

The Fourth of the Fourth: On the Genesis and the Early Performances of the *Allegretto, pizzicato* Movement of Béla Bartók's String Quartet No. 4

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ABSTRACT

As already pointed out by László Somfai in the late 1980s, Béla Bartók's first fully developed five-movement realization of the so-called "bridge" or "palindrome" form was only an afterthought, a further development of a composition originally intended as a cycle of four movements only. As also discussed briefly by Somfai, the evolution of the *Allegretto, pizzicato* movement itself had distinct stages. A recently surfaced source further clarifies these compositional phases, among others confirms the existence of a 140-measure-long version without a proper conclusion, which, at one point, the composer considered as a definitive version (for which only the ending needed to be composed) and tested with the Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet. The present article re-examines the compositional process of Bartók's String Quartet no. 4 with an emphasis on its additional fourth movement and discusses the different compositional phases of the *Allegretto, pizzicato*.

KEYWORDS

Béla Bartók, Imre Waldbauer, string quartet, source study, genesis

At the end of the 1920s Béla Bartók became interested in shaping multi-movement symmetrical forms with thematic connections between the opposite movements. This structure, already

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apparent in the three-movement Piano Concerto no. 1 composed in 1926, was fully exploited for the first time in String Quartet no. 4, composed between July and September 1928.¹ After the Second World War the composer-analysts of serial music found their primary key to the Hungarian composer's oeuvre in this work.² László Somfai published a study, first in Hungarian in 1988, then in English in 1989, on the genesis of the Fourth String Quartet;³ his not so barely concealed aim was to illustrate the downsides of these analyses.

As the titles of Somfai's articles suggest, his focus was on his innovation, that is, the introduction of paper-studies into the field of Bartók research. He was able to do this due to the kindness of Peter Bartók: after the material of the former New York Bartók Archives was transferred to his private archive following a lengthy legal process,⁴ he sent black-and-white photostat copies of all compositional sources in his possession to the Budapest Bartók Archives in 1988. With the benefit of the paper-study Somfai proved that the idea of movement IV of String Quartet no. 4 and thus the realization of Bartók's first multi-movement arch form was an afterthought only, achieved when Bartók had already finished the autograph score of a four-movement version, which included the present movements I–III and V. According to Somfai, this is evidenced not only by the fact that movement IV is notated on a different sort of paper, but also by the fact that movement III is immediately followed by movement V in the autograph score. In the continuation of the article, Somfai discussed the draft complex to briefly outline the history of the genesis of each movement. Later he also incorporated the outcome of his article into his book on Bartók's compositional method.⁵

In the present article I am revisiting this case. My focus is on the *Allegretto*, *pizzicato* movement, and I am exploring the compositional events which followed the decision of adding this movement to the original four-movement concept. Although Somfai already described this part of the compositional process, during the preparation of volumes 29–30 of the *Béla Bartók Complete Critical Edition*, it turned out, partly due to a recently surfaced source, that the compositional process of the whole Fourth String Quartet can be analyzed in significantly greater detail than Somfai was able to do almost three and a half decades ago. As will be discussed below, a major difference is that the genesis of movement IV can be clearly divided into three distinct phases: (1) Bartók's initial sketch of the beginning of the movement; (2) a first, but unfinished version; (3) final form. As it is essential to have at least a basic knowledge of the surviving compositional sources of the work, the discussion of the different phases is preceded

¹*Béla Bartók Complete Critical Edition*, vol. 29: *String Quartets Nos. 1–6*, ed. by László SOMFAI in collaboration with Zsombor NÉMETH (München–Budapest: G. Henle Verlag–Editio Musica Budapest, 2022), 23* [henceforth: BBCCE/29].

²See inter alia René LEIBOWITZ, "Béla Bartók ou la possibilité du compromis dans la musique contemporaine," *Les Temps Modernes* 25 (1947), 705–734; Milton BABBITT, "The String Quartets of Bartók," *Musical Quarterly* 35 (1949), 377–385; George PERLE, "Symmetrical Formations in the String Quartets of Béla Bartók," *The Music Review* 16 (1955), 300–312.

³László SOMFAI, "A 4. vonósnegyes genezise: Bartók és a kottapapírok" [The genesis of String Quartet no 4: Bartók and manuscript papers], *Magyar Zene* 29/3 (1988), 324–332; id., "Bartók and the Paper-Studies: the Case of String Quartet No. 4," *Hungarian Music Quarterly* 1/1 (1989), 6–13.

⁴These sources are now held in the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel (CH-Bps).

