



# FACT SHEETS ON HUNGARY

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## A Brief History of Music in Hungary

***With its lively musical life and internationally renowned performers, Hungary ranks high among the countries, some of them many times its size, which boast of centuries-old musical traditions. Home to just about ten million people, it is often called a “great power” in music. Despite the tragic turns in its history, its musicians have always managed to manifest their talent and link their homeland to European musical life.***

songs or those retelling bygone deeds sounded. Music to mourn the dead – Transylvanian pentatonic laments and diatonic laments from various Hungarian-speaking areas – dates back to pre-Conquest times. Melodies of laments were originally also used for singing ritual or epic texts, the latter describing the lives, deeds and death of heroes.

As from the second half of the tenth century, Hungary gradually became part of Europe’s variegated cultural texture. Our forebears strove to adopt a foreign musical idiom and refined musical achievements without rejecting indigenous patterns. Conversion to Christianity had far-reaching consequences as it transplanted plainsong, a valuable genre of unisonous music. Equally important

As historical turmoil has destroyed much of the evidence (sheet music and instruments) of early Hungarian musical life, research relies on secondary sources and the findings of other disciplines (such as archaeology and linguistics). Because Hungarian composed music emerged from folk music, only research on the latter allows us to glean some information about the earliest periods. Folk music retained ancient melodies, or at least their style, for a long time. A close look at the melodic line, ambit, number of syllables, embellishments and ways of performing folk songs allows the researcher to tell with relative precision which historic period a folk song comes from. Even if folk songs have undergone minor changes in recent centuries, certain original characteristics are still recognisable.

The so-called “new style” of folk songs, which became dominant at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is nothing like any versions of the “old style”. The new style has an arched melodic line, strict composition, long phrases and extended register. By contrast, folk songs belonging to the old style, even if of widely varying date of origin, theme, rendering or territorial appearance, have a descending melodic line.

Thus laments from the era before Magyars settled in the Carpathian Basin in 896 AD (the event usually referred to as the Conquest), mediaeval pipe-player’s and swineherd’s dances and 18<sup>th</sup>-century melodies in major and minor all belong to the old style category.

There are hardly any records about the music of the time before the foundation of the Hungarian State in 1000. We can only guess how shamanistic



Sheet music of church songs on the pages of mediaeval Hungarian codices

was the influence of mediaeval schools, for they imparted respect for *musica* among all learned people of the age. Students had a music lesson every day, where they were taught hundreds of songs for church service. Thus they learned to read music and some theory of music. In that respect the school system was uniform across the country: practically the same liturgy and musical curriculum were taught at schools that were attached to cathedrals and those run by the tiniest of villages. That gave rise to a Hungarian version of Gregorian chant. Several richly ornamented collections of choral pieces and codices were produced using a special, Hungarian method of musical notation. We can safely state that music formed part of the erudition of all learned persons of Hungary in the Middle Ages. Although schooling was not compulsory, the joint daily singing of church songs created the foundations for a shared musical culture.

Records are scantier about the secular music of that age. As no sheet music has come down to us about secular music, we can only rely on written references and contemporaneous folk music. The names of persons and places mentioned in mediaeval documents often

refer to music instruments and musicians' jobs (as, for instance, Sıpos [pipe-player], Dobos [drummer] and Igricfalva [village of minstrels]), which indicates that music was a part of celebrations and entertainment. Hungarian monarchs invited to their court foreign musicians, noted minstrels and German minnesingers. Gaucelm Faidit and Peire Vidal are supposed to have arrived at the court of King Imre (reigned between 1196

and 1204) alongside the king's young Aragonese wife. Oswald von Wolkenstein (1377-1445) visited Hungary during the reign of Sigismund (who was king of Hungary between 1387 and 1437). Thus the most refined achievements of lyric music of the age of chivalry were also appreciated in Hungary.

The fundamental economic and social changes that ushered in the Late Middle Ages also affected musical life. New towns

to the latest style of the Netherlands were also played in the royal court and for church dignitaries.

Matthias Corvinus (reigned between 1458 and 1490) was an affluent and erudite monarch. His royal chapel employed 40 singers and, as noted by the head of the chorus of the Vatican after visiting the royal seat in Buda, it rivalled that of the Holy See or Burgundy in size and quality of performance. Instrumental chamber music was also played in Matthias' court but the scores have regrettably perished.

The works played and the musicians and singers are believed to have been mainly Italian and Flemish. They included the Flemish composer Jacques Barbireau (c. 1408-1491), Pietro Bono (1417-1497), the most outstanding Italian lutenist of his time, and the famous singer-composer Johannes Stockem. He is thought to have stayed at Matthias' court between 1481 and 1487.

It was that colourful musical culture that the Ottoman Turkish occupation of Hungary (1524-1686) shredded. The country was forcibly divided into three parts, and musical life all but ceased in the central areas that had

been seized by the Turks. Even plain-song singing survived there for just a few more decades before falling into silence for good at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Elsewhere in Hungary unisonous singing gained momentum around 1540 with the advent of the first Protestant reformers. Initially the old Latin liturgical songs were translated into Hungarian, and later on long hymns sung in church by the whole



*Sebestyén Stulhoff completed the construction of the organ of the Benedictine Abbey of Tibany in 1770*

sprang up independently of church centres, and the public grew more appreciative of cultural achievements. Plainsong singing was still popular, yet polyphonic works also spread. As early as the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, Gregorian chants were performed in two voices and enriched with inserted verses. As polyphony developed, a second and third part with independent cadence was added to the original one. Motets composed according

congregation in the vernacular became prevalent.

