

95693

BRILLIANT
CLASSICS

KANCHELI

LETTERS TO FRIENDS

FOR VIOLIN AND STRING ORCHESTRA

Andrea Cortesi Georgian Strings

Giya Kancheli b. 1935

Letters to Friends *for violin and string orchestra*

1. **Letter to artist Tengiz Mirzashvili** (1934-2008) 3'39
Based on themes from "Hamlet" and "Don Quixote"
Play by William Shakespeare staged by Robert Sturua in 1992 and film by Revaz Chkheidze from 1988
2. **Letter to film director Georgi Danelia** (*1930) 2'02
Based on themes from "Mother Courage And Her Children" and from "Don't Grieve"
Play by Bertolt Brecht directed by Robert Sturua in 1988 and film by Georgi Danelia and Rezo Gabriadze from 1969
3. **Letter to film director Georgi Kalatozishvili** (1929-1984) 2'39
Based on theme from "The Caucasian Chalk Circle"
Play by Bertolt Brecht staged by Robert Sturua in 1975
4. **Letter to composer Sulkhan Nasidze** (1927-1996) 3'30
Based on theme from "Twelfth Night"
Play by William Shakespeare, directed by Robert Sturua in 2001
5. **Letter to sound engineer Mikheil Kilosanidze** (*1936) 2'44
Based on themes from "Bear's Kiss" and "Richard III"
Film by Sergei Bodrov from 2002 and play by William Shakespeare staged by Robert Sturua in 1979
6. **Letter to film director Eldar Shengelaia** (*1933) 2'02
Based on the themes from "Khanuma", "Sior Todero" and "The Blue Mountains"
Play by Avksenti Tsagareli, staged by Robert Sturua in 1968, play by Carlo Goldoni, staged by Robert Sturua in 2002 and film by Eldar Shengelaya and Revaz Cheishvili from 1984
7. **Letter to choreographer Gogi Aleksidze** (1941-2008) 2'17
Based on Theme from Waiting for Godot
Play by Samuel Beckett staged by Robert Sturua in 2002
8. **Letter to artist Koka Ignatov** (1937-2002) 2'35
Based on the slow theme from "Some Interviews on Personal Matters"
Film by Lana Gogoberidze from 1977
9. **Letter to opera director Guram Meliva** (1933-2014) 3'20
Based on music for "As You Like It"
Play by William Shakespeare directed by Robert Sturua in 1978
10. **Letter to composer Nodar Gabunia** (1933-2000) 4'33
Based on the main them from "The Crucible"
Play by Arthur Miller, staged by Robert Sturua in 1965
11. **Letter to musicologist Givi Ordjonikidze** (1929-1984) 2'45
Based on themes from "Cinema" and from "The Role For A Beginner"
Film by Liana Eliava and Levan Chelidze from 1977 and play by Tamaz Chiladze staged by Robert Sturua in 1980
12. **Letter to friend of childhood Gogi Kacharava** (*1937) 1'25
Based on theme from "The Role For A Beginner"
Play by Tamaz Chiladze staged by Robert Sturua in 1980
13. **Letter to impresario Dorian Kitia** (1927-2006) 3'18
Theme from "Sunny Night"
Play by Nodar Dumbadze directed by Robert Sturua in 1966