⁵László SOMFAI, *Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts, and Autograph Sources* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London: University of California Press, 1996), 63–64, 100–102, 155–158, 273–275.



by a brief description of the sources.⁶ The contorted history of movement IV of String Quartet no. 4, however, did not end in Bartók's workshop; this will be discussed in the last two chapters of my article.

In considering formal units, I refer to Bartók's own analysis, published as the introduction to the pocket score issued under the *Philharmonia Partituren* brand.⁷ According to this, the movement consists of three parts (where Part Three is a varied recapitulation of Part One) and a coda.

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SOURCES

The draft complex of String Quartet no. 4 (CH-Bps, Béla Bartók Collection, 62FSS1) includes inter alia continuity sketches to movement IV on pages 33–35 and page 21, and an unfinished draft score of movement IV on pages 19–20. As is well known, the original bifolios of manuscripts preserved in the New York Bartók Archives (NYBA) were systematically cut into two in the 1950s so that the single leaves could be put into plastic folders for preservation; then, where it was necessary, an archivist paginated or re-paginated the pages.⁸ These numbers are not chronological, they do not reflect the original bifolio structure or sometimes not even the recto-verso relationship of pages. In our case pages 33–34 and 19–20 are two folios which apparently once formed a bifolio, and pages 35 and 21 are two pages of another separate folio (see Table 1).

These sketches and the partial draft score served as the basis for the autograph score of the movement (CH-Bps, Béla Bartók Collection, 62FSFC1, pp. 24–28), which, as Somfai already uncovered, is a kind of state within a state: a later insertion, written on a paper type different from that used for the other movements.⁹ At first glance, the original paper structure is not

Table 1. Mov. IV in the draft complex of String Quartet No. 4

Paper type	[Folio]	Page numbers	Content
J. E. & Co No. 8, 24 linig	[1 ^r]	33	Continuity sketches
	[1 ^v]	34	
	[2 ^r]	19	Unfinished draft score
	[2 ^v]	20	
J. E. & Co No. 5, 18 linig	[3 ^r]	35	Continuity sketches
	[3 ^v]	21	

⁶See the description of the complete source-material of this work in *Béla Bartók Complete Critical Edition*, vol. 30: *String Quartets Nos. 1–6: Critical Commentary*, ed. by László SOMFAI and Zsombor NÉMETH, in collaboration with Yusuke NAKAHARA (München: G. Henle Verlag / Budapest: Editio Musica, 2022).

⁷Republished in *Bartók Béla írásai* [Béla Bartók writings], vol. 1, ed. by Tibor TALLIÁN (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1989), 211–212. Former English translation in *Béla Bartók Essays*, ed. by Benjamin SUCHOFF (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), 412–413; current English translation in the Appendix of *BBCCE/29*.

⁸See Viktor BÁTOR, *The Béla Bartók Archives* (New York: Bartók Archives Publication, 1963), 16.

⁹Movement IV is notated on J. E. & Co. No. 6, 20 linig papers, while the rest is on J. E. & Co. No. 5, 18 linig papers.



Table 2. Movement IV in the autograph score of String Quartet no. 4

[Folio]	Page numbers	
	Bartók	NYBA
[1 ^r]	24	–
[1 ^v]	25	–
[2 ^r]	26	–
[2 ^v]	27	–
[4 ^r] and [3 ^{r-v}] (upper half)	28	(28) and PASTED (DISCARDED) 62FSFC1
[4 ^v]	–	–
[3 ^r] (lower half)	–	28a
[3 ^v] (lower half)	–	28b

obvious here either, but the lack of clarity is not due to the archivist’s pagination, but rather is the result of the compositional and editing process (see Table 2).

Bartók originally intended to use two bifolios of J. E. & Co. No. 6, 20 linig paper for the notation of the autograph score of movement IV in a way that the bifolio consisting of folios [2]–[3] was nested into the bifolio consisting of folios [1] and [4]. Bartók initially notated only on folios [1]–[3], and left the last folio blank.¹⁰ However, when Bartók re-shaped the movement to the final form (see detailed discussion later), the original paper structure got mixed up. In the present state, movement IV is on folios [1], [2], and [4], while folio [3] was cut into halves, and the recto side of the upper half was used as a paste-up on the upper half of the verso of folio [4] (which has notation on its lower half, too). Bartók paginated folios [1]–[2] as pages 24–27 and paginated the recto of folio [4] as page 28. This pagination, however, is on the paste-up, i.e., the upper half of folio [3]; thus, when this paste-up was detached from folio [4] in the NYBA, the recto of folio [4] was re-paginated as page (28), and the verso of the paste-up as “PASTED (DISCARDED) 62FSFC1.” The lower half of folio [3] was paginated in the NYBA as 28a–28b.

