Ronald CORP

LETTERS FROM LONY
SONG-CYCLE FOR MEZZO-SOPRANO, STRING QUARTET AND PIANO

Sarah Pring, mezzo-soprano
Chilingirian Quartet
Andrew Brownell, piano

FIRST RECORDING
Leonie (Lony) Fraenkel was born in Berlin in 1878. At the age of 26 she married Dr Ludwig Rabl from Karlsbad (now Karlovy Vary in the Czech Republic), and they divided their time between the two cities. In 1906 their first daughter, Ruth, was born in Berlin; another daughter, Annemarie, was born in Karlsbad in 1908. Ludwig Rabl died in Berlin in 1925, and in 1933, Lony, still in Berlin, became manager of the upmarket Kaffee Trumpf at the Gloria Palast, on the Kurfürstendamm by the Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche; a year later, Annemarie married Hans Lobbenberg. By 1938 Lony had moved to Amsterdam, where in early 1939 she opened the Café de Paris at 9b Beethovenstraat, catering to the expatriate German-Jewish community; the terrace soon became a popular rendezvous for German Jews. Annemarie and her husband, Hans, succeeded in leaving Germany and settled in Edgware, in north London. In May 1939 Lony paid them a visit, and was delighted to discover that her first grandchild was on the way. But on 3 September 1939 Britain declared war on Germany; travelling back to England now became impossible. At the Café de Paris the German Jews spread maps on the tables to follow the troop movements in Europe.

Lony’s grandson, Peter Lobbenberg, was born in Edgware on 12 September, nine days after the declaration of war. The following day Lony wrote a postcard in halting English to her new grandson, ‘Welcoming my sweet little boy’, but after the German invasion and occupation of France, Belgium and the Netherlands in May–June 1940...

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1 Adapted from (a) the anonymous programme note for the premiere of *Letters from Lony* on 28 June 2017, a commission from the ‘Proms at St Jude’s’ (in St Jude-on-the-Hill, Central Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London NW11; www.promsatstjudes.org.uk/what-is-proms-at-st-judes.php; (b) Frank van Kolschooten, *De Beethovenstraat. Verborgen geschiedenissen* (‘Beethoven Street. Hidden Histories’), Uitgeverij De Kring, Amsterdam, 2015; (c) untitled article online at *De Oud Amsterdammer*, 28 October 2015 (link no longer available); (d) Hanneloos Pen, ‘Lony’s liefde: Oorlogsbrieven aan ein kleinzoon’ (‘Lony’s Love: Wartime letters to a grandson’), *Het Parool*, Amsterdam, 28 January 2016, translation online at www.joodsmonument.nl/nl/page/552388/lonys-love-wartime-letters-to-a-grandson.
Lony in Karlsbad in 1936 or 1937
she lived under the daily threat of violence. On the evening of Saturday, 8 June 1940, twenty members of the National Socialist Dutch Arbeiderspartij (NSNAP) stormed the crowded terrace of the Café de Paris, threw bricks through the eight large plate-glass windows, stove in the smaller windows and generally created havoc. Neither staff nor customers dared to do anything. The men were caught by the police and detained for four days in the cell-block building on Leidseplein; and when she appeared before the Amsterdam District Court in early 1941, Lony Rabl was told that the Café de Paris would receive 3000 guilders in damages. But on 12 February 1941 the Café was once again destroyed, in revenge for the liquidation of a member of the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland or NSB – the Dutch Nazi Party, the more successful rival of the NSNAP. The cigar shop at Beethovenstraat 6 was also targeted. On 18 April 1941 another gang of thugs, including several in the uniform of the paramilitary arm of the NSB, smashed in the windows and door of the Café de Paris. Lony Rabl made no mention of these events in the letters to her daughter and grandson in London; instead, she wrote that she always re-read their letters, and day and night thought about little Peter.

In 1942 the Café de Paris was declared one of the official Jewish meeting places for the Beethovenstraat district, and for the moment Amsterdam’s Jews carried on as best they could. In her war diary An Interrupted Life, Etty Hillesum was full of praise for the fried flounder she was served at Café de Paris: ‘Unforgettable as to both price and quality.’² The writer Harry Mulisch described in My Book of Hours³ how he went there every week to drink a cup of ersatz coffee with his mother.