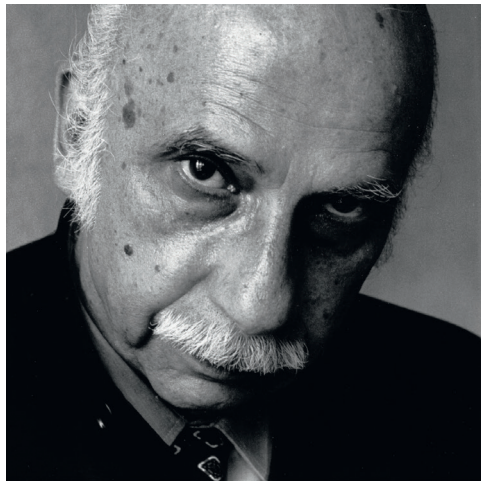
14. **Letter to director Lana Gogoberidze** (*1928) 2'55
Based on the main theme from "When Almonds Blossomed"
Film by Lana Gogoberidze and Zaira Arsenishvili from 1972
15. **Letter to folklorist Anzor Erkomaishvili** (*1940) 2'30
Based on theme from "White Stones"
Film by Revaz Charkhalashvili from 1972
16. **Letter to actor Kakhi Kavsadze** (*1935) 1'45
Based on theme from "The Caucasian Chalk Circle"
Play by Bertolt Brecht staged by Robert Sturua in 1975
17. **Letter to composer Bidzina Kvernadze** (1928-2010) 2'28
Based on theme from "Mimino"
Film by Georgi Danelia and Rezo Gabriadze from 1977
18. **Letter to artist Georgi Alexi-Meskhishvili** (*1941) 1'53
Based on theme from "Twelfth Night"
Play by William Shakespeare, directed by Robert Sturua in 2001
19. **Letter to actor Ramaz Chkhikvadze** (1928-2011) 2'07
Based on theme from "King Lear"
Play by William Shakespeare staged by Robert Sturua in 1987
20. **Letter to conductor Jansug Kakhidze** (1936-2002) 3'10
Based on the slow theme from "Some Interviews on Personal Matters"
Film by Lana Gogoberidze from 1977
21. **Letter to writer, puppeteer and painter Revaz Gabriadze** (*1936) 3'12
Based on main theme from "Kin-dze-dza"
Film by Georgi Danelia and Revaz Gabriadze from 1986
22. **Letter to actor Janri Lolashvili** (*1942) 1'58
Based on theme from "The Caucasian Chalk Circle"
Play by Bertolt Brecht staged by Robert Sturua in 1975
23. **Letter to singer Nani Bregvadze** (*1936) 2'19
Based on theme from "The Eccentrics"
Film by Eldar Shengelaya and Rezo Gabriadze from 1973
24. **Letter to singer and actor Vakhtang Kikabidze** (*1938) 2'43
Based on theme from "Don't Grieve"
Film by Georgi Danelia and Rezo Gabriadze from 1969
25. **Letter to director Robert Sturua** (*1938) 3'09
Based on the ragtime from "Richard III"
Play by William Shakespeare staged by Robert Sturua in 1979

Andrea Cortesi *violin*

Georgian Strings

Recording: 13-14 April 2018, Georgian Film Studio, Tbilisi, Georgia
 Producer: Luca Ricci
 Sound engineers: Luca Ricci & David Khositashvili
 Mixing and mastering: Luca Ricci
 Cover image: 'Hubble Spies Big Bang Frontiers' - special thanks to NASA
 Photos of Andrea Cortesi: Luca Moretti
 Photo of Giya Kancheli: Gia Chkhatarashvili
 Photo of Georgian Strings: © Georgian Strings
 © & © 2019 Brilliant Classics

While dedicating myself to symphonic and chamber music, I also composed for the stage and screen. No wonder then that certain themes originally intended for plays and films made their way into my larger works or that the large forms themselves sometimes contained episodes reminiscent of incidental music. I cannot even always remember where a particular theme first appeared, not least because more than a hundred films and plays for which I wrote music have now passed into history.



Initially, I decided to revive some forgotten excerpts by putting them together into a collection of 33 miniatures for piano. A cycle of 18 miniatures for violin and piano that derived from the same musical material followed a few years later. It was recorded and released by two excellent Italian musicians Andrea Cortesi and Marco Venturi.

When in 2016 Andrea Cortesi asked me to compose a piece for violin and string orchestra, I decided to rearrange the miniature cycle again. It consists of 25 musical letters to my friends and colleagues. Each of them played a certain role in my life and professional career, so I wanted to thank them in the language of music.

The premiere of *Letters To Friends*, for violin and string orchestra, took place in

Tbilisi. The performance proved so good that I would have been quite happy for it to be released as a concert recording. However, Andrea Cortesi returned to Tbilisi, accompanied by Italian sound engineer Luca Ricci, and made a studio recording of the whole cycle with Georgian Strings, the string group of the National Philharmonic Orchestra.

My sincere gratitude goes to the musicians and the sound team for taking such good care of my music and for the brilliant sound.

© Giya Kancheli Tbilisi, October 2018

The Messenger

I often wonder what music still has to do with our lives at present times. Being in the middle of an unanswered question like this for me is like a fire that drives me to search and discover. For me, music and life are the same thing, because, in both, one of the most important qualities we can improve, is the ability to listen. For many people, of course, listening to music means enjoying it (which is not wrong at all), but here, by listening, I mean the aptitude to focus on the possibilities that sound can have, through artistic expression, to be a key, a tool to get closer to ourselves.

I always thought that music exists thanks to composers' enlightened minds, and because our consciousness is touched by that light. Among the so called 'great' ones, I find myself particularly comfortable with those who conveyed their own inner emotional world, their temperament, and even their private life in their music. They have the power to visualize their ideas and their spiritual evolutions, in a way that words couldn't even try to do. On the traces of what composers think and create, we discover ourselves.

As a musician I always find it natural to try to reach the spirit of the music what I am called to present as an *interpreter*.

My first approach to the music of Giya Kancheli is strictly linked to my natural attraction for the unknown. I started to find reflections of myself in this mysterious music. I then planned to record his work for Violin and Piano called ‘*Time...and Again*’. What I noticed, from the first moment, was that for my particular nature and my sensitivity, I was already connected to his music. From that first contact our collaboration began, until the birth of LETTERS TO FRIENDS.