When the autograph was finished, at least one photographic reproduction of it was made. This became the engraver’s copy of the first edition published in 1929 (CH-Bps, Béla Bartók Collection, 62FSFC2, pp. 24–28).

A set of autograph parts of movement IV also survived (Budapest Bartók Archives, C-3810/22). Originally produced for testing purposes (see detailed discussion below), they were later used as the engraver’s copy and are the sole surviving material of the complete set of parts used as the engraver’s copy for the first edition of the parts. This source surfaced only recently: they were donated to the Budapest Bartók Archives in 2020 by Katherine Waldbauer, granddaughter of the violinist Imre Waldbauer.¹¹

¹⁰As this bifolio was used upside down, and was in fact a discarded bifolio, rejected clefs for two pianos appear on the bottom of folio [4^v].

¹¹See details in Zsombor NÉMETH, “Imre Waldbauer, an Important but Little-Known Violinist Partner of Béla Bartók,” *Studia Musicologica* 62/1–2 (2021), 149–173, 163–164.



2. PHASE 1: THE INITIAL SKETCH

The initial sketch appears on page 33 and on the first four staves of page 34 of the draft complex (see [Facsimiles 1a–b](#)). This rough notation consists of the material corresponding to measures 1–35 of the final version together with 13 more measures, that is, an initial version of Part One.

The initial sketch demonstrates that Bartók already had a symmetrical form of five movements in mind, in which movement IV would expand the chromatic form of movement II into diatonic form. He had also decided that after five introductory measures the main theme (a modified version of the main theme of movement II) should appear in a four-part fugato arrangement instead of the two-part arrangement of movement II, and that the thematic entries should be a fifth apart from each other, progressing up in a circle of fifths. The overall tonality, however, is different in this version: everything, which also appears in the final version, is notated a third lower (i.e., the main theme in m. 6, Viola part starts on F instead of A \flat).

The last 13 measures of the initial sketch (i.e., the last 7 measures on page 33 and the measures of the first system on page 34, see [Facsimiles 1a](#) and [1b](#)) in this initial form cannot be matched to the printed edition. The first five measures of this section are a transition to the section which resembles measures 37–44 of the final version. The corrections on the top of page 34 reveal that Bartók tried a different contrapuntal layout and hesitated on the conclusion of this section.

Right after what was discussed before Bartók notated the material of measures 37–41. This sketch is concluded with a double bar-line, and, more importantly, is already notated in the final tonality. It seems that it was at this point that Bartók changed his tonal concept of the movement.

3. PHASE 2: THE FIRST VERSION, WITHOUT A PROPER CONCLUSION

As a next stage Bartók outlined a first version of the movement, which was significantly longer than the final version, despite its incompleteness.

With the sketching of measures 37–41 (discussed above) Part One of the movement was in fact ready in the final tonality. Thus, Bartók separated folio [1] from the bifolio, and on the other part of the bifolio (i.e., folio [2]) he began to write the draft score. On the recto side (p. 19) and in the first measure of the verso side (p. 20) he transposed and elaborated what was already sketched previously. The three measures of the continuation, which lead to Part Two and which were not sketched before, were first notated in pencil, and then reinforced in ink.

The first section of Part Two was notated for the first time in the draft score, without preliminary sketches or penciled drafts. This is not so surprising, as this section is also a reworking of material already finished: measures 78–101 of movement II (which is also the first section of Part Two in that movement). Note that in the draft score of movement IV there are still no traces of the so-called “Bartók-pizzicato,” which in the final version lends a special color to this section.¹²

¹²The color, which was described by Ernő Lendvai as “crackling fireworks,” contrasted with the “siren-like wailing” of the parallel section of movement II. Ernő LENDVAI, *The Workshop of Bartók and Kodály* (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1983), 604.



Handwritten musical score for piano, page 33, from the Béla Bartók Collection, 62FSS1. The score is written on aged, yellowed paper with multiple systems of staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The page is numbered '33' in the top right corner. At the bottom, there is a library stamp that reads 'Estate, Bela Bartok' and '62 FSS 1'.

Facsimile 1a. CH-Bps, Béla Bartók Collection, 62FSS1, p. 33

However, after finishing the first section of Part Two of movement IV, Bartók returned to the page where he left off sketching (i.e., p. 34) and began drafting the remaining section of the movement almost to its end. When he ran out of space, he continued his work on the recto of a



34

34

viola
viol. II.

