

The Playground Ensemble

Concert in the memory of the late composer György Ligeti, including a performance of the *Poème Symphonique for 100 Metronomes*.....

All in Time

Susan Froyd

My prime Ligeti experience was at Ojai, California, where, after a drunken night camping under a full moon among the matilija poppies, I sat on a green lawn listening to a chamber orchestra play, washed away by a tide of the Hungarian composer's spacey, shifting harmonics. The sky was robin's-egg blue, and the air was perfectly still; it was as if a thousand cicadas had landed in that valley, all vibrating furiously in unison...and yet *not*. If you've ever seen and heard the opening overture to *2001: A Space Odyssey* stoned (who hasn't?), you might have an inkling of how it felt. Whoa!



Because György Ligeti, creator of those mind-fucking sound masses so favored by 2001 director Stanley Kubrick, died earlier this year, Denver's avant-garde **Playground Ensemble** is performing two full concerts of his works. "Ligeti's music might be more listenable or accessible than that of his contemporaries," says ensemble member Conrad Kehn, adding that the composer's works stand out because they don't follow the inevitable — and eventually tiresome — rules of atonality and other modern styles.

Perhaps the most interesting piece being presented is ***Poème Symphonique for 100 Metronomes***, for which a battalion of swing-arm metronomes are simultaneously set to different speeds and allowed to tick-tock away until they peter out. In order to pull the piece off, the ensemble put out a call for metronomes, and they expect to have between forty and fifty timekeepers on stage, which is good, considering the backlash they've received from some more traditional types. "Some said, 'Oh, I'd rather listen to garbage cans,'" Kehn notes.

But the show must go on: The ensemble members will explore all the facets of Ligeti's unique sound, which he dubbed "micropolyphony," today at noon at the Newman Center for the Performing Arts, 2344 East Iliff Avenue, and tonight at 7:30 p.m. at Bethany Lutheran Church, 4500 East Hampden Avenue. Admission to the noon show is free; tickets are \$5 to \$10 in the evening. Visit <http://www.experimentalplayground.org/> for details. And if you have a metronome to loan, contact Kehn at tepe@du.edu. Thu., Sept. 21, noon, free, 303-871-6412. **Newman Center for the Performing Arts**, 2344 E. Iliff Ave., Denver, 303-871-7720, <http://www.du.edu/newmancenter>.