A new unisonous genre, the verse chronicle, gained popularity at that time. Historical events, exhortative biblical parables and romances were sung in long “chronicles”. Most of the verse chronicles were perpetuated in folk tradition. It is a welcome fact that two printed records have also come down to us. That written by the famous singer-lutenist Sebestyén Tinódi was printed in 1554.

During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries monophony gained currency in the music of Hungarian-speaking territories. The more refined tendencies of composed music, which emerged during the Late Middle Ages, could only survive in some isolated localities, as for instance, in the court of successive princes of Transylvania. At that time the Principality of Transylvania formed the eastern part of Hungary. Treading a carefully line between Austria and Turkey, Transylvania gained a measure of independence, and it was instrumental in cultivating Hungarian national consciousness. In fact, the desire to perpetuate national consciousness was one of the motivations behind the effort to run a royal court that revived the mediaeval atmosphere. The princes of Transylvania – Zsigmond János (reigned between



*Joseph Haydn directed musical life in the Esterházy Mansion, Fertőd*

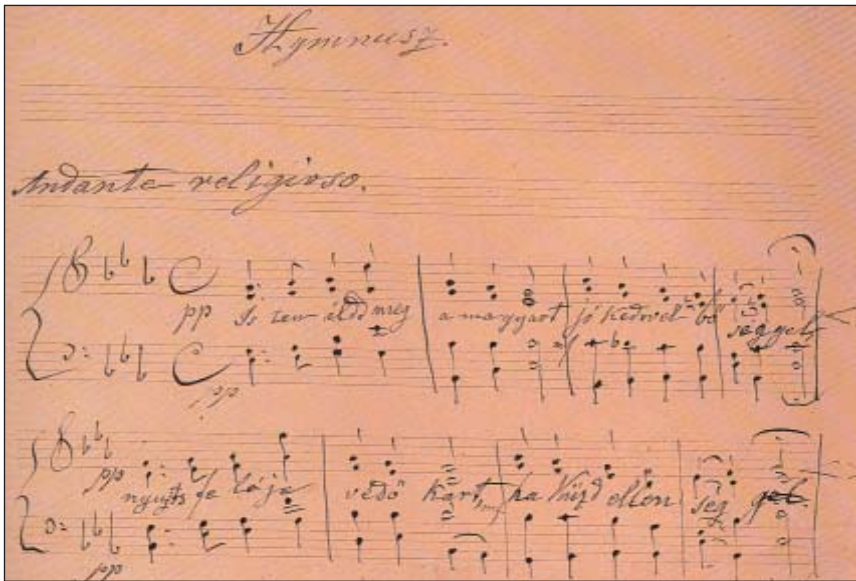
1559 and 1571), István Báthori (reigned between 1581 and 1586) and especially Zsigmond Báthori (reigned between 1588 and 1598) – were widely known as sponsors of the arts. That is why numerous famous foreign musicians spent some time at their court and/or dedicated their works to them. They included Palestrina (c. 1525-1594) and Girolama Diruta (c. 1550-?), author of the first collection of exercises for the organ. Giovanni Battista Mosto (c. 1550-1596), a pupil

of Lasso of Italian origin, spent several years in Transylvania. He entitled his first published collection of madrigals *Madrigals of Alba Iulia*, which was to indicate that he had originally composed the richly embellished polyphonic works for the court chorus in Transylvania.

The outstanding lutenist and composer Bálint Bakfark (1506?-1576) also lived in that era. The first collection of his works came out in Lyon (1553), and the second in Cracow (1565). He



*Francis Joseph I, emperor of Austria and king of Hungary, was in the audience when Liszt, who had earned renown throughout Europe, gave a concert in the Castle district of Buda*



Ferenc Kölcsey's poem *Hymn* was set to music by Ferenc Erkel. It has become Hungary's national anthem

Portrait of Ferenc Erkel from 1861

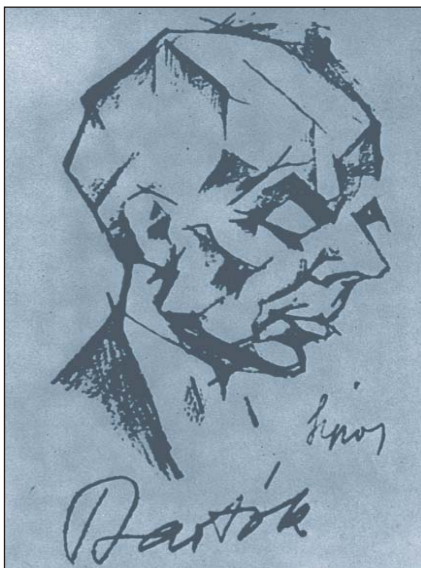
was proud to refer to his Transylvanian origin in the title of his works. He was a celebrated lutenist virtuoso, who enjoyed the favour of several rulers across Europe, and even poets sang his fame. His art contributed to making instrumental music widely recognised in Hungarian-speaking territories.

For the educated burghers of the dynamically developing border towns of the Austrian-dominated northern and western parts of Hungary, European music chiefly meant church music. Eloquent examples could be found in the musical life of Pozsony (Bratislava), Sopron, Bártfa (Bardejov)

and Lőcse (Levoca). Both the church authorities (the bishopric and the chapter) and the municipalities hired, with generous fees, highly qualified musicians to play the organ in churches, or various other instruments during festivities in the towns. Orchestras (called *capella* at the time) consisted of between 8 and 15 persons: singers, strings, an organist and a conductor. Accompanied by wind instrument players, they played renaissance motets, instrumental concert pieces and, later on, baroque church compositions in four or five parts.

