



Dohnányi and Bartók
Source: National Széchényi Library



OUR GREAT INHERITANCE Volume One

Parallel Lives: Works by Ernst von Dohnányi and Béla Bartók for flute and piano

Listening to this album is a unique experience because the recording offers a selection of flute and piano pieces of two world-renowned Hungarian composers: Béla Bartók (1881–1945) and Ernst von Dohnányi (1877–1960).

The names of Bartók and Dohnányi may seem unusual in a flute and piano programme, since although the latter did have some interest in the instrument in the last years of his life, Bartók did not compose pieces for solo flute or any significant chamber music where the flute was originally included. There might be several explanations for this. Flutist Szabolcs Szilágyi, who formulated the concept of this CD and is also one of the recording musicians, believes that although the German goldsmith Theobald Böhm (1794–1881), patented his new invention revolutionising flute playing already in 1847¹, for various reasons it had not yet become prevalent at the Budapest Academy of Music (Royal National Hungarian Academy of Music, at present: Liszt Academy of Music) where the two composers studied at the turn of the century. Furthermore, the Viennese flutes – also commonly referred to in professional circles as simple system flutes – used in Budapest and in German speaking areas were less suitable for performing complex chamber music or solo pieces, both in terms of their sound capabilities/potential and technical possibilities. Another explanation for Bartók's and Dohnányi's reluctance may be that neither composer had friendships with remarkable flutists who could have inspired their work, despite the fact that the professor of the Royal National Hungarian Academy of Music as well as the first flutist of the Royal Hungarian Opera House was Adolph Burose (1858–1921). The flutist of German origin was also a much sought-after international soloist and the author of the first Hungarian language flute school, the two-volume *Die Neue Grosse Flötenschule*² (the exact date of its publication is unknown). We should not be misled by the German title: the book was published as the study material of the Royal National Hungarian Academy of Music with German and Hungarian instructions. Both were official languages of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and it was only natural that Burose wrote the instructions in his mother tongue. It is also likely that he spoke little or no Hungarian, because in the preface to the flute school he thanks his student, Dr August Alcsuti³ for the Hungarian translation. Burose was extremely broad-minded as it turns out from his work, which includes the fingering chart of both the Viennese and the Böhm systems⁴, that he preferred the former. He even recommends specific exercises to practice the fingering of the Böhm system, which implies that he considered the Böhm system a deviation from the "normal instrument". At this point, however, we have come full circle as we are back to square one, namely the restrictions due to the sound character and level of technical development of simple system flutes.

Track list

01. Ernst von Dohnányi : *Aria for Flute and Piano Op. 48. No. 1*

02. Ernst von Dohnányi : *Passacaglia for Flute Solo Op. 48. No. 2*

03-16. Béla Bartók : *Suite Paysanne Hongroise*

03. Rubato (Megkötöm lovamat)
04. Andante (Kit virágom rózsát adott)
05. Poco rubato (Aj, meg kell a búzának érni)
06. Andante (Kék nefelejcs ráhajlott a vállamra)
07. Scherzo. Allegro (Feleségem olyan tiszta)
08. Allegro (Arra gyere, amőre én)
09. Allegretto (Fölmentem a szilvafára)
10. Allegretto (Erre kakas, erre tyúk)
11. L'istesso tempo (Zöld erdőben a prücsök)
12. Assai moderato (Nem vagy legény)
13. Allegretto (Beteg asszony, fáradt legény)
14. Poco più vivo (Sári lovam a fakó)
15. Allegro (Összegyűltek, összegyűltek az izsapi lányok)
16. Allegro (Duda nóta)

