On Friday, January 13, 2006 I attended the first of a series of three concerts of music of Hungarian composer György Ligeti, presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York City. The first program had the most sonic variety; the following two concerts featured works for woodwind quintet, string quartet, and piano.

Most of the program was organized around a chronological sequence of works, opening with the tonal Old Hungarian Ballroom Dances, for flute, clarinet and strings. Ligeti wrote the piece in 1949 to appease Soviet authorities, who asked him to write something for public radio that reflected the country’s cultural heritage; the work was a great success. He says, “I became famous for writing a piece that was not my own composition”. Nonetheless, there are hints of irony in this work, which apparently were not noticed by those in power.

The Chamber Concerto for Thirteen Instrumentalists, completed in 1970 reflected a vastly different musical vocabulary, one the composer developed after fleeing Hungary in 1956, moving to Vienna, then working extensively with other modernist composers in Cologne at West German Radio. This piece, in several movements, contained virtuosic writing for all the instruments, creating a delicate balance between soloistic and textured ensemble writing; the use of sonorites of minor seconds and melodies of perpetual motion made for an exciting performance. Conducting the group was Reinbert de Leeuw, director of the Schoenberg Ensemble in Amsterdam and a familiar conductor and pianist in the US.

The showstopper was “Mysteries of the Macabre,” the wild coloratura aria from Ligeti’s opera, Le Grand Macabre (1978), arranged for chamber ensemble and performed brilliantly by soprano Barbara Hannigan. The opera is set in a surrealistic world with themes of mortality and depravity: the end is coming, or perhaps it’s not. The soprano portrayed Gepopo, a male character who is chief of police. Wearing a shiny black wig, a short, tight black leather dress, high boots and a long black leather coat, Hannigan sputtered and sang a series of disconnected sentence fragments, words and sounds, accompanied by a similarly disjointed instrumental texture that was punctuated by occasional verbal outbursts from the ensemble.

Providing a calm antidote to the previous piece’s excesses was the Hamburg Concerto for solo horn and chamber orchestra, completed in 2002. Here Ligeti writes for an ensemble that includes two basset horns and four obbligato natural horns. The contrast between the solo horn, played for the most part on a contemporary instrument, and the four obbligato horns was striking: the natural horns (without valves), all in different keys, created an intonation that defied any known tuning. The result was a sense of unusual color, termed “weird” even by the composer. William Purvis, the soloist, led the group through a series of seven movements, many with contrasting dance rhythms and musical styles.

Completing the program was Ligeti’s classic work, Aventures and Nouvelles Aventures 1 and 2, for three singers and seven instrumentalists (1965). As the composer explains, the piece uses an artificial language that conveys “ritualized human emotions... such as understanding and dissension, dominion and subjection, honesty and deceit,” etc. There is no setting of a text, only particular groupings of sounds. Barbara Hannigan, soprano, Katalin Károlyi, mezzo, and Omar Ebrahim, baritone, performed the vocal parts with drama, humor, and irony.

The audience at Alice Tully Hall responded with tremendous enthusiasm to the entire concert.
CUBE Annual
Spring Festival 2006

Sounding the Sacred II: 
CUBE Looks Up
by Lawrence Axelrod

After an auspicious first collaboration last year with the Lutheran School of Theology, CUBE will present “Sounding the Sacred II.” The concert will be held on Sunday, February 19 at 4 PM at the Lutheran School of Theology, 1100 East 55th St., in Hyde Park. Admission is $15, free for students.

The wide-ranging program features vocal and instrumental music of varied spiritual emphases. Purely instrumental works will have an important role in this concert. Patricia Morehead’s Antiphonal for English horn and bass clarinet based on music of the twelfth century nun-composer, Hildegard von Bingen, and William Ferris’s A Lenten Meditation for solo clarinet will be the shorter offerings, along with Paul Ben Haim’s Three Songs Without Words for oboe and piano.

Pozi Escot’s Jubilation for string quartet will be played by the Tetras String Quartet of the Juilliard School in New York. This work has been hailed as a “rare and wonderful piece” and admired for its “aphoristic density.” The composer, who will attend the concert, resides in Boston and is recognized as a principal exponent of the relationship between music and mathematics.

A more familiar yet non-traditional text-setting of the sacred will be represented by Ralph Shapey’s “O Jerusalem” for soprano and flute. The solo soprano voice will also be featured in Robert Cogan’s “Utterances,” an eight-minute work featuring a multi-language text and extended vocal techniques. Mr. Cogan, a past chair of the Departments of Theoretical Studies and Composition at the New England Conservatory, will be in attendance. The wonderful soprano for these two pieces will be Sharon Quattrin.

Lawrence Axelrod’s song cycle “The Immanence of Angels” presents a more expanded spiritual landscape, pairing texts by James Broughton and Rabindranath Tagore. Jeffrey Strauss, last heard singing new music in the Chicago Chamber Musician’s Composer’s Perspective series last season, will be the baritone.