At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, following 150 years of Ottoman Turkish

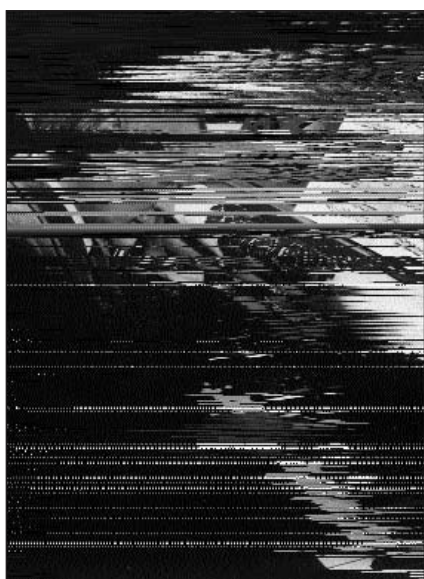
dominance, Hungary and its cultural life needed reconstruction. In the realm of music that meant absorbing the new European style of the time: baroque. That involved taking over foreign patterns and inviting numerous musicians from abroad. As from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in an increasing number of bishoprics, liturgy came to involve baroque music, later works by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven and compositions of gifted domestic composers. The cathedral of Győr holds a rich collection of sheet music. It includes works by Antonio Caldara (1670-1736), as well as other major figures from the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: Johann Baptist Vanhal



Cubist portrait of Bartók from the 1920s



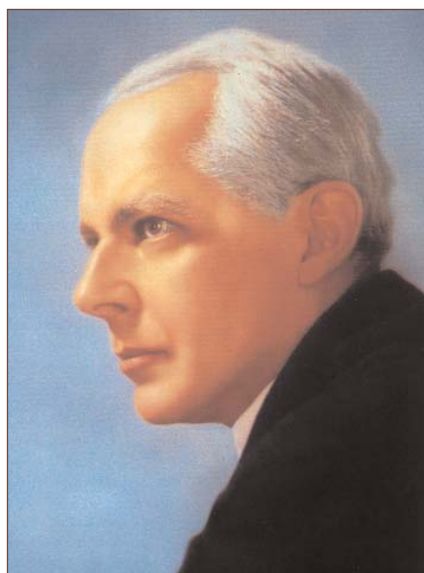
Scene from the ballet *Wooden Prince*



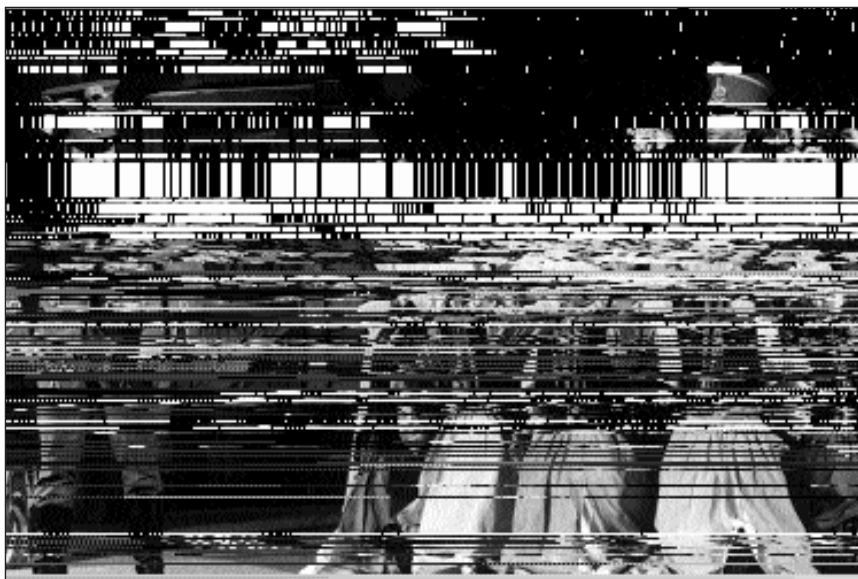
*Zoltán Kodály at home*

(1739-1813), Joseph (1732-1809) and Michael (1737-1806) Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739-1799) and Johann Albrechtsberger (1736-1809), who worked for a few years in Győr. Arguably the most outstanding composer of the era, Benedek Istvánffy (1733-1778) directed the musical ensemble of the Győr cathedral as from 1766. Other bishoprics including Pécs, Veszprém, Szombathely, Székesfehérvár, Eger and Várad (Oradea) were reconstructed and refurbished following the end of Turkish occupation, and musical life was as lively and colourful there as in Győr.

The Churches were not the only



*Béla Bartók in exile in the United States*



*Scene from the musical János Hány*

sponsors of composed music. Certain members of the aristocracy, first of all, members of the extremely rich Esterházy family, followed suit. Prince Pál Esterházy (1635-1713) formed an orchestra in Kismarton (Eisenstadt) and sponsored the publication of *Harmonia Caelestis*, a collection of 55 church cantatas, which was the first written record of Hungarian baroque music. Subsequent generations of the Esterházy family expanded the orchestra. As from 1727, a noted Viennese composer, Gregor Joseph Werner (1693-1766), conducted the orchestra. Then, from 1761, Joseph Haydn held the position for nearly three decades. Only a limited section of society bene-

fited from that lively musical life though. Even the educated members of the middle class went without musical education, and in fact there were some instances of actual hostility towards music.

By the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the middle class had established its hold on political power in the western part of Europe. For peoples of East-Central Europe, that period saw the strengthening of national consciousness. In Hungary the lesser nobility was the motor of enlightenment, and its members advocated the national character of culture. But where could this generation find the Hungarian characteristics of culture? The composed music of



*Former students - Attila Bozay, Zsolt Durkó, György Kurtág, Emil Petrovics, Lajos Vass, Sándor Szokolay and Miklós Kocsár - congratulate Ferenc Farkas on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday*



Performance of the operetta *Csárdás Queen* in the *Gárdonyi Géza Theatre, Eger*



*Imre Kálmán and family*

previous centuries contained few genuinely Hungarian traditions. Some members of the lesser nobility discovered those traits in a self-styled “folksy” music that just affected folk music.

