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EVOCATIONS OF CHINA IN THE MUSIC OF GYÖRGY LIGETI

Joseph Cadagin

Abstract

This paper traces the shifting significance of China in the music of Hungarian composer György Ligeti (1923-2006). In early instances of *chinoiserie* from the 1940s—including a black-key piano exercise and incidental music for the puppet play *Spring Flower*—Ligeti resorts to pentatonic essentializing to evoke childlike visions of a fairytale Orient. A half-century later, in his 2000 song cycle *Síppal, dobbal, nádihegedűvel*, China reemerges as a far more nuanced, though no less imaginary space. Ligeti's settings of Chinese-themed verses by Hungarian poet Sándor Weöres function as coded expressions of alienation and foreignness from an exile composer separated from his homeland.

Keywords: György Ligeti, Sándor Weöres, Hungary, China, Orientalism, exoticism, pentatonicism, migration, exile

Following the 1978 success of his first (and ultimately, only) opera, *Le Grand Macabre*, Hungarian composer György Ligeti began planning a follow-up—an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. This project was abandoned around 1990 in favor of an *Alice in Wonderland* musical-theater piece, which also remained unrealized at the composer's death in 2006.[1] Yet Ligeti left behind over two hundred pages in preparatory material for these two works combined, almost entirely in the form of verbal sketches. A large portion of his notes for *The Tempest* are devoted to the character Ariel. As he explained in a 1982 letter to German writer Herbert Rosendorfer, a possible librettist, "the magical atmosphere of the island, the Ariel world, attracts me."[2] In an undated sketch, he imagines a "BEAUTIFUL MAGIC SOUND"[3]—the likes of which have never been heard—to represent Shakespeare's airborne spirit. These "magical chords" would be constructed from string and flute harmonics, supplemented with harmonica and possibly electronics.[4]

For Ariel's voice type, Ligeti takes into consideration the spirit's ability to shapeshift and imitate the voices of others. In another undated sketch, he toys with the possibility of triple-casting the role for a coloratura soprano, a tenor, and a deep bass, all of whom wear the same costume and mask.[5] Beneath this jotting, Ligeti mentions a special vocal style that might suit the character—what he calls "Buddhist *Sprechgesang*." For an example of this "pure" or "clean" singing, he reminds himself to consult a cassette of Chinese Buddhist music, specifically a "pagoda chant."[6] Although none of the tracks contain "pagoda" in the title, it's very likely that Ligeti is referring to the field recordings of ethnomusicologist John Levy, released by Lyrichord in 1969 as *Chinese Buddhist Music* and later reissued on cassette.[7]

Like hundreds of other sketches in the composer's notebooks, the page references a recording from his vast collection of non-Western music.[8] In the 1980s, Ligeti gained a newfound appreciation for an enormous range of folk and classical traditions from across the globe. While the composer immersed himself in certain traditions—especially those of Sub-Saharan Africa—others remained on the periphery of his musical radar. Chinese music was one of these blind spots, yet we still find scattered allusions to China throughout his sketches and published oeuvre. In many ways, this brief *Tempest* sketch might serve as an entry point into understanding Ligeti's complex and shifting relationship to "China" as both a musical and cultural construct, which I attempt to trace in this study.

It's crucial to note that, in this jotting, Ligeti associates Chinese music with a magical, inhuman character who resides on an enchanted isle. In this sense, the composer's invocation of China seems to play into the kinds of tropes that Edward Said deconstructs in his landmark volume. Ariel's "noises, sounds and sweet airs" are rendered strange and alien when tinged with the vocal styles of Buddhist chant. By extension, Prospero's island begins to overlap with European fantasies of the Orient as "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences," as Said puts it.[9] And, indeed, in his earliest compositional evocations of China in the 1940s, Ligeti was guilty of such Orientalist essentializing, painting "the mysterious East" through stereotyped pentatonic melodies.[10] These compositions, in the tradition of Bartók's ballet *The Miraculous Mandarin*, largely fit into Yayoi Uno Everett's third category of "East-meets-West" encounters in post-1945 art music: works that "evoke Asian sensibilities without the explicit borrowing of preexistent

musical materials or styles," often through "Western approximations of oriental melodies."[11]

However, returning to the *Tempest* sketch, it isn't clear that Ligeti intended to imitate or appropriate Buddhist chant as an explicit musical evocation of China. Rather, he seems to be interested in a certain mode of delivery and a purity of vocal timbre in the abstract—a singing style that just happens to be represented on a cassette of Chinese music. Scholars have characterized Ligeti's African borrowings in a similar manner, identifying a process of abstraction and admixture—i.e. extracting polyrhythmic structures and combining them with comparable techniques from other musical traditions.[12] Given his experiences as a Holocaust survivor and a Hungarian exile in Western Europe, Ligeti was sensitive to the dangers of essentialization. "As the antithesis of the exotic," writes Amy Bauer, "Ligeti's non-Western other would no longer be trivialized, marginalized, or parodied; it would take its rightful place as the new modernity."[13]

But this is not to say that exoticism is totally absent from Ligeti's late works. As we see in the *Tempest* sketches, the composer sought strange, unheard-of sounds that could instill a sense of magic and mystery. China, the original playground of exoticism in Ligeti's early works, resurfaces fifty years later during his late period—in some respects, no less exoticized. Two of the central movements of his 2000 song cycle *Síppal, dobbal, nádihegedűvel* (With pipe, drum, and reed fiddle) for mezzo-soprano and percussion are settings of Chinese-themed verses by Hungarian poet Sándor Weöres. To dismiss these songs as mere *chinoiserie* is to grossly misunderstand their cultural, biographical, and musical complexities. In what follows, I demonstrate how China—though consistently an imaginary space in Ligeti's music—transforms as a concept in his oeuvre. In his late-period evocations of China, Ligeti consciously avoids essentializing musical stereotypes. But, rather paradoxically, he continues to strike a tone of foreignness, albeit as a form of self-reflection and not out of an Orientalist impulse to otherize China.

Chinese juvenilia and *Spring Flower*

It's surprising that, given Ligeti's enthusiastic embrace of non-Western music beginning in the 1980s—especially traditions from the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia—the composer never developed a taste for the rich classical and folk repertoire of China. When asked by

Eckhard Roelcke in the early 2000s if there were any musical cultures that he wasn't interested in, Ligeti responded rather diplomatically, "Yes, I haven't dealt technically with Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese music."[14] Nevertheless, "Chinese" music—with ample quotation marks—played a role in Ligeti's early output as a young man in Budapest following the war.

In a composition notebook from his student days at the Liszt Academy, we find a short sketch for a jangly piano piece titled "Chinesisch. Schnell" (Fig. 1), probably composed in January 1946.[15] The D-flat-major key signature confines the player entirely to the black keys—a rather old-fashioned and even childish evocation of Chinese pentatonicism that Debussy utilizes for the melody line in "Pagodes." Then again, Ligeti's piece may have been intended for children. He reminisces in a 1972 essay that he used to indulge in such black-key Orientalizing as a boy: "When I was tinkling at the piano, I soon discovered—like all children—the euphonious magic of the black keys." Regarding the two ebony-framed pictures of kimonoed ladies above his aunt's out-of-tune piano, little Gyuri (as Ligeti went by) formed a "mysterious connection" in his mind between the black-key music and the black-haired geishas. "I called the music with these keys 'Japanese' without the slightest idea of pentatonic and Far Eastern music, since there were no records with such music at the time."[16]

