* Florestan, Eusebius and Meister Raro and also in the first movement to Johannes Kreisler, a fictional moody, anti-social composer, who was the *alter ego* of the novelist E T A Hoffmann, and who in turn inspired Schumann's *Kreiseriana*. The first five movements are, as with Webern, very short. The longer last movement refers to Guillaume de Machaut, a 14th century poet and composer who was especially influential in the development of isorhythmic motets (in which a repeating rhythm helps to unify a piece). Here the three players independently repeat their own rhythmic pattern, the piano strictly, the other two parts gradually condensing their rhythms. Does Meister Raro reconcile them?