At the end of August 1943 Lony Rabl was deported to Westerbork, a transit camp near the German border. On 23 February 1944, she sent a last letter from Westerbork to a contact in Amsterdam, clearly intended to be passed on to family and friends. (It reached her daughter and grandson in London only in September 1945.) On 25 February, the Germans deported her from Westerbork to Terezín (Theresienstadt), the garrison town

³ Mijn Getijdenboek, Landshoff/De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam, 1975, as quoted in van Kolfschooten, op. cit., p. 81.
in occupied Czechoslovakia that was used as a ghetto and has since become famous for the intellectual life that flourished there. As the German Reich crumbled under attack from east, west and the skies, on 12 October 1944\(^4\) she was put on a transport from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she was murdered two days later.\(^5\)

The tragic story of the Jews of Europe under German occupation is all too familiar. This particular strand of that story might never have been told, had it not been for that ‘sweet little boy’, Peter, who grew up to graduate from Oxford, become a chartered accountant, a trustee of the P. G. Wodehouse Estate, a husband, father, grandfather and music-lover. For years, though, Peter Lobbenberg had no idea of his grandmother’s fate, nor of her epistolary legacy. Speaking to Sue Fox, a journalist from *The Sunday Times*, he explained,

> I knew my grandmother was called Lony, but my mother never talked about her and obviously I never met her. Knowing now what I have learned about the family, it must have been much too painful for my mother who, with my father, got on with their lives and built a very successful business.\(^6\)

When the Blitz started in London, Peter’s parents relocated to Shrewsbury, where they moved the family corset factory.\(^7\) Peter’s father, Hans, died when Peter was fifteen. After his mother’s death in 1971, Peter was sorting out the family home and opened her antique bureau.

> I was going through the desk when I came across a bundle of 22 old letters from Holland. I wasn’t particularly interested in them, but I was fairly passionate about stamps so I decided to keep them.

\(^4\) The deportation of the majority of Theresienstadt’s prisoners to Auschwitz began on 28 September and lasted exactly one month. Lony was one of 18,401 people in eleven transports.  
\(^5\) https://www.bundesarchiv.de/gedenkbuch/directory.html. At Westerbork, Lony had deliberately given her year of birth as 1882 instead of 1878; this German state website perpetuates the error.  
\(^6\) Interview in May 2017, in preparation for the premiere of *Letters from Lony*, quoted in the programme.  
\(^7\) The company was called Corsets Silhouette. Its products included the iconic ‘Little X’ girdle, designed by Peter’s mother and hugely successful in the 1960s and 1970s. In 2016-17 the Little X was highlighted in ‘Undressed’, an exhibition of underwear at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.
When he eventually got around to reading the letters – only two of which were in English – he admits to not really taking them in:

My emotional connection came much later when I re-read them and realised Lony was literally pouring out her heart to me. She was also keeping in touch with the family, addressing them as ‘My dear ones’.

He wanted to find out more about Lony and what had happened to her. A Dutch website, www.joodsmonument.nl, proved crucial and in 2014, via some press-cuttings and Google, he contacted Frank van Kolfschooten in Amsterdam, the author of a history of the Beethovenstraat, where Lony had her café at number 9b: ‘My wife and I went on a pilgrimage to the café, which is now a quite fashionable ladies-wear shop’. It was a deeply emotional experience for Peter. A fluent German-speaker, he resolved to translate the letters into English and to have them set to music, by way of a memorial to the grandmother he never met and, by extension, to the millions of others who shared her fate.

8 It is a branch of Claudia Sträter.
AMSTERDAM UNDER GERMAN OCCUPATION, 1940–45
by MacGregor Knox

The German assault of 10 May 1940 crushed the neutral Netherlands and Belgium, along with France. The Luftwaffe levelled the centre of Rotterdam, killing 800 civilians. The Dutch army duly capitulated on 15 May; Queen and government fled to London; bureaucracy and police remained in place. Adolf Hitler sent his SS Bodyguard Regiment and tanks from the 9th Panzer Division to parade across Amsterdam and strike awe into the population. He also sent a trusted Austrian Nazi, Arthur Seyss-Inquardt, to serve as viceroy: the Dutch were potential candidates for incorporation into the Greater German Reich. Another Austrian, Hanns Albin Rauter, took responsibility, as Heinrich Himmler’s chief of SS and Police in the Netherlands, for controlling the population of nine million, of whom 800,000 – including roughly 80,000 Jews – lived in Amsterdam.