17-19. Ernst von Dohnányi : *Sonata Op. 21*

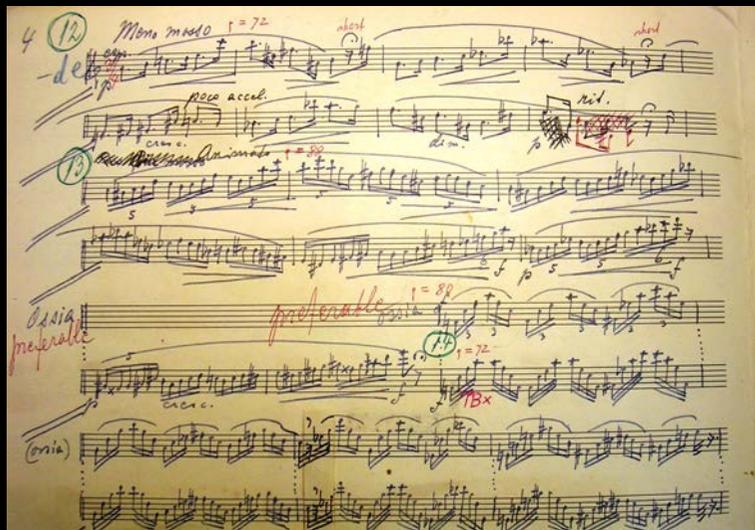
17. Allegro appassionato
18. Allegro ma con tenerezza
19. Vivace assai

20-25. Béla Bartók : *Romanian Folk Dances*

20. Bot tánc / Joc cu băță (Stick Dance)
21. Öves tánc / Brâul (Sash Dance)
22. Topogó / Pe loc (In One Spot)
23. Bucsumi tánc / Buciumeana (Dance from Bucsum)
24. Román polka / Poargă Românească (Romanian Polka)
25. Aprózó / Măruntel (Fast Dance)

26-28. Béla Bartók: *Trois Chansons Hongroises Populaires/Három csíkmegyei népdal*

26. Rubato
27. L'istesso tempo
28. Poco vivo



Passacaglia manuscript
Source: Florida State University Warren D. Allen Music Library

Nevertheless, besides the piano, violin and cello, instruments like the viola, horn, clarinet or harp also play significant roles in Ernst von Dohnányi's chamber music. However, he waited until he was 81 years old to compose a piece for flute. But could the reason have really been that he had not yet met a great performer? That presumption is unlikely since of the two pieces concerned – neither the first composition on our disc, *Aria for Flute and Piano* (Op. 48/1), a minor piece serving as a prologue, nor the grandiose *Passacaglia for Flute Solo* (Op. 48/2), the central composition in the programme was composed for a great artist; they were both dedicated to a very young student, Elizabeth (Ellie) Baker. In fact it was not her but rather her father and the president of Ohio University, John Baker, that Dohnányi was close friends with. Of course, young Ellie admired the Maestro and, according to her recollections, she once proclaimed to Dohnányi: "If only Brahms had written some solo music for the flute! To which Dohnányi quickly and gently responded, "I will write you something instead."⁵ Posterity should, however, be wary of such romantic reminiscences as documents contradict Ellie's memories at several points. We may also wonder to what extent the piece is related to Brahms: its style and harmonies make it closer to French music at the turn of the century. The origin of Passacaglia is even more mysterious in this respect, since at the time of its composition, the young girl had not yet reached the technical or musical level required for its performance: "[...]she is afraid that she would be an old woman before she could play it skilfully", her father joked⁶. Another interesting feature of the piece is that the first part of its theme suggests a twelve-tone row, which, however, is dismissed by the composer in the variations as if he could not or did not want to develop this material. The series of variations elaborating the almost twelve-tone theme were composed intentionally and logically. This is followed by a rather traditional tonal code, and may suggest several things. Is it possible that Dohnányi failed in his last compositional experiment? Or does he just mock the modern theme? Did he deliberately "lose" the atonal theme and let it move towards the style familiar to him, implying that after all, dodecaphony is not the right direction, or at least certainly not for him? Regardless of which interpretation is closer to the listener's taste, Passacaglia deserves the attention of all those interested in the questions and possibilities of 20th Century flute music.

