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## Experimental Music in Hungary: The New Music Studio

*In 1980 I spent five months in Budapest under the auspices of the Anglo-Hungarian Cultural Exchange Programme. Although I was there chiefly to study the music of György Kurtág I talked to a number of other composers, including the members of the New Music Studio in whose work I am especially interested, and I was able to have several extended interviews with Zoltán Jeney. I also attended most of the concerts given by the Studio during my stay. A concert of László Vidovszky's music will take place at the ICA in London on 25 July at 8.00 p.m. as part of the series Musica 1982; three works mentioned in this article will be included in the programme (Kettős, Autokonzert, and Schroeder halála) and the performers will be Zoltán Kocsis, Gusztave Fenyő, and Vidovszky himself.*

The mention of an experimental music group thriving in Hungary, especially one influenced by American experimental composers (not all Hungarian composers sound like Bartók!), generally occasions surprise in the UK. Conditions in Hungary are not widely reported by the British media; it is, after all, a small country which has not produced any newsworthy disasters since 1956. Nevertheless, the steady pattern of social and economic reform that has taken place since the Revolution of 1956 has brought about a degree of personal freedom which is probably unmatched elsewhere in the Eastern Block. Musicians in particular seem to be free to compose and perform in a wide variety of styles from the 'Kodályesque' to the 'Kagelesque'.

The first group of experimental composers to have been founded in Hungary was the New Music Studio (Új Zenei Stúdió) or, to give it its full title, New Music Studio of the Central Artists' Ensemble of the Young Communist League (KISZ Központi Művészegettes Új Zenei Stúdiója: the Hungarians seem to delight in long titles!); it is still undoubtedly the most important. The fact that it was not established until 1970 is evidence of the amount of catching up Hungarian composers had to do after the repressive Stalinist régime of the early fifties. The Second Viennese School and Boulez became influential again (or for the first time) in Hungary, but these influences were quickly assimilated, and by the end of the sixties many of the younger generation of Hungarian composers were looking for new means of expression. It was in this atmosphere of search that the New Music Studio was set up by three composers: László Sály (b. 1940), Zoltán Jeney (b. 1943), and László Vidovszky (b. 1944); they were later joined by the musicologist András Wilhelm, and composers Barnabás Dukay, Gyula Csapó, Zsolt Serei, and György Kurtág jnr, and on occasion by Zoltán Kocsis and Péter Eötvös. All the Studio members are performers as well, and Wilhelm acts to some extent as a spokesman. He writes of the group's foundation:

The New Music Studio, formed in 1970, owes its existence to the recognition that contemporary composition cannot be [separated from practical music making, that composition equals research, that new possibilities are opened up to the composer if he is able to take part in the composition's realisation. For almost three years the New Music Studio held closed workshops (with improvisation and continuous co-operation with interested instrumentalists) in which they began to explore the simplest basic musical materials.]<sup>1</sup>

Wilhelm does not elucidate further upon these 'basic musical materials', but one may assume that the group was engaged in examining each musical parameter (pitch, rhythm, etc.) individually. This is not surprising since such experiments had been going on elsewhere, but works by composers like Cage, Reich, and Riley were not well known in Hungary at that time, so the New Music Studio was apparently working in some isolation. In 1972 some of the members had the opportunity to find out more about developments that were taking place outside Hungary: 'Some of the group were greatly helped by a study-tour to Darmstadt in 1972 where they became better acquainted with patterns which had up to then been indigestible and unacceptable to Hungarian ears.'<sup>2</sup> The important point is, according to the group, that they were not slavishly imitating such patterns, but rather their development was running parallel to that of composers working elsewhere. There have been and still are external influences, however. Surely the permutations in Reich's *Clapping Music* (1972) have influenced some of Jeney's permutation compositions such as *Impfo 102/6* and *Arupa*?<sup>3</sup> The compositions and writings of Cage have also proved an inspiration. Wilhelm writes: 'A clean sheet for new music was created by the intellectual and creative work of John Cage, in whose writings it was first stated that time, or duration, provides the most general yardstick in music. Pre-eminent temporal dimension of construction is most clearly shown in Cage's compositions.'<sup>4</sup>

On the whole the group has not formulated its aims in writing. Its approach is not obviously political, and this is scarcely surprising in view of the conditions during the early fifties in Hungary, where interference by politicians in the arts proved so damaging. This is not to say that the group has been without its troubles. During the early days it had its critics, who tried to claim that what was coming out of the Studio was not music at all. But it says something for improvements in artistic freedom in Hungary that the group survived and is now an accepted part of musical life there. Not only is there no group manifesto, there are also few written statements about their music by the individual composers; even programme notes are rarely provided at concerts in Hungary (especially at concerts of new music).