Letters to Friends is an anthology of themes originating in screenplays from 1962 to 2010, rewritten and collected in a cycle for violin and string orchestra, after I asked Giya to write something especially for me.

But the most fascinating dedication, as the title of the work says, is for the closest friends of his career and life. Each piece/letter carries the name of a different Georgian friend of the composer, like the directors Robert Sturua, Eldar Shengelaya, Giorgi Danelia and Rezo Gabriadze. The original idea was about adapting few pieces taken from a previous cycle, THE MINIATURES for violin and piano, but then the entire work ended up consisting of 25 of the most beautiful pieces Kancheli wrote for Cinema and Theatre, completely reborn in this new light and frame.

So Letters to Friends is a tribute to friendship, a special kind of friendship that shares creativity, artistic projects in common or that just connects up different visions of life and art.

Giya asked me to do the world premiere performance of Letters to Friends in Tbilisi on July 2017, with Georgian Strings and conductor Nikoloz Rachveli. Suddenly I realized that my role was not only the soloist, but I felt as if I was a sort of a *messenger* delivering those musical letters. All those friends, he said, are represented here also as the personalities who had a concrete influence on ‘*re-shaping his artistic perceptions*’. Of course, it was a huge responsibility to carry that burden in front of an audience that considers the composer a monument of Georgian culture and a living legend and all these pieces a part of a collective memory and identity. For all these reasons it was also one of the most intense musical experience of my life.

What you find here are not only beautiful film themes. For those who need to divide music into different genres, this cycle escapes one comprehensive definition.

The sound in Kancheli is a driving force, and the reflection of the way he lets things happen. For many composers the sound depends almost entirely on the interpretation, on the choices and the personality of the musician, when the artist's mission is accomplished within the musical matters. Of course I like those kind of composers too.

The music of some other ones then comes to us sophisticated by the ego of the performers who let themselves be overwhelmed basically by the desire to show off their skills, instead of searching a real inspiration and trying to say something personal.

In Kancheli the sound is already there, it comes from how things are.

I don't mean to say that it does not take much effort to give an ideal expression to a language so apparently easy but at the same time so enigmatic. In other cases all the information is in the written sign. Here the actions we must take to decipher this sound, on the contrary to the usual, have a different origin. Looking through a transparent surface of simplicity, I found inner pulses towards contemplation, nostalgia, tenderness and romanticism. Then flashes of pure poetry. Here I also found the acceptance of something inevitable which is full of serenity. I can really say that you can hear this music smile.

The background of this cycle offers us a lot of *scenes* of smart irony and lightness too.

Then, sometimes, *anger* suddenly breaks in. But what can be the place of anger in all this? I don't consider it as a representation of the battles between angels and demons. I feel those explosions as a sign of reaction to the weight of the physical world. An intolerance to the *gravity* and to the interferences of negative emotions, which trap us in an uncomfortable reality. So, if contemplation sails out of time, anger is here and now.

There are no heroes here, no conflicts to win, except those each man fights with himself.

Kancheli's language is often defined as spiritual and transcendent. I find Kancheli's visions closer to being a lens to see reality from a different perspective, rather than doors to mystic dimensions.

These pieces are daydreams. And not the renderings of fantasy and unconscious, but states of limpid sensitivity and consciousness. It is precisely when the breaths of our feelings and thoughts touch the profile of the sound that there are not many differences between what is *physical* and what is beyond it.

It is certainly a music that leaves open the field of emotions, and not only because it is film music. But what kind of emotions do we find here? They are not the purpose of musical expression. If we look beyond the senses, and beyond the superstructures of the form, emotions are movements of our consciousness. Most of those movements are independent from our will. Those who label them as a misleading element of distraction are too focused on the beliefs of the mind. Anxiety to exhibit only tangible and measurable objects sees emotions as a fog and a sign of weakness.



Sound here creates the emotions and, at the same time, emotions create the sound.

Music is a window towards a particular zone of time. For me the need to place a composer in a particular moment of history is secondary to my interest to connect with the meanings the composer left us on the paper just in the present time, in the very moment of the performance. The choice is to discover those meanings in what I perceive, in the intuitions of an open mind, or in what I am conditioned to perceive (an objectivity certified by others). The only thing I can do to get near to the soul of the piece is to try to connect to the same source that inspired the composer. Although I remain a severe critic towards my own intuitions, I reject the prejudices that lead me astray. So, when my mind is free to flow towards that source, the visions of the composer share their breath with mine. But at the same time I am not sure that what I create, what the *interpretation* is totally mine, I am only a mirror that projects the original spark with a certain personal angle.

