

**A SNEAK PEEK INTO LIGETI'S MAILBOX:
"IL ME FERA GRAND PLAISIR D'ÉCRIRE UN QUATUOR À
CORDES POUR LES ARDITTI. MAIS QUAND? ..." ^{1, 2}**

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SUMMARY: Ligeti's manuscripts at the Sacher archive in Basle continue to provide new insights into the composer's life and career, elements which are meant to complement the general knowledge about this fascinating musician. The verbal sketches of two more String Quartets (Nos. 3 and 4) challenge the researcher to step into the intricate maze of Ligeti's creative mind. Meant for two famous ensembles, the Arditti and Kronos, respectively, the sketches of the two uncompleted pieces span almost two decades, from mid-1980s until the year 2000. Remaining an unrealised dream, along with other works, such as the operas *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Tempest* and the orchestra piece *Labyrinth*, the String Quartets Nos.3 and 4 represent a window into Ligeti's laboratory, allowing us to glimpse, through fragmentary clues, the author's secret ingredients, ideas and creative mechanisms.

Keywords: Ligeti, String Quartet, Manuscript, Sacher Foundation, Arditti, Kronos, John Zorn

György Ligeti's published string quartets (including here his early piece *Andante and Allegretto*) convey a very accurate image of his compositional development over the years, mirroring the stages of his mastery across two decades (the 1950s and the 1960s). They retrace in miniature the broad

¹ Letter from Ligeti to Joséphine Markovits, February 20, 1989, from Hamburg; Arditti Collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation, Basle.

² Portions of this article appeared in Bianca Țiplea Temeș, "Tracking Down Ligeti's Unfinished Third and Fourth String Quartets", no. 25/2012, in *Mitteilungen der Paul Sacher Stiftung*, Ed. Schwabe AG, Basel/Muttenz, pp. 49-54 and "Ligeti's String Quartet Music: From the Published Works to the New Discoveries at the Paul Sacher Foundation", in *IFCC 2012. Proceedings of the 2012, 13th International Conference on Acoustics and Music: Theory & Applications (AMTA '12)*, ASME Press, New York, pp. 183-188.

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stylistic metamorphosis of his oeuvre and provoke new questions regarding the fact that such a prolific composer could write very few pieces for string quartet during his long career.

The manuscripts preserved at the Paul Sacher Foundation have proved to be a revelation in terms of Ligeti's earlier attempts and his continuing interest in writing string quartet music after the 1970s.

As the composer's rich notebooks at the Sacher archive confirm, the idea of writing more string quartets after his No. 2 evolved in his mind from the 1980s to the year 2000, a period during which he also planned several other unfinished works (*Labyrinth* for orchestra, *The Tempest* for the BBC, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*) and published some of his most noteworthy pieces (*Trio for Horn*, *Three Fantasies after Friedrich Hölderlin*, *Magyar Étüdüök*, *Violin and Piano*, *Études pour piano*, *Hamburgisches Konzert*, *Piano Concerto*, *Violin Concerto*, *Sonata for Solo Viola* etc.).

Even though the String Quartets Nos. 3 and 4 will forever remain among the musical "unknowns" of his last compositional phase, the composer's notes offer important and even intriguing clues in terms of style. The idea of writing the two pieces was probably triggered by the interest that both musicians and audience expressed in favour of having more string quartets by Ligeti. A letter sent in the early 80s to Irvine Arditti (member of the famous ensemble) by a certain Dr. Vanek from Geneva, and then forwarded by Irvine Arditti to Ligeti, supports this hypothesis:

Un concert Ligeti I + II + (un 3e quatuor de Ligeti n'est-il pas en chantier pour vous? Que diriez-vous alors d'une création mondiale?)⁴

In fact, a 3rd String Quartet was indeed in the making for the ensemble Arditti and a 4th, for the no less famous, Kronos, even if the idea has been left only in verbal description form:

⁴ Letter from Prof. Vanek to Irvine Arditti, March 15, 1981. Ligeti collection, Paul Sacher Foundation.