The group does have certain clear aims, however. Since it is part of the Young Communist League its role is principally educational. Not only have its members sought to unite composition with practical music making, but they have also endeavoured to train instrumentalists to play the more experimental types of music, since such training is lacking elsewhere. They have their own ensemble of instrumentalists drawn chiefly from students at the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. Their

<sup>1</sup> From Wilhelm's sleeve notes to the recording of works by Sály on Hungaroton SLPX 12060. Hungaroton recordings give parallel Hungarian and English texts for sleeve notes, and here and elsewhere I quote from the English texts, giving editorial alterations to the translations in square brackets.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> All titles of works are given in the original language; Hungarian titles have been provided with English translations.

<sup>4</sup> From Wilhelm's sleeve notes to the recording of works by Jeney on Hungaroton SLPX 12059.

own compositions range from pieces that require relatively little instrumental technique to those that make considerable demands on the players: they are far from being anti-virtuoso. It is significant that they train musicians not only to play their own works but also to play those of experimental and other avant-garde composers from abroad. Because the forint is not a convertible currency it is difficult for the state concert-giving organisation to afford visiting performers, especially from the West, and the Studio has made an important contribution by putting on its own performances of works by Cage, Reich, Riley, Wolff, Boulez, Xenakis, and many others. On occasion the Studio has invited artists from abroad to its annual concert series in Budapest and Steve Reich and Frederic Rzewski have been guests. Its didactic role—the introduction of a wide range of contemporary music to the public and the provision of ensembles capable of playing such works—is therefore of the highest importance. Apart from the annual series of concerts (usually four) in Budapest, other concerts are given by the group in the capital and the provinces. Although it has its own rehearsal room in the headquarters of the Young Communist League in Budapest, these are its only premises and its concerts are given in a wide variety of venues.

Before going on to discuss individual composers in the group, I should mention that they have created a number of collective compositions. These are not the results of joint improvisation sessions, nor yet compositions written together, but rather are amalgamations of different elements produced by members of the Studio working independently of each other, usually having decided only the length and instrumentation of the piece beforehand. I know only two such compositions: *Two Players* (1977) by Dukay and Sály for flute and cello, and *Hommage a Kurtág* (1975) by Sály, Jeney, Vidovszky, Kocsis, and Eötvös. I have had a chance to listen closely to *Two Players* since it was released on István Matuz's record *The New Flute*, but I have not seen a score of it.<sup>5</sup> Dukay contributed the cello part, a quasi-Baroque bass consisting largely of diatonic scales, broken up into short phrases but nevertheless keeping up a steady, relentless pulse. Above this, Sály's flute part provides a contrast of generally slower-moving flute chords of three or four parts in untempered intonation. These chords are formed from upper partials whose sounding is made possible by new fingerings and carefully controlled breath pressure. István Matuz, who has played an important role in discovering many of these chords, can sound up to eight notes simultaneously. The succession of chords in *Two Players* is broken up into phrases which are separated by pauses and which begin after a while to take on the quality of a distorted Bach chorale, an effect that is reinforced by the Baroque character of the cello part. The piece is thus a reasonably successful example of the genre 'separate—joint' composition since the two parts complement each other well when they are put together.

I have heard *Hommage a Kurtág* only once (there is no commercial recording available), so I can give no more than my first impressions here. The sound is a curious jumble, an effect no doubt intended since the work is partly a musical recreation of the collages of puns (especially the musical ones) that occur throughout Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Why *Finnegans Wake*? Because at the time the work was conceived Kurtág had been enthusiastically reading Joyce's book and that gave the group the idea for the material of their homage. Why *Hommage a Kurtág*? Because Kurtág is generally regarded as the leading composer in Hungary today. He was the first to establish a successful personal style after

the restrictions of the Stalinist era, and he proved to Hungarian composers that it was possible to assert one's own personality over the dominating influence of Bartók. He is held in great esteem by the Studio, and he, in turn, takes a great interest in its work and can be seen regularly at its Academy concerts.

In *Hommage a Kurtág* Kocsis provided a part for three string instruments and two prepared pianos, and Jeney one for tam-tam, bass drum, and electric guitar. Jeney's material is derived from folk-songs, in the middle of which is a montage of tape recordings, some at normal speed and others speeded up; this forms the climax of the piece and comes nearest to mirroring Joyce's technique of accumulating puns. Vidovszky's contribution is a repeated melody for organ, while Eötvös's is a separate composition for flute, cor anglais, and harmonium. Sály's part, for mallet instruments, uses five note-heads on a circular stave which is rotated to give new pitches. The spacing of the ensembles is important to the effect of the whole work, but I was unable to appreciate this since I heard only a mono tape recording. All the composers had fixed in advance was the length of the piece and the instrumentation of the various parts. The idea of inserting a fairly random coincidence of individual parts into a predetermined time-span seems somewhat Cageian, but the members of the Studio claim that, because of the similarity of their thinking and their common experiences over many years of music making together, they can write coherent joint compositions when they are apart. I cannot really vouch for this view since *Hommage a Kurtág* is perhaps not meant to be very coherent, and *Two Players* works well precisely because it is based on contrast.

