

# Lukas Ligeti, Composer

## Biography

Lukas Ligeti's compositions draw on diverse traditions including New York experimentalism, electronic music, jazz, African influences, and the European avant-garde. His music shows an interest in musical processes, complex polymetric structures and intercultural collaboration, with many of his works arising out of his deep, long-term engagement with the music of Africa. An established percussionist, especially in the fields of jazz and free improvisation, Lukas Ligeti has long worked with live electronics and has initiated numerous intercultural musical projects, such as his European-African electronica group Burkina Electric.

As a composer, Lukas Ligeti's output ranges from percussion works, including *Pattern Transformation* for four marimba players, and ensemble works such as *Surroundedness* or *La parole seule* for mezzo-soprano and ensemble to his large-scale *Suite for Burkina Electric and Orchestra*, which the composer premiered with the MDR Symphony Orchestra in Leipzig and interpreted in a revised version with the Brussels Philharmonic in 2021. He has received commissions from the Vienna Festwochen, Austrian Radio, Bang on a Can, the NOW! festival, Tonhalle Düsseldorf, the Moers Festival, the American Composers Orchestra, Ensemble Modern, Eighth Blackbird and the Kronos Quartet; his works have been premiered by soloists including Håkan Hardenberger and Colin Currie. He has been featured at festivals including the Festival d'Automne à Paris and the London Southbank Centre's Meltdown Festival. He gives solo concerts on electronic percussion worldwide. Lukas Ligeti was artist-in-residence at Sonoscopia in Porto and at the POLIN Museum for the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw; a CD recording of the work realised there, *That Which Has Remained... That Which Will Emerge...*, was released by col legno.

A whole series of works have been premiered in recent seasons: *Aquifères* was launched by soloist Sofia Gantois (flute) and the Ensemble Hopper in Liège; the Ensemble Reconsile interpreted *Actaonella* in Vienna – the American premiere followed with the Ensemble New Music Network in Philadelphia. In Essen, Ensemble BRuCH together with Burkina Electric premiered *Égal, pas pareil, nonpareil. Réflexions sur badenya, fadenya, communauté et convivialité*. Expanded to include a second movement, the work was performed at the Moers Festival in 2023; a duo programme with pianist Nicolas Namoradze was also launched at the Budapest Music Center. The Ligeti Quartet performed the new string quartet *Entasis* at the Aldeburgh Festival and in Huddersfield in 2023. In March 2024, the Aris Quartet gave the world premiere of another new string quartet, *Neostasis*, at the Liederhalle in Stuttgart. Pianist Shoko Kawasaki performed the solo piano work *Trinity* on a major recital tour with stops in Japan and at the Gasteig in Munich, and the Amaryllis Quartet and the Prometheus Quartet gave the German and Czech premieres of the string quartet *Moving Houses*. At the Opera Nova Festival in June 2024, Prague State Opera premiered *Glaubst du an die Ewigkeit des Lebens?* for mezzo-soprano, piano, percussion and electronics with improvisational elements, a reaction to *Le grand macabre* by György Ligeti. In the same month, the Accademia Chigiana in Siena presented a portrait concert with compositional and improvisational pieces by and with Lukas Ligeti.

As artistic director of the World New Music Days, which took place on the African continent for the first time in 2023 to mark the 100th anniversary of the International Society for New Music, Lukas Ligeti presented a festival in South Africa that offered unique opportunities for creative exchange. Prior to this, he also co-curated the programme of the highly acclaimed Oluzayo festival as part of the African Futures conference in Cologne. As part of these events, his *Suite for Burkina Electric and Orchestra* received three (partly country premiere) performances in Cologne, Johannesburg, Cape Town and, with the Basel Sinfonietta, in Basel in May 2024.

Lukas Ligeti studied composition and percussion at the University for Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, where his tutors included Erich Urbanner and Kurt Schwertsik. He also studied with George Crumb, Jonathan Harvey, and John Zorn, among others. In 1998, he moved to the USA; after many years in New York, he was Professor of Composition, Improvisation, and Technology at the University of California, Irvine until 2021. He currently divides his time between Miami and South Africa, where he received his PhD from the University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg) in 2020 and holds an honorary professorship at the University of Pretoria. Since September 2024, Lukas Ligeti is Professor of Composition at the Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles. He has been the recipient of numerous awards and scholarships, including the CalArts Alpert Award in Music (2010) and the Förderpreis of the City of Vienna (1990).

2024/25 season

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