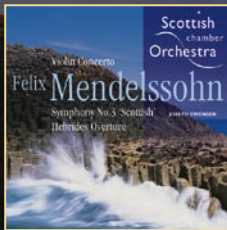




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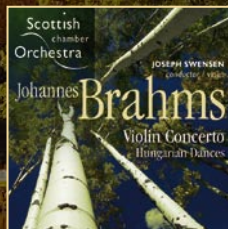
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Scottish
chamber
Orchestra

SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS
conductor

Zoltán Kodály
Dances of Galánta

Béla Bartók

Music for Strings, Percussion & Celeste
Divertimento





Scottish chamber Orchestra

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967)

1. Dances of Galánta 16.30

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste

2. *Andante tranquillo* 7.43
3. *Allegro* 7.34
4. *Adagio* 7.15
5. *Allegro molto* 7.21

Divertimento

6. *Allegro non troppo* 9.31
7. *Molto adagio* 9.28
8. *Allegro assai* 7.31

Recorded at the Usher Hall, Edinburgh
29 February and 1 March 2004 (Bartók)
and at Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh 7 March 2004 (Kodály)

Produced by Tim Oldham

Engineered by Philip Hobbs and Calum Malcolm

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SA-CD mixing by Philip Hobbs and Calum Malcolm

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ZOLTÁN KODÁLY

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), like his friend and colleague Béla Bartók, was inspired by folk music. Unlike Bartók, he devoted his life not just to composition, but to educating his increasingly urbanised compatriots in their native peasant music. Bartók wrote of him:

If I were to name the composer whose works are the most perfect embodiment of the Hungarian spirit, I would answer, Kodály... The obvious explanation is that all Kodály's composing activity is rooted only in Hungarian soil, but the deep inner reason is his unshakeable faith and trust in the constructive power and future of his people.

The *Dances of Galánta*, inspired by the eponymous small market town in western Hungary where Kodály spent seven childhood years, is probably his most popular composition. At the end of the nineteenth century a famous Romani band played there, and their sonorities no doubt impressed themselves on him. Yet his main source for this 1933 composition was a Viennese publication containing some music 'after several gipsies from Galánta'. This music was in the *verbunkos* (recruiting dance) tradition most widely cultivated by Romani bands from the eighteenth century on. Written for the 80th anniversary of the Budapest Philharmonic Society, the *Dances of Galánta* is characterised by rondo-form construction and a brilliant, Debussy-influenced orchestration that captures the spirit of the original.

BÉLA BARTÓK

Béla Bartók (1881-1945) wrote his *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste* (1936), *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* (1937) and the *Divertimento* (1939) just before World War 2, at a time of gathering gloom in Europe. The first of these pieces, composed in the summer of 1936 for the Swiss conductor Paul Sacher and the Basle Chamber Orchestra on its tenth anniversary, is rightly regarded as the most significant of



his chamber orchestra works, displaying as it does Bartók's highly-developed techniques of variation and an amazing economy of means. The première took place in Basle on 21 January 1937. The instrumentation is both unusual and challenging: a double string orchestra with celeste, harp, piano, xylophone, kettledrums and a miscellaneous collection of percussion under the control of one player. The common title of the work in English, however, *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste*, is somewhat misleading since the word in the original German title, 'Saiteninstrumente', refers to instruments that have strings but which are not necessarily bowed, such as the harp, and while technically the piano is a percussion instrument it operates through the striking of strings by hammers. Bartók himself only finalised the title as he evolved the conception of the scoring.

The placement of the orchestra on the stage has the two groups of string players separated by the other instruments which are placed centrally, and this spatial relationship gives a sense of three-dimensionality in performance. Bartók uses the string instruments both antiphonally and in combination, with and without the percussion instruments, all of which are sounded in original and imaginative ways. This recording uses a smaller orchestra than is customary, one specifically allowed by Bartók in a letter of 1936 to Max Adam, in which he mentions that Paul Sacher had 30 string players available and that this was sufficient. The only proviso was that the two string orchestras should have equal numbers. Comparable to Sacher's original forces, the present recording uses 34 string players who are equally divided into five first violins, four second violins, three violas, three cellos and two double basses for each orchestra.

The first movement is remarkable for its twisting fugue subject which, spanning all eight semitones between A and E, contains within it all subsequent development. In its six and a half minutes this movement is tightly constructed, rising to a single crescendo (at the most distant tonal point of E-flat) that is eventually succeeded by a return to atonality and, after a shimmering four bars of celeste figuration, a falling away to silence. Bartók's tendency to use a systematic variation technique in his works of this period is best seen through the reference to the opening fugue theme in each movement. The

second movement, dance-like and in sonata form, takes much of its material from the motives of this opening fugue. Its structure of exposition, development (with a fugato passage) and recapitulation is carried along with irresistible energy.

