

Recordings and Notes by LÁSZLÓ KÜRTI



ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4020

# Hungarian Folk Music in the United States



BÉLA NYÁRI PLAYING AT A HUNGARIAN GATHERING, NEW YORK, 1981

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE



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## SIDE ONE

1. Three songs of Éva Bálint, Mrs. Mátyás Galló  
(2' 15")
2. Four songs of Ilona Harváth, Mrs. Miklós Farkas  
(2' 8")
3. Seven songs of Gusztáv Fülöp  
(5' 35")
4. Four songs of Kálmán Horosz  
(2' 6")
5. Songs on violin, played by Béla Nyári  
(4')

## SIDE TWO

1. Music and related songs by Iván Dezső and band  
(5' 43")
2. Medium and fast *csárdás* tunes, Jenő Bartal and  
orchestra (2' 49")
3. *Csárdás* tunes by Mickey Schwartz and band  
(3' 27")
4. *Csárdás* variations by Béla Babay and  
Francis Saas, (5' 52")
5. Gypsy dance tunes by Gypsy Joe and orchestra  
(6' 52")

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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"Amerikába jöttünk  
tudjisten hányan  
hajó orrában  
hajó farában  
betakar a sárga föld  
Amerikában."

(György Gyékényesi)

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SELECTIONS

The title of this collection, Hungarian Folk Music in the United States, may be questionable by some people. One of the most burning problem with it is the idea of "folk," a category that is not clearly understood in the study of Hungarian immigrants. The diversity of cultural patterns and immigrants' cultural values are still largely unknown in North America. Questions, like how immigrant communities were formed, what were the social institutions fostering values of the immigrants, what roles these institutions played, and just how cultural systems have changed under various historical and socio-economical conditions, are yet to be answered by social scientists.

When I began to study Hungarians in America, in a hot summer day in Akron, Ohio, sometimes in 1976, it became clear to me after awhile that no community can be separated from its historical setting and the social forces that have shaped institutions and formal representations of ideas of the community in question. Every immigrant community, be it a large multi-religious metropolitan community in New York or a removed mining settlement in western Pennsylvania, possesses certain elements and patterns that can provide a key to understand its culture, folklore and musical systems. For that reason, it is a highly questionable enterprise to develop and utilize an overarching category as "folk music." This is so especially since "folk" may mean diverse and sometimes opposing values from community to community. Yet it is also clear that there are certain values and cultural patterns that identify distant Hungarian settlements as "Hungarian" and separate them from other East European settlements. With this record, I hope to show that various musical systems may serve this very purpose. Furthermore, by showing how Hungarian immigrants express themselves in musical terms, I hope to provide a fresh look at Hungarian presence in America. With the term "folk" I do not mean to criticize the same concept used in Hungarian ethnomusicology (See, Kodály 1971) or to discuss the issues raised by Porter (1978:2) on the same subject. What I really aim at is to show that diverse music systems, such as song complexes, singing societies, brass bands and gypsy orchestras, are only meaningful and comprehensible when seen in their own terms in light of the models provided by the community in question.

It is important to notice that every Hungarian community in North America is unique for one reason or another; the Buckeye community in Cleveland, Ohio, has been known as a real old timers' place and, as Erdély informs us (1964, 1979), the song repertoire of the singers reflect a great deal of diversity; the Franklin, New Jersey, settlement was known for a long time for its excellent brass bands, founded by István Bendes (See, Makar 1969:102); the Árpádhon-Albany Hungarian community in Louisiana, studied by Dégh (1980), has a grape-harvest festival, though the people were originally strawberry farmers; New York City has been always a center providing the first class musicians and gypsy ensembles in the East Coast; and so on the list is endless.

Interesting as it may, there are eternal songs that simply outlive the community or a generation of immigrants. Many of these popular tunes are the so-called "old timers' tunes," yet they are not part of the authentic "old-style" peasant music system analyzed by Kodály (1971). Nevertheless, they were brought from the Old Country and are passed from one generation to the next and from one ensemble to the other. The musical repertoire of the immigrants is in a constant state of flux. Since there were many different immigration periods (i.e. 1880-1914, 1918-1930s, 1945-50, and most recently 1956-57) and in these many newcomers coming to fill the positions in immigrant organizations, there are new songs and tunes introduced into the repertoire. The dissemination of Hungarian music records, since the late 1910s, also contributed to this diversity. The newcomers, especially the 1956 generation (referred to as the "fifty-sixers"), had an incredible impact on the already established immigrant machinery. In some cases, they were caught by this machinery and went along with it. Most of the time, however, and this can be seen by the many new institutions and ideology emerged, they did not. For this very reason, it is highly questionable to say, as Erdély has that: "The Gypsy ensembles are among the few instrumental groups that retain their traditional compositions and performance practices" (1979:123). There are no two Hungarian bands who would play even the same melodies alike. It is obvious that bands, like that of Iván Dezső of the 1930s and the currently popular Gypsy Joe and orchestra in New York, are unique in their compositions, repertoire, structure, functions and so on. The group in Pittsburgh and vicinity is also unique for various reasons; and, to say the least, the duo of Lake Ronkonkoma is everything but "traditional compositions" showing signs of "traditional ... performance practices." Yet they are all Hungarian: serving Hungarian functions, playing Hungarian music and maintaining a specific national character.

It is obvious that immigrants of the turn of this century transplanted musical institutions, such as the *dalárda* (singing society) and the *fúvószenekar* (brass band), for they themselves were the product of a society who produced and maintained such institutions. There is no reason to believe that this is not the situation in the case of diverse song styles and dance melodies

that belong to later immigrant generations and groups. When the "fifty-sixers" arrived to this country it was a culture shock both for them and the old-timers. Many musicians who were born here or came earlier in this century agree that the new songs and different musical ideas brought by the newcomers were "strange" and foreign to their ears. For the "fifty-sixers" the tunes of the old-timers were often outmoded, unheard of or even meaningless. The song repertoire reflecting the mood of the 1920s Hungarian society in Hungary, is quite different than the songs produced by Hungarian miners in West Virginia. Similarly, the techniques of violin playing (see, for example, the selection of Béla Nyári, Béla Babay and Paul Zitay) are also a reflections of a style fashionable or taught at one point in Hungarian history. There is much more that could be said here; however, this much will suffice at the present. Obviously, there is more research needed to make this picture more coherent and clearer. I believe that this selection is still a good example of Hungarian musical systems in America, regardless of how "folky" or how "authentic" they are.