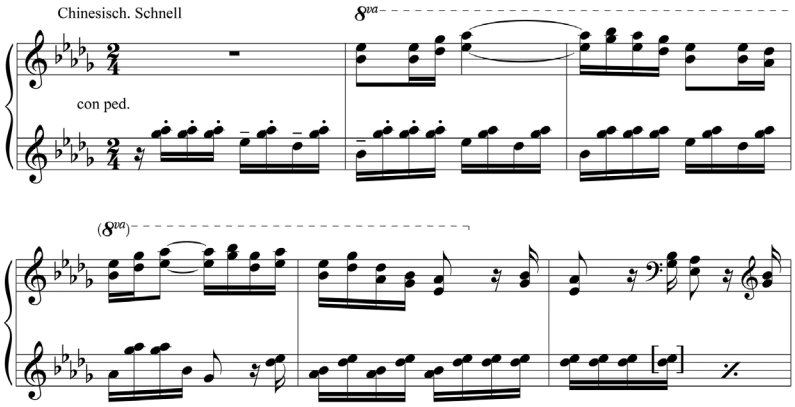
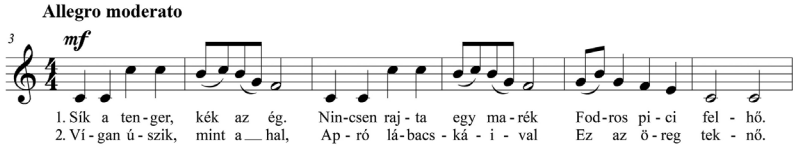


Figure 1. Transcription of Ligeti's sketch for a pentatonic piano piece titled "Chinesisch. Schnell," likely drafted in January 1946 (reproduced with the permission of the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel)

An encounter with genuine Asian music would come in 1949 during the World Festival of Youth and Students in Budapest.[17] Along with the premiere of Ligeti's socialist-themed cantata, the festival featured a Beijing-opera troupe from the PRC delegation.[18] The performance impressed the composer and no doubt influenced his score for the puppet play *Spring Flower* (*Tavaszi Virág*), which inaugurated the newly nationalized Budapest Puppet Theater in October of that same year. Translated by János Zsombor from a Soviet puppet play by Sergei Preobrazhensky,[19] the plot injects Marxist rhetoric into a pastoral fairytale set in China.

Loyal Heart (Hűséges Szív), a shepherd boy, tracks his missing sheep to the garden of Spring Flower (Tavaszi Virág) and her greedy father, Shady Elm (Árnyas Szil). In Spring Flower, Loyal Heart encounters, for the first time, "someone who knows that the fate of the poor cannot be eternal oppression, but that it is possible to fight against tyrants," and falls in love with the revolutionary-minded girl. Shady Elm will only permit their marriage if Loyal Heart brings back three gold bars, a golden keg, and the Pearl of Truth. With the help of three masons, a gardener, and a 500-year-old turtle, Loyal Heart reaches the Wise Dragon (Bölcs Sárkány), who offers him this advice: "He who helps others, helps himself." Loyal Heart returns with the treasures, only to find that Shady Elm has betrothed his daughter to the tyrannical emperor. In the end, "due to the guidance of the Wise Dragon and the cleverness of Spring Flower, power falls into the hands of the people," and the couple are happily wed.[20]

A critic, writing in the pedagogical journal *Köznevelés* (Public Education), praised the solid ideological grounding of the new Puppet Theater's repertoire: "Empty entertainment and aimless comedy have been replaced by the working man and the fight against exploitation."[21] There's a brief mention in the review of Ligeti's "lovely melodies" and "catchy tunes," which also impressed the young György Kurtág. The commission was, in fact, first offered to Kurtág, who dismissed the song texts as "tasteless, primitive verse." "To our astonishment," recalls Kurtág, "Ligeti shows an interest and takes on the job. The result is a brilliant piece of music with hits that live on until today in our circles."[22] Beyond Budapest, however, the score remained almost entirely unknown throughout Ligeti's lifetime, with the exception of one tiny excerpt. In 1984, Ligeti arranged Loyal Heart's song "Sík a tenger, kék az ég" (The sea is flat, the sky is blue, Fig. 2) for solo trumpet, giving it the title *Big Turtle Fanfare from the South China Sea*.[23] The hero sings this optimistic number while riding the back of the ancient turtle, and the creature takes up the tune himself in a later scene.



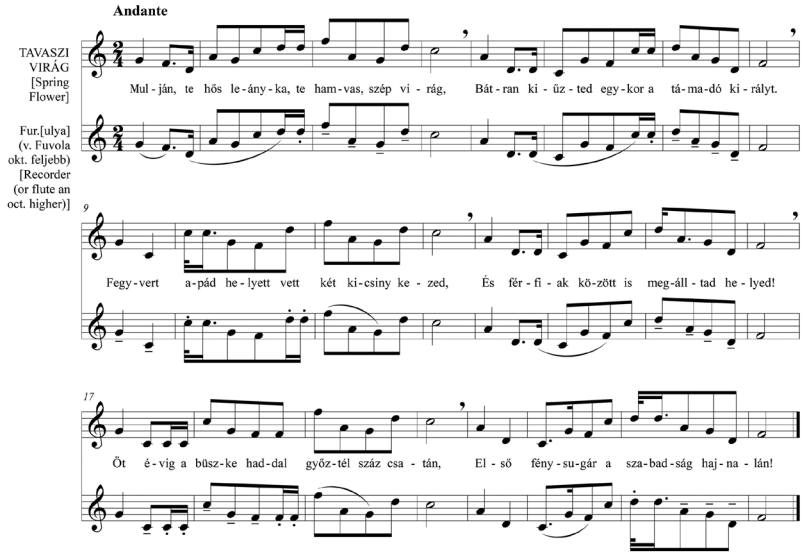
Sík a tenger, kék az ég.	The sea is flat, the sky is blue.
Nincsen rajta egy marék	There isn't even a handful
Fodros pici felhő.	Of ruffled little clouds.
Vígan úszik, mint a hal,	He swims happily as a fish
Apró lábacskáival	With his little legs,
Ez az öreg teknő.	This old turtle.

Figure 2. Transcription of Loyal Heart's song "Sík a tenger, kék az ég" (No. 14) from Ligeti's score for the 1949 puppet play *Spring Flower* (reproduced with the permission of the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel)

Ligeti produced thirty numbers for *Spring Flower*, including a prelude, interludes, incidental/action sequences, sound effects, and songs for most of the central characters. The flexible chamber scoring calls for at least three instrumentalists: a recorder player (ad lib. flute/piccolo), a violist (ad lib. recorder), and a pianist, all of whom can double on percussion. Responding to the Sovietized *chinoiserie* of Preobrazhensky's play and Zsombor's translation, Ligeti adopts what is, for the most part, an Orientalist musical language. The score's pentatonic melodies are about as authentic as the meaningless string of *Hanzi* characters Ligeti copied onto the manuscript score's title page (音的樂他及目/趙中其学科).[24] For example, the scale in "Sík a tenger" contains semitones, which aren't found between principal pitches in Chinese pentatonicism. Rather, Ligeti's mode here is closer to pentatonic collections derived from the *pelog* tuning system of Javanese gamelan music, such as the *pelog barang* scale.[25]

Spring Flower's ode to the heroine Mulan, "Mulján, te hős leányka" (Mulan, you heroic girl, Fig. 3), is more modally accurate. But even if the anhemitonic tune corresponds to the Chinese *gong* scale,[26] its dotted rhythms and octave leaps are thoroughly Hungarian features.[27] At the same time, there are certain compositional touches that show the influence of Ligeti's run-in with Chinese music at the World Festival of Youth. In

this number and others, the viola and/or flute shadow the vocal line in unison or at the octave. It's a clear nod to the accompanimental style of Beijing opera, where the *jinghu* fiddle and bamboo flute double the singers heterophonically.[28] Ligeti also attempts to replicate the clangor of a Chinese-opera percussion section in a number scored for xylophone, wood drums, snare, triangle, cymbals, gong, and six pentatonically tuned liter-bottles (Fig. 4).[29] Anticipating the unconventional instrumentation of his late-life song cycle *Síppal, dobbal*, this ensemble of wood, metal, and glass underscores a pantomime sequence in which a conjurer performs a bit of sorcery with a cabinet before being chased off the stage by the emperor.



Mulján, te hős leányka, te hamvas, szép virág, Bátran kiűzted egykor a támadó királyt.	Mulan, you heroic girl, you blooming, beautiful flower, You once bravely drove out the attacking king.
Fegyvert apád helyett vett két kicsiny kezed, És férfiak között is megálltad helyed!	You took up arms in place of your father, with your two little hands, And among men you stood your ground!
Öt évig a büszke haddal győztél száz csatán, Első fénysugár a szabadság hajnalán!	Five years with the proud army, you won a hundred battles, First gleam of light at the dawn of freedom!