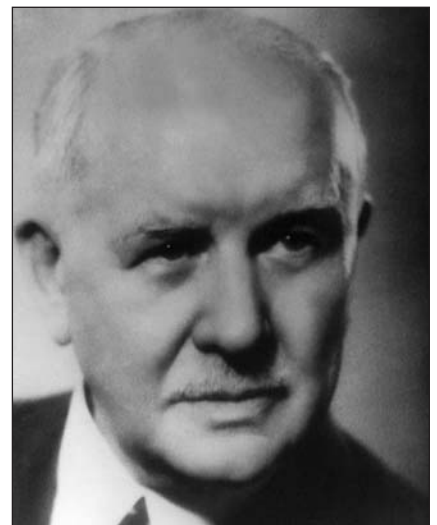
There was, however, another, more valuable, strand of indigenous music: dance music that originated from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Certain collections of instrumental music contained melodies that alloyed Western harmonies and forms with traditional Hungarian dance music. These dances were marked by embellishments and rhythm patterns that were indeed unmistakably Hungarian. The music was called *verbunkos*. Originally the term meant men’s dance associated

with the recruitment of soldiers. Later on it became dance music unrelated to its military function, and it helped the renewal of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian musical idiom. As Gypsy bands most often played the music, it was mistakenly associated with Gypsy music. Although that misconception was propagated by Ferenc Liszt in his book: *On Gypsies and Gypsy Music in Hungary* (Paris, 1859), *verbunkos* has nothing to do with genuine Gypsy folk music.

Original Gypsy music is vocal, and the words of the songs are in Romany or Hungarian. It must be noted, however, that Gypsy musicians would always adopt the instruments and performing styles of their host country. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century they mixed several characteristics of Western composed music with the Hungarian dance music of earlier times. In fact, any tune can be turned into “Gypsy music” when it is played in the sensuous style of a Gypsy band.

Virtuoso Gypsy musicians – including János Bihari (1764-1827) – earned fame at home and, with the help of sponsors after 1830, abroad. *Verbunkos*, Hungarian dances and folksy songs that are reminiscent of Hungarian folk music were written in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by numerous Hungarian composers and those foreign composers who spent some time in Hungary: János Lavotta (1764-1820), Antal Csermák (1774-1822), Márk Rózsavölgyi (1789-1848), Ignác Ruzitska (1777-1833), Joseph

Bengráf (1745?-1791) and Ferdinand Kauer (1751-1831). The *verbunkos* style exerted an influence on vocal music. Moreover, its rhythmic patterns and ornaments – which used to occur only in instrumental music – were adopted by composers of operas and songs, including Béni Egressy (1814-1851), Gusztáv Szénfy (1819-1875), Kálmán Simonffy (1832-1881) and others. Those motifs were borne in mind also by innovative composers of chamber music and symphonic works. The general public at home and abroad associated *verbunkos* with the then voguish “Hungary image”, as illustrated by its employment in several works by great Western composers: Joseph Haydn, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Carl Maria von Weber (1786-



*Ferenc Lehár*

1826), Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) and Johannes Brahms (1833-1897). Berlioz' *Rákóczi March* has become the most famous among such works.

In Hungary, romantic poets referred to a refined version of folk poetry as genuinely national, while *verbunkos*, at least as it reappeared in composed adaptations, was hailed as the manifestation of a new, national music. Alongside *verbunkos*, quality works by various European composers found their way to music-lovers in Hungarian towns. A growing number of musical institutions were set up and noted instrumentalists performed before ever larger audiences. Informal domestic concerts by ad-hoc chamber orchestras became fashionable during the 19<sup>th</sup> century; music schools were formed, sheet music publication began, musical journals were launched, and concertgoing became a habit. Operas were regularly performed in Pozsony (Bratislava), Sopron, Pest, Kolozsvár (Cluj) and other towns. Towards the end of the century, domestic concerts were replaced by "modern" public concerts, where the public had to buy a ticket to enter. As concerts became more numerous, the demand grew for trained performers and musicians.

There had been several unsuccessful attempts to amalgamate *verbunkos* and quality European music, when a gifted composer, Ferenc Erkel (1810-1893), managed to do so in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was the first

to use the Hungarian language in operas (*László Hunyadi* and *Ban Bánk*), and the quality of his music was comparable with contemporaneous Western operas. It was not by accident that foreign critics of the time noticed the Italian influence on the style of his *Ban Bánk*. What was the secret of the success of Erkel's operas? The themes had political topicality, and he employed a unique Hungarian musical idiom to accompany the typically "Hungarian" scenes of his full-size operas, while in other scenes he mixed that idiom with those of French and Italian operas.

The oeuvre of Ferenc Liszt (1811-1886) represented a high point in



*László Lajtha, a meditative composer and musicologist*



*Outstanding pianist of the 20th century Annie Fischer*



*Pianist György Cziffra conducted a master course at the Festetics Mansion in Keszthely*



*Dezső Ránki and Zoltán Kocsis, both aged 18, photographed in 1970*



*János Ferencsik and Yebudi Menuhin perform Bartók's Violin Concerto No. 2 in Budapest in 1964*



*Sir George Solti was proud of his Hungarian origin*



*Plácido Domingo and Andrea Rost sing a duet in a Budapest concert*

Hungarian composed music of the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the 1830s and 1840s Liszt toured Europe as a celebrated concert pianist and composer. After the River Danube flooded much of the town of Pest in 1838, he became conscious of his Hungarian roots and gave several concerts in Hungary. Thereafter he contributed to the development of Hungarian musical life as a pianist, composer, public personality and sponsor. Liszt was a broad-minded citizen of the world, who could give expression to his patriotic emotions in ways worthy of the greatest figures in the history of music. His works managed to unite the finest elements of European romanticism with Hungarian traditions. That is how he could make the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian musical legacy part of the musical treasures of the world. Another famous Hungarian composer of the time was Károly Goldmark (1830-1915), who earned international recognition mainly with his operas.