Ligeti's verbal sketches of the String Quartets Nos. 3 and 4

III. VONÓSNÉGYES: → Ardi: Str. Q

IV. VONÓSNÉGYES: → Kronos

mindkettőben elhangolásuk így:

♯ picc ~ 14 cent ♯ 30% ~ 31 cent ♯ nyugodtan
 10-20% (7 felhang) ~ 45 cent
 (5. felhang)

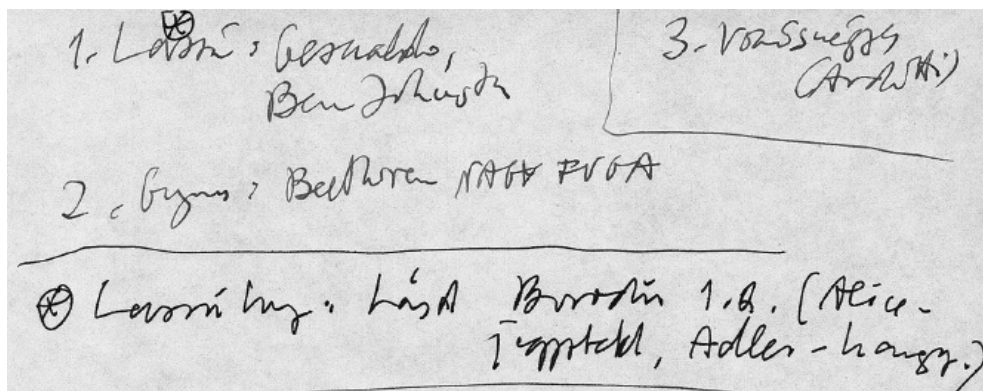
13., 14., 15. felhang → callé G-ly 5. felhang (a-bis) (M. felhang.)
 Calhounia VLA, Vn. II elhangtalan → Vn. II C. felhang
 Vn. I elhangtalan → Vn. I C. felhang

<p>III - Str. Q.</p>	<p>IV - Str. Q</p>
<p>egy hangján belülben sok epizód: ataca igen csapongó, megle- pettő szerű: talán ez a hat típus</p>	<p>kető térdelben</p>
<p>LASSÚ TÍPUSOK:</p> <p>① felt korál</p> <p>② fluktuáló afrik. labirintus rácsoknál, Otajá</p> <p>③ hangzás (s. poltróni) experimentumok lebegésnél</p>	<p>1. LASSÚ fluktuáló, beme- dallam - labirintus, afrik. rácsok, Otajá</p>
<p>GYORS TÍPUSOK:</p> <p>① Aven... John... Str. Q - avian... Str. Q - p... (Cameron) ...</p>	<p>2. GYORS Burma, Cameron, Konsooc, Trüffelilm</p>

Even in words, the new unwritten String Quartets, which would have been completely innovative, both in terms of music substance and structure, display the same features as the titles of the same decades, namely those of a wide stylistic fusion between different cultures and historical times. Just as Ligeti's String Quartet No. 1 echoes pieces like *Musica Ricercata* and *Sechs Bagatellen für Bläserquintett*, clearly pointing towards the music of Bartók but also Sándor Veress, and String Quartet No. 2 matches stylistically with works of the same period, such as *Kammerkonzert* (in the fast movements) or *Lux aeterna* (in the slow movement), the verbal sketches of the String Quartets Nos. 3 and 4 exhibit the new stylistic concept of the author between the 1980's and 2000. In his most recent notes kept at the Paul Sacher Foundation⁵, recovered from the artist's piano in Vienna right after his death (notes where Ligeti was still using the Hungarian language after so many years spent in Austria and Germany), the researcher can pick up the following musical ingredients: the composer collected ideas from Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge* (String Quartet op. 130), Borodin's String Quartet No. 1, Janáček's String Quartet No. 2,

Ex. 2

Ligeti's verbal sketches of the String Quartet No. 3



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the African polyrhythms that he employed intensively in his *Études pour piano*, musical elements from Burma, Cameroon, Hungary, Romania (for example

⁵ *Skizzenbuch (um 1995)*, Ligeti collection, Paul Sacher Foundation.

