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MUSIC OF THE WORLD



MONITOR PRESENTS THE CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA OF THE

# HUNGARIAN STATE FOLK ENSEMBLE

IMRE CSENKI, Conductor



## INTRODUCTION

HUNGARIAN FOLK MUSIC is a living reality. It is not a museum piece of the past requiring stiff, reserved admiration. The Hungarian peoples' creative spirit remains abundant and continuously productive. Nor is a listening public lacking, for the folk song never merely lingers near the site of its birth, near the *Pusztá*, the village. Together with the other products of the Hungarian soil, the folk song always finds its way to the city, to what may be called "the realm of higher musical culture" which it feeds and renovates. The food of the Hungarian music-lover never lacks, as it were, the vitamin of folk music.

The discoverers of the treasures of the ancient Hungarian folk song had, all the same, — or rather for that very reason — a difficult task in store. They had to divest the Hungarian folk song of the diatonic disguise that had been adjusted to it in order to restore its original, plain beauty. The hardest job was that of getting the performing artists to interpret the folk material properly. It took almost half a century, a period of time in which the country and life of the people had undergone radical changes, to have Hungarian folk music interpreted with its original purity by modern folk performers.

Recruited in 1950 and formally established in the following year, the outstanding Hungarian State Folk Ensemble has proven not only vital to musical life in the years of its existence, but has also managed to make Hungarian folk music known and loved abroad. The Ensemble scored a round of successes both East and West, in touring London and Moscow, Peking and Paris, Baghdad and Warsaw. The public, though widely differing in tastes and musical habits, has everywhere been astonishingly unanimous in its enthusiasm for Hungarian folk music. Led by Miklós Rábai and Imre Csenki, the Ensemble has contributed yet another rich infusion to the pool of international folk music.

## SIDE ONE

### 1. KODALY: KALLO DOUBLE DANCE

This is easily the most popular piece in the Ensemble's performing catalogue. It was composed by Kodály in 1951 for the Ensemble's mixed chorus and for an orchestra comprising three clarinets, two cymbalums and strings. It derives its title from a dance for one couple popular in the village of Nagy-Kálló in Szabolcs county. The three movements follow each other without pause, in rhapsodic style, slow and quick sections in alternation. The folk material utilized includes "Autumn Winds Blow from the North," "Mrs. Sirjai Sells Good Wine," "My Dear Cummer," and "I Am in Nobody's Debt."

Zoltán Kodály (b. 1882) is the greatest living Hungarian master and, after Bartók, perhaps the best known outside his country. His many works include the famous Hány János opera, based on a familiar Hungarian folk hero, and known in the West principally in Suite form.

### 2. MAROS: WEDDING IN ECSER

Ecsér is a little village close to Budapest whose inhabitants have preserved unusually rich wedding traditions. The bridal procession, a tableau of many colors, is the traditional highlight. Maros' music and Rábai's choreography emphasize the solemn ceremonial moments rather than the gay ones of the reception. The individual scenes of the work are "The Dressing of the Bride," "The Bridegroom's Farewell to Bachelorhood," "The Binding of the Bride's Hair," and "Wedding Czardas."

Rudolf Maros (b. 1917) studied composition as a pupil of Kodály. Since 1949 he has been teaching at the Budapest Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music. His "Wedding in Ecsér" was one of the very first works commissioned by the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble.

### 3. GULYÁS: BOTTLE DANCE

This Ensemble favorite was composed in 1951, based on a tune and dance for girls from the town of Decs in the Tolna region. In many parts of Hungary the favorite transportive means remains the flat of the head; women are still seen carrying bundles, bottles and jugs in this timeless fashion. The "Bottle Dance" is a musical and choreographical tribute to this custom. The delicate skill required in balancing the bottles lends the dancers a beautiful upright bearing (see photo).

László Gulyás was born in Debrecen in 1928. He studied piano-forte and composition in Budapest under Sándor Veress and Ferenc Farkas. Since 1950 he has been the house composer and artistic director of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble.

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## SIDE TWO

### 1. FARKAS: THE GRAPES ARE RIPE

Several songs and dances collected from the villages of Decs, Sarpilis and Öcsény in the county of Tolna were unified by the composer into a unified whole with a story; a lad and a girl are in love with one another, but they dare not avow their affection. But a gay vintage celebration, with its easy merriment, enables them to declare their love.

Ferenc Farkas (b. 1905) is a prominent member of the contemporary generation of Hungarian composers. He was a pupil of Leo Weiner and Albert Siklós in Budapest and then continued his studies in Rome under the guidance of Ottorino Respighi. At present he is Professor of Composition at the Budapest Academy of Music. His works include a Symphony, a Concertino for Harp and Orchestra, and several works for the stage including opera, ballet and musical comedy forms.

### 2. GULYÁS: THE SPINNING ROOM

László Gulyás's "The Spinning Room" is one of the oldest and most popular pieces in the Ensemble repertory. The spinning room a place where the village girls meet on winter evenings, is also the social center; for a place where girls meet is likely to attract lads too, and the place where the village youth gather will scarcely be overlooked by the pick of the village old! The spinning room, then, is a kind of club, a village ballroom; a place where young people fall in love. All this is musically narrated in Gulyás's masterly-shaped piece of music. The flute's initial, inviting sounds are answered by the female chorus — the girls are still by themselves, "diligently" attending to their work. The music soon turns gay and highly-colored, developing into quite a whirl. The lads then make their appearance, and at the end of the piece we are treated to a nuptial song.

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