Figure 3. Transcription of Spring Flower's "Mulján, te hős leányka" (No. 2) from Ligeti's score for the 1949 puppet play *Spring Flower* (reproduced with the permission of the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel)

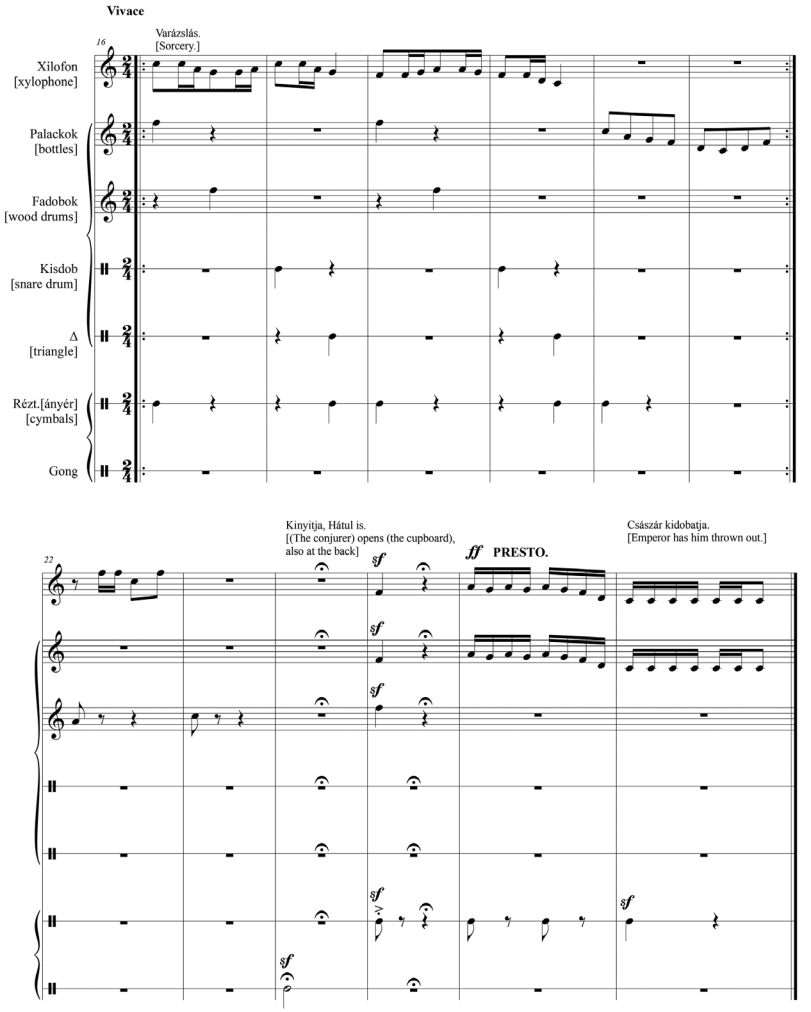


Figure 4. Transcription of the conjurer's pantomime (No. 28) from Ligeti's score for the 1949 puppet play *Spring Flower* (reproduced with the permission of the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel)

The problem with pentatonicism

In Ligeti's early works—including his juvenile improvisations at the keyboard—we find pentatonic *chinoiserie* (or, by extension, *japonaiserie*) closely associated with childhood, magic, and fairytale whimsy. Tellingly, in 1950, he arranged excerpts from *Spring Flower* for school orchestra under the title *Chinese Imperial Court Music* (*Kínai császári udvari zene*), a work now considered lost.[30] Moreover, Ligeti would have been familiar with the pedagogical methods of his teacher, Zoltán Kodály, who recommended that kindergarteners begin learning music by singing pentatonic melodies: "It is through them that children can achieve correct intonation soonest, for they do not have to bother with semitones."[31] Yet music teachers didn't need to look as far east as China for pedagogical material; such anhemitonic tunes were to be found in the Hungarian folksong tradition, which is rooted in pentatonicism.

Granted, as Kodály points out, most of this folk repertoire is too rhythmically complex for kindergarteners and extends beyond the narrow compass of their voices. He calls for newly written pentatonic tunes "in the spirit of folksongs but without their difficulties," like those he composed for his own instructional collections.[32] It was crucial that "the soul of the child should be nursed on the mother's milk of the ancient Magyar musical phenomenon," whether that be in the form of an authentic pentatonic folksong or a faithful imitation.[33] For Kodály, musical pedagogy can serve as a platform for building national identity along ethnic lines. At the same time, he heads off accusations of chauvinism by couching his arguments in the language of decolonization: "shall we continue to be a colony, or shall we become an independent country not only politically but culturally, in asserting our personality, too?"[34]

Still, there's no denying the aggressiveness of Kodály's wish to expunge foreign (especially German) influences from musical education and foster those qualities that are quintessentially Hungarian. It's initially surprising, then, that he invariably locates the origins of Hungarian pentatonicism—the "core" and "foundation" of his people's music[35]—in the Far East. While he admits that pentatonicism is widespread "among peoples without mutual contact," he identifies certain melodic structures that link Hungarian folksongs to a cross-continental lineage: "the Magyars represent the outermost edge of that great Asiatic musical tradition, many thousands of years old, rooted in the spirit of the various peoples who live from China, throughout Central Asia, to the Black Sea."[36] He even

adopts Chinese theoretical nomenclature to analyze pentatonic melodies, referring to "extraneous" notes as *pien* pitches and the tonic as the *kung*.[37]

For Kodály, Chinese music obviously doesn't pose a foreign threat to autochthonous Hungarian traditions. Rather, it symbolizes the ancient and noble beginnings of a hypothesized musical lineage extending westward via Ugrian and Turkic peoples to the Hungarians. "Time may have wiped away the Eastern features from the face of the Magyar community," he writes in *Folk Music of Hungary*, "but in the depth of its soul, where the springs of music lie, there still lives an element of the original East."[38]

He continues this racially charged rhetoric elsewhere: "The tenacity with which the pentatonic system persists testifies, moreover, to the fact that for Hungarians it has always been the instinctive means of musical expression. This is why it has not been suppressed by European influences, by assimilation, by racial mixing, etc."[39] Paradoxically, the latent Asianness of Hungarian folksong serves to reinforce its Hungarianness. By invoking ties to China, Kodály sets Magyar folksong apart from European music. In his eyes, the absence of pentatonicism in neighboring traditions offers proof of the Hungarian people's exceptionalism, the endurance of its ethnonational character, and its primordial pedigree.

All this is to say that Chinese pentatonicism may have carried implicit associations with Hungarian nationalism for Ligeti. In seeking ties to the "original East," Kodály was motivated less by a spirit of Bartókian cosmopolitanism than by the desire to attach Magyar folksong to a grand music-historical narrative. As Ligeti observes, his former teacher rarely drew on foreign traditions in his compositions: "Kodály nationalistically limited himself to Hungarian folk music as a source of inspiration. Bartók, on the other hand, was international."[40]

To be sure, Bartók also subscribed to the theory that Hungarian folksong was "a branch of the great Central-Asiatic Turkish, Mongolian, and Chinese pentatonic center."[41] At the same time, in a 1942 essay, he decries the concept of racial purity in music that sullies Kodály's writings, arguing that what makes his nation's music "incontestably Hungarian" is its crossbreeding with neighboring traditions. Given our discussion, the metaphor Bartók draws is ironically apt: "an artificial erection of Chinese walls to separate peoples from each other bodes no good for [folk music's] development."[42]

Síppal, dobbal, nádihegedűvel: III. Kínai templom

Over half a century after the premiere of *Spring Flower*, Ligeti returned to Chinese themes—or, more accurately, Hungarian visions of China—for his 2000 song cycle *Síppal, dobbal, nádihegedűvel* (With pipe, drum, and reed fiddle). Written for Hungarian mezzo Katalin Károlyi and the Amadinda Percussion Group, the piece comprises seven settings of poems by Ligeti's friend and compatriot, Sándor Weöres. The composer set a number of Weöres' verses during his pre-migration days in Budapest. But after the 1955 choral diptych *Éjszaka – Reggel* (Night – Morning), Ligeti didn't revisit Weöres until 1983 with *Magyar etűdök* (Hungarian Etudes) for sixteen voices. The cycle draws on an eponymous collection of nursery-rhyme-like texts, penned between 1947 and '56, that have become a staple of children's literature.[43]

While Ligeti admired the cosmic scope of Weöres' long-form poetry, for musical purposes, he preferred the writer's more compact verses, such as those found in *Magyar etűdök*. Ligeti was especially "attracted by these constructions in his very small poems"—the kinds of linguistic games that also drew him to Lewis Carroll's nonsense verses.[44] Like Carroll, Weöres experimented with unusual typographic layouts, notably in his 1941 "Kínai templom" (Chinese Temple). The words are arranged into four columns, which are read top-to-bottom, as in classical Chinese. Weöres evokes a temple garden in atmospheric language, restricting himself entirely to monosyllabic Hungarian words.