Of the works by individual members of the Studio, I shall concentrate on those by the senior members Sály, Jeney, and Vidovszky, since I have been unable to become sufficiently acquainted with the music of Dukay, Csapó, and Serei. The earliest work by Sály that I have heard, *Catacoustics* (1967) for two pianos, seems to be written in a post-serial manner with many abrupt changes of rhythm, register, and timbre. Sály's later concern with sounds in their own right is foreshadowed in the skilful combination of conventional piano technique and special effects produced by plucking the strings and hitting the case; these sounds are musically well integrated and not employed simply for their own sake. The development of Sály's style at this stage can be traced in the series of works called *Sonanti*. *Sonanti no. 1* (1969) for harpsichord is in much the same vein as *Catacoustics*: no guidance is given as to choice of registration though changes of dynamic are indicated and no unusual effects are called for. In *Sonanti no. 3* (1970) for cimbalom many of the instrument's tone-colours are exploited: a great range of sounds is achieved through the use of different beaters, plucking the strings with the fingernails, and varying degrees of pedalling; harmonics bring the work to a close.

From 1970 onwards, with the formation of the New Music Studio, a gradual simplification is noticeable in Sály's style. *Incanto* (1970) for five voices, to Sándor Weöres's poem *Fuga*, shows this further development. Its two elements are a slowly changing cluster, reminiscent perhaps of Ligeti's 'static' music, contrasted throughout by loud, rapid interjections, whose theatricality recalls Ligeti's 'gesticulating' style (I am not necessarily implying an influence here, but merely using Ligeti as a well-known comparison). This theatricality is carried into the orchestral piece *Immaginario no. 1* (1970), and the contrast between slow, almost static sections and rapid interjections is taken even further in *Psalmus* (1972) for soprano and any melodic instrument; here the soprano has passages of monotones which are interrupted by increasingly longer passages of melodic and rhythmic variety.

It is with *Sounds for...* (1972) that Sály's new concentration on sounds in their own right first emerges

<sup>5</sup> A list of published and recorded works by Sály, Jeney, and Vidovszky may be found at the end of this article.

clearly. It is the earliest of his works to use what could be called minimalist techniques. The preface to the score contains Cageian sentiments:

Each sound is a 'personality' of individual value, being neither subordinate nor superior to other sounds. Even a single sound may represent the performance, provided all its possibilities have been exhausted. The performers may begin playing independently of each other and at any point in the piece. Play the notes always anew, and always differently. Perform each note in the largest number of ways possible... Try to establish a completely new kind of context of note, time and intensity. Each performer is a soloist, he is not dependent on the other players.

Pitches and registers are fixed, since the piece is based on an all-interval chord (events 1-34) and its inversion (events 35-55), see Example 1, but all other parameters, including instrumentation, are left to the performer(s). *Sounds for Cimbalom* and *Sounds for Piano* (both 1972) would appear to be based on a similar

Example 1 László Sály, *Sounds for ...*, events 1-4 and 35-8



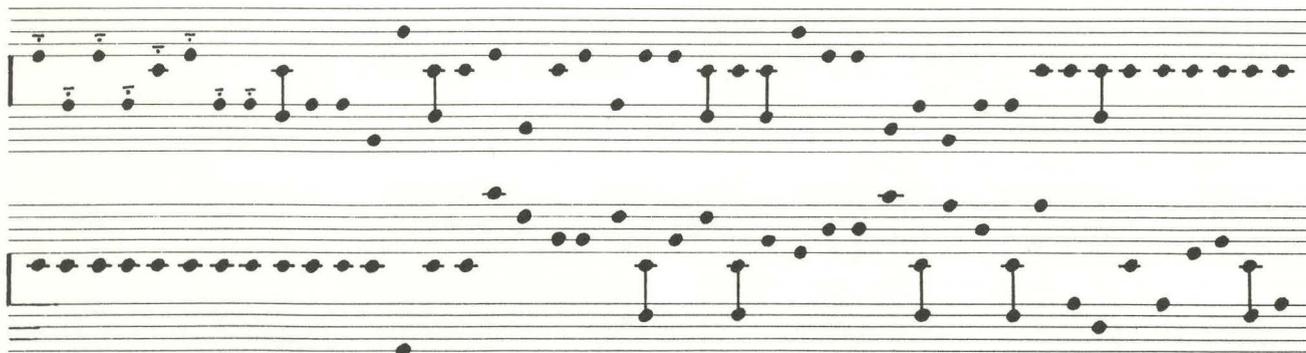
Example 2 László Sály, *Cseppre-csepp*, bars 1-4