Passacaglia is at the centre of our selection not only because it is the only solo piece in the recording and the least known one, but also because of the above questions. The concept of the programme was to contrast romantic and modern, conservative and progressive Hungarian works, or rather present them side by side as demonstrated by the case of Passacaglia, which seems to appear as the symbiosis of two opposing stylistic concepts. It may now seem obvious why Szabolcs Szilágyi and László Borbély, the musicians recording the CD, had Bartók and Dohnányi on their minds when they were looking for a modern and a romantic composer from the 20th Century. However, the truth is that Hungary has yet to provide a detailed description and interpretation of the relationship of these two great Hungarian composers. Musicology has yet to cover this topic in sufficient detail⁷, and opportunities for music lovers to listen to the composers side by side are also rare. Parallel Lives thus endeavours to provide an opportunity. Interestingly, Dohnányi and Bartók met while they were still attending grammar school. There has never been – and probably there will never be – in Hungarian music history another secondary school in the country like the Catholic Grammar School in Pozsony, where two future world famous composers, studied at the same time. Their names were first linked when the duties of the freshly graduated Ernst von Dohnányi were taken over by the newly enrolled Béla Bartók as the organist during school masses. Their shared roots in their youth (and almost in their childhood) determined their relationship for their entire life. Not only because they were really congenial friends, but also because a kind of hierarchy always remained between them: Bartók, who was younger, always looked up with respect to Dohnányi, who supported him as his older brother – which may seem a bit surprising to posterity. The less than four years between them “magnified the divergent arcs in their individual development.”⁸ Moreover, Dohnányi found his true call within the realm of music much earlier than Bartók. It is important to know that Bartók mainly followed Dohnányi when he chose the Royal National Hungarian Academy of Music at Budapest for his studies, which was of crucial significance for his whole career as well as the history of Hungarian music. Dohnányi graduated two years before Bartók started his studies at the Academy in September 1899 and his career was on the rise. He had already achieved huge success in England and was preparing to leave for America in the new season. However, he kept in touch with his younger colleague when visiting Budapest and also made efforts to help him. For example, Dohnányi recommended the extremely shy young Bartók to the salon of Mrs. Henrik Gruber (née Emma Sándor, later Mrs. Zoltán Kodály), where he later also met Kodály. As the culmination of the relationship between the two young men, Bartók took some private lessons from Dohnányi at the end of his studies.



The Dohnányi and the Baker family.
 In the middle of the picture, Ellie Baker, whom Dohnányi recommended the *Aria* and the *Passacaglia*.
 Source: Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Archives for 20th and 21st Century Hungarian Music

LÁSZLÓ BORBÉLY pianist

László Borbély graduated with distinction from the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Budapest as a pianist in 2007 and obtained a DLA degree from the same university, *summa cum laude*, in 2014. Between 2009 and 2018, he was an external lecturer at the Academy, where he has been a senior lecturer since 2018. His teachers included Edit Major, Mariann Ábrahám, György Nádor and Balázs Réti. During his studies, László Borbély regularly participated in prestigious international master classes and festivals, such as the Encuentro de Música y Academia (Santander), The International Holland Music Sessions (Bergen), Collegium Musicum (Pommersfelden), Cliburn Institute (Fort Worth), the International Bartók Seminar and Festival (Szombathely). He also attended the master classes of Livia Rév, Márta Gulyás, Ferenc Rados, Péter Frankl, Zoltán Kocsis, András Schiff, Gábor Csalog, Eliso Virsaladze, Dimitri Bashkurov, Murray Perahia, Menahem Pressler, Tamás Ungár, Mikhail Voskresensky, Claudio Martínez Mehner, Kim Kashkashian and others. His most important competition awards include 2nd prize at the International Liszt-Bartók Piano Competition in Budapest in 2006, 2nd and 3rd prizes in different categories at the Los Angeles International Liszt Competition, as well as several prizes and special prizes in other prominent national and international competitions [EPTA youth piano competition (Osijek), the Yamaha Prize, London International Piano Competition, Haydn-Mendelssohn Competition of the Hungarian Radio]. He was granted the Annie Fischer Scholarship for Performing Artists three times. He was awarded the prestigious Junior Prima Award in 2009. As an active performing artist, László Borbély performs both as soloist and chamber musician in numerous countries in Europe and overseas. His repertoire spans several hundred years including music ranging from early Baroque to contemporary. In recent years, he has appeared at festivals such as the International Conservatory Week (Saint Petersburg), the International Bartók Festival (Ankara), the Liszt Festival (Raiding, Utrecht, Fermo), FestivalLiszt (Grottammare), Arcus Temporum (Pannonhalma), Budapest Spring Festival, CAFe Budapest, The Day of Listening (Budapest), Tiszadob Piano Festival, Miskolc International Opera Festival. He also appeared in England, Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Poland, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Georgia, Armenia, Asia and different states of the United States of America. László Borbély made a number of recordings at Bayer Records in Stuttgart. His performance was also recorded by Hungarian Radio and TRT (Ankara). Modern and contemporary music constitute an integral part of his performing art, which is manifested in his work with chamber music groups such as Qaartilumi Ensemble, Ensemble METRUM, UMZE Chamber Ensemble and Intermodulation Chamber Ensemble. He is presently a member of Ensemble METRUM. As a lecturer at the Liszt Academy, he has had master classes in Germany (Hochschule für Musik, Würzburg), Switzerland (Haute école de musique, Genève), Georgia (Sarajshvili State Conservatory, Tbilisi) and Turkey (Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir).