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## NOTES ON THE SELECTIONS

### SIDE ONE

1. Mrs. Máttyás Galló, nee Éva Balint (1895-1980)

These songs were recorded at the Lorántffy Care Center in Akron, Ohio, in late December, 1976. In many ways Mrs. Galló's life story is typical to recollections of the first generation of immigrants coming to this country before WWI. She was born in a wheelwright family in a small poverty stricken settlement known as Nagygyéjóc. This place can be found in the historical Ung County, a north east region of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. She arrived to America in 1913 with her first husband. She found jobs in cigar and mill factories in New Jersey. In 1916, the family moved to Cleveland, Ohio, and remained there for good. On Cleveland's East Side, the Hungarian Buckeye Community (also referred to as the Hungarian Debreceen City), she spent her whole life. She was among Hungarians constantly and held memberships in several clubs. She spent her last two years among Hungarians at the Care Center, an old age home under the supervision of the Hungarian Reformed Church. The majority of her songs is a good reflection of what generally Hungarians know and sing. Her three songs included are unique however.

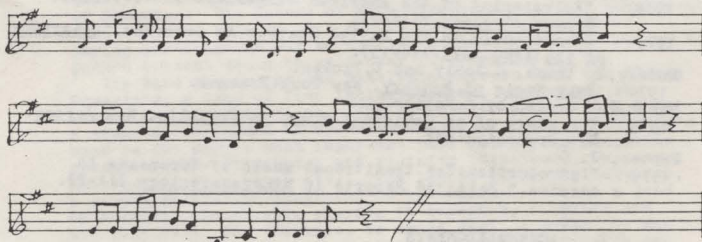
The first song, *Kakukk madár az erdőben...*, is a sweet romantic story and melody about the Cuckoo, the outlaw and love. The characteristics of one can be projected on the other and, thus, they can symbolize various aspects of all three ideas. The second song is a soldier song. Popular during WWI and in the 1920s, this song telling about a soldier's desire of returning home, had a powerful message to people living in the tumultuous years following WWI. Songs of this nature were, of course, fostered through various institutions of the immigrant society in America. Her third song is about dying. It summarizes beautifully one's fear of passing in a foreign land; this is expressed by the color of the soil (yellow), for this color usually is black in Hungarian folk songs in Hungary.



Kakukk madár az erdőben szépen szól,  
In the forest the cuckoo sings nicely  
Elbúcsúzik a nefelejcs bokortól,  
Leaving from the forget-me-not bush  
Egy legény is búcsút mondott ennek a nagy világnak,  
A lad, too, has taken his leave from this world  
Valahol a nagy Alföldön bánatában beszegődött betyárnak.  
Somewhere in the plains grief's driven him to the underworld.

A betyárnak jól megy dolga, világa,  
The outlaw's life all went smoothly  
Zöld erdőben leveles a párnája,  
The fallen leaves are his pillow presently  
Kakukk madár ébresztgeti, rákiált az alvóra,  
The cuckoo is trying to wake him and cries at the sleeper  
Kelj fel betyár ne aludjál reggel van már tizedt ütött az óra.  
Get up brigand, the clock just struck ten it's morning.

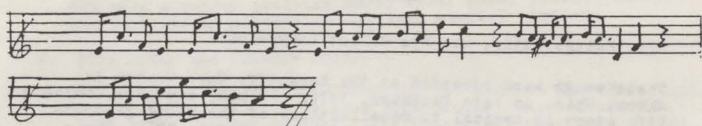
Hol jártál te kakukk madár az éjjel,  
Where were you last night cuckoo  
Nem látod, hogy a betyár mégsem kelt fel,  
Can't you see the brigand is still sleeping  
Azért alszik olyan mélyen, elhagyta a babája,  
He's sleeping, for he is without lover  
Angyalokkal álmodozik, álmodozik örökké tart az álma.  
For he is with the angels sleeping now forever.



## 2

Tenger partján áll egy legény, hazajutni nincsen remény,  
A lad stands at the seashore, there's no hope of getting home  
Ki van a két szeme sirva, öreg magyar rezervista.  
His eyes are filled with tears, he is an old Magyar reservist.

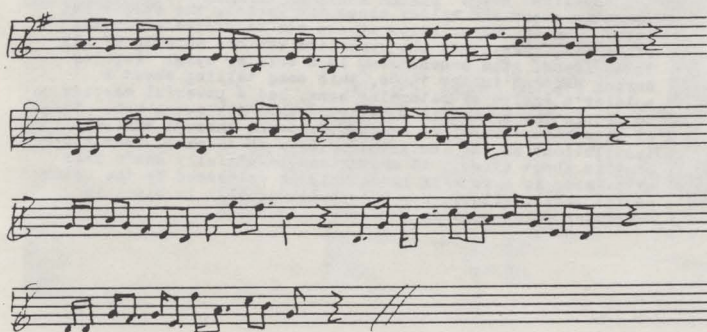
Nincs egyebem a vágyammal, ott lenni a Kárpátoknál,  
I've nothing but my wish to be again at the Carpathians  
Ott ahol a havasalja, vér-rózsákkal van kirakva.  
Where at the foothills one could find blood-roses.



## 3

Árvalányhaj lengedez a hegytetőn, árva vagyok elhagyott a szeretőm,  
The feather-grass grows at the peaks, I'm an orphan without a lover  
A szememben csak egy árva könny ragyog, úgy is tudom nemsokára meghalok.  
One tear flows in my eye, for I know soon I will die.

Ha meghalok nem kell nekem szerető, szeretőm lesz majd a gyászos temető,  
If I die, I'll need no lover, the graveyard will be my lover  
Sárga homok szívja gyenge testemet, te meg babám felejts el a nevemet.  
My body will perish in the yellow soil, so you can forget my name.