*Hora lungă*⁶, a folk song from Maramureş brilliantly used in his *Viola Sonata*), providing references about the acoustic effects required ("pizzicato movement = Madagascar zithers"⁷ or "Romanian folk string instruments"⁸, "uneven tremolo, in a different vibrato speed"⁹) and about the language ("ultra chromatic", "spectral", "complex polyrhythm")¹⁰, aiming for an extraordinary musical crossover. References to the music of the past are numerous and span from Perotin and Gesualdo to Schubert's G major String Quartet. But browsing the past during his mature years was not intended to restore outdated compositional methods; rather it was supposed to lay the foundations of the new techniques and musical substance he had in mind.

The rhythmic combinations on his sketch pages, the notes concerning microintervallic, untempered intonation, as well as the words "free heterophony", all these place the two uncompleted pieces into a very distinct creative universe.

The novelty of the musical language, the crossed references woven together in a rich counterpoint of sources remind us very much of Ligeti's *Études pour piano*. This complex combination of elements seems to be an important feature of the composer's music from the 80s, therefore, Denys Bouliane's description of the aforementioned piano pieces in anatomical terms could very well define the new, unfinished String Quartets, Nos. 3 and 4:

"Ligeti develops a new musical living organism through various brain cell transplant, blood transfusion and skin graft applied to creatures provided with an amalgam of cultural experiences."¹¹

⁶ It is widely acknowledged the impact of this type of Romanian folk music in Bartók, as well as the role Bartók played in discovering, transcribing and then employing *Hora lungă* from Maramureş in his oeuvre.

⁷ Original, in Hungarian: "Pizz. tétel = Madagascar Cythères".

⁸ "Román népi vonósok".

⁹ "Lebegések visznek hangmagasság-fluktuációkhoz".

¹⁰ "Ultrakromatikus", "spectral", "complex poliritm").

¹¹ Denys Bouliane: „Imaginäre Bewegung. György Ligeti's 'Études pour piano'“, in *Musik Texte*, Köln, no. 28/29, 1989, p. 84. German, original: „Ligeti entwickelt einen neuen, lebensfähigen musikalischen Organismus durch zahlreiche Gehimzellentransplantationen, Bluttransfusionen und Hauptverpflanzungen an Lebewesen, indem er kulturelle Verweise zusammenschmiltz.“

Ligeti's verbal sketches of the String Quartet No. 3

1. Lovoni: Bernardo,
Ben Johnston

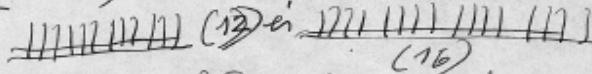
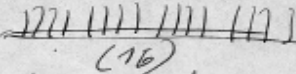
2. Gyon: Beethoven, MATH PROA

3. Vozsuegys
(Arduki)

⊗ Lovoni: Lisa Burstin 1.8. (Alice-
Tippelt, Adler-hangy.)


JO METODAS:


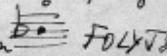
EGY tetel, folytatás, Perotin-vezetmény
Afiny. (János stb.) két óra alatt

egyszerű  (12) ei  (16)

alca Erzs. angol nyelvű János-é:

15 = 3x5 = 8+7, 14 = 7+7 = 8+6 = 9+5
 13 = 7+6, 12 = 3x4 = 7+5, 11 = 6+5
 10 = 2x5 = 6+4, 9 = 3x3 = 5+4
 8 = 2x4 = 5+3, 7 = 4+3, 6 = 2x3 = 4+2
 5 = 3+2, 4 = 2x2, 3 = 3 (legnagyobb modell)

keszlet egy hang:  h, kép két-foldig,
 "elhangosít" ↑ h, h, ↓ h = lebegés

Rit. miköz METODAS - a 4 hangon MAD DRYM
 utolsó j. hang, azaz minden ugyan van,
 de a hang elvétel (f. v. a. d.) után. Absztrak-
 elvétel "híres" EZZE SOROSOK (heterofon), amely
 minden egyes részben külön van. Vissza
 SOROSOK HETEROFONIAI, megadott megadott - hirtelen
 TOVA BB: c kékhez c j. a, 25. hang, cello f. hang.
 cello 17. hang  FOLK

