

A Bridge Between Heaven and Earth

The output is a string quartet, commissioned by the Hungarian Unitarian Church to commemorate the 450th anniversary of the Edict of Torda in 1568, marking the foundation of the church. The quartet was premiered at the opening ceremony of the 'year of religious freedom', a description recognised by the Hungarian and Romanian governments and the European Parliament. The church commissioned two artworks, a sculpture by Liviu Mocan, and this quartet.

The work attempts a reconciliation of the role of the string quartet in classical music as declaration of an *art poetica* - an individual statement of technique and aesthetic, and its purpose as commemorative piece referring to the historical anniversary of the declaration of religious freedom.

It uses a variety of techniques to attempt this:

- a) reference and quotation - themes referring to Liszt (via a 12-note, augmented harmony theme, similar to the Faust symphony's main theme), and John Ireland (a composer with Unitarian connections)
- b) Coded names - in this Renaissance technique, the various forms of the name of leading reformer Dávid Ferenc or Franz David Hertel, are encoded into musical themes (see score, opening movements I and III)
- c) Historical counterpoint - court lutenist to Prince János Zsigmond in 1568 was Bakfark Bálint; his Krakow lute book provides the model for the passage in movement IV, 92-106. Bartók, who was a Unitarian, is the model for much of the rest, e.g. I, 123-140.
- d) A hymn as linking theme - this new hymn based on Dávid's name, is intended to familiarise audiences unused to contemporary music.

The quartet was premiered by the Concordia String Quartet in front of an invited audience of around 400 in Kolozsvár/ Cluj, Romania. It was widely featured in Hungarian media, and also described in an article for *The Senses and Society*.