\*For any four instruments of the same genre

Example 3 László Sály, *One by One*, opening

♩ = 300



organisational principle, but their pitch content is different from that of *Sounds for ...* to judge by the published score of that work. Inadequate sleeve notes accompanying the records and the absence of published scores make it difficult to deduce just what connection (if any) exists between *Sounds for ...* and these two works. *Sounds for Cimbalom* is a fascinating piece in which the strings of the cimbalom are prepared and amplified to sound like Eastern gongs. *Sounds for Piano* is less successful: here the piano notes are ring-modulated, which results in a fuzzy sound rather like distortion on a poor recording.

Sály usually defines the pitch content and register of his works. Pulse and/or individual note-values are prescribed too. Dynamic levels are usually held constant, but the virtuoso piano piece *Collage* (1974) is an interesting departure from this norm: each event is assigned a different dynamic value from *pppp* to *ffff*. There is usually no sense of climax in Sály's works because no sound is 'subordinate' or 'superior' to another.

Many of Sály's later pieces are based on small groups of pitches and rhythms which are constantly varied. The groups are usually small enough to allow the listener to perceive the compositional idea, although there is rarely any question of gradual permutational change such as Jeneý uses extensively. Where the basic pulse is rapid, these works have a great rhythmic vitality and are immediately attractive. In *Cseppre-csepp* (Drop by drop; 1974), for any four instruments of similar timbre, the rhythm is pointed by instruments dropping out for one or two beats in a kind of hoquet effect (Example 2). *One by One* (1975) for solo piano or harpsichord has a predominantly single-line texture in which accents are created by the sounding of simultaneous fourths or fifths (Example 3). The rhythmic interest in *Kotyogó kő egy korsóban* (Pebble rattling in a pot; 1978), for prepared piano or percussion, is achieved by the use of a greater variety of

Example 4



note-values as well as hocket. It uses only seven pitches (Example 4) in ever changing order. *Ötfokú gyakorlat* (Pentatonic study; ?1979), for prepared piano and xylophone, seems to be based on similar principles. The title *Ötfokú gyakorlat* is well known to Hungarian musicians from Kodály's pentatonic studies of the same name, which are used in music teaching. However, Sály here ironically bases his piece not on any pentatonic scale found in Hungarian folk music (which is what the title leads us to expect) but rather uses an unorthodox pentatonic group (or pentachord) formed from the pitches C sharp, D, F sharp, G, and B, which is more reminiscent of gamelan music. Hence the work is both a verbal and musical 'pun' upon the pentatonic idea.

Elsewhere in this issue (see my review of the 1981 Music of our Time) I discuss one of Sály's most recent works, *Socrates utolsó tanácsa* (Socrates' last teaching; 1980). The attractive *Variációk 14 hang fölött* (Variations on 14 pitches; 1975) for soprano and piano is somewhat in the same style. These two works provide a contrast in their slower pulse and more tentative mood to the rhythmically animated works. *Variációk 14 hang fölött* is a more successful piece than *Socrates utolsó tanácsa* in that its texture is more varied and therefore it holds the attention better. In the opening section the soprano sings the 14 pitches in a linear disposition, then the piano plays them in a chordal texture, and finally soprano and piano combine, arranging the pitches into 'melody' and 'accompaniment'. The soprano sings a text which is itself permuted during the piece.

Not all Sály's compositions are based on this idea of continuous reordering of material. In *Csigajáték* (Snail play; 1973), for six or more players, there are six parts which all have the same pitches and keep the same basic pulse. However, the note-values get proportionally shorter in each part. The proportions are based on a simple Fibonacci series which conforms to the proportions of the structure of a snail's shell. This rule of natural growth, which is exhibited not only in snail shells but also in certain plant formations, is something with which Bartók was preoccupied and which has, therefore, influenced many later Hungarian composers. Gradually in *Csigajáték* each part stops playing until only the slowest-moving is left. On the record the piece is performed on three pianos. This turns out to be an unhappy choice of instrument since the piano has too uninteresting a tone to sustain a slow, monophonic solo for long. Bowed strings might have sufficient character to maintain interest and this is an experiment that Sály would perhaps be well advised to try.

A similar structure is to be found in Sály's *Szimfónia* for keyboard, percussion, or plucked string instruments, given its first performance in 1980. One part begins with a melody which it repeats in ever greater augmentation. The remaining instruments enter one by one with the same melody, treating it in the same way, so

that a canon develops. The basic pulse is quite fast and the resulting rhythmic and melodic complexity creates a euphoric sound. Certainly this work was enthusiastically encored at its première.