Ideas imported from the composers of previous times would have provided Ligeti with a fertile conceptual framework over which he would have added the novelty of music imbued with extra-European elements and charged with new meanings. Much richer in references than the String Quartet No. 4, String Quartet No. 3 opens up new perspectives about Ligeti's manner of continually reinventing himself as a composer. Commissioned by the prestigious *Festival d'Automne à Paris*, the piece passed through various stages of design. First, it was to be written in one part ("one long movement with many episodes")¹², recalling the form of *Métamorphoses nocturnes*, then it evolved into different forms, as a piece of six or of three movements, specifying also the duration of each one (12' + 3' + 6' = 21'). The musical language was also clearly outlined in words: "entirely microtonal"¹³, "microtonal flageolets"¹⁴, "it disintegrates through the hyperchromaticism typical for Gesualdo"¹⁵, completed with detailed information regarding each instrument on which string to play. Descriptions combining visual and acoustic elements of different music fragments are utterly relevant:

"Gradually it evolves higher and higher (maybe the cello stays in a low register, on the C string, as a *BORDUN*), the others disappear, irritated in the high register through high flageolets, like a lost plane"¹⁶.

In all these features, Ligeti identifies a broad array of musical influences from all over the world, stringing together, as his words prove it, rhythmic and melodic ideas from Burma, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Java-Bali, Cameroon etc. Moreover, he crosses the frontier of the music art by integrating into his verbal sketches references from the fine arts: "In Escher's *Metamorphosis footsteps*"¹⁷, "*Pinturas negras*" a reference to Goya's series of paintings, "*Alhambra ornaments*"¹⁸ (which also inspired Escher), all these articulating the image of a complex personality of 20th century culture and poignantly leaving unanswered for posterity the question of what String Quartets Nos. 3 and 4 could have sounded like.

¹² "Egy hosszú tételben sok epizód".

¹³ "Egész Mikrotonális".

¹⁴ "Üveghang mikrotonális".

¹⁵ "Gesualdo szerűen hiperkromatikusan széthúzódik".

¹⁶ "Fokozatosan elmozdul mind magasságra (esetleg Vc lent marad C-húron, mint BORDUN), a többiek üveghangokban magas szövetekben, irritálva eltűnnek a magasban, mint egy elveszett repülőgép".

¹⁷ "Metamorfózisok Escher nyomán".

¹⁸ "Alhambra ornamentika".

Ligeti's verbal plans for his new String Quartets prove that the pieces would have been fully innovative, both in music substance and structure; at the top of one manuscript page dedicated to the String Quartets Nos. 3 and 4 (*Skizzenbuch, um 1995*), Ligeti writes the Hungarian title "Radikálisan új" ("Radically new").

In fact, the sketches are completely in keeping with the words of the Romanian composer Ștefan Niculescu, which I discovered in a letter at the Sacher archives, in 2011; writing to Ligeti in March 1993¹⁹, he accurately described his late composition style, after receiving a recent CD of the Transylvanian-born composer, released in the early 90s. It is the period of time during which Ligeti was sketching his String Quartets Nos. 3 and 4, therefore Niculescu's words also apply to the aforementioned pieces of Ligeti's artistic laboratory:

"I find here a completely new and paradoxical world, come as from eternity. A miracle of certain archetypes which you discovered inside yourself, but which can also be found, under totally different shapes, in the great traditional cultures of the world. Eternal, therefore timeless archetypes, and yet so significant - I would say 'redeeming' - for specifying and guiding today's *Zeitgeist*. I sense here, among other things, the seed of a new universal grammar or, as you put it, of a new 'tonality' which, I believe, has in your case planetary features".

Allowing us all to attempt his musical puzzle, by imagining the possible sonorous result, Ligeti ignited in us the interest to discover why he indefinitely postponed these plans. His mail box provides the answer.

Trying to reconstruct the facts, we relied on the letters he exchanged with some important personalities of the international musical scene. Here follow, chronologically ordered, some of the hints. In a letter dating back to November 1985²⁰, Ligeti explains to Andrew Rosner (one of the agents at the Allied Artists, in London) about why he had to postpone his plans:

¹⁹ Letter from the composer Ștefan Niculescu, March 24, 1993, Ligeti collection, Paul Sacher Foundation. Romanian, original: "Găsesc aici o lume absolut nouă și, paradoxal, venită parcă din eternitate. Un miracol al unor arhetipuri, pe care le-ați descoperit în Dvs., dar care pot fi întâlnite, sub cu totul alte forme, și în marile culturi tradiționale ale lumii, arhetipuri eterne, deci fără timp, și totuși atât de semnificative - aș spune de salvatoare - pentru precizarea și orientarea Zeitgeist-ului de astăzi. Eu simt aici, printre altele, germenii unei noi gramatici universale sau, cum spuneți Dvs., ai unei noi 'tonalități', care, cred, are la Dvs. caracteristici planetare".