I always imagined a sound that lives beyond the subjective and the objective. So what we find in this research, even if we call it *truth* or *authenticity*, is less important than how (and why) we found it. I would like to call it *coherence*.

In Kancheli I found the touch of a genius who immerses us in a timeless perspective that floats through the history of music (elsewhere in his other works also along the frontier between orient and occident). I followed then the dream to put different echoes and links into my 'screenplay': the music before Bach, the phrasing of the Baroque and Classical era, the spirit of Romanticism, the Italian sound I suppose runs in my veins and fragments of aleatory improvisation on the colours of the sound. I also let myself be involved in many influences coming from *pop* and *jazz*.

I was fascinated by the refined sensuality of this music, not something related with *seduction* or *sentimentalism*, but an high and balanced state of the senses.

For me making music means catching the present: the fleeting edge where past and future meet. What I perceive about the past and what kind of future is going to appear depends on what I am doing *now*. Most of the time our mind swings back and

forth between the past and the future. Even scientists of course are wondering if our brain is able to perceive something that can be called present. In the face of time we define ourselves.

In all those short letters a compressed duration plays its game with an expanded time. Kancheli succeeds in visualizing thoughts, ideas, emotions in a space which doesn't suffer from briefness. Nothing is missing. Reduced to the essential, gestures become symbols of powerful meanings. Beyond ego and rationalism, even unspoken thoughts become revelations. As in fractals, every small detail of reality is complete, every little sign speaks the language of the Universe.

Kancheli's music is a bearer of such a potential of beauty that, when playing it, I always remain with the feeling that it is not possible to express all that beauty through sound, you can only aspire to it.

For some people the beauty is the pursuit of perfection, for me perfection is a *side effect* while I aspire to the beauty of the piece. In both cases nobody can achieve them completely. I think beauty is where we cross our limits with the challenge of finding something unexpectedly new. The doubt that I didn't take that challenge means that I got distracted in the notes and in the violin, without looking any further.

Being open to beauty is not only a matter of a relation with pleasure. It is not in the superficial texture, in the appearance. Recognising beauty is not the confirmation of a truth which is frozen in our mind or within the borders of the work of art.

Will, curiosity, sensitivity towards beauty come together with risk and courage of an unprejudiced mind. Beauty lives in the mystery of the unpredictable, in the consciousness of the spectator, in the imagination of the artist, in the proof that beyond what is right or wrong, everything is in motion.

Life and art speak about it. It's a kind of beauty that disintegrates the illusions and expectations crystallized in the loops of our ordinary thoughts. It helps you to overcome what you already know.

It is very probable that we look at the work of art (and at the world around us) in

the same way we look inside ourselves.

By the way, it is interesting to recall Plato's Myth of the Cave. I love the metaphor of the man who had the chance to experience the dazzling light of the world outside the cave (the truth) and had to face the impossibility of bringing his message of knowledge to other men chained inside the cave and forced to see only shadows.

This eternal example talks to us even today, when seeing the beauty of the light we become conscious of our actions. This always means overcoming appearance, prejudice, fear, indifference. It means dissolving all that controls our minds and our lives, all that is *virtual* in a world in which *reality* is a *show*.

In Kancheli, sound (and beauty) is in how things happen and not in a rational planning of the interpretation. Here you need to sit back and watch the river. The sound comes and lets us discover what there is beyond the horizon of written music, and both the interpreter and the listener must be ready to find that sound in their consciousness.

In slowness and contemplation, while waiting for that sound to be born many times from the emptiness, my mind and my physical experience of the music around me lived in balance.

I was also very impressed by the engaging dialogue with the orchestra part, so rich in transparent colours, brilliant instrumentations and wonderful landscapes. The single voice and the collective voice shared the same energy and inspiration.

With *Letters to Friends*, consciously and unconsciously, I have also been influenced by the energy of all those friendships, their stories ran through me and made me feel part of them.

© *Andrea Cortesi*



Georgian Strings

violin I Teimuraz Jaiani* · Nino Shamugia · Natia Gugulashvili · Ana Jajanidze
Maria Stepanova · Mari Chovelidze

violin II Akaki Deisadze** · Nino Kvinikadze · Vakhtang Magradze
Mari Kasradze · Keti Panjikidze

viola Mariam Chikvaidze** · Ilia Chkhaidze · Kote Chavleishvili
Nino Kokrashvili · Giorgi Magradze

cello Giorgi Imanov** · Murad Ibragimov · Mikheil Lomidze

double bass Javad Javadzade

*Concertmaster **Section leaders

*Thanks to Igor Zoloratev, Laura Gorkoff, Anne Wilson, Joanna Harvey,
Luca Moretti, Mirella and Eugerio Pongelli*