I should like to have said more about the diversity of Sály's writing, especially between the 'tonal' and 'dissonant' pieces, but I have been unable to study the more dissonant works such as *Hangnégyzet I and II* (Sound quartets I and II) for any ensemble and *Koan bel canto* (?1979) for piano, harpsichord, or cimbalom.

Zoltán Jeney is undoubtedly the Studio's most prolific composer. Early influences on his music, were, apparently, Dallapiccola, Webern, and Berg,<sup>6</sup> but like Sály his style began to develop along different lines with the foundation of the New Music Studio. One of the first works from this period is *Alef—hommage à Schoenberg* (1972) for orchestra, which takes as its starting-point 'Farben' from Schoenberg's *Five Orchestral Pieces*, op.16. Developing Schoenberg's idea of subtle timbral changes within individual chords, Jeney bases his piece entirely on a single all-interval chord. He uses full orchestra without percussion but with the addition of an electronic organ. The piece is not devoid of rhythmic movement, but this is kept to a minimum so that the listener's attention is drawn to the changes in timbre and dynamic. Jeney has written several more orchestral pieces. *Quemadmodum* (1975) for string orchestra is a quite dissonant composition with a surprisingly Second Viennese School feeling about it. It too is a harmonic, coloristic work, involving contrasts of dynamic and string texture. The textural variety is achieved by contrasts in density rather than by exploitation of any unusual string effects; indeed, save for a brief *fortissimo* outburst of *tremolo*, ordinary bowing is used throughout. *Laude* (1976) for full orchestra is clearly a homage to Mahler. It takes as its basis the Adagio from Mahler's Tenth Symphony, re-distributing the pitches while keeping to the original metrical structure; the result sounds like a collage of fragments from Mahler.

These works represent one side of Jeney's compositional output. Much of the rest is based on permutation of small musical ideas: of pitch, rhythm, or both. One of the first of this type to appear was *Négy hang* (Four pitches; 1972) and it is also one of the simplest. Jeney instructs the performers (between four and eleven) to read the pitches in the treble clef at the given register; as long as these conditions are fulfilled any suitable instruments, with or without electronic modification, can be used. The performers should begin at the same time, but they may begin where they wish (Example 5); they should avoid intentional repeats of the same permutations of notes. As in Sály's *Sounds for . . .*, the players are given discretion in matters of dynamic, duration, and articulation; but, again like Sály, Jeney usually determines pitch and duration.

The permutational works based solely on rhythmic variations are, on the whole, less satisfactory. Some of them suffer from too rigorous a pursuit of an idea that is in itself insufficient to sustain the attention. Inevitably a comparison with Steve Reich is suggested. Reich (*Clapping Music* apart) seems to have the necessary

<sup>6</sup> György Kroó, *La musique hongroise contemporaine* (Budapest: Corvina, 1981), p.285.

Example 5 Zoltán Jeney, *Négy hang*, some of the groupings of the four pitches



judgment to change an idea before it gets tedious. Generally for this type of work he creates small ideas and his choice of instrumentation is attractive so that the interest does not flag. Jeney sometimes falls short in these areas. His less successful works, I feel, are *Arupa* (1981) (see my review of *Music of our Time*) and *Impho 102/6* (1968) for six crotales. *Impho 102/6* (the telex code of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo) gains most of its interest from a changing pattern of standing-waves which the six crotales are tuned especially to create (the tunings are  $c'''$ ,  $d'''$ ,  $f'''$ ,  $f'''$ sharp,  $g'''$ , and  $b'''$ ). Unfortunately the overtones are almost totally lost on the recording, and it would clearly be necessary to hear a live performance to judge the work's true effect, so I am perhaps being harsh in my verdict.

*Százéves átlag* (Hundred years' average; 1977) suffers a similarly unfortunate fate on the same record. This piece consists of slow, rising and falling *glissandi* for bowed strings, sine-wave generator, and ring modulator. What Jeney attempts to present here is a portion of an event that has a duration of 100 years. It is almost as if we are eavesdropping on this untrammelled musical motion, almost as if it had started long before we began listening and will continue long after we stop. In his sleeve notes Wilhelm writes of the 'undisrupted continuity of the glissando... where the exclusiveness of the [smooth motion is not destroyed even by chance resonances which would be acoustically realised as rhythm].'<sup>7</sup> On the record, however, there are quite audible breaks in the supposedly undisturbed movement, which do result in the perception of some kind of rhythm, and so Jeney's attempt is not altogether successful. Unfortunately the recording, for viola, two sine-wave generators, and ring modulator, is aurally far less interesting than Jeney's preferred version for cellos, sine-wave generator, and ring modulator. It is precisely because of chance resonances emanating from the cellos that the latter has more character, but even here the undisrupted, smooth motion tends to pall.

