

István Kertész (August 28, 1929 – April 16, 1973) was an internationally acclaimed Hungarian orchestral and operatic conductor who, throughout his brief but distinguished career led many of the world's great orchestras, including the Cleveland, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Detroit, San Francisco and Minnesota Orchestras in the United States, as well as the London Symphony, Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic, and L'Orchestre de le Suisse Romade. His orchestral repertoire numbered over 450 works from all periods, and was matched by a repertoire of some sixty operas ranging from Mozart, Verdi, Puccini and Wagner to the more contemporary Prokofiev, Bartók, Britten, Kodály, Poulenc and Janáček. Kertész was part of a rich musical tradition that produced fellow Hungarian conductors, János Ferencsik, Eugene Ormandy, George Szell, János Füst, and Sir Georg Solti.

On April 16, 1973, while on a concert tour, Kertész drowned while swimming off the coast of Israel at Herzliya.[4] He had been recording what would become a legendary version of Brahms' Variations on a Theme by Haydn, as well as the complete Brahms symphonies. After his untimely death, and in tribute to him, the Vienna Philharmonic finished recording the Haydn Variations.

Kertész was survived by his wife, operatic soprano Edith Kertész-Gabry, his children, Gabor, Peter, and Kathrin, his mother, Margit Muresian Kertész Halmos, and his sister, a graphic artist, Vera Kertész.

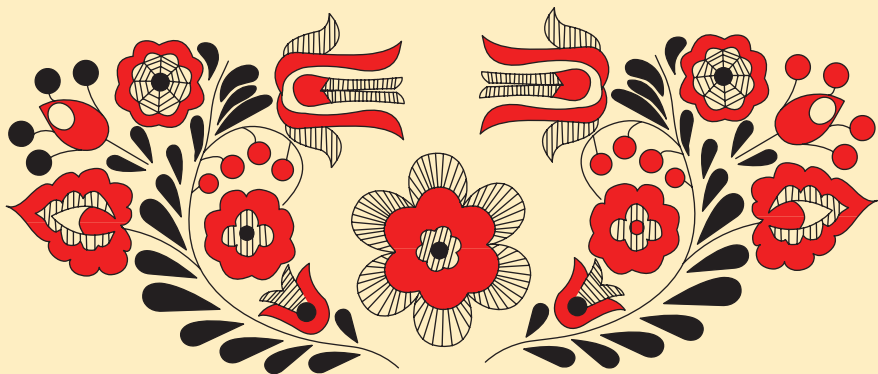


KODALY

HARY JANOS SUITE DANCES OF GALANTA

KERTESZ

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Facts about this Recording

Producer Ray Minschull / Engineer Kenneth Wilkinson
Recorded Feb 28 & March 2 1964
Kingsway Hall, London

"It was a joy to work with Kertesz, who knew the music so well," once exclaimed Barry Tuckwell, the eminent horn player of the London Symphony Orchestra. "There was a small contingent of Hungarian conductors in Britain at the time: Dorati, Fricstay, Kertesz, and Solti, the last of whom I did not like. Kertesz, the junior member, was to assume all the duties that Monteux had occupied; frankly, we players were overjoyed." Kertesz (1929-1973) mastered in his relatively brief lifetime an impressive range of repertory, including sixty operas and the mainstream middle European tradition in symphonic music. A staunch admirer and acolyte of Bruno Walter, Kertesz admitted to Gramophone's Alan Blyth that "I was very much influenced by Bruno Walter. I read his books and listened to his records, and I realized that an artist has a duty to humanity."

The hearty vigor that literally characterizes all of Kertesz's efforts galvanizes the LSO in these Kodaly readings from February and March 1964. Kodály had written in his preface to the score: "Háry is a peasant, a veteran soldier who day after day sits at the tavern spinning yarns about his heroic exploits... the stories released by his imagination are an inextricable mixture of realism and naivety, of comic humor and pathos." He also comments that "though superficially he appears to be merely a braggart, essentially he is a natural visionary and poet. That his stories are not true is irrelevant, for they are the fruit of a lively imagination, seeking to create, for himself and for others, a beautiful dream world." Háry János embodies the poetic power of folklore to go beyond political frustrations, since Kodály intended to bring his national folk music to an operatic setting.

The suite drawn from the opera Hary Janos by Kodaly opens with a musical sneeze – indicating that the tale about to be told should not be taken too seriously. We hear the escapades of a young soldier who is carried off to the

Viennese Imperial Court by the Empress Marie Louise, wife of Napoleon. Hary is most impressed by the glitter and luxury of his new surroundings, not least a musical clock. The angered Napoleon marches on Vienna, but Hary defeats his forces single-handedly. Hary eventually returns home to be reunited with his girlfriend. Brilliantly orchestrated, especially in the third movement "Song" and fifth movement "Intermezzo," it includes prominent parts for viola, saxophone and the cimbalom - the traditional Hungarian hammered dulcimer. Kertesz and soprano Olga Szonyi include two songs from the operatic score: the first, nostalgic and melancholy, casts a bittersweet glow in national colors. The second, Slavic in ironic flavor, moves briskly in lithe and witty colors that nod to Mussorgsky as their influence.

Kodaly wrote his Galántai táncok (Dances of Galánta) for the 80th anniversary of the Budapest Philharmonic Society, which first presented it on October 23, 1933, under the direction of Ernst von Dohnányi. In the preface to the printed score, Kodály wrote:

The author spent the most beautiful seven years of his childhood in Galánta. The town band, led by the fiddler Mihók, was famous. But it must have been even more famous a hundred years earlier. Several volumes of Hungarian dances were published in Vienna around the year 1800. One of them lists its source this way: "from several Gypsies in Galánta"... May this modest composition serve to continue the old [verbunkos] tradition.

The inflamed reading by Kertesz and the LSO proves idiomatic and infectious at every turn, a natural classic of its kind.

Zoltán Kodály Music

István Kertész conducts the London Symphony Orchestra

Háry János Suite:

- 1)Prelude-The fairy tale begins
- 2)Viennese musical clock
- 3)Song
- 4)The Battle and Defeat of Napoleon
- 5)Intermezzo
- 6)Entrance of the Emperor and His Court

7)*Dances of Galánta*

- 8)Arias from Háry János/Poor am I still *
- 9)Arias from Háry János/Once I had a brood of chicks

* **Cymbalum-John Leach**

OLGA SZONYI soprano

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