The people in Amsterdam reacted with relief to the apparent mildness of the occupation in its first months. But Seyss-Inquardt, knowing or sensing the Führer’s wishes, swiftly imposed increasingly harsh measures upon the Jews who had fallen under German domination. The vital first step was their identification, whether Dutch or foreign citizens, ‘full Jews’ or of mixed ancestry. To that exacting task the Dutch interior ministry brought a technocratic fanaticism that inspired the keen admiration of its German masters. The bureaucrats had in previous years devised a universal population registry that sorted all Netherlands residents by categories that included religion. The quest for bureaucratic perfection soon linked those registry data to forgery-proof photo-ID cards and food-ration cards. All that remained was to stamp with a large ‘J’ the files and ID cards of those whose religion was listed as Judaism – which the Dutch authorities did from June 1941 onward.
The turning point of the occupation was by then long past. In February 1941 the thugs of the disreputable Dutch National Socialist movement had attacked Amsterdam’s Jewish quarter. Rauter’s police thereupon sealed the area off and deported almost 400 Amsterdam Jews to camps in Germany and eventual death. The population of Amsterdam and north Holland reacted with a spontaneous three-day general strike, the first in any country as yet occupied by the Reich. The German army in full combat gear restored ‘order’.

In April–May 1942 the German authorities imposed upon Dutch Jews the wearing of the yellow star, as decreed in the Reich in September 1941. And once the machinery of the Reich’s programmed extermination of European Jewry was in place, deportations duly began in July 1942. The Dutch police played an indispensable role throughout 1942–43 in the mass round-ups and manhunts that doomed the Jews of Amsterdam. The Germans assembled most deportees at the transit camp at Westerbork, where Leonie Fraenkel was first imprisoned. The Dutch and German railways then forwarded them across Germany, usually to death by gassing at Auschwitz or Sobibór. The Netherlands – highly urbanised, open and flat – offered few places to hide. It was the only country in western Europe in which Jews had a less than even chance of escaping death, and only one in four of Amsterdam’s Jews survived.

*MacGregor Knox is Stevenson Professor of International History emeritus at The London School of Economics and Political Science.*
Some background first, if I may. I was born in 1951, in Wells, Somerset, at No. 1, Cathedral Green – but my parents were not connected to the Cathedral and were not ‘musical’ in any real sense, and so I have assumed that my early surroundings had a subliminal influence on me, given that I am a Church of England vicar as well as a composer and conductor. I went to the local grammar school (the Blue School), where I was academically gifted but made a real hash of my O-Levels (although I passed Music a year early!). Luckily, I got my act together for my A-Levels, and the new headmaster, who arrived as I did my ‘mocks’, suggested that I apply to Oxford. I stayed an extra year in the sixth form to pass the entrance exam and take the O-Levels (including Latin) which were required.

Between 1970 and 1973 I read music at Christ Church under the tutelage of Simon Preston, who accepted me into the Cathedral Choir on a choral scholarship in my second year. I was accepted to do a research degree (Victorian oratorio) but failed to get a grant and so journeyed to London in search of work, duly securing a job in the BBC Music Library serving Radio 3, later becoming librarian specifically to the BBC Singers. I also enjoyed two separate years as a producer of radio programmes.

During my time at the BBC I formed a staff choir (the BBC Club Choir) and engagements with that choir brought me to the attention of other choral societies. I became Musical Director of the Highgate Choral Society in 1984 and Chorus Master of the London Chorus in 1985. I am now their Musical Director.

In 1988 I launched the New London Orchestra, which has now made over twenty CD recordings. I am happy to report that my albums for Hyperion and Dutton Epoch have brought much unfamiliar music before the public: works by Cecil Armstrong...

In 1991 I launched the New London Children’s Choir, and it has performed at the Proms, in the major London venues and at the Aldeburgh Festival, as well as appearing abroad and for film soundtracks and on the occasional outing with musicians such as Lou Reed and Nick Cave.

I have composed music since my earliest years and commercial recordings are available of my First Symphony, Piano Concerto, Cello Concerto, three string quartets and a clarinet quintet, the children’s opera *The Ice Mountain* and some choral works – among them *Dhammapada* on chamber choir and *And all the trumpets sounded* for choir and orchestra – and song-cycles including *Fields of the Fallen*, settings of World War One poetry by both English and German poets. *My The Wings of Memory* was recently included on the second volume of the Toccata Classics series *Music for My Love*, featuring works for string orchestra commissioned by Martin Anderson in memory of his partner, Yodit Tekle. Current projects include a Second Symphony.

As a freelance composer I have fulfilled commissions from various choral societies and soloists, and recent works include the chamber opera *The Pelican* (Strindberg). As a conductor I have worked with international and British orchestras and have made a number of recordings with the BBC Concert Orchestra.

My book *A Choral Singer’s Companion* is now in its third edition,¹ and I have edited and compiled music by various composers for a number of major publishers.

I was the proud recipient of an OBE in the New Year Honours List in 2012 and have been made an Honorary Doctor of Music by the universities of Anglia Ruskin and Hull. If you want to learn more, please visit my website, www.ronaldcorp.com.