## 2. Mrs. Miklós Parkas, nee Ilona Horváth (1894-1981)

These songs were collected in Vintondale, Pennsylvania, at the informant's house, in the summer of 1977. Vintondale is a small mining settlement in the bituminous coal region of western Pennsylvania. Hungarians arrived here in large number around 1905-1907. By the end of the second decade of this century, the Hungarian community of Vintondale was a well organized immigrant society: church, school and social club were erected. This prosperity, however, did not last long. The decline of the mining industry and the closing of the mines in Vintondale contributed to the fall of this community, a situation that was a cause for the extinction of Hungarian settlements in Virginia, Kentucky and West Virginia.

Mrs. Parkas was born in Lévárt, the former Gömör County of Hungary (annexed to Czechoslovakia after the Treaty of Trianon in 1919). At age eighteen she was forcefully married off by her family and she followed her husband to America. They settled in Vintondale immediately after their arrival in 1912. In 1924 a disastrous mine fall took her husband's life and soon after she remarried to Miklós Parkas. Parkas was an able man and operated a boarding-house and hotel for Hungarian miners. This place was a real social as well as a cultural institution for Hungarians. In fact, Mrs. Parkas admitted that many of the songs she learned she heard from the miners living in the *burdosház*, boarding-house.

Her first song is a beautiful folk song, in which Vintondale is put in the place of the original Hungarian name. This practice is common in the art of folk singing even today: singers may change place names mentioned according to the place they live, came from or have strong memories attached to it. Her second song has three verses. At the time of the recording she could not remember the melody of the first line so she hummed it. The third and fourth songs only have one verses each. They did have many more, but Mrs. Parkas's failing memory could not remember them.

Mrs. Parkas

## 1

Vintondalén végtől végig, végig,  
All along the streets of Vintondale

Minden kis kapuban kettő rózsza nyílik,  
Every gateway has two roses

Minden kis kapuban kettő három,  
Some has two maybe even three

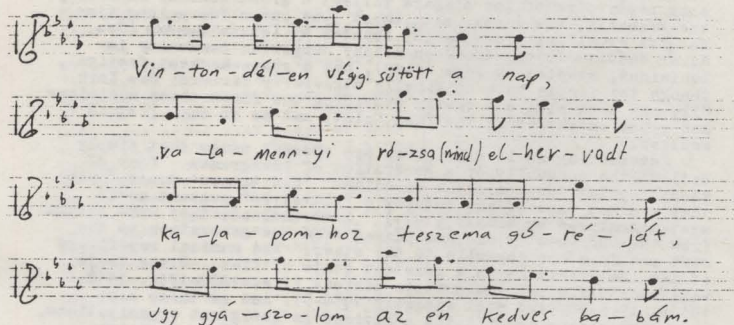
Csak az enyém hervadt el a nyáron,  
Only mine has withered in the summer.

Vintondalén végig sütött a nap,  
The sun shone down on Vintondale

Valamennyi rózsza mind elhervadt,  
Now, all of the roses withered

Kalapomhoz teszem a göréjét,  
I'll stick the rose's husk in my hat

Úgy gyászolom az én kedves babám.  
And so mourn my sweet lover.



## 2

... Nem tagadom én is jártam tehozad,  
... I won't deny it, I used to see you

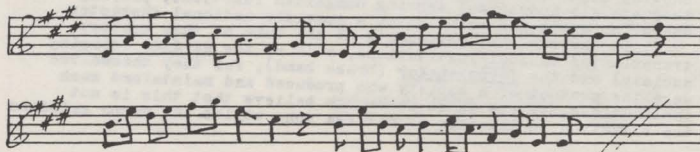
Cifra szűrő szemtanúja, hányszor voltál kebelemre borulva.  
My sheepskin cloak is the witness, how often you cuddled on my chest.

Kebelemre ráborultál zokogva, ajkaimon forró csókot osztottál,  
You cuddled and sobbed too, threw hot kisses on my lips

Esküdöttél égre földre, hogy hű leszel mindörökre, de megcsaltál.  
Swearing by heaven and by earth of your love, but you betrayed me.

Megcsaltad te barna legény magadat, nem találaz nálamnál igazabbat,  
You've betrayed yourself, you'll find no-one truer than me

Esküdöttél égre, földre, hogy hű leszel mindörökre, de megcsaltál.  
Swearing by heaven and earth of your love, but you betrayed me.





3  
Jaj de szépen harangoznak, talán az én galambomnak,  
The bells toll, perhaps it's for my sweetheart  
Most viszik a temetőbe, el sem búcsúzhattam tőle.  
He is taken to the cemetery, without my last farewell.

4  
Édesanyám minék adott férjhez,  
Mother why did you make me wed  
Minék adott idegen legényhez,  
Why did you give me to a strange lad  
Idegen lányt idegen legénynek,  
He's a stranger, I'm a stranger  
Jaj de nagyon bajos élelni szegénynek.  
How could he hug me with love.

### 3. Gusztáv Fülöp (1888-1978)

These songs were recorded at the Lorántffy Care Center in Akron, Ohio, in December 1976. Uncle Fülöp was born in Gergelyi (today Gergelyugornya), a little village in Szabolcs County in north-east Hungary. He came to the United States in 1907 with many of his village buddies. He worked various jobs in New Jersey, Ohio and Pennsylvania, when in 1911 he returned to Hungary. The basic reason was the army draft. Another reason was a family affair: Gusztáv Fülöp was married off to a well - to do family's daughter in Mezővári (today Vári in the Soviet Union). However, he did not like the army service. After a few months he, and several others, deserted and came to America. From that time on, until his retirement in 1953, he worked in the coal-mines in West Virginia. In 1922 he was able to bring his family out to America. Logan, Holden and Sharples were the small mine-patches where the Fülöp family lived and these places do occur in Uncle Fülöp's songs and stories.

