

## Hungarian Radio

István Láng

(1933\*)



Born in Budapest, Láng studied composition there from 1950 to 1958 at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music, first with János Viski and later with. After graduating, he worked as a freelance composer until 1966. From 1966 to 1984 he was Musical Adviser to the State Puppet Theatre, and in 1973 he joined the staff of the chamber music branch of the Liszt Academy. He also held guest lectureships at the University of Colorado in 1973, CNM in Mexico City in 1987, and the University of New Mexico in 1988. He served as Secretary General of the Association of Hungarian Musicians from 1978–90, was a member of the Executive Committees of the International Society for Contemporary Music and the International Music Council (UNESCO) in 1984–87 and 1989–93, respectively 2003. He has twice been awarded the Erkel Prize (in 1968 and 1975), was made Artist of Merit in 1985, and has won the Bartók-Pásztory Prize in 1994.

In his early mature works, Láng adopted the serial techniques that had become fashionable in the early 1960s, showing the influence of Boulez and Schoenberg, but still managing a clever and effective synthesis of these styles with traditional Hungarian elements derived from Bartók in all areas: melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture—a synthesis perhaps best demonstrated in his *Variations and Allegro* (1965), which is an arrangement of an earlier symphony. His music from this period is marked by an absorption with the theatre, even in chamber and solo instrumental works, such as *Monodia* for clarinet, which is intended for stage or concert performance. Other important works from the sixties are the first two Wind Quintets (1963 and 1966), a ballet on Thomas Mann's *Mario and the Magician* (1962), and a Chamber Cantata to words by Attila József (1962). Another feature of Láng's style is the use of cyclic form, and his later music tends to consist of sequences of short movements constructed from small motifs, which he calls "micro-organisms". These traits are found, for example, in his Second Wind Quintet of 1966 and Third String Quartet of 1978. The movements in such works are often linked by improvisatory solo interludes, as in the Second String Quartet of 1966.

Although Láng also worked briefly with electronic music as early as 1974 (*Surface Metamorphoses*), he turned seriously to this medium beginning only in the late 1990s, for example *Esteledés* (Nightfall, 1997), which uses live electronics to manipulate sounds of a trumpet and Korean bell. More recent works with electronics are the *Capriccio metronomico* for tape (2001), and the Third Chamber Cantata, "No Man Is an Island", to words of John Donne (2001), for soprano, five instruments, and tape.

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### **Close Connections (17:29)**

The *Close Connections* of István Láng was composed between September 2012 and 2013, in one year. The composer decorates string and brass orchestra by some percussion instruments, but among those applies gladly such less often used instruments as, for instance, a flexatone. Regarding its form the composition follows the principle of non-standard variations. After the first and second variation the third one is none other than the double of the second variation (decorated repetition, variation), the fourth one is the double of the first variation, then comes the fifth variation, after which the sixth is the double to fifth, finally the Epilogue tolls out the piece. The tempos: Con slancio - Con triste - Poco inquieto - Vivo, in ritmato - Lento - Lento assai - Tranquillo.

There are significant solos accentuated in each instrument group, often in chamber music assembly. While each item has its autonomy, fragmentary memories of the heard also reappear. The items are in close relation to each other - hence the title. An exception is the Epilogue, in which the harp - till now voiceless - enters with a series of new musical ideas, though in the course of items we recognize a couple of movements from heretofore. The final moment is resolved by a quite simple-sounding ensemble of the suddenly appeared vibraphone and the harp, leaving the composition open.

The world premiere was on May 5, 2015 at the Hungarian Radio.



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