When Peter Lobbenberg asked me to set his grandmother’s letters to music, I identified two problems: first, to edit the letters to a manageable size without losing any

of their character, and second, to find a musical idiom which would sustain the extended cycle. I wanted the music to sound conversational but not too much like recitative. I felt the music had to have melody and I hope to have found a way of writing in an arioso style which brings Lony alive. I also had to be sensitive to the accompanying musical palette and to give the singer some respite during the cycle – hence the interludes, which also serve the purpose of helping the narrative to progress. The combination of string quartet and piano seemed to provide the fullest ‘orchestral’ accompaniment without drowning the voice.

When I was writing *Letters from Lony*, I discussed with the mezzo-soprano Ann Murray what I was thinking in terms of the cycle and how it should end. Ann suggested that Lony would have wanted to sing a lullaby to her new-born grandson, and so I created one as the second movement. I bring this music back at the end, after the final letter. Lony sings it, and then hums it, and in a live performance she continues humming as she leaves the stage. This moment represents the final document: it’s not a letter from Lony but a card telling the family that she has perished in Auschwitz.

*Letters from Lony* was a commission from the ‘Proms at St Jude’s’, which take place annually in the church of St Jude-on-the-Hill, Central Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London NW11. It was first performed there on 28 June 2017 by the musicians heard in this recording.
Family members and others mentioned in the letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relationship and Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ludwig Rabl (‘Vati’)</td>
<td>Lony’s late husband, 1861–1925; Peter Lobbenberg’s grandfather</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acka and Hugo Marx</td>
<td>Lony’s younger sister and her husband, in Amsterdam; both perished in Bergen-Belsen in 1945</td>
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<tr>
<td>Detta (Aenny, Anna) Sandbank</td>
<td>Lony’s aunt, 1870–Theresienstadt, 1943</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gustav Fraenkel</td>
<td>Lony’s brother; emigrated to Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alice Buseck-Unna</td>
<td>Gustav’s mother-in-law, mother of his wife Irma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hans and Annemarie Lobbenberg</td>
<td>Lony’s daughter and her husband, parents of Peter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Otto and Trude Lobbenberg</td>
<td>Hans’ brother and sister-in-law; moved to the USA in 1940</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resi Ganz</td>
<td>Hans’ sister; came to England with the extended Lobbenberg family, December 1938</td>
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<td>Fanny Lobbenberg</td>
<td>Hans’ mother, Peter’s paternal grandmother (died Shrewsbury, 1941)</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Lobbenberg (‘Otschi’)</td>
<td>Hans’ son by his first marriage, born 1922; Peter’s half-brother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin Rabl</td>
<td>nephew of Lony’s late husband, Ludwig; in England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otto Lebenhart</td>
<td>nephew of Lony’s late husband, Ludwig; in England</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heidi Willer</td>
<td>cousin of Lony; later married Otto Lebenhart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachmann</td>
<td>Cologne and Switzerland business associate of Hans Lobbenberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Rusy</td>
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<td>Doctor Fleischmann</td>
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<tr>
<td>Josef Blum</td>
<td>contact of Lony in Amsterdam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liesje</td>
<td>friend of Lony in Amsterdam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ludwig</td>
<td>friend of Lony in Amsterdam</td>
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The Letters from Lony
translated by Peter Lobbenberg

1 No. 1 – 13 September 1939 (written in halting English and addressed to ‘Johnnie’)
Welcome, my sweet little boy. I am anxious to see you as soon as possible, and I hope you are all right and your little mother is very happy with you. I think of you day and night and I am so happy to know you are here. How is father? And your great brother? I am shure [sic] they all are so found [sic] of you, the same as I am! Now I have a wish, answer as soon as possible to your grandmother Lony.

2 No. 1a – Lullaby
Schlaf Kindlein, schlaf Kindlein, d’Äuglein mach zu,
Schlaf Kindlein süß Kindlein, geh nun zur Ruh.
Schlaf Kindlein, schlaf Kindlein, d’Äuglein mach zu,
Schlaf Kindlein süß Kindlein, schlaf Kindlein süß Kindlein, geh nun zur Ruh.

Sleep, little child, close your eyes,
Sleep, little child, sweet little child, go to rest now.

3 No. 2 – 28 September 1939
My beloved little boy, today I received your first sweet letter, when you were just a week old. I was so thrilled to get it, and will keep it safely, and when you can read you can have it back. How I’d love to see you, and take you on my arm and watch you feeding or sleeping, or being bathed. But who knows whether your first and maybe your second birthday will pass before we make personal acquaintance.