His nickname was that of "Big Gus," for he was six foot and four inches. Although originally from a peasant family, Uncle Fülöp's mentality had changed fundamentally by his five decades of back-breaking work in the mines. Tears in his eyes, he recalled vividly the life-style of the miners, strikes, mine accidents and socializing in the mining community. He did not sing much about the fields, shepherd-boy, and the colorful Hungarian country-side seen through the eyes of the peasant. His actors were minás legény (miner-lad) now. The places of his actions were American places and not places in Hungary. From his huge repertoire of stories, ballads, songs, and religious tunes I have included here seven songs. Varied in tunes and stories these songs are real value, for they give a cross-cut of many different kinds of songs that were popular among Hungarian miners in isolated settlements. His last song, the ballad of the cowboy and the baroness, has been included for it is an almost complete version of a ballad popular at the turn of this century among the lower social strata of Hungarian society.

Mr. Fülöp

1  
Kimegyek Amerikába, ránézek egy angol lányra,  
I'll look at the English girls, when I'm in America,  
Megtanulok tőle kacsintani, tíz dollárt kellett fizetni.  
So I'll learn how to wink, but ended up paying ten dollars.

ki-mé-gyek A-me-ti-ká-ba

rá-ne-zek egy an-gol lány-ra.

meg-tan-ul-ék tő-le kacsin-ta-ni,

tíz dol-lárt kel-lelt fi-zet-ni.

2  
Elmegyek, elmegyek nem maradok e tájon,  
I'm leaving, I'm leaving and will not stay

Hogy a szívem a babámér' ne fájjon,  
For my heart aches after my sweat lover

Mert a szívem csak Váriba vágy vissza,  
My heart yearns back to Vári town

Felcségem szerettem, de az anyja nem hagyta.  
I loved my wife, but her mother frowned upon it.

el-megy-ek, el-megy-ek, nem ma-radok e tá-jon,

hogy a szí-ve-m a ba-bá-mér ne fá-j-on.

Spoken: mert a szí-ve-m csak Vári-ba vágy vissza,

Spoken: fe-le-sé-gem sze-re-ttem de az any-ja nem ha-gy-ta.

Ha meghalok temessetek piros borbá,  
When I die, bury me in red wine

A hordókkal temessetek el egy sorba,  
With the wine barrels in one line

A fejemhez tegyetek egy akós vedret,  
At my head, place a twelve gallon bucket

A lábomhoz meg tíz literes üveget,  
At my foot, a bottle with ten liters in it.

Hát mond meg pajtás, hogy minék kéne az néked,  
Buddy, what good would that do to you

Úgy is eleget ittál az életedben,  
You've drunk quite enough already

Megkínálnám a szenteket az egekben  
I'd offer it to the angels in the sky

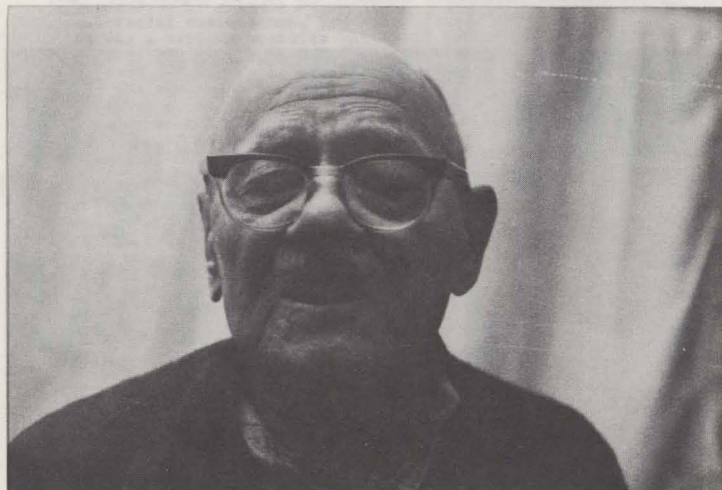
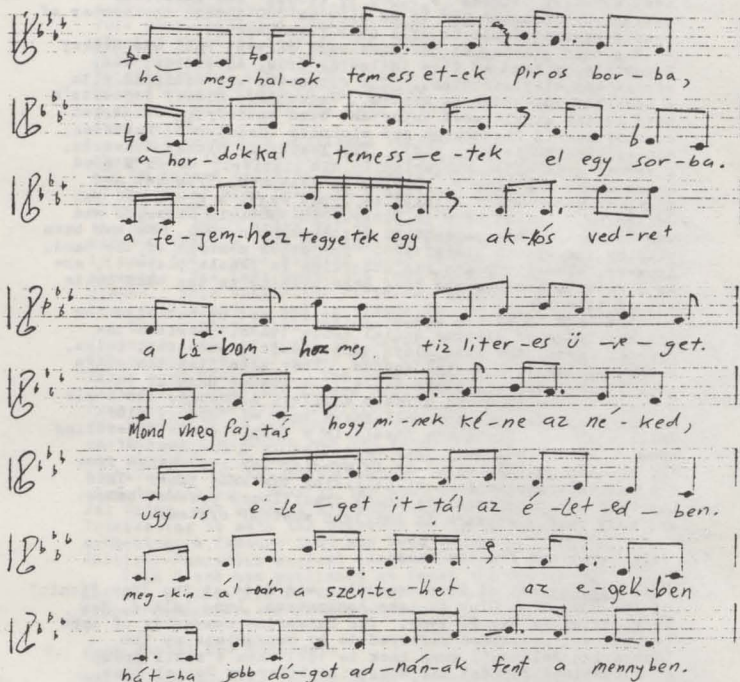
Hátha jobb dolgot adnának fenn a mennyben.  
They may find me a better fate in heaven.

Életemnek legrszebb korát töltöm a kocsmában,  
My heyday is spent in the inn

Onnan visznek az angyalok feles menyországba,  
The angels will take me directly from there

Az angyalok is azt mondják odafenn az égen,  
Up in heaven they'll recommend me

Uram, ezta jó borivót fogadd kegyelmedbe.  
God, you should take care of this fine drinker.