62 FSS 1

Estate
Bela Bartok

Facsimile 1b. CH-Bps, Béla Bartók Collection, 62FSS1, p. 34



leftover fresh folio (p. 35).¹³ Thereafter he returned to the draft score and using his new sketches (on pp. 34–35) he drafted approximately the second and third sections of Part Two until the end of page 20.

The reason why I use the term first version to this compositional stage lies in the fact that although what was discussed so far lacked a proper conclusion, it was copied into the autograph fairy copy of the score (onto folios [1]–[2] and the still intact folio [3], cf. Table 2) and was furnished with almost all performance instructions and measure numbers (indicated for every fifth measure above the staff in boxes, just like in the first edition; see also Table 3). Moreover, from the first but unfinished version of movement IV Bartók produced a complete set of parts. The first and the final versions are related as follows. The initial tempo of the movement was $\text{♩} = 152$ instead of $\text{♩} = 142$ and, throughout the movement, the “Bartók-pizzicatos” were indicated with circled plus-signs. Part One, except for the texture of a short section in the first violin part (the chords in mm. 21–26 also contain an E^1), is the same as the final version. In Part Two there are significant changes in texture throughout; most importantly the number of the repetition of the *pianississimo* cluster motive was different (cf. Table 3), and the violoncello part of measures 78–82 had an additional upper voice (like that of the second violin). Part Three (i.e., the recapitulation) is almost the same as the final version.

The unfinished coda (see Facsimiles 2a–b), however, is markedly different. It started with an *Allegro* section, which again alluded to the theme of Part One. But compared to the recapitulation it is less dense and the canonic voices enter a whole measure apart from each other. Its accompaniment first resembles the beginning of the movement, but during the *sempre accelerando* section the material of the lower two parts evolves into the *arp. sempre* motive known from measure 78 (i.e., Part Two, third section). The end of this discarded section resembles the beginning of the coda of the final version (mm. 113–117, where the thematic material is broken up into scale motifs which mirror one another and into rhythmic imitation), but it is also “airier” than the definitive form. Although Bartók must have had ideas about the conclusion, he first wanted to hear the already finished sections – this time not on one or two pianos,¹⁴ but by a real string quartet. This must have been the reason why he furnished the autograph score of the unfinished movement with performance instructions and measure numbers and why he produced parts from it, which were given to the members of the Waldbauer–Kerpely Quartet. This method of working was not unique in the compositional process of the Fourth String Quartet: an autograph first violin part of movement I also survives, which similarly preserves an earlier version without a proper conclusion.¹⁵

¹³Despite the common paper type, this folio was not recycled from the autograph score, but was probably part of the gathering of two bifolios used for the composition of *Five Hungarian Folksongs* for voice and piano (BB 97, 1928, see Gábor Vásárhelyi's Collection, BH I/212). I would like to thank to Nakahara Yusuke for this observation.

¹⁴According to Bartók and Ditta Pásztory's letter to the composer's mother Paula Voit, of August 26, 1928 (see *Bartók Béla Családi levelei*, ed. by Béla BARTÓK Jr. [Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1981], 448), the new quartet (i.e., the four-movement version of String Quartet no. 4) was “almost ready” and they even played the first movement on two pianos.

¹⁵Budapest Bartók Archives, BAN 1084 (donated to the Archives in 1963 by János Temesváry, former member of the Waldbauer–Kerpely Quartet). Although there are no other similar surviving sources, it is suspected that Bartók decided to delete the special vibrato sign at the beginning of the third movement (see SOMFAI, *Béla Bartók*, 274) after a similar testing.



Table 3. Comparison of the first version and the final version of movement IV

Formal parts		First version	Final version	Level of difference
Part One		mm. 1–44	mm. 1–44	Almost the same or very similar
Part Two, first section		m. 45	m. 45	
		–	m. 46	
		mm. 46–57	mm. 47–58	
		mm. 58–59	–	
		mm. 60–66	mm. 59–65	
		m. 67	–	
Part Two, second section		mm. 68–71	mm. 66–69	
		m. 72	–	
		mm. 73–75	mm. 70–72	
		m. 76	–	
Part Two, third section		mm. 77–91	mm. 73–87	
Part Three		mm. 92–115	mm. 88–111	
		m. 116	m. 112	Different
Coda	(until <i>Sostenuto</i>)	mm. 117–140	mm. 113–118	
	(from <i>Sostenuto</i>)	–	mm. 119–124	

4. PHASE 3: SHAPING THE FINAL VERSION

The changes ignited by the aural experience were added first to the autograph score in red pencil by Bartók (probably during the quartet's performance),¹⁶ and simultaneously into the parts in pencil by the musicians. The changes were later introduced into both sources in ink by the composer himself.