Now something else that will interest you quite terribly. We managed to let two rooms of the flat upstairs to a ping-pong club, and the three others we’ve nearly let. But now I have to buy provisions. Everything is more and more expensive, and sometimes not to be had at all, like pineapples and peaches. You’ll probably say that’s not at all important, and in my view you’d be right, but customers want all that kind of stuff, even when it’s wartime and they should be glad to have anything at all.

Well now, Granny has to go to bed, and you too, although I could chat with you for hours, but it’s midnight and high time.
No. 3 – 16 November 1939
You know, my little treasure, your mummy always used to write very interesting and nice letters, but never a one as charming as yours. Tomorrow you’ll be 5 weeks old, your Mummy should enjoy each day with you, and not wish the time away. You’ll grow up much quicker than she can imagine today. But when you’re grown up, then hopefully there’ll be no war any more. And they’ll just tell you about it, because boys like to hear that kind of thing, especially if they were never there.
I’m going back to the embassy, but I think there’s no chance of my getting a visa.

Welcome, my sweet little boy
I am anxious to see you as soon as possible, and I hope you are all right and your little mother is very happy with you. I think of you day and night and I am so happy to know you are here. How is father? And your great brother? I am sure they all are so proud of you the same as I am! Now I have a wish to answer as soon as possible to your grandmother Tony.
5 No. 4 – 3 December 1939
If your Mummy can’t write, at least you could. I get such pleasure out of your letters. I’ve got a sweet romper suit here for you and don’t know how I can send it to you, because of customs and shipwrecks and things like that. So for the time being I play with it. I do up the buttons and undo them again and have fun with it. Does Daddy know we’re sitting on a powder keg here? But I behave as if there were nothing going on. Got a little dress made for myself, and am very pleased with it. If you see your parents, give them my love.

6 No. 5 – 18 December 1939
My beloved boy, I thank you very much for your long and adorable letter, which I read over and over again, morning and night. Of course, it’s a terrible shame that we can’t get to know each other, you and I, and let’s just hope that one day it will be possible.

Well, what do you think of the Graf Spee.¹ I sat at the wireless till midnight and followed every phase. – Do you understand why they sank that beautiful ship? Just you wait, the people will take that about as badly as a hole in the head, but sadly they aren’t allowed to squeak.

7 No. 5a – Interlude

8 No. 6 – 11 February 1940
My beloved boy, well really, it’s been so long since you wrote to me that I was beginning to think you can’t write any more, because you’ve got so much else to do, like kicking, and knee rides, and drinking, and guzzling orange juice, and all that kind of stuff. Your picture is in a little frame on my bedside table and I keep looking at it. Now I’d like to have another one soon, but I guess that won’t be easy. Can you imagine how much I’d like to get to know you, but at the moment I don’t see any possibility at all. And if things turn out as I believe, namely that the Allies come to the help of the Finns, go into Sweden, from there against the Russians and then through Poland and Czechoslovakia against the Germans, then it could be quite a while before the war is over. And what’s to become of us here, nobody knows either, we’ll have to wait and see. Most wealthy Dutch and also Germans who had money have left here and continue to leave, naturally we suffer too as

¹ The Admiral Graf Spee was a German Panzerschiff (‘armoured ship’) – a ‘pocket battleship’ in British Navy parlance – that was launched in 1936 and deployed to the South Atlantic in anticipation of the outbreak of World War II. Damaged in the Battle of the River Plate on 13 December 1939, she put into port at Montevideo, where her captain, Hans Langdorff, ordered her to be scuttled.
a result of that, although for the time being new customers are still coming to replace them. But there’s simply less money being spent, and that’s such a shame. Just think, people drink so much orange juice here, and now I’ll always be thinking that Mummy doesn’t give you enough, at least for your appetite. Has my letter to Mummy not yet arrived? It should be there by now. Bachmann’s cheque hasn’t been cleared either. Young Rusy is said to have been seriously wounded, and I hear Doctor Fleischmann died in London. I’m buying lots of little parcels, it’s almost beyond my means. Did my letter to Otto [Lebenhart] arrive, and the one to Grandma Fanny? Martin shouldn’t worry, everyone’s well. Today was your great-grandmother’s birthday, but it’s good that she doesn’t have to live through these times. You will come into good times one day, of that I am certain. I would like to experience them, too. And I’m so curious what will turn out, and how, and how the new beginning will be, and how we can get rid of all the criminals. I hope they’re already racking their brains about that. Thank God that you, my little Englishman, won’t have anything to do with it. Kiss your parents, and Grandma Fanny and Auntie Resi, and your big brother and, well, everyone.

