

*to Gillian Whitehead*

David Lumsdaine

# Kali Dances

Hocket 1

Chorus 1

Hocket 2

1st Strophe: Nocturne (piano and flute solos)

Hocket 3

Chorus 2

Antiphons: Aubade (Wind, brass & vibraphone solos)

2nd Strophe part 1 (Piano solo)

Chorus 3

2nd Strophe part 2

Instrumentation:

Flute (piccolo)  
Oboe  
Clarinet in B flat (Clarinet in E flat)  
Trumpet  
Tuba  
Vibraphone  
Piano  
Violin  
Viola  
Cello  
Double Bass

Duration ca 17'

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KALI—the female personification of time. KALI—an extreme embodiment of the creative and destructive aspects of our nature. KALI—a vortex of energy: benign, beautiful, cruel, grotesque.

The music is in a single movement, broken into a number of sections, the main parts being the two strophes and the central antiphons. Perhaps the hockets are Kali's garlands; the choruses, invocations; and the solos in the Antiphons, the songs of Kali's birds.

The character of the music grows out of extreme polarities; oppositions which mate, dissolve and reform. It demands both an individual and an ensemble virtuosity from the musicians. Players need the greatest metrical precision at high speed, as well as the ability to float apparently unconcerned by anything that's going on around them.

About the rhythmic interpretation:

Some of the music has to be played very precisely, and the rhythmic shaping is essentially determined by the metre. Each player must have a strong sense of the pulse and the larger rhythmic groupings. This applies to the hockets, choruses, and the two choirs in the second strophe.

Elsewhere, the barlines are no more than guides to synchronisation. This applies to all the solos, including the groups of solos—flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet and vibraphone—in the Antiphons. The irrational groupings serve as guides to a fluid rubato within each individual line, rather than any strict division of the pulse. (This is quite different to the metric use of triplets in Hocket 1 and Strophe 2.)

At several points, such as towards the end of each Strophe, the solos move closer to a rhythmic co-ordination with one another, or with the choirs. These points will become obvious in rehearsal.

There is an essential ambiguity about the role of the tuba in the Antiphons; at the beginning, it clearly belongs with the string choir, but in the course of the section, it has a tendency to drift away as a solo.

Generally, there is no sense of goal orientation in this music. The overall shape will become apparent if each section, each phrase, is played as though it were the first or the last in the piece. This is the only way to make sense of the solos in the Antiphons. They are mostly marked forte, and are to be projected like the songs of individual birds in a dawn chorus.