It is noteworthy that Bartók originally also intended to cut the last section of Part Three. His marking initially included the turning point of the movement, too (mm. 102–111, originally marked as *Tranquillo* only, and changed to *Tempo I. (tranquillo)* in the final form), where the “thematic material, closed to start with, is broken up as in the development by means of inversions and rhythmic imitation, and then closes like a fan.”¹⁷ But later on, he changed his mind, which is signaled by his remark “marad” [stet] (see [Facsimile 2a](#)).¹⁸

¹⁶Such corrections also appear in movements I, II and V, but they are minor ones (mostly the addition or deletion of performance instructions). In movement III a marking in red pencil prompted the scratching out of the special vibrato sign.

¹⁷János KÁRPÁTI, *Bartók's Chamber Music*, transl. by Fred MACNICOL and Maria STEINER (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1994), 360.

¹⁸This remark is near the boxed measure number 110, but as it is very pale in the original, it is barely visible in the facsimile reproduction.



PASTED (DISCARDED) 62FSFC1

135

140

288

Estate
Béla Bartók

62FSFC1

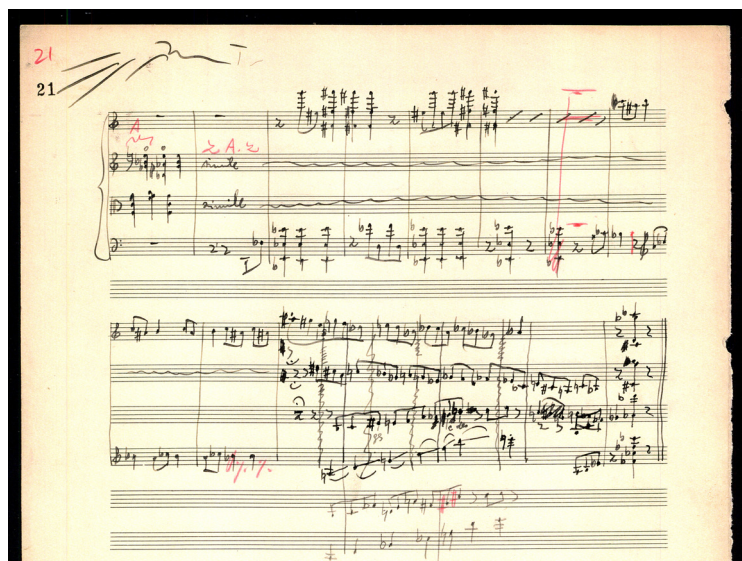
Facsimile 2b. CH-Bps, Béla Bartók Collection, 62FSFC1, mov. IV, fol. [3^v] (reconstructed)



On the top of the verso of folio [3] in the autograph score Bartók marked what must be retained after slight modifications (see his marking in mm. 137–139 according to the first version in [Facsimile 2b](#)). Bartók began the rewriting of the end of the movement on folio [4] of the autograph score. First, he planned to copy measures 100–111 again. But even before writing a full measure, to save time, he changed his mind, and cut out that upper part from folio [3] (which contained music that did not need to be changed) and pasted it onto the recto of folio [4] (cf. [Table 2](#)). He then notated the first part of the final version of the coda on the remaining blank part of the recto of folio [4].

At this point the movement still lacked a proper conclusion, and this is where the previously ignored sketch on page 21 of the draft complex comes into the discussion (see [Facsimile 3](#)). This page is the verso of page 35, which holds the continuity sketches to measures 108–140 of the first version (i.e. mm. 104ff. according to the final version). The notation on page 21 is, however, not a direct continuation of the music written on page 35 (i.e., the previous page).

The first part of the sketch (see the whole first system and the first two measures of the second system in [Facsimile 3](#)) is a recapitulation of the beginning of Part Two. These 10 measures were probably intended in place of measure 119 of the final version, but not used there. The continuation of the sketch is largely identical with measures 120–124 (the last five measures) of the final version. Thus measure 119 of the final version, the measure with the unique tempo indication *Sostenuto* (valid only for this single measure), could be understood not just as “a momentary suspension of the rhythmic progress [to] another fan-like closing gesture,”¹⁹



Facsimile 3. CH-Bps, Béla Bartók Collection, 62FSS1, p. 21 (staves 1–11 only; the rest of the page is blank)

¹⁹KÁRPÁTI, *Bartók's Chamber Music*, 360.



but also as a brilliantly compressed recapitulation of Part Two, in which the only item that returns is the major aural novelty of this movement, and indeed of the whole piece: the Bartók-pizzicato.