9 No. 7 – 5 May 1940, to Annemarie
Things don’t look very safe. You’ll be aware that the whole country is in a state of emergency, of which we only hear, but otherwise don’t notice it much, that our minister’s speech was not reassuring, that there have been so many arrests of respected Dutchmen, well, and so on. We don’t know what’s happening from one day to the next. It is of course a tragedy that the many sacrifices for Scandinavia were in vain.2 Tell Heidi I got her letter and showed it to her father straightaway. I was delighted and interested in what she writes about Peter, it’s such a shame that I can’t even see him, not even hear him squeak on the telephone. Write me every bit about him, he’ll be advancing every day now and every day will bring new surprises. The photos are very sweet, I look at them again and again. He’s nearly eight months old now. A strapping and discriminating man. Alice is still worried that we might be invaded. What’s the mood like in England? Here in general it’s not very good. Such a pity I can’t get a visa, otherwise I’d like to come for a holiday. I’ll try again. Even if it’s difficult and costs lots of money. I would so much like to bring Hans some cigars, and Otsch a cheesecake, and you a kiss, and Peter something nice.

10 No. 7a – 10 May 1940 Interlude
(Five days after the last letter, Germany invaded the Netherlands.)

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2 The German army invaded Denmark and Norway on 9 April 1940.
No. 8 – 26 September 1940, to the family
My dear ones all together, now it’s already two weeks since our little boy’s birthday, and I’m still waiting longingly for his joyous description of all the presents he got and what he thought of the birthday. I was so terribly pleased to get your last letter, firstly anyway and secondly because after the long wait there was such heart-warming news. I’m not complaining that I can’t take part in the boy’s development, just happy at every sign of it and the good times that he has. And that his parents get so much joy out of him. May it stay that way.

No. 9 – Undated 1940, to the family
On Monday we’re planning to pay all the rent arrears, not because we have to but because we think it’s right. Detta is well, she writes regularly. It’s a pity I can’t see your Mummy. The monthly turnover is astonishing but we get little from it, despite that I’m satisfied, we have a monopoly. Kiss our boy. When I come I’ll bring him a bike, then he can come here with Daddy. How did my tender girl come to have such an enormous boy? Many many heartfelt kisses, Your Lony

No. 10 – Undated, probably about 9 November 1940, to Annemarie
My only beloved treasure, in a week’s time it will be my birthday and so I’m naturally thinking of you twofold and threefold, the dearest people I have left in the world. And if it weren’t for the terrible longing for you all, I’d be quite calm and at peace no matter what happens. But I’ve much to do, I’ve a lot of self-control and try to picture the future. I just hope Peter hasn’t grown a moustache by then. I rearrange your pictures every day, I’ve just put Peter’s picture in front of the radio so that I can always see it, and Hans and you and Martin next to Vati on the little dresser. Then I’ve been taking care at home of all the wilting flowers at the office, bought myself a sweet little writing table quite cheap because my room was overflowing with books, and papers and writing utensils, and that’s the way I spend my leisure time. I have been making so many enquiries for Otto and Trude, but still no answer, and I don’t know if George is with them yet. My visa to Brazil is not to be had either, there’s no point now anyway, because no ships are travelling there.

No. 11 – Undated, probably later in November 1940, to the family
I haven’t heard anything from anyone, it’s as though we were living on a desert island. Business is OK, for now I haven’t got any financial worries. I’d have so many questions, but you know
yourselves what I’d like the answers to. Little Peter should write to me again soon. Your pictures are all on my grandmother’s sewing table next to my big chair and are a feast for my eyes every day.

I send you many hugs and kisses
Your Lony.