There are more successful permutational works by Jeney. These include the extensive meditational piece entitled *OM* (1979) for two electronic organs of the same type. In this the first organist plays a scale pattern which gradually proceeds through all its permutations. He repeats each new permutation a number of times before passing on to the next. The second organist holds down a chord formed from each new scale pattern. The interest in the piece comes not only from the gradual changes in the scales but also from the way in which they melt into the background of the chords, making 'holes' in the texture. Psychologically these 'holes' seem to cause dynamic variation (a phenomenon well known to composers for instruments with drones). *OM* is a long piece (performances usually last about 50 minutes), and opinions about it vary according to the perceptiveness of the listeners. Jeney told me that some of the audience at the première accused him of repeating the same phrase over and over again; they had failed to notice that the scale patterns were constantly changing! Others found the work extremely hypnotic (this can be a problem for the performers too!).

Perhaps one of Jeney's most successful works is his *To Apollo* (1977), for the very reason that it involves permutation of both rhythmic and melodic ideas. It is scored for unison choir, electronic organ, cor anglais, and twelve crotales (for three players). Jeney has derived 64 different scale patterns from the Dorian mode (minus the seventh degree) and the Ionian mode (minus the third degree), and has built up 28 rhythmic patterns based on Greek rhythms. These scales and rhythms pass through a number of slow permutations. The listener is aware that some sort of gradual change is taking place, but the

<sup>7</sup> Sleeve notes to Hungaroton SLPX 12059.

complexity of the ideas guarantees that he is never quite sure which section of the scale or rhythm will change next. This and the vitality of the rhythms (the basic pulse is quite quick) help to make a highly attractive work.

In 1979 another facet of Jeney's technique emerged with the composition of *Úvegekre és fémekre* (For glass and metal). This is a *musique concrète* piece made up from edited tapes recorded in a glass works and an iron foundry, hence the title. In collecting material for it Jeney recorded those processes that were rhythmically best-defined; he then cut his tapes into 33 'events' which he reassembled without electronic treatment except for altering the tape speeds to give a range over all of five octaves. The results show that *musique concrète* still offers interesting possibilities.

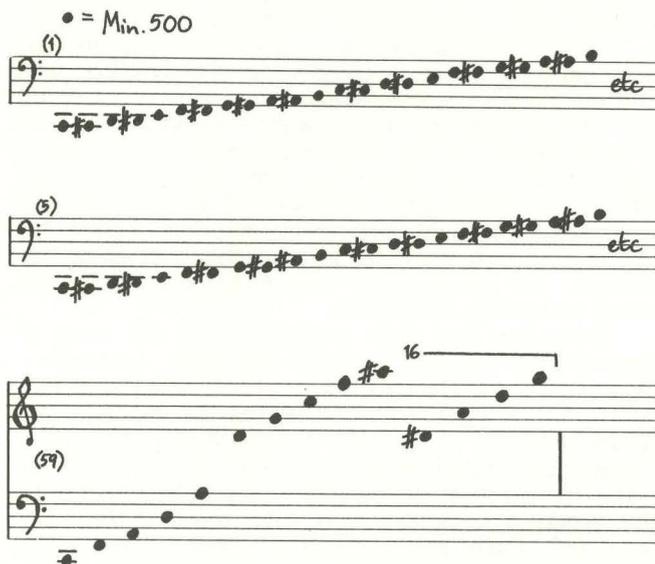
Jeney has also made excursions into the realm of literature; he has two works to his name, *Labrador—Description of a Dream Concert* (1976) and *Les adieux* (1977; neither published), and he has also made a film, *Round* (realised at the Béla Balázs Studio, 1973-5), a visual representation of his composition *Round* (1972) for piano, harpsichord, and harp, or two prepared pianos. In this work, a combination of five tones is variously permuted. Each part consists of twelve pages. The performers must begin simultaneously but each may start at the beginning of any page as long as he follows the order of pages right through to the page preceding that on which he began (for example, 4, 5, 6... 1, 2, 3). Bar-lines are given in the score not to indicate metre but to show time units. One time unit equals MM 96 and can contain up to four separately sounded pitches. The dynamic level is to be held constant throughout and should be as quiet as possible. The effect is of little groups of notes passing rapidly from one instrument to another. Jeney attempts to portray this visually by a speeded up film of pedestrians (who represent the sounded pitches) crossing a large square; superimposed on this scene are several vertical black strips which constantly change width and position, to represent the rests (longer or shorter) in the music. Whereas the constantly changing pitches provide a degree of aural interest, the unchanging view of the square cannot be said to offer equal interest to the eye (the pedestrians are too small to be made out individually!), and the rapid movement of the black strips is most unsettling optically. Undoubtedly *Round* is more successful as a musical composition than as a piece of cinema!