The third movement, *Adagio*, explores, often magically, the sonorities of the instruments. The tonal materials, all derived from the fugue subject, are subsumed into a 'night music' fabric of rustling strings, tapping xylophone notes and glittering celeste, harp and piano figurations. Bartók had already explored the insect-like world of 'night music' in his *Out of Doors Suite* for piano of 1926, but here the concept is taken further. The balance of the sections in this slow movement is maintained through one of Bartók's arching structures, with the fugue subject again serving as the link between them. In the finale, the main theme is a straightened-out, Lydian-scale version of the opening fugue subject, its jazzy rhythm of 2 + 3 + 3 within a standard 2/2 metre resembling that of the fourth (3 + 2 + 3) of the six piano pieces 'in Bulgarian rhythm'. The movement has a rondo-like structure, with each return of the theme varied. A restrained *meno mosso* section provides a short lull before the strident final cadence.

At the time Bartók was writing these works he was deeply immersed in his analysis of East European folk music. He had made collecting expeditions much earlier, not only in his native Hungary but also in Romania and Slovakia, and he was in close contact with scholars in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and elsewhere. And in 1937 he was composing five of his 'Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm' for the collection of piano studies known as *Mikrokosmos* (1932-39). His reverence for Bach, on the other hand, led him as a composer into attempting at this time a synthesis of Baroque procedures (imitation, inversion) and folk music (multiple techniques of variation). But no one can fully understand Bartók without referring to his folk music collecting, transcription and analysis, which actually absorbed more of his time than did composition. The passion he felt for peasant music lies at the basis of all his mature music, even in this renowned work, which marks a high point in his intense 'middle period'. Paul Sacher described Bartók's personality well at this time:



Whoever met Bartók, thinking of the rhythmic strength of his work, was surprised by his slight, delicate figure. He had the outward appearance of a fine-nerved scholar. Possessed of a fanatical will and pitiless severity, and propelled by an ardent spirit, he affected inaccessibility and was reservedly polite. His being breathed light and brightness, his eyes burned with a noble fire. In the flash of his searching glance no falseness nor obscurity could endure. If in performance an especially hazardous and refractory passage came off well, he laughed in boyish glee, and when he was pleased with the successful solution of a problem, he actually beamed. That meant more than forced compliments, which I never heard from his mouth...

The less severe *Divertimento* was also written for Sacher and the Basle Chamber Orchestra, who gave the première in Basle on 11 June 1940. Its three movements were written in just fifteen days and the work was completed on 17 August 1939. Its two bright, joyful outer structures enclose a sombre *Adagio*. On the whole the piece is more akin to the *Dance Suite* of 1923 in its amiable and carefree moods: harmonies are mostly triadic, and the counterpoint is clearly delineated. Only the central movement is darkly introspective, perhaps reflecting the news that Bartók's mother was now seriously ill. In this work the composer seems to look back to the concerto grosso of the eighteenth century, with its concertino of solo instruments and a ripieno consisting normally of an orchestra of strings. But his conception was not a retrograde, 'antique' one that imitated the earlier genre. The first movement is a sonata form, the finale is again rondo-like, and the *Adagio* is in four sections of which the first and last match each other.

Rhythmically the first movement is predominantly in 6/8 and 9/8, meters that are not especially common in Bartók's compositions (nor in Hungarian folk music). The main theme of the first movement is a relatively simple melody in the violins over pulsing quavers. The basic tonality is F major, with a hint of the Lydian mode in the harmonic

support. A second thematic idea in A major appears, but the tonality thereafter melts through bitonal harmonies and gradually, at the development, turns into B-flat. Most of the development uses imitation, with intermittent five-part canonic writing and the contrast of solo and tutti passages. The recapitulation varies the main melody, its tranquil mood ruffled only by a short passage of imitative chromatic writing before drawing serenely to a close.

The *Adagio* that follows changes the mood entirely with its anguished melodic turn of E#-G-F#, which is developed into a twisting line over an oscillating quaver bass. In the second section the violas create a dramatic statement in a marked rhythm reminiscent of a Hungarian Old Style melody, and a third section sees the return of the first theme, the pianissimos of the coda punctuated by passionate exclamations. The finale is one of Bartók's brilliant dance-like conceptions, with a scampering main theme and a double fugato that forms the central section. Following a cadenza pause by the solo violin the main melody reappears, this time inverted. Later, Bartók introduces a cheeky parody of a polka, a satirical comment on café-music that is rudely interrupted by swirling violins in a triplet figuration leading to a vivacious coda.