**15 No. 11a – Interlude**

**16 No. 12 – 11 February 1941, to Peter**

My darling Peterkin, today is your great-grandmother’s birthday, and to commemorate it Auntie Acka brought me flowers, the first lilies of the valley; and here comes your lovely letter, and words can’t express my happiness. I’ve been looking in every pram to see if there might be a little boy like you, but now I’m looking at every plane, because I imagine my little Peter is sitting in it and coming to visit his Grandma Lony. And now I’m racking my brains to think of all the lovely things I can show him here. Above all, there’ll be chocolate with whipped cream, and a big piece of cheesecake, and a big window with new curtains looking out on to the street, and lots of people walking and driving past, big and small, and we’ll wave to them and they’ll wave back and be happy to see my fair-haired boy. And in the evening when we’re tired, I’ll put the boy in the little bath and there’ll be a little boat and a crocodile that squirts water when you squeeze its tummy, and then the boy can let the water out all by himself, and when he’s dried he can run barefoot into bed on great-grandmother’s hand-worked rug, and then he’ll get told a lovely story, about his mummy when she was a little girl. I’m looking forward to that quite terribly. You too? It makes me so happy that Daddy is content and that Mummy is happy with her two men. May it stay that way. I’m still well, we’re still getting trade, even a lot, and no financial worries at least for the time being. It’s a lot of work of course, but I enjoy that. The Hugos have a thousand plans and never carry them out. They’re still in their big house which of course is standing empty. I had my hair done today, since I have gone grey it needs a lot of care so that I look smart. And tomorrow I’m off to the dentist, unfortunately, as my bridge no longer fits and needs renewing. But he’s only a few steps away, so I’ll just have to get along with it. There’d be so much more to tell and to ask, but nothing pleasurable, and one shouldn’t even think about all the sad stuff, otherwise you lose the energy to live. You’re quite right there.

Now write again very soon, give my warmest thanks to our friends for all their love which makes me so happy. And they shouldn’t forget me. I embrace you all and am with dearest love
Your Lony
No. 13 – Unknown date, perhaps late September/early October 1941, to Annemarie
Have you heard anything from my brother Gustav and his children? Their mother is terribly worried, for herself and for their grandmother. Hilde, who used to look after the children, has had a major operation in New York. Other than that I know nothing. Hugo comes to me daily, they’re having a tough time too, so many clients are falling away, some because they close so early, some because they’ve left, some because they’ve died. Tomorrow would have been my brother Erwin’s birthday. Now he’s been dead so long, nearly as long as Vati. But this year I’m thinking of your birthday, even though I didn’t write in time, but you know anyway. Love to my Hans, kiss our boy, love to all our other dear ones, and hugs and kisses with so much love you can’t imagine from your Lony.

No. 14 – 1 October 1941, to Herr Bachmann (in Switzerland)
Dear Mister Bachmann, my grateful thanks for your kind letter, which gave me such pleasure and informed me about the well-being of my children. If I know they’re all well, I can be brave and keep my head held high. I had letters from Trude and George with the shattering news that Grandma Fanny died before our little boy’s birthday, and I’m greatly saddened. It only comforts me that despite all cares she was able to spend a couple of good years with her children. I too would wish myself such a gentle death after a long happy life surrounded by my family.

For myself I’m well, only I yearn terribly for my dear ones, and I find that hard to cope with. My aunt writes regularly, lives in her own home, and gets what she needs to live, she has even saved a bit.

I myself have a great deal to do, business is still going well, but there’s a lot more work than there used to be because of the changed circumstances, but I hope to be able to continue. The small debts are largely paid off, despite a serious setback in summer last year. Sadly I haven’t saved anything, but can manage my obligations. I look well, just a bit thinner, but otherwise have everything I need. Only I’m short of shoes, but if things get really bad I’ll just wear clogs like the others do. I get enormous pleasure from my little boy’s picture, there in front of my table on grandmother’s sewing desk next to me, and on that there is everything I need to write and make notes. So when I look up I watch him, eating his bread, picking flowers, and he looks just like his mummy.
19 No. 15 – 6 January 1942, card addressed to Hans from Bachmann in Lony’s name
Warmest greetings to you and the children. It’s so long since I had any news and I am concerned that you are all well, and would ask you earnestly to write to me by return that things with you are as I would hope and wish. I am well, I have much to do, and business is running. I would lack for nothing if I could hear that the children are well. Fondest wishes for the New Year and for Annemarie’s birthday. Ever your Lony Rabl

20 No. 15a – Interlude

21 No. 16 – 30 December 1943, from Westerbork Camp to Josef Blum
Hopefully all is well and in order with you. I am very worried about my brothers and sisters. Myself I am healthy for the moment, and hope I don’t get an attack, though with this illness you can never be sure. Could you ask sometime whether it’s possible to send clothes without a label, if so I would like the black woollen dress that was offered and the silk costume, both with white collars, it could be that I need them. I could do with a suitcase as well. Otherwise I have received everything, the gloves too of course. Everything is very good. With much love I am your Lony.

22 No. 17 – 23 February 1944, from Westerbork Camp to Josef Blum
My dears, Today again my first greetings, and perhaps also the last for the time being, my address is going to be Theresienstadt, and I would earnestly ask you to keep on sending me parcels and money, as you promised me in the old days. Please also tell Liesje and Ludwig, and my doctor.

I’ve heard nothing from my brothers and sisters, but I hope you have some news. I am worried about them.

I could really do with a black woollen dress, but nothing has arrived.