The reworking of the autograph parts also has lessons. In the second violin and viola parts, the crossing starts at measure 112 (according to the final measure numbers) and ends at measure 140 (according to the old measure numbers), just as in the autograph score. In the first violin (see [Facsimile 4](#)) and the violoncello parts, however, the crossing already stops in measure 131, and measures 132–140 were reworked: not just simply crossed out and rewritten, but whatever was recyclable was reused (even if some more measures were discarded in this section, too). This phenomenon also gives an explanation to Bartók's markings on the top of the verso of folio [3] of the autograph score (see [Facsimile 2b](#)) and proves that measures 113–117 of the final version not just resembles measures 132–140 of the discarded section, but at least in the cases of the first violin and the violoncello, the final version was directly shaped from the first version.

It is open to discussion whether Bartók put the content of page 21 of the draft complex on paper at the time of the completion of page 35 (as ideas for a possible conclusion, not yet connected to the rest of the movement) or composed it only after he listened to the unfinished version of the movement. But thanks to the autograph parts it is certain that he also worked on this section after first hearing the unfinished movement performed by the Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet. As discussed above, the re-shaping of the first version to the final form was done in the autograph score first in red pencil; these red-penciled markings, however, also affect the new ending (i.e., mm. 112ff. of the final version). Since Bartók's red-penciled markings in measures 112ff. appear in the autograph parts initially as additions by the musicians (which were later reinforced by Bartók in ink), and red-penciled markings also appear on the sketch itself (see [Facsimile 3](#)), it is highly possible that Bartók composed the ending on the spot, i.e., during the rehearsal of the Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet which he might have attended in order to be able to listen to the still unfinished movement performed.²⁰ It is assumed that after editing the sketch, Bartók notated the conclusion into the autograph score, then immediately copied it into the parts. The musicians then tried out the ending, in which Bartók also made further changes: *inter alia* he added dynamics in measures 112, 115, and 124; he cancelled the glissandos in the violoncello part, measures 120–122; and he recomposed the last measure of the violoncello part.

5. THE INITIAL TEMPO INSCRIPTION

The photographic reproduction of the autograph score is relevant for the present study for one reason only. Parallel to the tempo indication of movement II (*Prestissimo, con sordino*), there was a comma between the words *Allegretto* (i.e., the character) and *pizzicato* (i.e., the instrumental effect) both in the autograph score and in the autograph set of parts. In the former source, however, the comma has a very light, pale color, which is therefore not visible in the photographic reproduction. As this reproduction served as the engraver's copy of the published score, the tempo indication appeared in print without a comma. It is believed that the tempo

²⁰Unfortunately, the exact date of this rehearsal is not known; it was before the photo of the autograph, which served as the engraver's copy, was taken, i.e. September or October 1928.





Facsimile 4. Budapest Bartók Archives, C-3810/22: p. 4 of the autograph first violin part of String Quartet no. 4, mov. IV

indications of the parts were changed according to the erroneous engraver's copy of the score in all probability by an editor at Universal Edition.²¹

6. SECRETS BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE FIRST PERFORMANCE, OR WHY THE AUTOGRAPH SET OF PARTS OF MOVEMENT IV MIGHT HAVE SURVIVED

It seems that the curious case of the Fourth of the Fourth does not end after the compositional and editorial process. On May 2, 1958, more than a decade after the death of Béla Bartók and

²¹This case is similar to the issue of the *Allegro, molto capriccioso* of movement II of String Quartet no. 2 (see SOMFAI, *Béla Bartók*, 263, fn. 52), although the absence of the comma here does not lead to similar misunderstandings.

years after the passing of Imre Waldbauer, the following lines appeared in a Hungarian-language independent Israeli newspaper:²²

The Israeli section of the international organization Jeunesse musicale gave its first successful concert at Heichal Hatarbut [Palace of Culture] earlier this season in front of a sold-out hall. Due to an organizational oversight, the second concert at the Tel Aviv Museum attracted less than half of the capacity. The Tal Quartet, together with Jona Ettlinger, performed Weber's Clarinet Quintet, but only got as far as the third movement, because it turned out that the clarinetist had forgotten one of the pages of his part... This recalls two amusing stories: on Ernő Dohnányi's 50th birthday, [on October 25, 1927] the Waldbauer Quartet gave a concert at the Academy of Music in Budapest, premiering his [i.e., Dohnányi's] new Third String Quartet.²³ The boxes were full of social and artistic notables, and the auditorium was packed with spectators. But suddenly the quartet's performance was interrupted – Temesváry, the violist, stood up and whispered something in Waldbauer's ear. The embarrassed leader apologized to the audience, that the violist had left part of his music at home and that they would have to take a break until he fetched it (from his apartment in Buda, a long way away)... The concert resumed after a delay of half an hour. The members of the Waldbauer Quartet were also the featured performers when Bartók's Fourth String Quartet was premiered in London; it was discovered only there that the Master had allegedly forgotten to give Waldbauer the parts of the pizzicato movement... They were therefore forced to perform the work with only four movements. Bartók claimed that Waldbauer had forgotten the parts, but Waldbauer blamed the Master for his forgetfulness....