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In the following years, Bartók was preoccupied with his unrequited love for Stefi Geyer, the discovery of folk music and, closely related to those, finding his own voice as a composer, while Dohnányi moved to Berlin. As professor of the Hochschule für Musik, he composed successful pieces while he also went through a deep emotional crisis. Partly in connection with this crisis, he returned to Hungary during World War I. The unavoidable significance of the two young composers in the musical life of the country became obvious when they participated together with Kodály in the musical directory of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919. Although appointed for professional reasons, they could not avoid the political consequences. From the 1920s, Bartók became increasingly recognised in the contemporary music circles of Western Europe, while Dohnányi had concerts in Budapest and abroad. He spent most of his time away from Hungary, which is probably why Bartók chose the title "Budapest Sorely Misses Dohnányi" for his famous article longing for the presence of Dohnányi.⁹

Both of them achieved significant successes, but while Dohnányi rose to the leading administrative positions of the Hungarian musical life in the 1930s, Bartók started to step aside because of his political convictions. In 1934, Dohnányi was appointed the president of the Academy of Music and one of his first decisions was to grant Bartók's request to be transferred to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences where he had a full-time position for the categorisation of folk song material. Their two careers, running parallel in many respects or closely intertwined at times, also ended quite similarly: both composers immigrated to the United States (Bartók left in 1940, while Dohnányi left war-torn Hungary in 1944), and they both died in New York – Bartók in 1945 due to a serious illness at the age of 64, and Dohnányi in 1960 due to complications of a cold caught during a strenuous recording session at the age of 82. Despite the many common points in their respective careers and their close relationship, the musical worlds of these two highly different personalities could not be more distinct – Bartók was reserved and ascetic while Dohnányi was serene and generous. Bartók's creative world is known to have been shaped by his scholarly interest in folk music and ancient music, which grounded his unique, dramatic and modern (at times, especially in the first phase of his career, even experimental) style, while Dohnányi seemed as though he was unwilling to break from 19th Century German music traditions that created his musical identity, and he admittedly wrote "conservative" music throughout his life. Still, their relationship meant that they were not independent of each other regarding their music. As we know from the sensitive analyses of László Vikárius, Dohnányi played a significant role in the young Bartók's search for his voice, not, however, as a model but as someone he wanted to differ from, which means that among the influences affecting Bartók as a composer, in Dohnányi's case, the rejection of his influence bears significance.¹⁰ Of course, using folk music as a source of inspiration and finding his unmistakably unique voice with great struggle excluded any later influence of Dohnányi on Bartók's works. At the same time, recent research has pointed out that Dohnányi, who, as it seems, could not or did not want to hold off from his own creative side the stylistic elements of the compositions that he performed as a pianist or conductor, also interpreted Bartók's music in his compositions. The embedding of the variation movement of his *Symphonic Minutes* (Op. 36) into the series, for example, was most probably due to the influence of Bartók's orchestral setting of the folk ballad, *Angoli Borbála*, as we can also discover Bartók's influence (or at least references to him) in several late pieces, particularly in *Burletta* (Op. 44/1) reminding of Bartók's burlesque entitled *Slightly Topsy*.¹¹