²⁰ Letter from Ligeti to Andrew Rosner, sent on November 23, 1985, from Hamburg; Arditti Collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation.

Dear Andrew,

/.../ I do want to write a third quartet and dedicate it to the Ardittis. My plans for that were too abstract a while ago but since the several wonderful Arditti concerts of a year ago, I have many new ideas, which I definitely want to write down. However, I would not even be able to think about it before the 90s because, as you know, I am already behind schedule with the piano concerto, the opera, etc. So please give the Ardittis my very best regards and tell them that we can plan the quartet more concretely in a few years when my other projects are well along the way (or finished). /.../

Not only had he to finish the Piano Concerto and the opera *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, but he also spent time promoting other composers' music. Instead of writing his new "No. 3", he warmly recommends to Irvine Arditti the string quartet of his student Hans-Peter Reutter²¹:

Dear Irvine,

You know that I never promote my music nor that of others. If I make an exception this time by sending you this enclosed score from Hans-Peter Reutter /.../, it is because he is an extremely nice man and one of my most gifted students. Please look at the score when you can.²²

In 1989, neither of the new quartets had taken shape in notes, even though the verbal sketches had become richer and more specific in indicating the composer's clear intentions. In the meantime his music was widely performed all over the world, and here is the letter of Josephine Markovits²³ (one of the key figures in organising the *Autumn Festival* in Paris) to confirm this fact from the French capital. While she was outlining to Ligeti the pieces which were about to be performed in Paris, she also challenged the composer, in the same letter, to write a new string quartet:

²¹ Established composer and comedian, Hans-Petter Reuter was also teacher in Hamburg (until 2005) and nowadays at Robert Schumann Hochschule, in Düsseldorf.

²² Letter from Ligeti to Irvine Arditti, sent on January 27, 1987, from Hamburg; Arditti Collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation.

²³ Letter from Joséphine Markovits to Ligeti, sent on January 26, 1989, from Paris; Arditti Collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation.

Cher Monsieur Ligeti,

/.../

Nous avons cette année trois concerts qui vous concernent:
le 27 septembre à l'opéra comique, les Madrigaux avec les King's Singers

les 23, 25, 27 octobre, des concerts de 45 minutes, à l'heure du déjeuner dans le foyer du Châtelet, avec Pierre-Laurent Aimard et Irina Kataieva. Au programme les Huits Études, Mouvements..., Pierre-Laurent me dit qu'il jouera aussi une oeuvre très courte (environ 4 minutes) de vos débuts.

le 23 octobre, à l'Opéra Comique, Ensemble Intercontemporaine, direction Peter Eötvös: concerto pour piano (intégral) (au même concert: Höller et Gielen)

Voilà pour le 1989. Nous espérons que vous pourrez venir à Paris et organiserons bien sûr votre voyage et votre séjour, selon vos souhaits.

Le Festival d'Automne 1990 sera pour une large part, consacré à la Hongrie, avec des productions théâtrales, musicales et le cinéma. C'est dans ce cycle que s'inscrit le concert de l'orchestre de Paris dirigé par Semyon Bychkov, avec votre oeuvre pour Monsieur Gawriloff²⁴, en novembre. (au même programme sans doute la *Sinfonia* de Luciano Berio). /.../

Le Festival d'Automne est très heureux de vous demander d'écrire un quatuor à cordes, pour le Quatuor d'Irvine Arditti. J'avais verbalement assuré Irvine d'une part et Madame Duscheneau²⁵ d'autre part de notre engagement dans ce projet. /.../

Pensez-vous avoir le temps d'écrire ce quatuor en 1990, afin qu'il soit joué à l'automne? Je sais que votre calendrier est très chargé et vous assure que nous saurons attendre. /.../

²⁴ The piece in question is Ligeti's Violin Concerto, dedicated to Saschko Gawriloff.