A few years later, on June 1, 1962, following the first public performance of Bartók's Fourth Quartet in Israel, the author of the previous article revisited his memories:²⁴

At the UK premiere [of the Fourth String Quartet] an amusing incident happened: the first violinist left the parts of the 4th (pizzicato) movement at home, and the work was performed without it. Waldbauer claimed at home that Bartók had not yet finished the movement, but Bartók told us the truth, without any annoyance.

²²“A ‘Jeunesse musicale’ nemzetközi szervezetének izraeli tagozata évad elején adta a Héichál Hátárbutban első nagysikerű hangversenyét, telt terem előtt. A második koncert — rendezési hanyagság folytán — a tel-avivi múzeumban fél termet sem vonzott. A Tál-vonósnyegyes Jona Ettlinger közreműködésével Weber klarinét-ötösét adta elő, de csak a 3-ik tételig jutott el, mert mint kiderült a klarinétos otthon felejtette szolamának egyik lapját... Erről két mulatságos történet jut eszembe: Dohnányi Ernő 50-ik születésnapja alkalmából a budapesti Zeneakadémián díszhangversenyt tartottak a Waldbauer-kvartett közreműködésével, melyen az ünnepeltnak új, 3-ik vonósnyegyes került bemutató előadásra. A páholyok telve voltak társadalmi és művészi előkelőségekkel, a nézőtér is zsúfolva közönséggel. Hirtelen azonban megszakadt a kvartett előadása, — Temesváry, a brácsás felállt és valamit sügött Waldbauer fülébe. A primhegedűs zavartan elnézést kért a közönségtől, hogy a brácsás egy lapot otthonfelejtett, s míg el nem hozza (jó messze fekvő budai lakásáról), szünetet kell tartania... Jó félórás késéssel folytathatták a díszhangversenyt. Ugyancsak a Waldbauer-kvartett történt meg, hogy mikor Londonban Bartók 4-ik vonósnyegyesét mutatták be, kiderült, hogy a Mester állítólag elfelejtette odaadni a pizzicato-tétel szolamait... Kénytelenek voltak tehát a művet csak négy tétellel adni elő. Bartók azt állította, hogy Waldbauer felejtette otthon a szolamokat, Waldbauer pedig a Mestert okolta a feledékenyséért....” See László PATAKI, “A zenélő ifjúság” [Young people playing music], *Uj Kelet* 39/2967 (May 2, 1958), 10.

²³See the full program of this event in *Koncertadatbázis – budapesti hangversenyek 1900-tól napjainkig* [Concert Database – Budapest Concerts from 1900 to the Present] of the Archives and Research Group for 20th–21st-Century Hungarian Music, Institute for Musicology, Research Centre for the Humanities: <http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?KID=3441> (accessed on December 17, 2021).

²⁴“Az angliai bemutatonál történt meg az a mulatságos eset, hogy a primhegedűs otthon felejtette a 4-ik, pizzicato-tételnek kottaanyagát, és így enélkül adták elő a művet. Waldbauer otthon azt állította, hogy Bartók nem készült még el a tétellel, Bartók viszont elmondta a való tény — anélkül, hogy bosszankodott volna rajta.” See László PATAKI, “Korszerű kamarazene” [Up-to-date chamber music], *Uj Kelet* 42/4210 (June 1, 1962), 8.



The reviews quoted were written by László Pataki (previously known as Pollatsek or Pol-latschek), a propagator of new music, whose reviews and studies appeared during the 1920s and 1930s in important newspapers and music periodicals in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany, and Switzerland. Inter alia, he published a lengthy article on Bartók's fiftieth birthday in the *Musical Times*,²⁵ for which he requested information from the composer himself.²⁶