While Sárosy and Jeney have had much of their music published and also have several recordings to their names, László Vidovszky, whom many regard as the Studio's most talented composer, seems to have had an unfair deal at the hands of the music publishers and recording companies. Admittedly his output is small and the visual elements in some of his works (he likes theatrical effects) may militate against their being recorded, but surely we could expect a recording of *Kettős* (Duo; 1969-72) for two prepared pianos, and the more recent *Induló* (March; 1979-80) for orchestra (see my review of *Music of our Time*)? Much of the attraction of *Kettős* comes from the Eastern sounds drawn from the prepared pianos. Passages of block chords are contrasted with passages of broken chords and there is skilful dovetailing between the two instruments. Dynamics and pedalling are prescribed and the only element left to the performers' discretion is the tempo.

The other published work by Vidovszky is *Schroeder halála* (Schroeder's death; ?1975) for piano and three assistants.<sup>8</sup> The solo pianist begins by playing a three-octave chromatic scale ascending and descending. Gradually this scale begins to alter: notes are omitted

<sup>8</sup> It seems likely that the work is inspired by Schroeder, the perpetual pianist of the *Peanuts* cartoon, who is forever playing his toy piano and ignoring the love-lorn Lucy.

Example 6 László Vidovszky, *Schroeder halála*, sections 1 (part), 5 (part), and 59 (the last, complete)



until arpeggios form (Example 6). Perhaps it all sounds as if we have been here before, but 11 minutes and 16 seconds into the piece the assistants begin to 'prepare' the piano's strings (the exact timings and the types of material they use are given in a separate table in the score) until eventually the piano is 'killed off' at the end of 40 minutes. All we hear at the end is the rattling of the keys and hammers (Vidovszky recommends amplification for this). The basic pulse of the scales is quite fast (crotchet = 500) and it requires a pianist with a steady nerve and eye

to follow the score, especially while the strings are being prepared! From the time of the first preparation onwards, different melodies and percussive rhythms emerge as different strings cease sounding.

The presence of three assistants in *Schroeder halála* provides a certain theatrical element. I understand that Vidovszky's *Autokonzert* (1972) also contains a number of visual delights, creating something in the nature of a happening. I have not seen a performance of this work, but Kroó writes: 'At certain moments... objects fall from a rope suspended over the platform upon the instruments and accessories on the ground.'<sup>9</sup>

The only other work by Vidovszky that I have heard is his *Souvenir de J* (1977) which is almost a musical game. It requires a minimum of 64 players but can be for any multiple of eight in excess of 64. Each player is given a pipe of a different pitch (the pitches are specified). Pipe number 1 is the highest and pipe number 64 the lowest. The performers stand in rows thus:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25
etc.							

Players 1, 16, 17, 32, etc. start by blowing their pipes; then each in his own time nods to the person on his left to play the next note so that the sound is passed along the row. This is interrupted at intervals by a signal on a percussion instrument at which point a certain group of players turns round. By the end of the performance all the players have turned, so that the sound moves up and down the rows instead of across as at the beginning. The

<sup>9</sup> Kroó, *La musique hongroise contemporaine*, p.293.

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performance I attended was marred by poor instructions (it was an international gathering, so there were insuperable language difficulties), but it looks as if *Souvenir de J* ought to be immense fun to play and is a nice way of involving the audience (if you are lucky enough to have an audience of 64!)

This last point brings me to a consideration of the success of the group's work. I was told by several people in Hungarian musical life that the Studio had reasonably large audiences at first, but that recently numbers have been dropping off. Perhaps one reason for this is the lack of involvement the audiences at Studio concerts must sometimes feel. The main criticism I have is that the performers too often play with almost funereal

seriousness. I do appreciate that the group has in the past had to convince a public previously unused to experimental music that its work was worthy of serious consideration, but apparent cold detachment on the part of players is unlikely to stimulate enthusiasm in an audience. This is one reason why the visual elements and humour in Vidovszky's music are so refreshing. Nevertheless it says something for the Studio's success in changing public opinion in Hungary that concerts of experimental music there have both instrumentalists to perform in them and audiences to attend them, and it is a measure of that success that the 'patterns' which they play are no longer so 'indigestible and unacceptable to Hungarian ears'.

## WORKS

The works listed here are those by the three composers discussed in detail above which have been published and/or recorded. The scores are published by Editio Musica Budapest and may be obtained in Britain through Boosey & Hawkes. Works that are recorded but not published are marked with an asterisk.