Nevertheless, the pieces on our disc emphasise more the differences between the two styles. This is partly due to the reason already mentioned: a flute-piano duo cannot select from a wide range of works if they intend to perform a Bartók-Dohnányi programme. Therefore, both pieces at the centre of the CD are transcriptions. Dohnányi's *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (Op. 21) and Bartók's great series of folk melodies, the *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs* (BB 79, in Paul Arma's arrangement: *Suite Paysanne Hongroise*), composed originally for piano, are also related by the date of their composition: the original Bartók piece was written in 1914–1918 and Dohnányi's Sonata dates from around 1913. They represent the strong stylistic contrast between the two composers. The Bartók piece is an example of the most direct way the composer used folk music when, as he wrote, "We may, for instance, take over a peasant melody unchanged or only slightly varied, write an accompaniment to it and possibly some opening and concluding phrases. This kind of work would show a certain analogy with Bach's treatment of chorales."¹² The melodies themselves are of course the scholarly composer's movements, meticulously selected partly from his own collection, and composed into a dramatic curve in the arrangement. As opposed to this, Dohnányi's "great" work is a sonata demonstrating a basically conservative taste even if more open-minded listeners may well discover several distinctive or, if you like, experimental elements, an exciting variation strategy and, most of all, a sensitive narrative line. Following a transcription of *Romanian Folk Dances* (BB 68), another composition originally scored for piano and akin to *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs* in both its conception and arrangement style, the final work on our recording is *Three Folksongs from the County of Csik* (BB 45b). This is the only composition that belongs to Dohnányi's "genuine" flute pieces. It was composed, if not for flute, but at least for an instrument from the same family, the recorder, and for piano. If we called Dohnányi's Aria the prologue, then this subtle piece, one of the first compositions in Bartók's emblematic style, will be the epilogue, even if the two cannot be stylistically related. These two works are separated from each other not only by two artists following different paths and more than half a century, but, regarding their place of origin, also by ten thousand kilometres.

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LÁSZLÓ BORBÉLY
Photo by: Mihály Borsos

As a soloist and chamber musician, Mr. Szilágyi has performed in several venues in Hungary including the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest, the Valley of Arts, Zsámbék Jazz Open, where the concert was broadcast live by the Hungarian Radio, Merlin Theatre, Trafó - House of Contemporary Arts, the Hungarian National Museum, Bartók Memorial House, Bartók Museum, the Budapest Music Center and Concerto Budapest's House of Music. Besides Concerto Budapest, he has also played with the Budapest Chamber Symphony and the Amadinda Percussion Group, with the latter's performance recorded on CD released by Hungaroton. He premiered in Hungary the works of such composers as Lowell Liebermann, Mike Mower and David Heath. In 2012 he returned to his mentor, Sir James Galway, for a solo concert at Weggis, Switzerland, at the Sir James Galway Flute Festival, where other distinguished guest artists included Denis Bouriakov, Andrea Griminelli and Philippe Bernold. He was invited in August 2013 to play in a recital and take part of the Jury of the Young Artist Competition at the Annual Convention of the National Flute Association in New Orleans, Louisiana, in the United States. Mr. Szilágyi performed at the Beijing Hungarian Cultural Institute (2014), and has been a guest artist at several events such as the Canadian Flute Convention (Toronto 2015), Sir James Galway Flute Festival (Weggis, Switzerland 2016) and Adams Flute Festival (Ittervoort, The Netherlands 2018). He has held master classes in China, South-Korea, Switzerland and Hungary. Beyond his career as a musician, he has also published articles in Pan, the British Flute Society's journal, Fuvolaszó, the Hungarian Flute Society's magazine, as well as Parlando, a journal of music pedagogy in Hungary. Since 2018 he has recorded exclusively for Hungarian record label Hunnia Records. Mr. Szilágyi is the founder and artistic director of the Budapest Flute Academy.

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¹ Before his patent was registered in 1847, Böhm had studied acoustics for two years at Munich University under Prof. Dr. Carl von Schaffnau. Theobald Böhm: *The Flute and flute-playing in Acoustical and Artistic Aspects* (New York: Dover Publications, 2011), 12.