While the pentatonic scale would initially seem suited to a poem like "Kínai templom," this obvious approach was now an impossibility for Ligeti in the year 2000. Aside from the Hungarian nationalist baggage attached to Chinese pentatonicism—the supposed ancient ursource of Magyar pentatonicism—it is crucial to consider the composer's late-life embrace of non-Western traditions. In the 1980s, he was introduced to a wealth of diverse musical styles, thanks to his student, Roberto Sierra.[45] Ligeti was particularly taken by ethnomusicologist Simha Arom's field recordings of Banda Linda horn ensembles from the Central African Republic, which he drew on for compositional inspiration.

Yet his borrowings of Sub-Saharan African music were never essentialized imitations. Ligeti typically abstracted and absorbed concepts from several different traditions—e.g. blending African polyrhythmic structures with comparable techniques from *ars subtilior* polyphony and Conlon Nancarrow's player-piano compositions. Moreover, his

appropriations of African music were informed by intense, scholarly engagement with field recordings and ethnomusicological literature by Arom as well as Gerhard Kubik.

Having cultivated a deep respect for non-Western traditions—and given his self-admitted ignorance of Chinese music—Ligeti would have undoubtedly felt uncomfortable with pentatonic Orientalizing. "I don't use these scales and tonal systems directly," he avers in a 1990 interview, "I never resort to exoticism."[46] As an alternative, we find Ligeti taking the complete opposite route from the limited tonal content of pentatonicism. In the melody line of "Kínai templom," all but four of the twenty-six chromatic pitches between E3 and F5 make an appearance.[47] No pitch class is repeated more than three times by the mezzo, and no discrete tone is sung more than twice, with only six duplications total.

This heterogeneity of pitches is the product of a tallying system that Ligeti utilized while sketching the movement. In the top margin of a draft for "Kínai templom," he lists two transpositions of a Lydian scale with the sixth and seventh scale degrees lowered—a mode often referred to as the Lydian minor (Fig. 5). Overlapping only on B and C, these two transpositions together constitute a chromatic aggregate. The mezzo's opening and closing passages at mm. 1-3 and 7-8 are based on the first scale, while the middle portion at mm. 4-6 is based on the second, resulting in a kind of ternary form. Ligeti draws short lines above, below, and to the side of the note names in his two modes to keep track of the number of times he uses each pitch class, ensuring a high degree of heterogeneity.

Figure 5. Transcription of Ligeti's note-tracking system from an undated sketch for "Kínai templom" (note that the two center lines are dividers, not tally marks)
(reproduced with the permission of the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel)

However, there are few discrepancies between Ligeti's tallying and the actual notated content of the sketch, which is melodically identical to the published version. Eb in the first scale is marked with two lines instead of the correct three, though this is probably just an honest mistake on the

composer's part. In addition, B and C in both scales each erroneously have one additional tally—these two pitches appear only twice in the outer Scale 1 measures and only once in the inner Scale 2 measures. Ligeti's error might be explained by the fact that both scales contain these pitches. Indeed, they even act as a point of common-tone "modulation" at the beginning of m. 7.

At any rate, one shouldn't read too far into this tallying system. There seems to be little significance, for instance, to the positioning of the tick marks in relation to the letter names—i.e. there's not obvious correlation between octave level and the placement of these dashes.[48] Neither does it seem as if he had in mind a specific ordering akin to a tone row. Rather than a systematic serial procedure, it's more likely Ligeti was simply using this as a casual tallying device to limit the repetition of notes.

At the same time, there are features of the vocal line that suggest he was mentally monitoring complex tonal and intervallic relationships without the aid of a written mnemonic. For instance, the first three cadences on C, D, and E at mm. 2, 4, and 5, respectively, are the first appearances of those pitch classes in the mezzo line. The third of these cadences, from B to E, is the only perfect interval in the overwhelmingly tritonal melody, and the whole phrase outlines an appropriately consonant E-major triad on the phrase "Four metal [objects] ring" ("Négy fém cseng"). Finally, if we ignore the Eb in m. 7, the five remaining cadences on C, D, E, F#, and G trace a transposed version of the Lydian pentachord from Ligeti's tick-mark scales.

Such constructivism is a response to the strict form and visual layout of Sándor Weöres' poem, an example of a classical Chinese quatrain known as *jueju*: four lines of either five or seven monosyllabic characters. Weöres, who was a great admirer of Chinese philosophy and visited the nation twice,[49] encountered *jueju* while translating the work of Tang poets such as a Li Bai and Bai Juyi.[50] Although his translations mostly eschew the original limitation to twenty or twenty-eight syllables, "Kínai templom" is an attempt to write an original *jueju* in Hungarian that adheres to the form's syllabic constraints. Moreover, as mentioned, Weöres preserves the typography of classical Chinese, stacking the seven words of each line vertically.

Imitating the abstraction and ambiguity typical of Tang verse, Weöres' poem is arcane in its language, conveying a complex image in strings of adjectives and nouns with minimal reliance on verbs. In his liner notes for the premiere recording of *Síppal, dobbal*, Ligeti describes the poem as

an expression of "the contentment of the Buddhist view of life."[51] Yet the composer's own unpublished translation of "Kínai templom" into German (Fig. 6) suggests a tone of fatalism rather than renunciation: the pleasures and successes of life are like the sound of bells ringing and dying away in a temple garden at nightfall.[52] This tolling takes instrumental form in an assortment of metallophones supplemented with vibraphone, which bathe the mezzo line in strange, reverberating harmonies that evoke the complex overtone series of struck bells.

There's no indication that these chords are derived from either of the two tally-mark scales. In fact, while Ligeti resisted the temptation to employ the pentatonic scale in the vocal line, Amy Bauer identifies scattered pentatonic collections in her harmonic analysis of the song.[53] At the same time, as Frederik Knop points out, the score doesn't necessarily offer a realistic picture of how these harmonies sound in performance: "Ultimately, only spectral analysis of a recording could provide an approximate explanation of the de facto relationship between the notation and the actual sound."[54]

III. Chinesische Tempel (in ungarischen jedes Wort einsilbig)	III. Chinese Temple (in Hungarian, every word monosyllabic)
Heiliger Garten, reicher Laub, geöffneter grüne Flügel, oben, unten kommt (die) weite Nacht, blauer Schatten. Vier Metall(gegenstände) klingen: (das) Schöne, (das) Gute, (der) Ruhm, (der hohe) Rang, dann schwingt tiefe Stille, wie (ein) verklungener Klang [= (eine) ausgekühlte Stimme].	Holy garden, rich foliage, open green wing, above, below comes (the) wide night, blue shadow. Four metal (objects) ring: (the) beautiful, (the) good, fame, (high) rank, then resounds deep silence, like (a) faded sound [= (a) cooled voice].