By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the musical life of Budapest had become comparable with that of other major cities of Europe. Thanks to its fine Opera House, orchestras, concert halls and noted conductors – including Artur Nikisch (1855-1922) and Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) – the Hungarian capital earned a reputation among lovers of music. Many of the graduates of the Budapest Music Academy



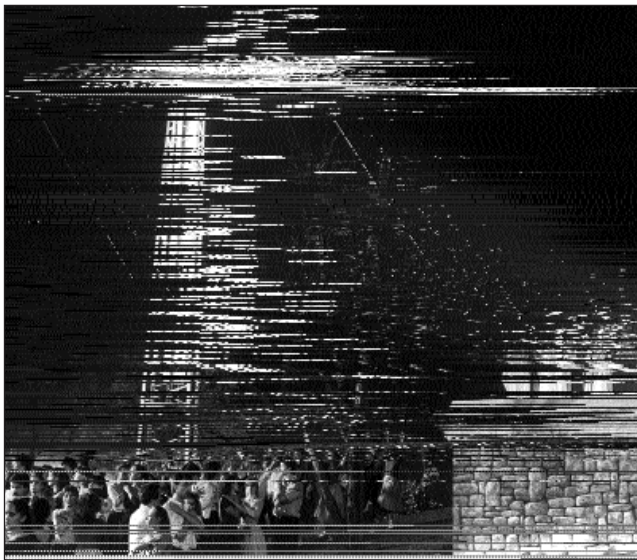
*The Hundred-member Gypsy Orchestra is a staunch keeper of traditions*

became internationally famed performers, and musical criticism and research were also cultivated.

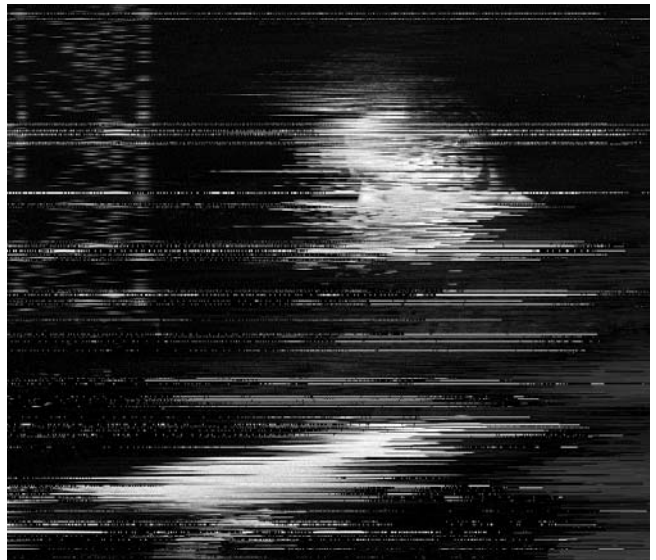
The Hungarian folk song of the so-called new style emerged during the last productive era of popular culture in the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, just before folk music was about to fall into obscurity in a manner similar to the more advanced Western countries. Musicologists attribute the emergence of new folk songs to, among other things, the migration of agricultural seasonal workers and the fact that thousands of young men had to do military service far from their homes. The advent of the new style of folk songs did not eradicate the old ones.



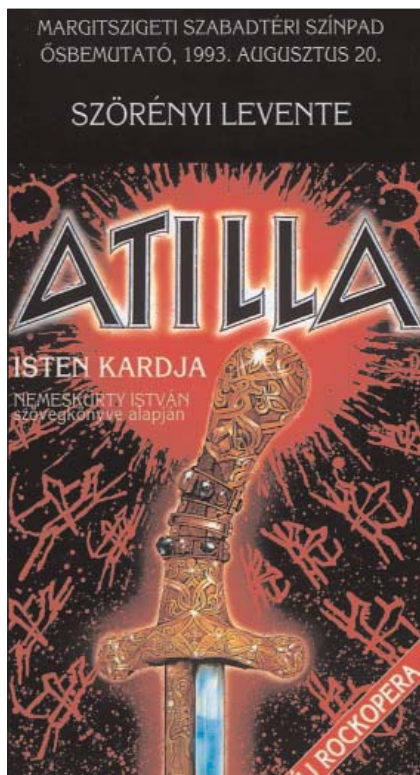
*Márta Sebestyén sings Transylvanian songs the traditional way*



*István the King, a rock opera by Levente Szörényi and János Bródy, was premiered in 1983.*



*Károly Binder, one of Hungary's most original jazz musicians*



*The rock opera Atilla by Levente Szörényi was first performed in 1993.*

As evidenced by records of Béla Vikár (1859-1945), an eminent ethnographer, folk songs of various styles could be heard by residents of the same village.

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hungarian musical performing art had attained international recognition and the domestic audience grew increasingly discerning. Hungarian performers gave guest performances

abroad and foreign performers could be heard in Hungarian concert halls. This all helped in the evolution of a performing culture that carried traditional values while remaining sensitive to modern trends.