Gustáv Fülöp



Elmennék Amerikába de nem merek, az iszonyú tenger vizétől félek,  
I'd go to America, but I don't dear, The ocean's vast waters I fear,  
Ki ott meghal a tengerbe temetik, a hótt testét a nagyhalak megeszik.  
Who dies there is buried at sea, Food for the fishes is his dead body.

A csontjait hullámok lobogtatják, Ohazába jaj de sokan siratják,  
His bones are tossed by the waves, Back at home, so many just weeps,  
Jaj Istenem vezérelj a tengeren, Ohazába feleségem gyermekem.  
God, please guide me over the sea, Back home wife and children wait for me.

Nyisd ki anyám zöldre festett kapudat, ereszd be az amerikai fiadat,  
My mother open your green gate-way, your son arrived from far away  
Hátrafordul szorítja a jobbkezem, Isten hozott szabadságos gyermekem.  
She turns around and holds my right hand: Welcome home my child.

Öröme jöttél te haza nem bűra, a bányától meg vagy már szabadulva,  
You came for happiness not sadness, for you survived the mine's shackles  
Hátrafordul szorítja a jobbkezem, Isten hozott szabadságos gyermekem.  
She turns around and holds my right hand: Welcome home my child.

Öröme jöttél te haza nem bűra, a szénbányától meg vagy szabadulva,  
You came for happiness not sadness, for you survived the mine's shackles.

Bányászlegény ha bemegy a csárdába, száz dollárost húz a cigány vonójába,  
When the miner walks into the inn, he puts hundred dollar into the bow  
Húzzátok cigányok, így mulatnak a sharpeszi bányászok.  
Strike up you gypsy, that's the way the miners of Sharples merry.

Szépén legel a báróné gulyája, The milady's herd is nicely grazing,  
A báróné maga sétál utána, After it she comes a-strolling,  
Már messziről kiáltja a gulyásnak, She cries out after the cowboy,  
Szívem, Jancsi terítsd le a subádat. Johnny, lay down your cloak.

Nem teritem én itt le a subámat, I won't lay my cloak down here,  
Itt a bűza behajtja a gulyámat, My herd turns to the wheat, I fear,  
Már te avval szívem Jancsi ne gondoldj, Don't you worry about that,  
Kiváltja az édesapám ha mondom. My father will save you from that.

Lányom, lányom, lányomnak se fogadlak, Daughter, daughter you're not mine,  
Hogy én téged egy gulyásnak adjalak, If you'll marry the cowboy you pine,  
Nem banom én édesapám tagadj meg, Father, as daughter you can deny me,  
Az én szívem a gulyásér hasad meg. My heart aches for him most ardently.

Mikor eztet a báró meghallotta, When the Baron listened her words fall,  
Kivágtatott az ecsedi pusztára, He rode to Ecsed plains forthwithal,  
Jó estét, jó estét, te gulyásbójtár, Good even', good even' cowboy,  
Nem láttad-e kökényszemű bárólanyt. Have you seen the blue-eyed baroness?

Nem láttam én kökényszemű bárólanyt, I haven't seen the blue-eyed baroness,  
Vizitálja fel a tanyám tájékát, You can even search my little nest,  
Megtanálja cifraaszűrőm, rezbáltam, You'll find my cloak and hatchet there,  
Mellette a százforintos furulyám. My hundred forints flute, too, is there.

#### 4. Kálmán Horosz (1908 - )

These songs were recorded at the American-Hungarian Folklore Centrum, in Passaic, New Jersey, in April 1982. Mr. Horosz was born in the former capital of Ung County, Ungvár (today called Užgorod in the Ukrainian SSR of the Soviet Union). He came to the United States in the beginning of 1937 and, after a few years of searching and wandering, has been living in New Jersey. Coming from a lower middle-class family, his father was a self-taught shoemaker, he had finished trade school while still in the Old Country. Since some family members, already in America, supported his idea of emigrating he decided in favor of leaving the chaotic situation that existed in East-Central Europe at that time. After working at various Hungarian factories and businesses in the tri-state area, he married in 1940 and settled in Passaic. At age seventy-four he is still an agile man and takes an active role in the Hungarian community.

His song repertoire is a good reflection of the struggling Hungarian society of the 1920s and 1930s. His first piece, Lányok, lányok ti nyújorki lányok..., is popular among Hungarians in America. However, in the place of 'New York,' people can use various names of their communities, a practice common in Hungary as well. The second song of Kálmán Horosz, Ilven ember kell nekünk..., is a humorous piece in four parts. According to him, scouts, youth clubs, children and sport teams, sung such funny songs; and, were a cause of great revelry, fun making at trips and popular gatherings. The last two songs are typical pieces of the irredenta Hungarose category. Filled with nationalistic ideas, chauvinistic slogans and irredenta feelings, these songs were outlawed in Hungary after the communist take-over in 1947. I should mention, however, that with some minor changes, such as adding religious sentiments and/or socialist connotations, several of these songs were used by different social groups at diverse occasions. For example, the song Magyarok vagyunk mi... was originally an early nineteenth century workers song used at demonstrations, strikes and workers' marches.

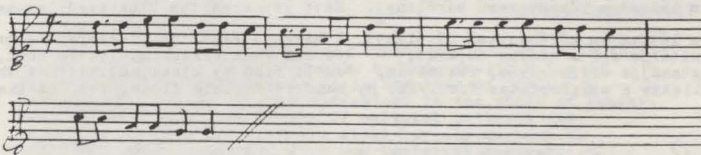
Mr. Horosz

Lányok, lányok ti nyújorki lányok,  
Lassies, lassies of New York  
Mért nincs néktek berakott szoknyátok,  
Ho come you've no pleated skirts  
Ha nincs néktek berakott szoknyátok,  
If you've no pleated skirts  
Nem is vagytok ti nyújorki lányok,  
You're not from New York  
Tisztelem a régi szeretőmet.  
I'll greet my old lover instead.