James Porter, May 2004

Sir Charles Mackerras

Born in 1925 of Australian parents in America, Sir Charles Mackerras studied in Sydney and Prague and made his debut as an opera conductor at Sadler's Wells. He was First Conductor of the Hamburg Opera (1966-69) and Musical Director of both Sadler's Wells (later English National Opera) (1970-77), and of Welsh National Opera (1987-92), where his notable Janáček productions, amongst many others, were acclaimed. From 1976-79 Sir Charles was Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and also conducted the opening public concert at the Sydney Opera House. Sir Charles is Conductor Laureate of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra, Conductor Emeritus of the Welsh National Opera and Principal



Guest Conductor Emeritus of the San Francisco Opera. A specialist in Czech repertory, Sir Charles is Principal Guest Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, following his life-long association with both the Orchestra and many aspects of Czech musical life.

He made his debut at the Salzburg Festival, with the Vienna Philharmonic, conducting *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and he returned to Salzburg to conduct the Orchestra in Cherubini's *Medée*. He has for many years been associated with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and has a long association with the Metropolitan Opera, New York.

Sir Charles has undertaken much research into performance practice of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of the highlights of the 1991 season was the re-opening of the Estates Theatre in Prague, scene of the original premiere of *Don Giovanni*. Sir Charles conducted a new production of that opera to mark the bi-centenary of Mozart's death. With the Scottish Chamber Orchestra he has recorded six Mozart operas, most recently a very successful *Idomeneo* following performances at the Edinburgh International Festival, and Mozart's *Requiem* which was released on Linn Records (LINN CKD 211). 2002 marked Sir Charles' 50th year with the Edinburgh Festival, in which he conducted Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda*, Handel's *Jephtha* and Mozart's *Gran Partita*.

Sir Charles received a CBE in 1974, was knighted in 1979, was honoured with the Medal of Merit from the Czech Republic in 1996 and made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1997. He is a DMus (Hon) of the Universities of Hull, York, Nottingham, Brno (Czech Republic), Griffith (Australia), Oxford, Napier, Melbourne, Sydney and the Prague Academy of Music. Sir Charles is President of Trinity College of Music.

Sir Charles became a Companion of Honour in the 2003 Queen's Birthday Honours.

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

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The Scottish Chamber Orchestra is internationally recognised for its innovative approach to music-making and programme planning. Formed in 1974 with a commitment to serve the Scottish community, it is also one of Scotland's foremost cultural ambassadors. The Orchestra performs throughout Scotland, including an annual tour of the Highlands and Islands, and appears regularly at the Edinburgh, St Magnus and Aldeburgh Festivals and the BBC Proms. Its busy international touring schedule has recently included the USA, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands, Sweden and Hong Kong.

With both Principal Conductor Joseph Swensen and Conductor Laureate Sir Charles Mackerras, the Orchestra pushes the boundaries of conventional chamber orchestra repertoire, performing symphonic works which were written for smaller orchestras than those usually heard performing them today. The SCO has an impressive catalogue of recordings, including - in partnership with Sir Charles Mackerras - six Mozart operas and a Grammy-nominated set of Brahms symphonies.

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The SCO has led the way in the development of music education, with a unique programme of projects providing workshops for children and adults across Scotland.



The Kodály Orchestra

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Sally-Ann Djachenko, Harry Kerr

2nd VIOLIN Nicholas Fallowfield, Carole Howat, Rosemary Ellison, Robert McFall,
Niamh Lyons, Fiona Stephen, Ruth Slater, Claudie Driesen

VIOLA Simon Rawson, Brian Schiele, Steve King, Kathryn Jourdan,
Rebecca Wexler, Mike Lloyd

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John Davidson, Donald Gillan

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FLUTE Alison Mitchell, Elisabeth Dooner

OBOE Robin Williams, Rosie Staniforth

CLARINET Maximiliano Martín, Ruth Ellis

BASSOON Ursula Leveaux, Alison Green

HORN Robert Cook, Harry Johnstone, Paul Klein, Andrew Saunders

TRUMPET Peter Franks, Shaun Harrold, David Prentice

TIMPANI Caroline Garden

PERCUSSION Ian Coulter, Joy Powdrill

HARP Heather Thomson

The Bartók Orchestra

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Lorna McLaren, Roddy Long

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VIOLA Catherine Marwood, Brian Schiele, Rebecca Wexler

'CELLO Kate Gould, Su-a Lee, Sarah Nelson

BASS Nicholas Bayley, May Halyburton

PIANO Peter Evans

PERCUSSION Ian Coulter, Cameron Sinclair, Sophie Hastings

ORCHESTRA 2

1st VIOLIN Ruth Crouch, Elin Edwards, Catherine James,
Sally-Ann Djachenko, Ruth Slater

2nd VIOLIN Emily Davis, Sarah Bevan Baker, Niamh Lyons, Ulrike Fenner

VIOLA Simon Rawson, Steve King, Georgia Boyd

'CELLO Kevin McCrae, John Davidson, Donald Gillan

BASS Adrian Bornet, Rick Standley

CELESTE Alexander Taylor