Figure 6. Transcription and English translation of Ligeti's handwritten German translation of Sándor Weöres' "Kínai templom" (note that Ligeti does not follow Weöres' typographical layout nor attempt a monosyllabic translation; the brackets in the last line are Ligeti's) (reproduced with the permission of the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel)

Síppal, dobbal, nádihegedűvel: IV. Kuli

The recurring Lydian minor collection of "Kínai templom" acts as a point of overlap with the following song, "Kuli" (Coolie). Stripped of its C, the first of Ligeti's two tally-mark scales in movement III becomes the basis of the mezzo's whole-tone melody in movement IV. Moreover, the singer's rising tritonal sequence in mm. 1-2 of "Kínai templom" is transformed into the accompanimental ostinato in "Kuli." Here, the xylophone and first marimba descend through tritonal chains on the same whole-tone scale as the mezzo, shadowed in parallel sixths by the second marimba and bass marimba on the other possible whole-tone transposition.[55]

Amy Bauer, in her analysis of "Galamb borong" from Ligeti's second book of piano etudes (1988-94), examines how the composer assigns complementary whole-tone collections to the pianist's right and left hands to approximate the paired *pelog* tuning of Balinese gamelan music.[56] While there might be some superficial resemblance to Indonesian music in "Kuli," we shouldn't read the movement as overt an evocation of gamelan as the piano etude. Ligeti avoids metallic percussion in favor of wooden marimbas, and unlike "Galamb borong," there are no quasi-Indonesian interlocking melodies or pentatonic passages.

The ostinato chains in "Kuli," variable in length, serve as a vivid musical representation of the phrase "guri-guri," a Hungarian onomatopoeia for rolling.[57] The titular rickshaw driver of Weöres' 1931 poem repeats this refrain as he describes his endless toil. Indeed, the *guri-guri* spinning of his pedicab wheels becomes a metaphor for the ceaseless torture of life and labor. Syncopated passages in the vocal line (e.g. mm. 2-3, 14, 16) lend the impression that the Coolie is struggling to keep up with the *perpetuum mobile* of his daily grind. The mezzo's final elliptical line, "Coolie forever: just *guri-guri, guri-guri*…," is carried on by the percussionists, who fade out one-by-one to lend the impression that this process continues *ad infinitum*.[58]

By reprising the opening pitch set and tritonal sequence of "Kínai templom" in "Kuli," Ligeti signals that we are meant to hear these two consecutive movements as a pair—a fact reinforced by the shared Chinese themes of their texts. Granted, the Hindi-derived word "coolie" can also refer to a South Asian laborer, and Weöres never explicitly mentions the ethnicity of the poem's subject. However, the Coolie's (admittedly stereotypical) nickname for his rickshaw, "dragon cart" (*sárkányszekér*), indicates his Chinese origins.

More specifically, he is a Chinese immigrant. His broken Hungarian, marked by illeism and omissions of verbs and articles, casts him as a foreigner learning an unfamiliar language. While these grammatical errors may seem racistly infantilizing from a contemporary perspective, Weöres is reproducing features of spoken Chinese, such as its lack of articles. And the Coolie's third-person self-reference is a common linguistic expression of subservience in Chinese.[59] He bemoans the "big bad people" who beat him with sticks and humbles himself as a "rice-grain, bean, poppyseed, little child." The first of these epithets—another clue to the character's Chinese ethnicity—is Ligeti's addition.[60]

In the literature on *Síppal, dobbal*, scholars tend to view the texts Ligeti selected for these two Chinese-themed songs as comparable to the pure linguistic games of Weöres' "Táncdal" (Dance Song) and "Szajkó" (Jay), respectively set in movements II and VII. Amy Bauer observes that the words in "Kínai templom" "seem to be chosen for their sound, but may be juxtaposed at random" while Richard Steinitz calls "Kuli" "a humorous burlesque in pidgin Hungarian."[61] Such readings fail to consider the deeper biographical significance these two poems must have had for the composer. Yet there are musical hints that Ligeti felt an emotional connection to their themes, especially in "Kuli."

At mm. 10-13, the *guri-guri* ostinato breaks off, and the mezzo intones the Coolie's complaints of greying hair and old age on a series of chromatically descending lines. Even if Ligeti rebuked one interviewer for perceiving a "dying fall" in such gestures, it's impossible not to hear these as manifestations of the composer's favorite *lamento* topos, given the tragic nature of the text.[62] Further complaints of exhaustion and hunger in this line are set to angular tritone motives that swell in frustration, the second—marked "impatiently"—threatening to burst into a genuine cry.

And indeed, no sooner has the Coolie taken up his street calls again than he has a terrible revelation: should he die, there would be no one to pull his rickshaw. "Coolie dies?" he asks on another pair of chromatic *lamento* figures at m. 24, "Coolie caaan't die!!"—an unset portion of text that Ligeti marks, "screaming, desperately." Are we to understand these expressions of pain as exaggerated slapstick? Are the Coolie's sighs and cries akin to Astradamors' yelps in Ligeti's opera, *Le Grand Macabre*, when the character's wife comically whips him? Or is something much deeper at play here?

The question of biographical analysis

There is a tendency in recent Ligeti scholarship to address the composer's traumatic past while simultaneously questioning the usefulness of such experiences in understanding his music. Florian Scheding chides his colleagues for underplaying the role of the Holocaust in Ligeti's life but then proceeds to dismiss its relevance in analysis. He argues, "The presupposition that biographical experiences are the sole determinant of creative output absurdly suggests that every minute experience likely shapes a creative artist's art."[63]

Granted, Scheding does admit the possibility that "a careful analysis of his works may reveal traces of Ligeti's biography as a survivor" and that such traces might be hidden "deep within the texture of the work." But these biographical traces shouldn't be "the starting point or basis from which to approach his works."[64] In his later monograph, Scheding applies the identical argument to migrant composers. Although Ligeti isn't the main focus of that chapter, Scheding's assertions no doubt extend to the composer as an exile: "while every piece of music written by a migrant is just that, a composition by a migrant, not everything composed by a migrant bears traces of migration."[65]

I agree with Scheding that biographical elements shouldn't necessarily be the starting point of analysis for *every* work by Ligeti—especially when considering untexted or highly abstract pieces like the piano etudes. As the composer himself remarked in 1997, "Real life, what you experience (and I experienced a lot of very bad things in the Nazi times and communist dictatorship, also), I would not put in connection with the music."[66] Scheding cites a similar statement from a much earlier interview with Ligeti, conducted in 1978: "if you try to understand a work from the actual circumstances of the artist, you will get nowhere."[67]

Yet Scheding fails to mention the numerous occasions when Ligeti himself finds points of autobiographical significance in his oeuvre. In writings and interviews, he often locates the origins of compositional techniques in childhood memories—e.g. an oft-requoted recollection of a spiderweb nightmare from his youth that later inspired his micropolyphonic textures.[68] Unless we choose to doubt the sincerity of these "autobiographical alibis," as Charles Wilson disparagingly dubs them, such self-contradicting statements seem to invite the very mode of biographically informed analysis that Ligeti warns against elsewhere.[69]

It's also crucial to note that, in the realm of Ligeti's verbal reflections on his past, we witness a significant shift toward emotional openness and a readiness to share as the composer ages. Compare, for instance, his contribution to the 1978 essay collection *Mein Judentum* with his comments to Eckhard Roelcke in a 2001/02 interview. In the former testimony, he only briefly discusses his forced labor service in the Hungarian army, mentioning in passing that in 1944 he "worked as a sack carrier in the army's grain silos."[70] Over two decades after writing this essay, Ligeti reveals to Roelcke that this was one of the darkest episodes of the war for him. He goes into detail here about a particularly harrowing incident in Szeged, where he and his fellow laborers were forced to carry sunflower seeds out of a burning silo and threatened with execution when they dropped the sacks.[71]

Ligeti was subjected to further horrors and near-death experiences during his escape to Cluj. Here in his hometown, he discovered his family's apartment occupied by strangers—only his mother returned in 1945, having survived Auschwitz. Ligeti's father died in Bergen-Belsen, and his brother was likely murdered at Mauthausen. "I try to speak without emotion," Ligeti adds after recounting the deaths of his family in the same 2001/02 interview, "though of course I am full of hatred for the Nazis."[72]

Further expressions of hatred and anger are found in Ligeti's other late-life writings and interviews. Granted, in his 1978 *Mein Judentum* testimony, he does address feelings of survivor's guilt and what he calls "refugee neurosis" (*Flüchtlingsneurose*).[73] But at the turn of the millennium, there is a noticeable shift toward greater forthrightness from the emotionally reticent composer. "I harbored a deep-rooted hatred of the [Hungarian communist] system, as I had of the Nazi dictatorship," he writes in a 1997 liner note. "I am permanently scarred; I will be overcome by revenge fantasies to the end of my days."[74] Addressing this hatred again in a 2001 interview, he discloses, "I cannot forget it and it never diminished. Emotions, with time which is going on [*sic*], these emotions of hate and disgust become stronger."[75]

