

international contemporary ensemble

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Workshop with pianos, notation, and György Kurtág's *Játékok* (Games) Ages 9-11 (4th and 5th grades)

Description: This is a workshop which encourages musical collaboration through the reading and writing of non-traditional notation, as laid out in the Hungarian composer György Kurtág's *Játékok* pieces for piano, his opus for young pianists. All the workshop requires is a piano—it does not even need to be a grand piano. Kurtág's notation indicates notes to be played with palms, forearms, and as glissandos—dragging the hand all the way up and down the keyboard. Learning the notation can be fun for students with and without background in reading music, and can make sense to anyone. After hearing and playing for themselves a sample of different kinds of pieces in the *Játékok*, students will compose their own pieces using the same kind of notation.

Objectives:

- To introduce Kurtág's musical style and his experimental approach to the piano
- To encourage experimental ways of playing on the piano keyboard
- To use the experience to immediately produce an original composed work
- To encourage collaboration among classmates

Handouts:

Basic Elements (*Játékok*, Book 1)

Exercises (Book 1)

The Bunny and the Fox (Book 1)

Music paper

Workshop structure:

- Discussion of treble and bass clefs, only in terms of high and low
- Looking at the *Játékok* pieces, starting to decipher symbols, figuring out how it might be played
- Explanation of notational symbols
- Playing "Basic Elements" at all dynamic levels —teacher, then students one by one
- Brief introduction to Kurtág, his national background, and his music. Explanation of why *Játékok* was important for him, and how he worked with young people
- "The Bunny and the Fox": Explanation of how the different techniques of playing can be descriptive of a story
- Use of pedal as expressive means in these pieces
- Composition. Approximately fifteen – twenty minutes to compose a short collaborative piece for two students using one or more of Kurtág's notation symbols. Students compose together and write down their piece. Performances by all students.