

## Chaos String Quartet

### **Roman Haubenstock-Ramati** Pluriel (1991)

Even if Haubenstock-Ramati in later years turned back from purely graphic layout to a modified use of the conventional music notation, exploring this extreme position brought him a very special freedom, that shows in works like the mobile Pluriel (1991) for string quartet. This piece also follows the concept of combining various fixed structures in a flexible way to a larger whole: In its five sections, the four individual string parts are combined to a quartet, a trio and three different duos. This means that the composer compels the musicians to communicate and connect their individual parts in order to form a meaningful whole, by using his own ideas of sound, form and notation in order to reach the most expressive vibrancy possible.

(Stefan Drees,

[kairos-music.com/sites/default/files/downloads/0015003KAI\\_Haubenstock\\_Booklet.pdf](http://kairos-music.com/sites/default/files/downloads/0015003KAI_Haubenstock_Booklet.pdf))

### **Josef Matthias Hauer** Zwölftonspiel, for string quartet (1957)

[Johann Sengstschmid](#): ANATOMIE EINES ZWÖLFTONSPIELS. Ein Blick in die Werkstatt Josef Matthias Hauer. Zeitschrift für Musiktheorie, Stuttgart, 2. Jahrgang 1971, Heft 1.

### **György Kurtág** Officium Breve, in memoriam Andreae Szervánszky, op. 28, for string quartet (1988/1989)

The composer and composition professor Endre Szervánszky (1911-1977) was one of the first in Hungary to explore Webern in the 1950s. In 1959, he wrote the "Six Orchestral Pieces", the first Hungarian work in twelve-tone technique after the Second World War. His earlier role models were of course Bartók and Kodály. Eleven years after his death, György Kurtág commemorated him with the "Officium breve". The title itself points to one of Kurtág's main stylistic devices, brevity - and Kurtág naturally adopted this from Webern, who was also his role model. The fifteen movements last just under 12 minutes. The reference to Webern is even more concrete in op. 28 (which is also the opus number of Webern's string quartet) than in its brevity. Kurtág refers to the double canon from the final movement of the 2nd Cantata op. 31, Webern's last work from 1941-1943, which in turn would not have been possible without his intensive study of 15th and 16th century vocal polyphony. He uses it in several movements or plays with its elements, for example in the 5th movement as a fantasia on its harmonies; in the seventh he uses the outer voices, in the tenth he transcribes it directly one tone higher on the strings. The 6th movement, a whole five bars long, is in turn an homage to Webern in canon form. Another quotation is from the composer's friend Szervánszky: after allusions in movements 3 and 12, the twelve opening bars in C major of the Larghetto of his

String Serenade from 1947/48 open the final movement of this – as Kurtág called it – "mini-requiem".

([kammermusik.org](http://kammermusik.org))

### **György Ligeti** Streichquartett Nr. 2 (1968)

The string quartet is based on a musical idea that recurs in all five movements, but is realized quite differently each time. In the first movement, the style of the music is completely chopped up; there are abrupt changes between extremely fast and extremely slow gestural types. In the second movement, the musical events are almost static, but the statics are interrupted by abrupt breaks, disturbances, sudden changes in tempo and form - remnants from the first movement that have been transplanted into the second, as it were. The entire second movement is a slow version of the first, there are numerous subterranean connections, and the endings of both movements, in which the musical form collapses, behave like the end rhyme of two lines of a poem.

The third movement, a pizzicato piece, is a kind of homage to Béla Bartók - but the Scherzo pizzicato from Bartók's Fourth String Quartet is not quoted, only indicated. The musical networks, which were soft in the first two movements, appear hardened here. There is a mechanical ticking – of an imaginary machine that is slowly breaking down, disintegrating into individual parts. Such polymetric mechanical processes can be found again and again in my music – for example in the "Poème Symphonique" for a hundred metronomes from 1962 or in the "Horloges démoniaques" from "Aventures", and the harpsichord piece "Continuum", which I composed shortly before the Second String Quartet, represents a precision mechanism as a whole.

The fourth movement is extremely condensed, brutal, threatening. The abrupt change of type in the first movement returns, compressed into the smallest space.

The fifth movement is like a memory seen through fog: The entire course of the piece so far is recapitulated, but softened - the music sounds as if from afar. All five movements contain the same musical and formal ideas, but the perspective and coloration are different in each movement, so that the overarching musical form only emerges when the quartet is heard and thought of as a context.

(G. Ligeti, Einführungstext zur Uraufführung am 14. Dezember 1969 im Südwestfunk Baden-Baden, [gyorgy-ligeti.com](http://gyorgy-ligeti.com))

### **Anton Webern** 5 Sätze für Streichquartett op. 5 (1909)

A radical break with tradition or a logical, organically evolved step: few innovations in music history have caused as much controversy as the consistent abandonment of the major-minor tonality shortly after the turn of the penultimate century. One of the first works from this period is "5 Sätze" for string quartet (1909) by the Austrian composer Anton Webern. Anton Webern himself used drastic words to describe the phase after 1908, the time of the "interregnum", when "everything was in an uncertain, dark flux": "As if the light had gone out!"

Upon closer inspection, the works created in this context have much more in common than just this new, "atonal" harmony. Most of the compositions of this early so-called "free atonality" are surprisingly short, highly expressive and extremely moving.  
(Thomas Wally)