Operettas became immensely popular in Hungary at the turn of the century. Initially, Viennese pieces were played – which included dancing scenes – that were patterned on light and entertaining yet somewhat sentimental classical French operettas. In this category, works by Franz Suppé (1819-1895) and Johann Strauss, Jr. (1825-1899) can be mentioned. Later on Hungarian composers produced similarly successful operas. The names of operetta composers like Ferenc Lehár (1870-1948), Imre Kálmán (1882-1953) and Jenő Huszka (1875-1960) have become known in many countries, and their works are still played.

However colourful Hungary's musical life was, in the 1920s Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) complained that Hungarian musical culture was built from the top downwards. Hungary has a good Opera House – he wrote – and has outstanding performing artists, yet there are not good music teachers in the schools and little attention is paid to the musical education of people in the countryside. Kodály spared no time and energy seeking remedies to the weaknesses of Hungary's musical life. He started research on genuine Hungarian folk music in the late 1890s

under the influence of Béla Vikár, who had widely toured the country to collect folk songs. Between 1905 and 1914, Kodály visited Upper Hungary and Transylvania to collect folk songs, which had a decisive influence on his musical creed and outlook. He made it his mission to collect as many Hungarian folk songs as possible, subject them to scholarly research and then incorporate them into the general cultural awareness via school education.

As a composer Kodály drew upon the late romantic tradition and Hungarian folk songs. After 1920 most of his works were vocal. He wrote numerous choral pieces and two oratorios (*Psalmus Hungaricus, Te Deum of the Castle of Buda*), two full-size musical works for the stage (*János Hány and The Spinning Room*) and several songs for solo singers. In addition to his compositions, his international fame was due to his "Kodály method" of teaching music. He made it clear in several essays that music – folk music that conveys national traditions, and quality composed music – played a key role in the educational efforts to rear people of a balanced value system and erudition. That is why he devoted so much energy to the musical education of young generations, including the writing of musical works that had a didactic purpose as well.

Béla Bartók (1881-1945), a seminal composer of international acclaim, also turned to the traditions of Hungarian

folk music and incorporated them into ingenious works. His oeuvre vaults him to the classics of music of all times. In his youth he attracted attention as a gifted pianist and a promising composer. Starting in 1905, he repeatedly toured Transylvania and western Hungary to collect records of folk music. He was also interested in the folk music of neighbouring peoples. A reputed pianist, he gave recitals in Hungary, several countries of Europe and in the United States. He was a truly original composer, who worked indefatigably. For years on end, he would spend between 8 and 10 hours weekly to write down folk music, he regularly gave recitals and found time to compose music.

His music was genuinely modern. He transcended the tonality of previous centuries. Just as certain other composers in Western Europe, he broke with dodecaphony to seek new paths. He based his works on the motifs and rhythmic patterns of folk songs. He has earned international acclaim with the opera *Bluebeard's Castle*, the ballets *Wooden Prince* and *Miraculous Mandarin*, six string quartets, *Cantata Profana*, three piano concertos, the *Violin Concerto*, the *Music for Strings*, *Percussion and Celesta*, the series of piano pieces entitled *Mikrokosmos*, furthermore, *Divertimento*, a piece for stringed instruments, and *Concerto*, which was written for a full orchestra.

Ernő Dohnányi (1877-1960) was a contemporary of Bartók and Kodály and shared their determination to renew Hungarian music. Initially as a successful piano recitalist, he worked for many years as the head of the most important Budapest musical institutions: the Academy of Music and the Philharmonic Society. He earned credit for propagating works by contemporary composers, primarily Kodály and Bartók.

The composer Leó Weiner (1885-1960) found inspiration in works by romantic masters and Hungarian folk music. He trained several instrumentalists, who later excelled in playing chamber music.

Kodály and Bartók made an indelible imprint on Hungarian music of the

20th century. Their oeuvre had a definitive influence on the character of domestic musical life and the works of younger Hungarian composers.

In the late 1940s Hungary came under communist rule. Classical music had high official prestige, yet musical life was under the strict control of the communist-led state. Research on folk music and other areas of musicology were publicly sponsored, yet political interference in personnel and artistic decisions was the order of the day. Modern, progressive musical trends were replaced by retrograde, "folksy" compositions, which had to be "under-

telligible for the general public.

The politicians in charge of official cultural policy encouraged the involvement of amateur musicians in concerts. That dovetailed with Kodály's motto of letting music belong to all. In the school education of music emphasis was laid on folk songs and their adaptations, and choral pieces written in a simple style that resembled folk songs. Choral singing went to grass roots.

Direct government interference in musical life gradually decreased during the 1960s, and contacts could be renewed with musical institutions abroad. "New" trends appeared on the



*Instrument maker Tibor Semmelweis teaches his students how to rejuvenate a cello*



*Girl Playing the Cello (1928) by Róbert Berény is a remarkable achievement of 20th-century Hungarian painting*

standable for the masses."

Some noted composers – for instance, Sándor Veress (1907-1992) and later György Ligeti (1923-) – got fed up with such repressive policies and emigrated in the 1950s. Others, including László Lajtha (1892-1963), a composer with French orientation, protested by refusing to compose music. The compositions of Pál Járdányi (1920-1966) reflect his attachment to folk music, while others, for instance, György Kósa (1897-1984), managed to develop a style that carried their personal imprint without becoming unin-

Hungarian scene, such as dodecaphony, the serial technique, aleatory and, later on, minimalism.