²⁵ Ligeti's secretary.

Despite the generous fee offered to Ligeti by the *Autumn Festival* in Paris²⁶, the composer did not disrupt his priorities, which at that time were dominated by the completion of his Violin Concerto. Always looking for outstanding performances for his own pieces, he preferred to listen to the pianist who was preparing to play his new Concerto in Paris:

Chère Madame Markovits,

/.../

En effet, mes visites à Paris se font rares. J'espère bien toutefois venir en octobre sinon pour le concert du 23, du moins pour entendre le duo Aimard - Kataieva. Vous savez que malheureusement j'ai un concert à Londres aussi le 23 octobre.

Indépendamment de ces répétitions à Paris, j'aimerais beaucoup pouvoir entendre le pianiste qui jouera le Concerto, et cela si possible vers la fin de l'été ou durant le mois de septembre. Pourriez-vous m'envoyer son nom, son adresse et son numéro de téléphone que je puisse le contacter moi-même? Grand merci.

/.../

Il me fera grand plaisir d'écrire un quatuor à cordes pour les Arditti. Mais quand?... De toute façon, comme Louise Duchesneau vous a dit, je ne peux rien promettre à ce moment-ci (c'est-à-dire je veux bien écrire un quatuor pour les Arditti mais je ne peux pas vous donner une date précise, ni même une année). Je peux toute fois promettre de vous donner un avis deux ans avant afin que vous puissiez mettre l'oeuvre au programme d'une certaine année.²⁷ /.../

Ligeti's schedule was just as full in the late 90s as it had been ten years before, and so the time for the new quartets and for the new opera had not yet come. One can read more of the demands on Ligeti's time during these years in the messages of his assistant Louise Duscheneau for Irvine Arditti²⁸:

²⁶ The same letter mentions the fee of 150.000 French Francs for the commission.

²⁷ Letter from Ligeti to Joséphine Markovits, February 20, 1989, from Hamburg; Arditti Collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation.

²⁸ Letter from Louise Duscheneau to Irvine Arditti, February 16, 1998, from Hamburg; Arditti Collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation.

Dear Irvine

/.../

An hour with the maestro? Oh, Irvine, only you know how difficult that is to find. I'll ask when he's back (he's still in Paris for a few days) and will let you know as soon as possible.

/.../

I'll remind him about your quartet. Nicholas Payne, the new E.N.O.²⁹ director, was in Paris for the premiere, a reminder of *Alice*, so I can tell you that he's rather nervous about all these reminders. He hopes to live so long (so do we...)

/.../

Less than a month later, Ligeti addresses a letter³⁰ to Irvine Arditti, using his abbreviated familiar name to sign the letter at the end - "Gyuri"³¹. It confirms that he was determined to write the String Quartet No. 3 for the ensemble, emphasizing an exceptional artistic relationship with the members of the Quartet over a long period of time:

Dear Irvine,

Through the new string quartet which I will write for you, I hope to express my gratitude for our collaboration of many years. As you know, I worked several times with many different quartets, but I never enjoyed such a harmonious relationship as with you, Rohan and the other sometimes changing members. Everybody knows that yours is the absolute best string quartet for modern music and I am, as everyone else is, also totally overwhelmed both by the quality and the breadth of your repertoire. For this achievement I see two reasons, the first being your enthusiasm for the identification with the works you play and the second simply continuous very hard work. I am very proud of your two excellent recordings of both my quartets on WERGO and SONY Classical. And, believe me, I am looking as much forward to writing the third one as you are to playing it.

²⁹ Abreviation for English National Opera.

³⁰ Letter from Ligeti to Irvine Arditti, March 13, 1998, from Hamburg; Arditti Collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation.

³¹ Letter from Ligeti to Irvine Arditti, March 13, 1998, from Hamburg; Arditti Collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation.

Once again, a letter³² of Louise Duchesneau for Claire Sykes³³ proves how tight Ligeti's daily schedule was during that period (a time when he was still teaching in Hamburg, as well as composing the *Études pour piano*, Books II and III, and the *Viola Sonata*.) She writes:

/.../ Mr. Ligeti dictated this letter in the train (which is where we do a lot of the necessary office work, airports and planes are also good) between Hanover and Hamburg to save a bit of time.