The public premiere of Bartók's String Quartet no. 4 took place on February 22, 1929 via the BBC Daventry Experimental radio station. At that time, the work had not yet appeared in print, and the official announcement did not contain the number or the tempo indications of the movements.²⁷ Therefore, if the fourth movement was indeed omitted, as Pataki recalled, this could only have been noticed by a narrow circle of insiders. As almost no reviews of radio concerts were written at the time, and no recording of the performance has survived, Pataki's anecdotal recollections can neither be proved nor disproved.²⁸ However, his recollections on the performance of Dohnányi's Third String Quartet are indeed confirmed by contemporary reviews: both the unknown journalist of the *Magyar Hírlap*²⁹ and the distinguished music critic Viktor Lányi mentioned the issue.³⁰ In addition it should be noted, that a few years earlier a performance of Zoltán Kodály's Duo for Violin and Violoncello (op. 7) in London had to be cancelled entirely because Waldbauer had forgotten to take the score with him, and no copies of the work could be found in the capital city of the United Kingdom.³¹

²⁵László POLLATSEK, "Béla Bartók and His Work: On the Occasion of His Fiftieth Birthday," *Musical Times* 72/1059 (1931), 411–413; no. 60 (1931), 506–510; no. 1061 (1931), 600–602; no. 1061 (1931), 697–699.

²⁶Bartók's answer of February 23, 1931 is published in *Bartók Béla Levelei* [Béla Bartók Letters], ed. by János DEMÉNY (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1976), 403–404.

²⁷[Without author and title], *Radio Times* 22/281 (February 15, 1929), 49.

²⁸Malcolm Gillies' comprehensive book on Bartók's reception in the United Kingdom (Malcolm GILLIES, *Bartók in Britain: A Guided Tour* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989]) only records the data of the first performance (p. 74), also Philip Arnold Heseltine's and Frederick Delius's opinions on this work (pp. 128–129).

²⁹"... az emelkedett hangulatot az a kis incidens sem zavarta meg, hogy a már megkezdett vonósnégyes hangjegyeinek egy része hiányozván, a játékot meg kellett szakítani. A műsort így megváltoztatták, szünet előtt játszották az ötöst, és csak azután a kvartettet." [The exhilarated mood was not disturbed by the small incident that the playing had to be interrupted because some of the notes of the string quartet, which had already begun, were missing. The program was thus altered, the quintet being played before the interval, and then the quartet.] See [Without author], "A Waldbauer-vonósnégyes első hangversenye" [First Concert of the Waldbauer String Quartet], *Magyar Hírlap* 37/243 (October 26, 1927), 8.

³⁰"A krónika hűsége kedvéért megemlítjük, hogy Waldbauerék egy kis hangjegykalamitás miatt a kvartett első tételét kénytelenek voltak félbeszakítani s míg a hiányzó kottaoldalak megkerültek, előbb az utolsó számként szereplő kvintettet játszották el." [For the sake of fidelity to the chronicle, it is worth mentioning that the Waldbauers were forced to interrupt the first movement of the quartet due to a small mismatch, and while the missing pages of the parts were being found, they first played the quintet, which was originally announced as the last number of the program.] Viktor LÁNYI, "A Waldbauer-kvartett jubiláris Dohnányi-estje" [The Waldbauer Quartet's jubilee Dohnányi recital], *Pesti Hírlap* 49/243 (October 26, 1927), 12.

³¹According to Zoltán Kodály's letter to the Universal Edition, November 20, 1925, published in *Kodály Zoltán és az Universal Edition levéltárlása – Zoltán Kodály und die Universal Edition Briefwechsel. 1918–1929*, ed. by Ferenc BÓNIS (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó–Kodály Zoltán Emlékmúzeum és Archivum, 2017), 500. Kodály may have been referring to the concert held at the Mayer House in London on February 25, 1925 (date of the concert according to the manuscript concert diary of the Waldbauer-Kerpely String Quartet: BBA, Waldbauer Estate, Box VIII, C-2135/16).



If the first performance of Bartók's Fourth String Quartet really happened as Pataki recalled, then the Waldbauer–Kerpely Quartet was in fact realizing Bartók's initial four-movement plan, and perhaps that is why the composer told the critic about the incident without being annoyed. And perhaps that is the reason why the autograph parts of this movement survived in the estate of Imre Waldbauer: after the printed parts were published, the composer may have given the violinist the manuscript parts as a memento of the abridged premiere.³²

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³²The complete manuscript set of parts, which served as the engraver's copy of the parts, and which included the autograph parts of movement IV discussed in this article, was sent back from Universal Edition to Bartók during the summer of 1929, alongside the first set of proofs for the parts. Following Bartók's enquiry of November 16, 1929 their return was requested by the publisher on November 19, 1929 (see the unpublished correspondence of Bartók and Universal Edition in CH-Bps, Béla Bartók Collection). It is not known whether Bartók sent the parts back; if so, they may have somehow been returned to him.