2

Ilyen ember kell nekünk, ilyen ember pompás,  
We need just such a fine man  
Kinek feje éjjel nappal, világító lámpás.  
Whose head all day and night is a luminating beacon.  
Egy kerékpár eladó, semmi baja nincsen,  
A bicycle is for sale, nothing is wrong with it  
Két keréke hiányzik, kormánya meg nincsen.  
Only two wheels are missing and a handlebar there isn't.  
Szár az tónak nedves partján, döglött béka kuruttyol,  
In the water of a dry lake-bed a dead frog is croaking  
Arra megy egy süket ember, meghallja hogy lubickol.  
A deaf man walks there and hears its splashing.  
Süket ember hallgatódzik, néma ember kiabál,  
A deaf man is listening, while a mute is shouting  
Kopasz ember haját tépi, vak ember meg szaladgal.  
A bald man rips his hair, a blind one runs here and there.



3

Föl fiúk munka vár, nyitva műhelyünk,  
Raise boys, the shops are open and work there is  
Mondjuk el hű imánk, Áldj meg Intenünk,  
But pray first so God will bless us  
Mert csak úgy nyerhetünk tőle új erőt,  
For the only way we'll receive new strength  
Hogyha mint gyermekek esdve kérjük őt,  
If we as children fall for a prayer  
Csak ha benne bízol és ha tőle vársz segítyt,  
Only if you trust Him and ask Him to help  
Szorgalmadnak lesz gyümölcse, nem várhatesz veszélyt,  
Your zeal will fruit and no harm will come upon you  
Két kezed ha dolgozik szíved mennyben legyen,  
When at work your heart should be with Him  
Akkor áldva lesz a munkád, áldás élteden,  
Then, your work and life will be blessed  
Föl hát, föl tehát, munkát és imát,  
So raise boys, get to work and prayer  
Honszeretettel egyesited és fölvirrad hazánk,  
Pray with patriotism and our land will prosper  
Magyar Hazánk.  
Our land, Hungarian land.

4

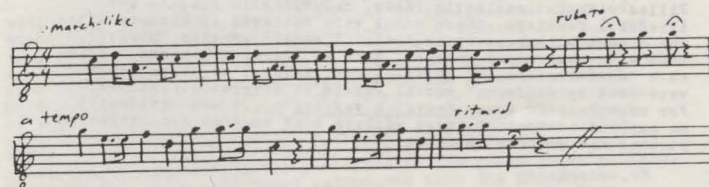
Magyarok vagyunk mi, nincs szabadságunk,  
We're Hungarians and have no freedom

Mert a szerencse gyászt hozott ránk,  
For our bad luck given us sorrow

Ref. Se baj, se baj, él még a nemzet, él még a hon,  
Don't worry, don't worry, our nation and land will live  
Él még a nemzet, él még a hon.  
Our land and nation will live forever.

Letörik a szarva annak a nagy úrnak,  
We'll break the horns of the mighty lord

Hogy ne parancsoljon a magyarnak... (Ref.)  
So he will no longer order the Hungarians.



## 5. Béla Nyári (1905 - )

This recording was made in 1980 in New York City. Béla Nyári was born in Sopron, a Hungarian city close to the Austrian border. He is coming from a gypsy musician family where the father as well as all of the sons were playing various instruments. He belongs to the so-called *rommagro* (i.e. Hungarian gypsy, from the romany rom + ungro) gypsy family, a population that has achieved a grand status in Hungarian society for their excellent musical talents. He started to play music in his father's band as a *brácsás*, or viola player. After his father's death in 1946, he took over the band and became a *primás*, first violinist. He also belongs to the group called "fifty-sixers," for the family resettled in America after the 1956 uprising in Hungary. After this traumatic experience, Béla Nyári was playing music only on part time basis: sometimes in a band, sometimes alone, for the family was in great need of money. Today he can be still seen at some local Hungarian restaurants in the Yorkville section of Manhattan, playing at tables if they allow him.

Nyári possesses a unique philosophy that is rare among gypsy musicians. He consciously separates his kinds of music from other musical styles. He makes a serious distinction between "gypsy style music" (i.e. popular and urban musical tradition utilizing some patterns of traditional peasant

musical systems) and operettas, military music, peasant music (he referred to this category as the "Bartókian" or "Kodályish" music) and others. In this selection, I want to emphasize this by showing several distinct categories and how Béla Nyári plays them. The first set is a characteristic combination of dance melodies into a *csárdás* set comprising of a medium tempo and a fast variation. The second piece, *Asszony, asszony az akarok lenni...* (I would like to be one's wife...), is a popular urban tune. It is interesting to note, that Nyári plays this number accompanied by his own saying of the words. This practice can be heard rarely among musicians. The next piece is a so-called "marching music," a category of military tunes arranged for large string and brass ensembles. The melody is not Hungarian and its origin may go back to the apex of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The fourth number is important for it shows two styles of fiddling: the simple (or *sima* as Nyári used it) and the fancy. The last piece is an excellent example of the musical category known as the "listening songs," or in Hungarian the *hallgatok*. Béla Nyári is accompanied by David Skuse, an excellent violinist in New York, who plays the part of the *brácsa*, the second fiddle.

## SIDE TWO

### 1. Iván Dezső and his band

This recording was made in New York City, in 1938, by the singer Iván Dezső. Information on Iván's life and career is scarce. He was born in the 1890s and arrived to America sometimes around 1910. He was not a professional musician. He was working in factories and, according to some of his contemporaries, coal-mines in Pennsylvania. He taught himself the skills of violin playing and singing. By the early 1930s we find him playing at various balls, dinner-dances and gatherings in the Hungarian community in New York City. Since the late 1930s, Iván was also a member of the Hungarian Theatre, also known as the Sároosy Theatre, a group of amateurs and professionals active between 1936 and 1960s. Probably his biggest role was that of the 1950 folk play, entitled "Jancsi Rigó, The Devil's Violinist," playing the lead role of the famous turn-of-the-century Hungarian gypsy violinist. His last role was that of "Cigányprimás" (The Gypsy Violinist), an operetta by Imre Kálmán staged early in the spring of 1958. He probably died soon after, for the fall season was opened without Iván Dezső.