I have a letter from Acka here, which she wrote before she left, and which I couldn’t send. I gave her everything I had left, and she asks that you reimburse me. So write as soon as you can, you know how you can find that out. Again thanks in advance and arrears and keep thinking of your very loving Lony.

Schlaf Kindlein, schlaf Kindlein, d’Äuglein mach zu,
Schlaf Kindlein süß Kindlein, geh nun zur Ruh.

3 In the German original ‘die Geschwister’. Lony is referring here to her late husband Ludwig’s many brothers and sisters: he was the eldest of seventeen. Of her own siblings, only Acka and Gustav lived beyond the 1920s.
In memoriam
Leonie (‘Lony’) Rabl, née Fraenkel, was born in Berlin in 1878. During the war she was deported on Transport XXIV/4 from Westerbork Camp, the Netherlands, to Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia, on 19 February 1944, and thence on transport Eq to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Extermination Camp, Poland, on 12 October 1944.
Lony perished in Auschwitz two days after arriving there, on 14 October 1944.

Sarah Pring studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and National Opera Studio, both in London. She began her career at Glyndebourne, gaining the Sir John Christie Award, and also the ESSO Touring Award. She appears regularly at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. She made her debut with Oper Stuttgart as Madam Larina in Tchaikovsky’s Eugene Onegin; other companies she has worked with include Opéra de Caen, Chelsea Opera Group, Dorset Opera Festival, English National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Grange Park Opera, Nevill Holt Opera, Opera Holland Park, Opera North, Scottish Opera, Singapore Lyric Opera and Welsh National Opera. Her recent repertoire has included Mrs Grose in Britten’s The Turn of the Screw, Lady Bertram in Jonathan Dove’s Mansfield Park, Mrs Alexander in Philip Glass’ Satyagraha, Alisa in Donizetti’s Lucia di Lammermoor, Marthe in Gounod’s Faust, the Mother and the Witch in Humperdinck’s Hänsel und Gretel, Mamma Lucia in Mascagni’s Cavalleria Rusticana, Marcellina in Mozart’s Le nozze di Figaro, Zita in Puccini’s Gianni Schicchi and La Frugola in his Il tabarro, Ragonde in Rossini’s Le Comte Ory, Giovanna in Verdi’s Rigoletto and Mary in Wagner’s Der fliegende Holländer and Fricka in his Das Rheingold and Die Walküre.
The Chilingirian Quartet – Levon Chilingirian and Ronald Birks, violins, Susie Mészáros, viola, and Stephen Orton, cello – is one of the world’s most celebrated and widely travelled ensembles. Formed in 1971, word of the new quartet spread rapidly and within a short time, the Chilingirian Quartet was claimed by the London critics to be an ensemble that would have a major impact on the world of the string quartet. In 1976, a triumphant debut in New York made the Chilingirians a sought-after group throughout the United States; four decades of extensive touring have now made the Quartet well known around the world. It has held residencies at the Universities of Liverpool and Sussex and at the Royal College of Music and regularly gives master-classes and lecture-demonstrations, continuing its dedication to education.

The Quartet has built an extensive and critically acclaimed discography of works by Bartók, Beethoven, Dvořák, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert and other major composers. It has also released ground-breaking recordings of masterworks by such contemporary composers as Michael Berkeley, John Tavener, Michael Tippett and Hugh Wood.
Described by *Musical Opinion* as ‘one of the most significant pianists of his generation’, **Andrew Brownell** is a laureate of several major international competitions, including the 2006 Leeds Competition and the 2002 Bach Competition in Leipzig. A noted advocate of the works of Johann Nepomuk Hummel, he won the 2005 Hummel Competition in Bratislava and is an honorary member of the Hummel-Gesellschaft-Weimar. His performances have been aired on BBC radio and television, Classic FM (UK), NPR, CBC, Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk and RBB KulturRadio. He has been soloist with orchestras such as the Hallé, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Calgary Philharmonic, Slovak Philharmonic and the Hermitage State Orchestra of St Petersburg.

A native of Portland, Oregon, Andrew Brownell began studying the piano at the age of four. His teachers have included Nancy Weems and Horacio Gutiérrez at the University of Houston; John Perry at the University of Southern California; and Joan Havill at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, where he earned a doctorate. He served as assistant organist of St James’ Episcopal Church in Los Angeles from 2001 to 2006 and was made a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists in 2010. An enthusiastic collaborative artist, he has appeared in concert with principals of orchestras such as the Philharmonia, Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Vienna Philharmonic. In 2017, he joined the faculty of the Butler School of Music, The University of Texas at Austin.