The influence of Bartók as well as dodecaphony could be felt in the works of outstanding composers such as Ferenc Farkas (1905-2000) and Endre Szervánszky (1911-1977). It was these two factors that shaped the early period of the oeuvre of György Kurtág (1926-), who is perhaps the best known Hungarian composer abroad. An individual characteristic marks the works of two of Kodály's pupils: Rudolf Maros (1917-1982) and András

Szóllósy (1921-). The most prolific composers in the field of opera, and vocal music in general, are Emil Petrovics (1930-) and Sándor Szokolay (1931-), who – along with Sándor Balassa (1935-), Attila Bozay (1939-1999) and Zsolt Durkó (1934-1997) – have largely contributed to creating an unmistakably Hungarian contemporary musical idiom. János Decsényi (1927-), József Sári (1935-) and József Soproni (1930-) are composers in full command of their chosen art, whose works form a coherent whole.

Embracing the style of Erik Satie (1866-1925) and John Cage (1912-1992) – composers who had not found

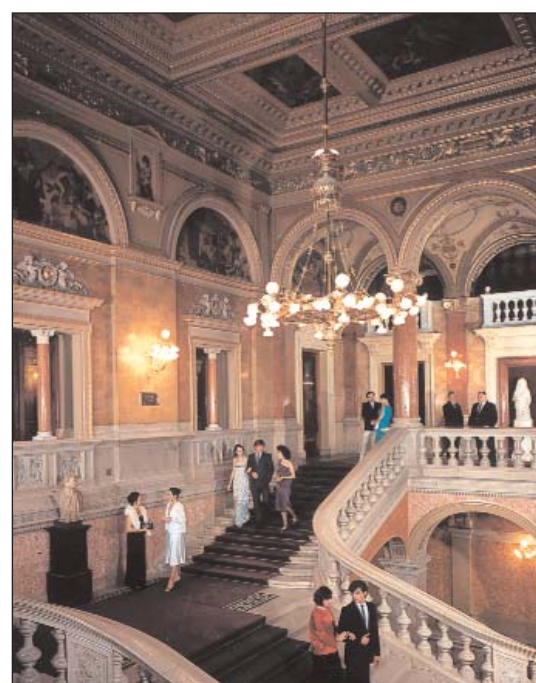
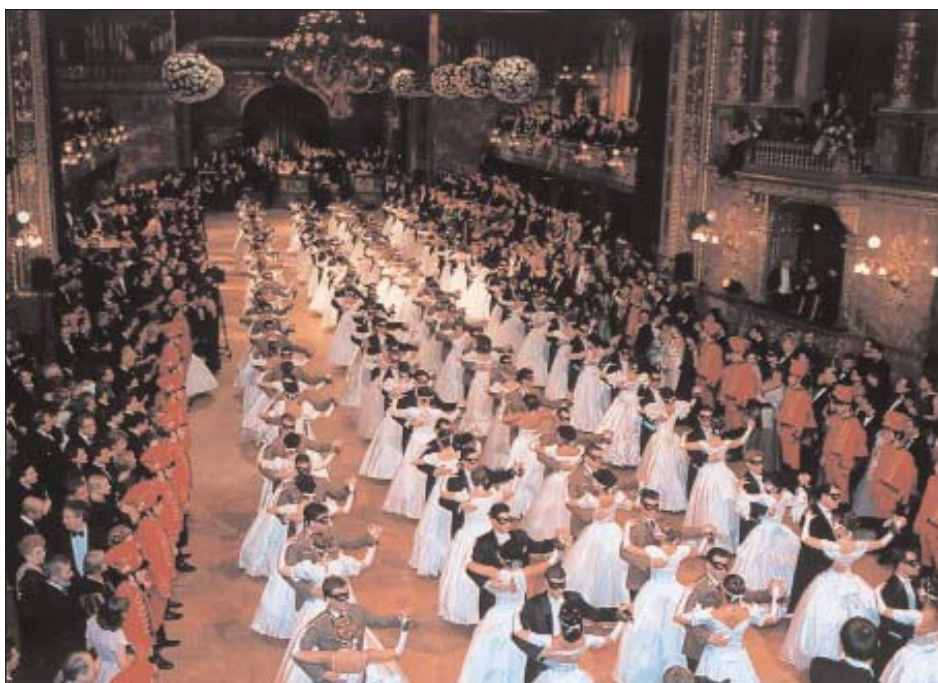
instance, at the Warsaw Autumn Festival, the Darmstadt Festival, etc.)

György Orbán (1947-), János Vajda (1949-), György Selmeczi (1952-) and Miklós Csemiczky (1954-), members of other groups of composers who became publicly known during the 1980s, have written works that evoke the styles and genres of earlier periods. The nostalgic atmosphere of their works has earned them considerable popularity.

Jazz, just as the modern trends of classical music, has only been truly recognised in Hungarian concert halls and school education in recent decades. Even though the first jazz

Szabados, Béla Szakcsi Lakatos, Rudolf Tomsits and György Vukán, and bands such as the Benkő Dixieland Band, the Kőszegi Band and the Super Trio.

Due to the relaxation of the domestic political climate in Hungary in the latter half of the 1970s, a dance house movement could get under way. Ferenc Sebő (1947-) and Béla Halmos (1946-), lead musicians of the Sebő Band, visited secluded hamlets in Transylvania and elsewhere where folk music was retained in its original form. Sebő and Halmos collected traditional folk songs and learned to play instruments the way villagers



*The Budapest Opera House, scene of remarkable performances and sumptuous balls, was built in 1887 on the designs of Miklós Ybl*

followers in Hungary before – the members of the New Music Studio (founded in 1970): Zoltán Jeney (1943-), László Sári (1940-), László Vidovszky (1944-), Barnabás Dukay (1950-), Zsolt Serei (1954-) and others, launched a new trend in Hungarian musical composition. The members of the New Music Studio are themselves musicians. It is their conviction that the artistic attainments of musicians and the musical education of the audience are key factors to ensure the successful reception of modern music. As from the 1970s, young Hungarian instrumentalists could take part in festivals of contemporary music abroad (for

musicians and bands appeared in Hungary as early as the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is only since the 1970s that Hungary has had an organised jazz life, jazz concerts supported by the musical institutions, jazz clubs, the regular issue of jazz recordings and the training of jazz musicians. In the past two decades, Hungarian jazz musicians have earned fame at home and abroad. Among the internationally renowned instrumentalists who regularly perform at festivals and concerts and release records, let us mention Balázs Berkes, Károly Binder, László Dés, Csaba Deseő, Antal Lakatos, Aladár Pege, György

had been doing for centuries. The revival of Hungarian folk music and country dancing became immensely popular among town-dwelling young people. Numerous bands that played traditional folk music (Kolinda, Mákvirág [Poppy] Muzsikás [Musician], Téka, Vízöntő [Aquarius], Vujcsics) earned fame within and outside Hungary.