If Ligeti displays an enhanced willingness to *verbally* open up about his emotions and experiences, can we expect a corresponding *musical* engagement with trauma in his final works? I have discussed the composer's geriatric displays of frankness and vulnerability mostly in relation to his experiences during the Second World War, yet there are admittedly few instances in his late pieces that one might convincingly analyze in connection to the Holocaust. While the composer observes

that "one dimension of my music bears the imprint of a long time spent in the shadow of death," he points out that an artist in his position is "more likely to alienate" than "to create terrifying works of art in all seriousness."[76]

In a 1983 interview conducted on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, Ligeti hints at more accessible point of biographical entry into his late-period works:

> In my opinion, what characterizes my present situation is not so much a return to this Hungarian-Bartókian style of composition as something more general and comprehensive: a feeling of nostalgia, the longing for homeland, which is certainly related to aging. … [W]here is my homeland? Surely it is Transylvania just as much as Budapest, where I studied and lived until 1956, but I wasn't a child in Budapest. So there is a double-rootedness, and my homesickness is for Transylvania—for my birth town of Dicsőszentmárton and the city of my schooldays, Cluj—as well as for Budapest. I believe that when one gets older, that plays an important role.[77]

The nostalgic current that Ligeti identifies in his own works points to another major life disruption that, like the Holocaust, had a profound effect on the composer: his exile in Western Europe. Having fled Budapest during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, Ligeti sought asylum in Germany and then Austria, eventually settling in Vienna and gaining Austrian citizenship in 1968. By that time, the political situation in Hungary had softened enough for Ligeti to make official visits in 1970, '79, '83, and '90.[78] The composer also visited Budapest "incognito," as Amadinda Percussion Group member Zoltán Rácz put it, to rehearse *Síppal, dobbal* with the ensemble in 2000.[79] Yet he never returned to Transylvania, his childhood homeland that constituted the other half of his "double-rootedness."[80]

In the final section, I consider the possibility that Ligeti was addressing his exile status in the two Chinese-themed movements of *Síppal, dobbal*. Granted, as Scheding warns, "not everything composed by a migrant bears traces of migration." Yet this shouldn't prevent us from seeking these traces when there are strong indications that they exist. After all, *Síppal, dobbal* is a work steeped in biographical relevance, as it nostalgically reengages with the language, folk music (notably in movement VI), and people (Weöres, recall, was a friend of the composer's) of Ligeti's past. Still, one could argue that the China of "Kínai templom" and "Kuli" is far removed from Ligeti's Transylvanian identity. But as I argue, these movements act as

coded self-references, covertly divulging a migrant composer's profound feelings of foreignness.

Diasporic intimacy, exoticism, and the significance of China in *Síppal, dobbal*

Given the self-professed tinge of homesickness in Ligeti's late works, cultural theorist Svetlana Boym's seminal study on nostalgia proves a useful tool in understanding how the composer navigates his émigré status. Boym develops the concept of "diasporic intimacy," which she describes as "a survivalist aesthetics of estrangement and longing." The word "intimate," as she points out, is both an adjective, meaning "very personal," and a verb, meaning "to imply subtly." Diasporic intimacy offers a mode "of speaking about the most personal and intimate pain and pleasure through a 'cryptic disguise,'…through indirection and intimation, through stories and secrets." It can also be a sense of identification between exiles: "the mutual attraction of two immigrants from different parts of the world." But Boym stresses that diasporic intimacy doesn't promise security; on the contrary, it "is not opposed to uprootedness and defamiliarization but is constituted by it."[81]

I read the central Chinese-themed movements of *Síppal, dobbal* as enacting something akin to diasporic intimacy. The composer was in his late seventies when he wrote the cycle and no doubt identified with the Coolie's geriatric fatigue, which he tellingly set to sinking *lamento* motives. To be sure, Ligeti would have been the first to admit that his comfortable life in Vienna was incomparable to the toil of a wretched rickshaw driver; at the same time, the composer had been forced to perform grueling labor under equally abusive conditions during the Holocaust. After a lifetime of toil and strife, is it Ligeti's scream we're hearing channeled through Weöres' Coolie?

But the character is more than a yellowface mask for the composer to disappear behind. Through this "portrayal of an Asian pariah's monotonous hopelessness and pent-up aggressiveness," as Ligeti described the poem, he allies his experiences as a refugee to an imagined immigrant community.[82] Like the Coolie, Ligeti was well acquainted with the feeling of being an outsider and the uselessness of his mother tongue. Separated from his homeland, his native language grew into something unfamiliar: "I have to search for the words when I suddenly have to switch to Hungarian

after speaking German, French, or English for a prolonged period, I have christened this language 'emigranto' since the purity of the language is lost."[83]

This is where "Kínai templom" comes into play. In this preceding movement, the Hungarian language is presented as something strange—a tongue as unintelligible to a Westerner as Mandarin or Cantonese. Moreover, the words are rendered alien even for native speakers. Weöres seems to have selected vocabulary that superficially resembles Chinese, such as "cseng" (ring) and "rang" (rank). Ligeti further defamiliarizes the text by instructing the mezzo to perform in a "distorted, nasal voice." The slow, meditative tempo ("like a mystical ceremony") coupled with the singer's enormous leaps serve to isolate individual words. Most notable is the tone of exoticism that the composer strikes in this song—albeit, an exoticism that intentionally steers clear of cheap Orientalizing.

As we saw, in lieu of pentatonicism, Ligeti employs quasi-serialist pitch-tracking based on two Lydian minor scales. This method ensures not only total chromaticism, but a near-maximum heterogeneity of discrete tones across the mezzo's range. Still, the tintinnabulous accompaniment might seem to revert to the clangorous *chinoiserie* of Ligeti's *Spring Flower* puppet pantomime from 1949. Yet we find that in "Kínai templom," the composer assembles a variety of Western and Asian percussion instruments, none of which are Chinese. In addition to unmotored vibraphone, tubular bells, crotales, and glockenspiel, he calls for tuned sets of Japanese *rin* and Burmese gongs.[84] The former—also called *rei*—are standing bells rung during sutra recitations in Japanese Buddhism; the latter are nipple gongs of the kind played in Burmese *hsaing waing* ensembles.[85]

Ligeti therefore combines several parameters in this song that allow him to conjure an atmosphere of exoticism without resorting to lazy musical essentializing: the obsessive non-repetition of pitches; the eschewal of pentatonicism; the ritual tempo; the sparse texture; the spectra-like harmonies rich in perfect intervals; the global assortment of gongs and bells. "Kínai templom," in spite of its title, isn't about China or Chineseness; like "Kuli," it is a coded expression of alienation and unbelonging from an aging migrant composer. Diasporic intimacy, as Boym argues, "is spoken of in a foreign language that reveals the inadequacies of translation."[86] These pseudo-Sino songs are neither in Chinese nor Hungarian, but linguistically and musically convey the composer's uprootedness in a polyglot "emigranto."

Conclusion

Across Ligeti's oeuvre, then, China remains something of a musical and cultural Other, but in vastly varying ways. Out of his juvenile piano improvisations emerged a mysterious and erotically charged connection between black-key pentatonicism and images of black-haired geishas on his aunt's wall. The "euphonious magic of the black keys," associated in his boyhood mind with visions of a vaguely eastern Cathay, became the basis for a "Chinesisch" piano sketch he drafted in his early twenties, likely a pedagogical exercise for little ones. A few years later, in 1949, Ligeti revisited this Chinese childhood playground in the puppet play *Spring Flower*—a fairytale which, though tainted by Soviet propaganda, still retained the enchantment and adventure of youth. In the instrumentation, the heterophonic accompaniments, and the pentatonic melodies of his incidental music, we might hear echoes of the authentic Chinese-opera performance Ligeti attended. But these features are rhythmically contorted to fit the idiosyncratic accent patterns of the Hungarian language.