/.../

Blending together a broad spectrum of folk music, from Africa, Eastern Europe, Java or stirring into the same musical 'pot' references to the music of other composers, such as Janáček, Murail, Alkan, Beethoven, Schubert, Gesualdo etc., had been a common practice for Ligeti in the 90s. Moreover, it reminds us of his "gastronomic" metaphor regarding his own musical style³⁴. Yet, Ligeti succeeds in surprising us again: in one of his manuscript pages³⁵, sketching ideas for a fast movement of his String Quartet No.3, he marks:

Gyors típusók (Fast types):

1) *Aventures*, John Zorn *Str. Q.*, *Trükkfilm*

In his unending quest to renew his style, Ligeti always made sure his musical knowledge was up to date, and often asked his students about the music they were listening to. In his sketches he referred to John Zorn's String Quartet *Cat O'Nine Tails*³⁶, released in 1988, commissioned and premiered by Kronos. This confirms once again his curious mind and his desire to absorb fresh influences, even when he was over 70. Although it may first come as a surprise, it turns out that one can easily draw a parallel between Ligeti and Zorn: they both blended together different musical styles (in Zorn's case jazz, classical music, rock, punk, metal or cartoon music)

³² Letter from Louise Duscheneau to Claire Sykes, March 13, 1998, from Hamburg; Arditti Collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation.

³³ Claire Sykes is today the author of various articles on Ligeti, see for instance "Fortes, Fractals, and Finger-Busters", in *Piano & Keyboard*, No. 196/1999, pp. 30-34.

³⁴ "You take a piece of *foie gras*, you drop it on the carpet and you trample it until it disappears - that's how I utilize the history of music /.../: *Ligeti in Conversation*, Eulenbuybooks, London, 1983, p. 119 (in conversation with Claude Samuel, 1981, translated from the French by Terence Kilmartin).

³⁵ *Skizzenbuch braun*, Ligeti Collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation.

³⁶ *Cat O'Nine Tails* is the name of a kind of whip formerly used in the British Navy.

and they are both unique, artistically speaking³⁷. One can only admire Ligeti's extreme open-mindedness until his last creative days. A certain artistic similarity between the two musicians seems to be detected also by the violinist Jennifer Koh, who commissioned John Zorn a cadenza for Ligeti's Violin Concerto. Performed by Jennifer Koh on November 12, 2005 at Miller Theater at Columbia University in New York, John Zorn's contribution to Ligeti's score has been characterized as a "short but electrifyingly virtuosic *candeza*"³⁸.

Ligeti's mailbox reveals that time pursued him like a "Cat O'Nine Tails" in the 90s and during the first years of the new century, denying us our chance of enjoying Ligeti's String Quartets Nos. 3 and 4. What we have as compensation are some wonderful recordings of the first two string quartets.

At the very bottom of the mailbox, one undated letter signed by Irvine Arditti still awaits opening³⁹; it should be regarded as a touching *coda* to the beautiful artistic relationship that existed between the composer and some of his best performers:

I first met György Ligeti in 1968 at the summer music courses in Darmstadt, Germany. He was very kind and encouraging to a young violinist interested in contemporary music. In 1976 he accepted the more or less unknown *Arditti* quartet to perform both his quartets in an important London concert. Whilst working with him for this concert, I got to know this fascinating man. His feeling for music, his boundless energy and limitless imagination inspired us to perform with the great enthusiasm for which we have become known. This encounter put the young Arditti on the map in the world of contemporary music, both for Ligeti's music and for many other collaborations with composers of our time.

Now after hundreds of performances of his music, I look back with great affection for those early days. /.../

Irvine Arditti

³⁷ The similarity goes even further: while Ligeti is the author of *Le Grand Macabre*, Zorn composed *Le Grand Guignol*.

³⁸ Alan Kozinn: "The Prankster as Omnivore", in *The New York Times*/14.XI.2005.

³⁹ Undated letter written by Irvine Arditti (probably in the early 90s). Arditti Collection at the Paul Sacher Fondation.

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