### Zoltán Jeney

- Five Piano Pieces, 1962  
 Soliloquium no.1, flute, 1967; (Hungaroton SLPX 11589)  
 Alef—hommage à Schoenberg, orchestra, 1971-2; (Hungaroton SLPX 11589)  
 Négy hang (Four pitches), 4-11 players, 1972  
 Round, piano, harpsichord, harp, or 2 prepared pianos, 1972; (Hungaroton SLPX 11589)  
 \*Solitude, female chorus, pf, 1973; *Contemporary Hungarian Female Choirs* (Hungaroton SLPX 11764)  
 Végjáték (End-game), piano, 1973; *Zoltán Jeney* (Hungaroton SLPX 12059)  
 Monody Igor Stravinsky in memoriam, 1974, rev. 1977  
 a leaf falls—brackets to e.e. cummings, violin, or viola with contact microphone, prepared piano, 1975  
 Desert Plants, 2 prepared pianos, 1975  
 Orfeusz kertje (Orpheus's garden), 8 instruments, 1975; (Hungaroton SLPX 12059)  
 Quemadmodum, string orchestra, 1975  
 Something Lost, prepared piano, 1975  
 Tropi, 2 trumpets, 1975  
 Impho 102/6, 6 crotales, 1977; (Hungaroton SLPX 12059)  
 Soliloquium no.2, violin, 1977; (Hungaroton SLPX 11589)  
 Százéves átlag (Hundred years' average), strings, sine-wave generator, ring modulator, 1977; (Hungaroton SLPX 12059)  
 To Apollo, unison choir, cor anglais, organ, 12 crotales (3 players), 1977 (score forthcoming); (recording forthcoming)  
 Üvegekre és fémekre (For glass and metal), tape, 1979; (recording forthcoming)

### László Vidovszky

- Kettős (Duo), two prepared pianos, 1969-72  
 Schroeder halála (Schroeder's death), piano, 3 assistants, ?1975

### László Sály

- Variazioni, clarinet, piano, 1966  
 Versetti, organ, percussion, 1966, rev. 1970  
 Catacoustics, 2 pianos, 1967; *Contemporary Hungarian Music* (Hungaroton SLPX 11589)  
 Fluttuazioni, violin, piano, 1968  
 Pezzo concertato, flute, piano, 1968  
 Quartetto, soprano, flute, violin, cimbalom, 1968  
 Sonanti no.2, flute, piano, 1968; *Contemporary Hungarian Percussion Music*, played by Gábor Kósa (Hungaroton SLPX 12065)  
 \*Incanto, 5 saxophones, 1969 (version of the choral piece of the same title)  
 Sonanti no.1, harpsichord, 1969  
 Canzone solenne, orchestra, 1970  
 \*Immaginario no.1, orchestra, 1970; (Hungaroton SLPX 11589)  
 \*Incanto, 5 voices, 1970; (Hungaroton SLPX 11589)  
 Sonanti no.3, cimbalom, 1970; *Contemporary Hungarian Cimbalom Music 2*, played by Márta Fábrián (Hungaroton SLPX 12012)  
 Hommage aux ancêtres, 6 voices, 1971  
 Versetti nuovi, organ, 1971  
 Image, clarinet, cello, piano, 1972  
 Psalmus, voice, any melodic instrument, 1972  
 Sounds for . . . , 1972  
 \*Sounds for Cimbalom, 1972; *Cimbalom Recital*, played by Márta Fábrián (Hungaroton SLPX 11686)  
 \*Sounds for Piano, 1972; *Contemporary Hungarian Music*, played by Ádám Fellegi (Hungaroton SLPX 11692)  
 \*Csigajáték (Snail play), 6 instruments, 1973; *László Sály* (Hungaroton SLPX 12060)  
 Cseppre-csepp (Drop by drop), 4 instruments of similar timbre, 1974  
 \*Variációk 14 hang fölött (Variations on 14 pitches), soprano, piano, 1975; (Hungaroton SLPX 12060)  
 \*Two Players (with Barnabas Dukay), flute, cello, 1977; *The New Flute*, played by István Matuz (Hungaroton SLPX 11920)  
 \*Kotyogó kő egy korsóban (Pebble rattling in a pot), prepared piano or percussion, 1978; (Hungaroton SLPX 12060)  
 Canone per sei esecutori (1979)  
 Diana búcsúja (Diana's farewell), 8 violins, 8 violas (1981)

*I should like to thank Gusztave Fenyő for lending me published scores and manuscripts in connection with this article, László Sály for permission to reproduce Example 3, and Editio Musica Budapest for permission to reproduce Examples 1, 2, 5, and 6.*