A half-century later, Ligeti revisits a fantasy of China that, while no less imaginary, has completely transformed after the composer's lifetime of migration and cultural encounters. Within the context of *Síppal, dobbal*—a work steeped in boyhood nostalgia—the two Chinese-themed movements might seem to perpetuate the childish Orientalizing we witnessed in Ligeti's *chinoiserie* of the 1940s. However, given his newfound respect for non-Western music and his self-acknowledged ignorance of Chinese music, the composer resists the juvenile urge to engage in pentatonic essentializing (perhaps, also, with an eye to avoiding the kind of Hungarian musical nationalism associated with the mode). At the same time, Ligeti doesn't entirely abstain from exoticism in his setting. His quasi-serialist procedures in the vocal line combined with the bell-spectra harmonies in the accompaniment generate an alien tonal world that isn't tied to any musical culture—least of all to China.

"China," therefore, remains just as inauthentic a concept as it was in Ligeti's early works. But its significance has drastically changed, becoming a shorthand for unspecified foreignness, divorced from any ethnicity. Yet, this is not to say that Ligeti is Othering Chinese people, for we aren't dealing with literal Chineseness in his settings. On the contrary, the composer seems to signal a sense of identification with the tragic figure in Weöres' "Kuli"—an ironic recognition that, as an aging immigrant and linguistic outsider, he fills the role of the Other himself. Theatrical

musical gestures—e.g. the perpetually cycling ostinato, the mournful *lamento* motives, the climactic scream—communicate a migrant worker's profound sense of exhaustion and frustration. Can we attribute these stylized emotions to Ligeti? Svetlana Boym demonstrates that the personal is never overt in the work of exile artists; it is hinted at and implied in the "game of hide-and-seek" that constitutes diasporic intimacy.[87] If we're seeking Ligeti in his music, we may find him hiding where we least expect him—as far off as China.

NOTES

1 For an overview of this unfinished project, see the author's forthcoming article in *Perspectives of New Music*: "Ligeti's Unfinished *Alice in Wonderland*."

2 "Doch die magische Atmosphäre der Insel, der Ariel-Welt zieht mich an." György Ligeti to Herbert Rosendorfer, May 15, 1982, Paul Sacher Stiftung, György Ligeti Collection. Translations are the author's, unless otherwise noted.

3 "SOSE HALLOTT SZÉPSÉGŰ VARÁZS-HANGZÁS." All verbal jottings are transcribed from Ligeti's compositional notebooks and sketches, held at the archives of the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel, Switzerland. My thanks to Heidy Zimmermann, Evelyne Diendorf, and Orsolya Moser for assisting me during my visit in September 2022.

4 "Ariel: Grisey PARTIELS—felhang-struktúrából a mágikus akkordokat kifejleszteni: vonós-flag., + szájharmonikák, flauto-armonici. elektronikus hangszerek? ESETLEG ELEKTR. NÉLKÜL! (?)"

5 "Fontos SZEREPOSZTÁSI VERZIÓ: Ariel (ugyanaz a maszk-kosztüm) különböző hangon: KOLORATURA SOPR—TENOR—MÉLY BASSZUS, 3 énekes játssza"

6 "Buddhista 'Sprechgesang'—tiszta ének, lásd Buddh. kínai kazetta (pagoda-ének)"

7 John Levy, *Chinese Buddhist Music*, Lyrichord LLST 7222, 1969.

8 A portion of this collection was catalogued by Louise Duchesneau, who lists four LPs of traditional Chinese music. See Louise Duchesneau, "'Play it like Bill Evans': György Ligeti and Recorded Music," in *György Ligeti: Of Foreign Lands and Strange Sounds*, ed. Louise Duchesneau and Wolfgang Marx (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 140-41.

9 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 1.

10 Ibid., 52.

11 Yayoi Uno Everett, "Intercultural Synthesis in Postwar Western Art Music: Historical Contexts, Perspectives, and Taxonomy," in *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*, ed. Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 17. See also Hon-Lun Yang and Michael Saffle, eds., *China and the West: Music, Representation, and Reception* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

12 Kofi Agawu, "Appropriating African Music," in *The African Imagination in Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 305-44; Martin Scherzinger, "György Ligeti and the Aka Pygmies Project," *Contemporary Music Review* 25, no. 3 (June 2006): 227-62; Stephen Andrew Taylor, "Ligeti, Africa and Polyrhythm," *The World of Music* 45, no. 2 (2003): 82-94.

13 Amy Bauer, "The Other of the Exotic: Balinese Music as Grammatical Paradigm in Ligeti's 'Galamb Borong'," *Music Analysis* 27, nos. 2-3 (2008): 340. See also Amy Bauer, "The Singular Exotic," in *Ligeti's Laments: Nostalgia, Exoticism, and the Absolute* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 141-57.

14 György Ligeti, *"Träumen Sie in Farbe?": György Ligeti im Gespräch mit Eckhard Roelcke*, interview by Eckhard Roelcke (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 2003), 138.

15 The sketch is undated, but the previous sketch in the notebook is dated January 8, 1946, and the one that follows it is dated January 14 of that year.

16 György Ligeti, "Musikalische Erinnerungen aus Kindheit und Jugend," in *György Ligeti: Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Monika Lichtenfeld (Mainz: Schott, 2007), 2:12-13.

17 Richard Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 2013), 46-48.

18 Emily Wilcox, whose research examines the dance groups sent by the PRC to such festivals, confirmed for me that a Beijing-opera troupe accompanied the Chinese delegation to Budapest in 1949. Email message to author, February 21, 2023. See also Emily Wilcox, "When Folk Dance Was Radical: Cold War *Yangge*, World Youth Festivals, and Overseas Chinese Leftist Culture in the 1950s and 1960s," *China Perspectives* 2020, no. 1 (2020): 33-42.

19 The original Russian title is *Vesenniy tsvetok* (Весенний цветок).

20 This synopsis is based on a digitized copy of the program booklet from the 1949 Budapest Puppet Theater premiere, which also reprints the texts of three songs. See "Tavaszi virág," Hungarian National Digital Archive (MaNDA), accessed June 14, 2023, https://en.mandadb.hu/tetel/266124/Tavaszi_virag.

21 "Bábszínház: A legkisebbek színháza," *Köznevelés* 5, no. 21 (Nov. 1, 1949): 614-15.

22 György Kurtág, "Mementos of a Friendship: György Kurtág on György Ligeti," trans. John Lambert, in *György Kurtág: Three Interviews and Ligeti Homages*, ed. Bálint András Varga (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 95.

23 In 1982, Per Nørgård composed a short trumpet solo for the nine-year-old Martin Nordwall, son of Swedish musicologist Ove Nordwall (Ligeti's first biographer) and harpsichordist Eva Nordwall (for whom Ligeti composed *Passacaglia ungherese*). Ligeti and several other major composers followed suit, producing trumpet miniatures for the young Nordwall that were eventually published as a collection by Universal Edition. See Ove Nordwall, "Ligeti- dokumenter - et rapsodisk vue," *Dansk Musik Tidsskrift* 64, no. 7 (1989-90): 234-37; Edward H. Tarr, ed., *Fanfares: New Trumpet Pieces for Young Players* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1989).

[24] My thanks to Linda Rui Feng for identifying the characters and confirming their meaninglessness. According to Richard Steinitz, "they were only decoration. Ligeti found them in a Chinese book and had no idea what they meant." See Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination*, 47-48.

[25] Jaap Kunst, *Music in Java: Its History, Its Theory and Its Technique*, ed. Ernst L. Heins, 3rd ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 1:74.

[26] Lu-Ting Ho, "On Chinese Scales and National Modes," trans. Kuo-huang Han, *Asian Music* 14, no. 1 (1982): 133.

[27] Lajos Vargyas, *Folk Music of the Hungarians*, trans. Judit Pokoly and Lucy Hunyár, ed. Katalin Paksa and Márta Bajcsay Rudas (Budapest: Akadémiai Kidadó, 2005), 40-41, 101-2.

[28] Elizabeth Wichmann, *Listening to Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 244-46.

[29] In his performing manuscript, Ligeti has crossed out the bottles from his instrumentation list, suggesting that they weren't employed in the final production.

[30] In 1951, he also arranged vocal excerpts from *Spring Flower* under the title *Music for a Chinese Puppet Theater* (*Zene egy kínai bábjátékhoz*), also considered lost. See Friedemann Sallis, *An Introduction to the Early Works of György Ligeti* (Cologne: Studio, 1996), 281-82, 286.