This privately published record is unique for many reasons. Above all, the selection deserves special attention. This old 78 record contains a *hallgató* (slow listening song) and on the other side there is a medium tempo *csárdás* finished with a short *friss csárdás* (fast *csárdás*). Both songs, the slow *Ahogy engem var az isten...* (The way God punishes me) and the *csárdás*, *Egy meg egy, az csak kettő...* (One plus one is only two), were popular songs in the 1930s. They are not anymore. The last part, the fast closing, is still being played. This tripartite division, however, is an idea borrowed from folk practice and is common in Central Europe.

The orchestration and the other musicians are also important features, telling about the heyday of American-Hungarian society. The *primás* was Paul Zitay (his former name was Pál Szittay), an Akron born Hungarian. The bass player was Árpád Szilágyi and the second violinist was Vilmos Szilágyi. The Szilágyi brothers were from the famous gypsy musician dynasty settled in Detroit around the turn of this century. On the piano was László Semsey. He was the only musician who had education on the piano as well as the cimbalom. He was a pupil of László Kun, former teacher of cimbalom at the Hungarian Academy of Music, until 1922 when he came to America. None of the musicians, with the exception of Pál Zitay, who manages his own band in New York, are alive anymore. Interesting to note the presence of the piano in this "gypsy" orchestra, a feature that has been accepted fairly early in American-Hungarian musical institutions.

Iván Dezső had published at least thirty 78 records. However, not all of them are of this musical style. These records are almost impossible to obtain anymore.

### 2. Jenő Bartal and orchestra

The Magyar records, a series of recordings published by Jenő Bartal, were made during the 1930s. The possible date of this record was 1932 or 1933. This archive record was given to the author by Toni Steiner-Köves, the widow of the late László Köves who played the piano with Bartal. This generosity is greatly appreciated. Jenő Bartal was a successful businessman, orchestra leader and famous cellist. He was a serious musician with good background in various musical styles. He was born in Budapest in the late 1890s. He came to America in 1921 together with László Köves-Steiner, and the violinist Sándor Aranyosi. After a few unsuccessful attempts of organizing his own band he turned to managing orchestras and musicians. By 1935 we find Bartal as a musical director of his own orchestra playing at the Hotel Lexington and Hotel Piccadilly. In the late thirties and in the forties there was no other orchestra of such fame and reputation than Bartal's "Singing Strings" dance band. But there was an obvious class problem, however. Bartal's orchestra did not satisfy the needs of the Hungarian community. He was playing at high class places out of the reach of most of the Hungarians, save the upper classes who identified not with their fellow country men but with the upper social strata of American society. Bartal published several records on his own expense. Most of these, however, are not folk music but various social dance tunes from the 30s and 40s. The wide reputation of the "Singing Strings" was based on several facts. Bartal had Sándor Aranyosi, a young agile gypsy *primás* who had a sound knowledge of various musical styles besides Hungarian music. He also had the friendship of László Köves, a self-made piano player and pharmacist by profession. Bartal also utilized musicians, such as Árpád Babos a gypsy cimbalom player coming to this country in the 1910s, who were excellent as musicians *per se*. He was also a great entertainer: Bartal gave solo performances on his cello between dance sets. I think, it is important to realize, however, that Bartal sought avenues of dissemination of music



through his elite friends of circle. Through records, high class restaurants and hotels, and elite parties, as well as the medium of radio, Bartal was able to manipulate his band and music in unusual ways. In 1939, the "Singing Strips" was selected as the best dance band of the year by class of '39 of New York University.

In this selection, Bartal's band plays in a "traditional" set up: with Kóves at the piano, Aranyosi the primás, Babos at the cimbalom and Bartal plays the cello. They play several dance songs of the medium csárdás tempo and the whole set is completed by a fast csárdás tune. Worthy of notice is the fact that both the piano and the cimbalom play both the accompaniment and the solo roles, a practice "invented" by American-Hungarian bands. Nobody is alive from this band anymore. The last member, Laszlo Kóves, died in 1974 at the age of seventy-four. Jenő Bartal had passed away sometimes in the 1950s.

### 3. Mickey Schwartz and orchestra

This live recording was made in November 13, 1982. The band was playing at the Hungarian Social Club, in the Hazelwood section of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The occasion was the popular Harvest Ball held annually and organized by the Hungarian Reformed Church of Hazelwood. The Szűreti Ball, Harvest Ball, is a common fund raising event in Hungarian communities throughout North America. Other East European immigrant communities are also known to possess similar social institution. An event like the Harvest Ball starts out with dinner as well as considerable consumption of alcohol. Then, around nine o'clock, the floor is cleared for dancing. During dinner time, the band may play or just may start to set up. Once dancing starts people are more than eager to steal the fruits hanging from the ceiling. If they caught they are fined by the judges, cséss in Hungarian, or are put in a specially built börtön (jail) until someone pays the amount of bail. At the Hazelwood gathering everybody paid eagerly and only people taking pictures went into the jail. Harvest Balls are held from September until the end of November. The income of such occasion may be a considerable sum: anywhere between \$ 1,000 to 2,000. The number of paying participants may be as high as 300 though the number of people present could be well over five-hundred.

The band playing at the Hazelwood Harvest Ball was Mickey Schwartz's, a band of five including drum, accordion, sax, violin and electric piano. The orchestra was equipped with a somewhat out-moded PA system. Undoubtedly, Mickey Schwartz's band is the single most important band satisfying Hungarian communities in Pittsburgh and vicinity (Hazelwood, Duquesne, McKeesport, McKeesrock etc). The leader is Mickey Schwartz, a second generation Hungarian in his sixties. He is a good entertainer and singer, playing on saxaphon, trumpet and the clarinet. The violinist is Árpád Nagy, a grand old man of age 82. He was born in Hungary in 1904, in Diósgyőr and was brought by his parents to Pittsburgh in 1906. He has been playing the violin since 1928. The other members of the band, drummer, electric piano and accordion (a female player!), are well known musicians and have been playing in the band quite a long time now.