With the advent of increasingly sophisticated audio media (cassettes, CDs) towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, playing instruments has lost some of its popularity, yet a new method of composition, that aided by computers, has become possible.

Hungary's transition to multi-party democracy in 1989-90 brought sweeping changes to an over-politicised musical life. Opposition to the over-centralised regulation of musical life was not without antecedents: as early as the 1960s, rock music conveyed an element of political protest. The bands

(Illés, Omega, Lokomotiv GT, Fonográf, etc.) and singers (Klári Katona, Zsuzsa Koncz, Kati Kovács, Sarolta Zalutnay and Péter Máté, etc.) that attracted nation-wide attention at televised pop music festivals and talent shows familiarised the domestic audience with little-known Western trends in pop music while adding domestic colour to them. As from the middle

of the 1980s, rock operas and rock oratorios came into fashion. In a way similarly to the Hungarian national operas of the 19th century, their popularity could be ascribed to their (historical or religious) theme rather than the quality of their music. Examples include *Kelemen Kőműves*, *István the King*, *Anna Febér*, *László and Édua* and *The Excommunicated* by Levente Szörényi

and János Bródy, *Attila* by Levente Szörényi and Sándor Lezsák, and *The Gospel According to the Virgin Mary* by László Tolcsvay and Péter Müller.

Even though musical life became more liberal after 1990, it remained highly politicised, just as literature and the other arts. There has been intense

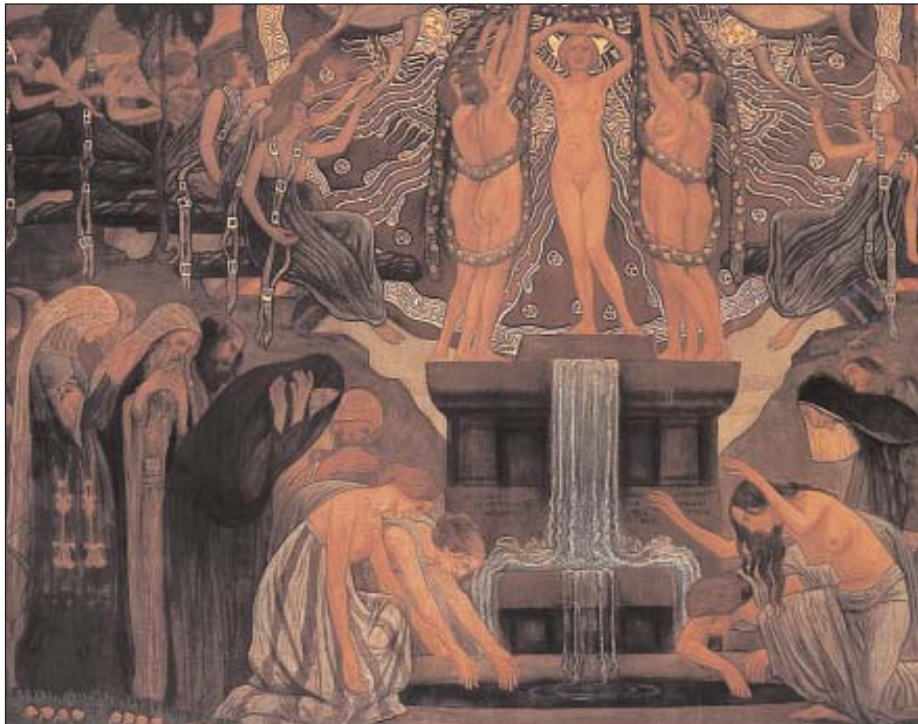
other potential sponsors has become a bread-and-butter question for all musical institutions. Of course, these are universal phenomena.

Despite the above difficulties Hungarian music life has experienced in recent decades, we are proud to note that Hungary is widely considered

as the "home of music". The high standard of Hungarian musical culture has been hall-marked by numerous eminent composers and authors of film music (for instance, Miklós Rózsa: 1907-1995) and internationally noted performers, including conductors Antal Doráti (1906-1988) and György Solti (1912-1997), violinist and conductor Sándor Végh (1912-1997),

violinist Loránd Fenyves (1918-), conductor and composer Péter Eötvös (1944-), pianists György Cziffra (1921-1994), Zoltán Kocsis (1952-), Dezső Ránki (1951-) and András Schiff (1953-), cellist Miklós Perényi (1948-) and opera singers Éva Marton (1943-), Szilvia Sass (1951-), László Polgár (1947-) and Andrea Rost (1962-).

**Ágnes Dobszay**



*The fresco The Fountain of Arts by Aladár Körösfői Kriesch adorns the building of the Academy of Music*

competition among the players in musical life to get exposure in concerts and the media. The transition to a market economy has transformed the system of musical institutions. After 1990 the state lost its monopoly in organising concerts, publishing scores and records and maintaining ensembles. As the state radically reduced funds available for sponsorship, courting

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