Facets of CUBE
by Janice Misurrell-Mitchell

Hear CUBE’s exploration of the many sides of American music in its March 12 concert “Facets of CUBE,” at 3 PM at the Merit School of Music, 38 S. Peoria St., two blocks west of Chicago’s Greek-town. The concert will open CUBE’s Spring Festival; ticket prices for Festival concerts are $20/$10.

Works of Pulitzer-Prize-winning composers such as Bernard Rands, George Walker and Joseph Schwantner will be performed along with Chicago composers Ilya Levinson, Elizabeth Start, Patricia Morehead and Edward Ecker.

There will be three world premieres: Sketches of a Summer Night, for the CUBE ensemble by Edward Eicker; Out of the Depths I Cry, for voice, oboe, clarinet, percussion, cello and piano, based on poetry by Ruth Gemicki Bragg, by Ilya Levinson; and Truth, Justice, and... for electric cello, English horn, flute, piano and percussion by Elizabeth Start.

Other compositions featured on the program are Five Fancies for Clarinet and Piano Four Hands by George Walker; Memo 8: For Solo Oboe, by Bernard Rands; Tears for Cassandra for solo cello by Patricia Morehead; and Velocities (Moto Perpetuo) for solo marimba by Joseph Schwantner. Guest artists are Barbara Ann Martin, soprano and Elizabeth Start, cello.

Pianoforte CUBE
by Philip Morehead

CUBE will present pianist Jeffrey Jacobs in a special free concert at Columbia College, 1014 S Michigan Ave, Chicago, on Wednesday, April 5 at 12:30 PM. The program will include works by Patricia Morehead, Chester Biscardi, Ethan Haimo, and George Crumb. A graduate of the Juilliard School and the Peabody Conservatory, Mr. Jacobs is a noted proponent of contemporary music, who has had works written for him by Crumb, Persichetti, Schuller, and many others and has recorded over 50 works for solo piano and piano and orchestra. There will be a post-concert discussion with Jacobs and composer/CUBEist Patricia Morehead.

CUBIST Cornucopia
by Janice Misurrell-Mitchell

The second concert of CUBE’s Spring Festival, “CUBIST Cornucopia,” will be on Friday, April 7 at 7:30 PM at Columbia College Concert Hall, 1014 S. Michigan Avenue. There promises to be wealth of new pieces along with contemporary classics performed by CUBE members and special guests.

Headlining the concert will be a performance of Elliot Carter’s Tempo e Tempi, for soprano, oboe/English horn, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin and cello, performed by mezzo-soprano Julia Bentley. Impressions, for solo flute by Timothy Bowly, will be given its world premiere by CUBE’s Caroline Pittman. Doug Lofstrom, on the faculty of Columbia College, will premiere a new work for flute, oboe and English horn, clarinet, percussion and double bass, featuring members of CUBE and Columbia College. Also featured are Flux, for alto flute and cello by Jason Eckardt, Cornucopia, for solo piano by M. Lewis Spratlan, and Duo for Flute and Piano, by Aaron Copland.

In addition to Ms. Bentley, CUBE is honored to have Rich Copolongo, winds; Grant Strombeck, drums and percussion; Paula Kosower, cello; Doug Lofstrom, double bass.

Live from WFMT 98.7
by Lawrence Axelrod

CUBE’s concert on WFMT will take place on Monday, April 10 at 8 PM Our program features music by Pulitzer-prize winning composers, with pieces that span the many decades since that prize was established. Both well-known and lesser-known composers who have been honored with the Pulitzer Prize
will be featured. Representing the 1940s will be Walter Piston and his *Suite* for oboe and piano. The icon of the "American Sound", Aaron Copland, will represent the 1950s with his *Duo for Flute and Piano*. The 1960s will feature Leon Kirchner’s *Flutings*, for flute and percussion based on music from his opera, *Lily*. Dean of American composers Elliott Carter will represent the 1970s with his *Tempo e Tempi* for soprano, oboe/English horn, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin and cello performed by Chicago favorite, mezzo-soprano Julia Bentley. A solo percussion work, *Reflections on the Nature of Water* by Jacob Druckman, will represent the 1980s. The 1990s will be represented by *Five Fancies for Clarinet and Piano* and *Four Hands* by George Walker. Finally, the first decade of this century will be represented by M. Lewis Spratlan’s solo piano work *Cornucopia*.

Please tune in to hear this varied, unusual and thoroughly American concert program.

**CUBE on the Road**

by Philip Morehead

CUBE packs its bags and travels to Three Oaks, Michigan, to perform in the lovely Acorn Theater (www.acorntheater.com) on Sunday, April 23, at 3 PM. Tickets are $10. The program will include works by Aaron Copland, Robert Lombardo, Olivier Messiaen, Walter Piston, M. Lewis Spratlan, Joseph Schwantner, George Walker, and Giacinto Scelsi.

**New Music Chicago**

by Philip Morehead

New Music Chicago, of which CUBE is a member, will present a free Mother’s Day concert at the Chicago Cultural Center on Sunday, May 14, at 3 PM. CUBE’s contribution will be the world premiere of *Which Way Home?*, a song cycle by New York composer Drew Hemenger on poems of Anne Sexton. The cycle will be sung by soprano Alicia Berneche, who commissioned the work, accompanied by Philip Morehead, piano.