[31] Zoltán Kodály, "Music in the Kindergarten," trans. Lili Halápy and Fred Macnicol, in *The Selected Writings of Zoltán Kodály*, ed. Ferenc Bónis (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1974), 147.

[32] Zoltán Kodály, "Pentatonic Music," trans. Lili Halápy and Fred Macnicol, in *The Selected Writings of Zoltán Kodály*, ed. Ferenc Bónis (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1974), 221.

[33] Zoltán Kodály, "Hungarian Music Education," trans. Lili Halápy and Fred Macnicol, in *The Selected Writings of Zoltán Kodály*, ed. Ferenc Bónis (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1974), 153.

[34] Ibid., 154.

[35] Zoltán Kodály, "A Hundred Year Plan," trans. Lili Halápy and Fred Macnicol, in *The Selected Writings of Zoltán Kodály*, ed. Ferenc Bónis (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1974), 162; Zoltán Kodály, "The Pentatonic Scale in Hungarian Folk Music," in *The Selected Writings of Zoltán Kodály*, ed. Ferenc Bónis (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1974), 20.

[36] Zoltán Kodály, *Folk Music of Hungary*, trans. Ronald Tempest, Cynthia Jolly, Laurence Picken, and Gyula Gulyás, ed. Lajos Vargyas (New York: Da Capo Press, 1987), 60-61.

[37] Ibid., 25-26, 55, 98.

[38] Ibid., 61.

[39] Ibid., 72.

[40] Ligeti, *Träumen Sie in Farbe?*, 201.

41 Béla Bartók, "Harvard Lectures," in *Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 371.

42 Béla Bartók, "Race Purity in Music," in *Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 31-32.

43 Ildikó Mándi-Fazekas and Tiborc Fazekas, "Magicians of Sound: Seeking Ligeti's Inspiration in the Poetry of Sándor Weöres," in *György Ligeti: Of Foreign Lands and Strange Sounds*, ed. Louise Duchesneau and Wolfgang Marx (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 53-68.

44 György Ligeti, "'Everything Is Chance': György Ligeti in Conversation with John Tusa, 28 October 1997," transcribed and annotated by Joseph Cadagin, in *"I Don't Belong Anywhere": György Ligeti at 100*, ed. Wolfgang Marx (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 260.

45 György Ligeti, "An Interview with György Ligeti in Hamburg," interview by Stephen Satory, *Canadian University Music Review* 10, vol. 1 (1990): 109-10.

46 György Ligeti, "A Conversation with György Ligeti," interview by Tünde Szitha, *Hungarian Music Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1992): 15.

47 G#3, A3, E4, and Bb4 are missing.

48 In another, earlier sketch for "Kínai templom," Ligeti uses a range of symbols (circles, squares, plus signs, long dashes, and short vertical/horizontal tallies) to keep track of pitches. Note names are listed in chromatic order in this sketch, rather than divided into two diatonic collections.

49 Emery George, "Sándor Weöres: Cosmic Poet (1913-1989)," *Cross Currents* 9 (1990): 283. See also Susanna Fahlström, *Form and Philosophy in Sándor Weöres' Poetry* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1999), 41-42.

50 Sándor Weöres, *Egybegyűjtött műfordítások* (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1976), 1:5-342. See also Zuzana Dudášová, "An Unlikely Meeting of Minds," in *China from Where We Stand: Readings in Comparative Sinology*, ed. Kate Rose (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 132-33.

51 György Ligeti, "György Ligeti on His Works," trans. Louise Duchesneau, in *György Ligeti: The Ligeti Project*, Teldec 2564 69673-5, 2008, 14.

52 The Teldec liner notes feature abysmal German, English, and French translations of "Kínai templom" (none by Ligeti) that clumsily attempt to preserve the monosyllabism of the original. For far more accurate and elegant renderings into English, see George, "Sándor Weöres: Cosmic Poet," 295; Mándi-Fazekas and Fazekas, "Magicians of Sound," 65.

53 Amy Bauer, "Singing Wolves and Dreaming Apples: The Cosmopolitan Imagination in Ligeti's Weöres Songs," *Ars Lyrica* 21 (2012): 30.

54 Frederik Knop, *Retrospektiven: Die Inszenierung von Tradition in den letzten Kompositionen György Ligetis* (Mainz: Schott, 2017), 191.

55 The published score incorrectly labels the marimbas as "Marimbaphones," which is a mistranslation. In German, *Marimbaphon* refers to a standard

marimba; in English, a marimbaphone is a defunct metal marimba produced in the early 20th century by the instrumental manufacturer J.C. Deagan, Inc. Ligeti's fair-copy score correctly refers to these instruments as marimbas.

56 Bauer, "The Other of the Exotic," 337-72.

57 The Hungarian verb for "to roll" is *gurít* or *gurul*. The word *guriguri*, with or without a hyphen, can also refer to a curtain runner.

58 See Frederik Knop's more extensive analysis of this movement in Knop, *Retrospektiven*, 204-11.

59 Horng-Yi Lee, "Linguistic Politeness in the Chinese Language and Culture," *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 10, no. 1 (Jan. 2020): 6.

60 Sándor Weöres, *Egybegyűjtött írások* (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1975) 2:521-22.

61 Bauer, "Singing Wolves and Dreaming Apples," 29; Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination*, 360.

62 Ligeti, "Everything is Chance," 266. See also Bauer, *Ligeti's Laments*.

63 Florian Scheding, "Where Is the Holocaust in All This?: György Ligeti and the Dialectics of Life and Work," in *Dislocated Memories: Jews, Music, and Postwar German Culture*, ed. Tina Frühauf and Lily E. Hirsch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 213.

64 Ibid., 212.

65 Florian Scheding, *Musical Journeys: Performing Migration in Twentieth-Century Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), 115.

66 Ligeti, "Everything is Chance," 266.

67 György Ligeti, "György Ligeti in Conversation with Péter Várnai," trans. Gabor J. Schabert, in *György Ligeti in Conversation* (London: Eulenburg Books, 1983), 21.

68 Ibid., 25.

69 Charles Wilson, "György Ligeti and the Rhetoric of Autonomy," *Twentieth-Century Music* 1, no. 1 (2004): 5-28.

70 György Ligeti, "Mein Judentum," in *György Ligeti: Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Monika Lichtenfeld (Mainz: Schott, 2007), 2:25.

71 Ligeti, *Träumen Sie in Farbe?*, 51-52.

72 Ibid., 54.

73 Ligeti, "Mein Judentum," 28.

74 György Ligeti, *György Ligeti Edition 6: Keyboard Works*, trans. David Feurzeig and Annelies McVoy, Sony Classical SK 62307, 1997, 12.

75 György Ligeti, "György Ligeti: 'The cogs have to mesh, exactly'," interview by John Tusa, in *On Creativity: Interviews Exploring the Process* (London: Methuen, 2003), 189.

76 Ligeti, "György Ligeti in Conversation with Péter Várnai," 21.

77 György Ligeti, "Gespräch mit György Ligeti," interview by Monika Lichtenfeld, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 145, no. 1 (Jan. 1984): 10.

78 Rachel Beckles Willson, *Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music During the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 188-92; Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination*, 337.

79 Zoltán Rácz, "'Az embert megérinti az univerzális tudás': Rácz Zoltán Ligeti Györgyről," interview by Zoltán Farkas, *Muzsika* 49, no. 10 (Oct. 2006): 30.

80 Richard Steinitz, "The Innate Melodist," in *György Ligeti's Cultural Identities*, ed. Amy Bauer and Márton Kerékfy (London: Routledge, 2018), 64.

81 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xix, 251-58.

82 Ligeti, "György Ligeti on His Works," 14.

83 Ligeti, "A Conversation with György Ligeti," 14.

84 In the score, the German phrase "Birmanische Gongs" is erroneously translated into English as "Birmanian Gongs." These instruments can also be referred to as "Thai gongs."

85 William P. Malm, *Traditional Japanese Music and Musical Instruments* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2000), 249; Peter Fletcher, *World Musics in Context: A Comprehensive Survey of the World's Major Musical Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 313-14.

86 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 252.

87 Ibid.

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