² Adolf Burose, *Die Neue Grosse Flötenschule* (Budapest: Edition Karl Rozsnyai, No. 312. No 313. c. 1907-1908).

³ Adolf Burose, *Die Neue Grosse Flötenschule*, 3.

⁴ Adolf Burose, *Die Neue Grosse Flötenschule*, 26.

⁵ Eleanor Lawrence, *The Flute Compositions of Ernst von Dohnányi*, 62.

⁶ John Baker's letter to Dohnányi, 3 August 1959 (Dohnányi Collection of the Institute of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities).

⁷ For a summary of their relationship see: Bálint Vázsonyi, *Adatok Bartók és Dohnányi kapcsolatához (Data on the Relationship between Bartók and Dohnányi)*, in Ferenc Bónis (ed.), *Magyar zenei történeti tanulmányok Mosonyi Mihály és Bartók Béla emlékére (Essays in the History of Hungarian Music, In Memory of Mihály Mosonyi and Béla Bartók)* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1973), 245-256.

⁸ Vázsonyi, 69.

⁹ Béla Bartók, *Budapest Sorely Misses Dohnányi*, *Musical Courier* (26 May 1921), 47.

¹⁰ László Vikárius, *Modell és inspiráció Bartók zenei gondolkodásában (Model and Inspiration in Bartók's Musical thinking)* (Pécs: Jelenkor, 1998), 79-88.

¹¹ Veronika Kusz, *Egy különös darab: Dohnányi Burlettája (A Singular Piece: Dohnányi's Burletta)*, *Magyar Zene (Hungarian Music)* 50/1 (February 2012), 79-90.

¹² Béla Bartók, *A népi zene hatása a mai műzenére (The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music)* (1931); see: Tibor Tallián (ed.), *Bartók Béla írásai (The Writings of Béla Bartók)* 1 (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1989), 141-144.



SZABOLCS SZILÁGYI
Photo by: Katalin Karsay

SZABOLCS SZILÁGYI flutist

Mr. Szabolcs Szilágyi was born to a family of artists. His father was an actor and his mother is a cultural manager, who works as an art gallery director. He graduated from the Liszt Academy in Budapest, where he was a student of the late Tihamér Elek. He then went to London to continue postgraduate studies at the Royal College of Music with Susan Milan. Meanwhile, invited by the maestro, he attended Sir James Galway's international seminar in Weggis, Switzerland, on several occasions. Mr. Szabolcs Szilágyi has been a member of Concerto Budapest - formerly Hungarian Symphony Orchestra - since 1995. The orchestra's artistic director is András Keller, leader of the Keller String Quartet and violin professor at the prestigious Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. Mr. Szilágyi played at the Frankfurt Chamber Opera, and was a regular member of the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under the baton of pianist/conductor Tamás Vásáry and later of world-renowned conductor Ádám Fischer. As an orchestral musician, he has worked with distinguished artists such as, among others, conductors Kobayashi Ken Ichiro, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Thierry Fischer, Yuri Simonov, Krzysztof Penderecki, János Füst, Gerhard Markson, Nikolaj Znaider, Tan Dun, Gábor Takács-Nagy, Michael Halász and Zoltán Kocsis, and soloists Gidon Kremer, Sir James Galway, Dame Evelyn Glennie, Petra Lang, Angela Hewitt, Isabelle Faust, Vadim Repin, Barbara Hendricks, Thomas Hampson, Boris Berezovsky, Juliane Banse, Gilles Apap, Andrea Rost, Dmitry Sitkovetsky, László Polgár, Olga Kern, Jose Cura, Bobby McFerrin, Ildikó Komlósi, Branford Marsalis, Steven Isserlis and Khatia Buniatishvili. Mr. Szilágyi has toured in nearly all European countries, as well as Russia, China, Taiwan, South Korea, the Middle East and the USA. He has made TV, DVD and Radio recordings, as well as CD recordings for Hungaroton, BMC, Teldec/Warner and Naxos. Since 2017 Concerto Budapest has recorded exclusively for Tacet Musikproduction of Germany.