The composer writes: “When I was asked to write a song cycle by the Chicago-based soprano Alicia Berneche on the topic of ‘Women Poets Who Committed Suicide,’ I was a little taken aback. However, when she explained that she was doing a recital on this subject, inspired by an article she had read about the way in which suicidal poets have used language differently from non-suicidal ones, I became interested. At her suggestion, I looked at a few different poets and immediately fell in love with the manic, crazy and utterly brilliant poetry of Anne Sexton. Sexton suffered several breakdowns and attempted suicide several times before finally succeeding in 1974, at the age of forty-six. She went in and out of mental institutions, yet was still able to maintain a family and create a sizable body of work.”

Hemenger’s cycle sets eight poems which “give a glimpse into this woman’s life.” In the cycle, there are crazy and tragic moments as well as happy and awestruck ones.

**American Songbook III**

by Philip Morehead

The output of America’s art song composers is rich indeed, and two superb examples will be presented on CUBE’s American Songbook program on Sunday, May 21 at 3 PM in the Gottlieb Concert Hall, Merit School of Music, 38 S. Peoria St, Chicago. The concert features two former member of Lyric Opera’s acclaimed Center for American Artists, Alicia Berneche and Brian Leehuber. Alicia replaced Dawn Upshaw as Daisy Buchanan in Lyric’s production of The Great Gatsby and has gone on to a distinguished career in opera. Alicia will perform the song cycle *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* by Dominick Argento, which won the composer the Pulitzer Prize in Music for 1975. The composer sets diary entries dating from 1919 to the last entry in 1941.

The program will also feature an exciting new cycle, *I Am Waiting for You to Love Me*, composed for CUBE by Ricky Ian Gordon with a commission made possible by support from the Katherine A. Abelson Fund, the Argosy Foundation. The cycle is a setting of poems by Frank O’Hara, John Ashbery, Guillaume Apollinaire (translated by J.J. Kennedy), Gwendolyn Brooks, Paul Celan, and Donald Justice. The music is scored for baritone, flute/piccolo, flute/alt flute, oboe/English horn/ oboe d’amore, clarinet/bass clarinet, double bass, piano, and percussion. The work will be sung by Brian Leehuber.

The third major work on the program is the world premiere of the Concerto for Piano and Three Instruments by Robert Lombardo. The work is in three movements, each featuring a virtuoso solo section for the piano and interplay with the ensemble, which consists of flute, oboe, and marimba. The piano soloist will be CUBE member Lawrence Axelrod.

**M. William Karlins Memorial Concert**

There will be a concert in memory of M. William Karlins on Tuesday, February 14, at 7:30 PM in Pick Staiger Concert Hall, on the Evanston campus of Northwestern University. Featured will be several pieces by Bill Karlins, including *Academic Festival Fanfare*, *Catena 1 for Little Orchestra with Clarinet Obbligato*, *Quarter No. 2* for saxophone quartet, *Introduction and Passacaglia*, for alto and tenor saxophones, and piano, and one of his last pieces, *Wally’s Caprice*, for solo flute. Performers include the Northwestern Contemporary Music Ensemble; the Chicago Saxophone Quartet; Walifred Kujala, flute; Eric Honour, clarinet; Jan Berry, Bill Street and Paul Bro, saxophone; Elizabeth Buccheri and Terry Spina, piano. For information call (847) 491-5441.

**Chicago Premiere: Nixon in China**

*Nixon in China*, John Adams’ ground-breaking opera on human drama within contemporary politics will receive its Chicago premiere by Chicago Opera Theatre in May. Written in 1987, the opera presents scenes, actual and imagined, of the two primary couples involved—Richard and Pat Nixon and Chairman Mao and his wife, Jiang Qing, and the entourages surrounding them in their 1972 visit.

For more information please see www.chicagooperatheater.org

Published two times a year (Fall and Spring) by CUBE

605 S. Dearborn St. #2016
Chicago, IL 60605
Voice 312/554-1133; Fax 312/803-2186
Email: cube@cubeensemble.com

For CUBE news, information, the CUBE Calendar, forms for ticket purchase, and the CUBE Store, please join CUBE on the Internet at: http://www.cubeensemble.com

CUBE is partially supported by grants from the the gaylord and dorothe donnelly foundation, alpheawood foundation, the elizabeth f. cheney foundation, the nbi foundation, the katherine a. abelson fund, the jengy foundation, and the illinois arts council, a state agency, and by a CityArts Program I Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs.

CUBE Circuits • Winter-Spring 2006
Live from WFMT, Monday, April 10, 8 PM. Works by Pulitzer Prize winning composers: Piston, Copland, Kirchner, Carter, Druckman, Walker and Spratlan.


New Music Chicago, Sunday, May 14, 3:00 PM, Preston Bradley Hall, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., Chicago. Admission free. Performances by member organizations, including CUBE, Fulcrum Point, ICE, MAVerick and Accessible Contemporary Music. CUBE presents soprano Alicia Berneche and pianist Philip Morehead in the world premiere of Which Way Home? by Drew Hemenger. Co-sponsored by the Chicago Cultural Center.