

Program Notes

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It is often said that music has no national borders, which means all of us can enjoy and appreciate music of other nations and peoples. But even if music lacks national borders, it often has a nationality. Italy has its own distinct music, as does Germany, for example.

The most distinctive element of music from Hungary is dance music. This includes the folk songs of the Magyar ethnic group and the gypsies (Roma). Even among the folk music of the Magyars, we can find subtle differences in content according to individual regions of Hungary.

The pieces to be played today together with the compositions by Mozart and Grieg include Hungarian dance tunes as their basis in creating more refined music. Although we listen to this as music that transcends national borders, the distinct nationality of the music is vividly present, and we have an opportunity to experience music that has been loved and performed by people in Hungary through the centuries.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Violin Sonata No. 25 in G major K. 301

W. A. Mozart (1756-91) wrote 43 violin sonatas altogether. The sonatas most frequently played in concert are the less than 20 pieces starting with No. 24 (as the sonatas numbered 37-39 remained unfinished). These are works written after Mozart had established his own unique compositional style following the famous Mannheim-Paris tour.

The sonata in G major (No. 25) was written in Mannheim during his travels and was published in Paris in 1778. It consists of the following two movements.

1st movement: Allegro con spirito, G major in 4/4 time

2nd movement: Allegro, G major in 3/8 time

Vittorio Monti

Csárdás

Vittorio Monti (1868-1922) was an Italian violinist born in Naples. He studied under a pupil of the great Paganini and, among other achievements, served as concertmaster of an orchestra in France during his career. Monti wrote several works for the violin, although only the present work is widely known. The Csárdás is a representative Hungarian dance tune originating from the popular music that was danced in the *csárda*, which is a tavern or inn in farming villages.

The present piece consists of two sections; a slow *lassù* section and a fast *friss* (literally "fresh") section, creating a piece rich in flavor with equal portions of lyricism and technical brilliance.

Zoltán Kodály

Dances of Marosszék

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), a representative Hungarian composer, was not only an outstanding composer; he is also famous as the creator of the so-called Kodály System of musical education, which has now been adopted around the world. Kodály's compositions are based on the folk music of the Magyars, which was transmitted over the centuries in different areas of Hungary, and which is even older than the music of the gypsies (Roma). In that sense, he could be called the most Hungarian of composers. Marosszék is a locality in Transylvania (most of which now belongs to Rumania), which is known as a treasure trove of folk music.

This piece consists of four dances. Although originally composed for orchestra, there have since been many arrangements for violin and other instruments.

Béla Bartók

Rhapsody for Violin and Piano No. 1

Béla Bartók (1881-1945) was born in the small Transylvanian town of Nagyszentmiklós in Austria-Hungary (now Sînnicolau Mare, Romania). After his father died when the boy was only seven, he moved to the Ukraine and later to Slovakia with his mother, who was a teacher. These wanderings sparked an interest in the folk music of different localities. Together with Zoltán Kodály, Bartók adopted many of these folk elements into his own compositions. It is no exaggeration to say that this was instrumental in his development as one of the greatest composers of the 20th century.

The Rhapsody for Violin and Piano No. 1, composed in 1928, is a work incorporating such folk music. The work was dedicated to Joseph Szigeti,* the great Hungarian violinist who gave the work its premier performance.

Note: Hungarian names, like Japanese names, are usually written with the family name first. But in both cases, the names are written with the given name first on programs outside those countries. Joseph is actually written *József* in Hungary, just as Franz Liszt's name is written *Ferenc* in his native land.

Edvard Hagerup Grieg

Violin Sonata No. 3 in C minor, Op. 45

This work by the great Norwegian composer E. H. Grieg (1843-1907) uses local folk themes, providing an opportunity to savor the differences between Hungarian and Norwegian folk music.

Grieg wrote a total of three violin sonatas, although the first two, written in his early years, are rarely performed today. The third, however, which appears on today's program, is prized as a masterpiece among works of this genre written in the late 19th century. It is said that Grieg was inspired to write the work by the playing of a beautiful woman violinist who came to see him from Italy around 1887. It consists of the following three movements:

1st movement: Allegro molto ed appassionato, C minor in 6/8 time

2nd movement: Allegretto espressivo alla Romanza, E major in 2/4 time

3rd movement: Allegro animato, C minor in 2/2 time