The band is unique not only for its set up but also for its knowledge of diverse social dance tunes. Besides the csárdás sets, the band plays tango, waltz, one-step, polka, and other American social dances. They also play the golya tánc (translates as "stork dance"), a number popular in Hungary in the '20s and perhaps earlier. Although, its music is not Hungarian but the well-known tune of "Glory, glory Hallelujah..." The dance itself is a couple dance resembling some polka variations. This selection is a fragment of a ten minutes csárdás set. It is special for its change from the medium tempo to fast by utilizing the same tune. This has been a common practice among traditional peasant bands, and only rarely appears in American musical systems.

### 4. Béla Babay and Francis Saas

This csárdás set of live recording was made at the "May Picnic" of the Hungarian Club in Lake Ronkonkoma, Long Island, New York State, in May 2, 1982. The Hungarian community of Lake Ronkonkoma (sometimes referred to by Hungarians as the "Hungarian Balaton") goes back to 1921 when a small group of Hungarians founded the Hungarian Literary Social Club. Since then this small group, not more than hundred maybe hundred-thirty families, while fairly in close contact with the Yorkville New York City Hungarian community, has developed quite a unique tradition. The shapers and movers of this community are successful business men and entrepreneurs. Many of them are from the "56 generation."

The so-called "May Picnic" is an annual event designed to raise money for the expenses of the club. They have at least five other major annual gatherings, though almost every weekend there is something going on in their Club House. Their two musicians, the famous gypsy primás Béla Babay and the accórdianist Francis Saas, are local folks. Babay, now sixty years of age, came in 1938 and became an overnight success. He was playing at first class places and made dozens of records. He retired early for his failing heart could not take the pressure-filled life-style. Saas is a self-made accórdian player. His profession was that of an electric engineer. They play together almost six years now in Lake Ronkonkoma.

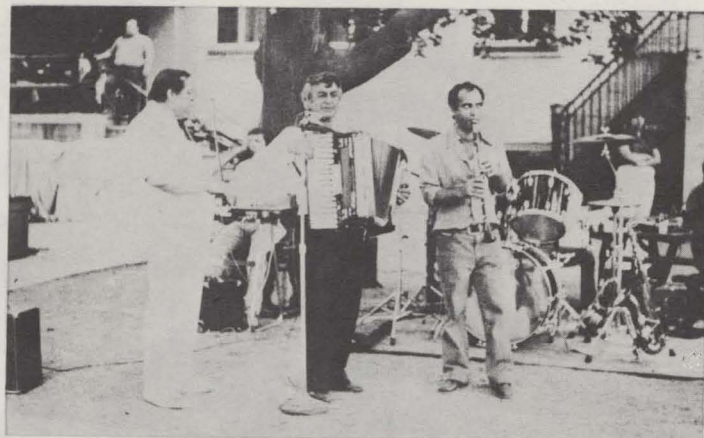
The music they play possesses several characteristics that are not present in the repertoire of other bands. First of all, they use a rhythm machine that is in the place of the double bass. Their rhythm machine (some people refer to it as the "dummy machine") is operated by Saas. He changes the tempo and operates the various knobs to achieve the desired beat. Secondly, Babay is today probably the best violinist playing Hungarian music. Next to the accordion we can listen to the virtuosity of Babay's technique. Constant embellishment and skillful improvisation characterize Babay's playing; yet all these with the confinement of the main melody, and the given musical structure. Babay's style is closer to the style of the former gypsy style, exemplified by such illustrious names as Imre Magyari (1894-1940) and Béla Radics (1866-1930), than the presently favoured violin playing techniques. The other characteristic, I can detect, though obviously Babay is the "star," is the harmonious and symbiotic playing of the musicians. In this selection it is clear that both of them are leaders and can change the songs and tempo at will. The songs in the medium tempo csárdás (with the rhythm machine playing a constant eight) follow in natural succession and this may go into the fast csárdás by simply developing into a faster beat.

### 5. Gypsy Joe and orchestra

This live recording was made at the Hungarian Club, Lake Ronkonkoma, New York, on October 2, 1982. The occasion was the popular Harvest Dance or as referred to sometimes, the Grape Festival. The small club was packed. I should say, however, that the number of people was far less than that of a similar occasion held in Cleveland, Pittsburgh or New York City. This event was fashioned pretty much the same to those found in larger Hungarian communities in North America. The event starts out with dinner, preferably serving some national dishes (stuffed cabbage, roast pork cutlet and others), and this is followed by dancing. This may go on until one or two in the morning. At the Lake Ronkonkoma Harvest Ball, the dance started out with a little show put up by the local dance group: including regional as well as a national style dances.

Without doubt, the most popular Hungarian band in the tri-state area at the present is Gypsy Joe and orchestra. Some organizers claim that "without Gypsy Joe there is no profit." Others say: "If there is no Gypsy Joe we might break even, if we're lucky. You need him. He brings people." This high repute is well deserved. His orchestra is exceptionally well organized. The repertoire is extensive including songs of diverse styles, different era and all this coupled with a good sense of humour and entertainment. Gypsy Joe and his men are all good musicians. Although none of them are professionally trained. The band is composed of five instruments: accordion, saxaphon/clarinet, violin, drum and electric piano. Gypsy Joe plays the accordion and he is the singer also; his son is at the drum. The other gypsy in the band is the violin player. Both of them are from the "fifty-sixers" generation.

The song cycle included here is a fragment of an eight minutes long dance set known as "the gypsy csárdás" or "the gypsy dance set." This is an important dance style unknown in American-Hungarian communities until the people of 1956 brought it over. Most old timers and second generation musicians agree that songs of this nature, as well as the different beat (the rhythm of accompaniment is known as szótam and refers to the following pattern: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩), are new additions to American-Hungarian folk music. This category is different from the regular csárdás music basically because of the new "gypsy" songs used and the szótam rhythm. The relationship of these kinds of songs to authentic gypsy folk songs (i.e. romany speaking tribal gypsy music) is still debated by ethnomusicologists. It is interesting to note, however, that the medium tempo is followed by a fast finish, a practice borrowed from the regular csárdás style. The whole set is completed by a short uniquely orchestrated version of the Rákóczi March. This is to signal that the party is over.



Gypsy Joe and his band at the "Hungarian Picnic," Bohemia Hall, Astoria, 1981