

Ferenc FARKAS

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME THREE MUSIC FOR OBOE AND STRINGS

ARIA E RONDO ALL'UNGHERESE
PICCOLA MUSICA DI CONCERTO
OLD HUNGARIAN DANCES
MUSIC FOR ZÁNKA
MUSICA SERENA
CONCERTINO IV
RICORDANZE
MASCHERE

Lajos Lencsés, oboe
János Rolla, violin
Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

FERENC FARKAS: ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME THREE MUSIC FOR OBOE AND STRINGS

by László Gombos

Ferenc Farkas (1905–2000), the outstanding Hungarian composer, professor at the Budapest Academy of Music, was invited to give a talk on 2 May 1967 at the Austrian Society for Music in Vienna. Under the title ‘In the Shadow of Bartók’, his presentation painted the scene for the generation of composers who emerged out of the 1920s, for whom the obvious models at the time were Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály – but in following these two giants there lay colossal hidden dangers. Falling under the influence of such exceptional personalities, only a few composers were able to establish a personal style of their own. For Farkas, the French and even more the Italian neoclassical style presented a way forward; between 1929 and 1931, soon after graduating from the Budapest Academy of Music, he continued his studies with Ottorino Respighi in Rome. There he learnt refinement of taste and style, developed his personal outlook, together with flawless craftsmanship, and acquiring practical experience. Later he worked as composer, pianist, chorus-master and conductor in the theatres of Budapest, as well as composing scores for countless films shot in Budapest, Vienna and Copenhagen. A decade later he became well-known, when the resounding success of the first production of his comic opera *The Magic Cupboard* (1942) was followed by a long line of other compositions: radio plays, cantatas, songs, choruses and works for full orchestra and chamber orchestra.

Farkas took a comparatively short time to find his own style, but for decades to come the shadow of Bartók and Kodály continued to hang over the younger generation of Hungarian composers. Farkas therefore aimed in his works to express his individuality, although without denying his antecedents or Hungary itself. This third volume of Farkas’ orchestral works from Toccata Classics expresses his aims particularly well, with modern works sounding in his own, inimitable personal voice and in compositions inspired by early music where he strived to supplement the uneven development of Hungarian musical history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It wasn’t simply a question of reconstructing the missing past; rather, he

sought to link it organically with developments in contemporary Hungarian music. Moreover, he established himself in activities which Bartók and Kodály left untouched – writing for the cinema and theatre, for example – and composed such music as differentiated him from the musical personalities who had preceded him. Farkas' life's work, so to speak, answered the challenge of the great Hungarian masters rather as German composers did after Beethoven and French composers did after Debussy: by speaking with their own voices.

The *Old Hungarian Dances from the 17th Century* fit into the series of compositions with which Farkas made the first fruits of Hungarian Baroque and Classical music accessible to later times. He worked on the music of an historical film at the beginning of the 1940s, for which he collected a huge amount of authentic material in various libraries, mostly from manuscript sources – far more than he required for the film. At this time Farkas was working in Kolozsvár (now Cluj in Romania) as the chorus-master of the Hungarian National Theatre and the director of the Conservatoire of Music, and he organised performances of early music with his students and local music-lovers. Those seventeenth- and eighteenth-century composers were often amateurs who lacked advanced techniques, whereas Farkas, in full command of the composer's craft, would make much more of the material, arranging the dance-tunes into suites, creating trios and other musical forms from the movements. He harmonised the melodies, which often had only a crude bass line, and sometimes enriched the movement of the inner parts with simple counterpoint. In subsequent decades, he fashioned several publications of these pieces. One such collection is the *Antiche danze ungheresi del 17. secolo*, popular worldwide in its dozen or so different instrumentations. In the 1950s Farkas made a wind-quintet version of other pieces,¹ and then in 1961 reworked it for string or chamber orchestra with the title *Choreae Hungaricae*.²

The arrangement heard on this disc was originally intended by the composer for flute and string orchestra, but when he showed his sketches to the oboist Lajos Lencsés, he subsequently agreed to adapt the music for oboe. The musical material of the first and second movements, an Intrada [1] and a 'Slow dance' [2] is identical with the material of the first four movements of the third series of *Choreae Hungaricae*, and originates from the seventeenth-century Lócse Tablature Book. The third movement, a 'Shoulder-blade dance' [3] was the third piece of the first series of *Choreae Hungaricae* and originated from the Vietoris Codex. The fourth movement, the 'Dance of

¹ Recorded by the Phoebus Quintet on Toccata Classics TOCC 0019, released in April 2006.

² Recorded by the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra on Toccata Classics TOCC 0184, released in August 2014.

the Prince of Transylvania' [4], and the seventh and last movement, 'Leaping dance' [7], featured in the 1943 piano pieces called *Early Hungarian Dances* as Nos. 4 and 3, respectively. The fifth and sixth numbers of the oboe version, 'Dance of Lázár Apor' [5] and 'Chorea' [6] are identical with the fourth and fifth, and first and second, numbers in the second series of *Choreae Hungaricae*, originating from the seventeenth-century Codex Caioni.

When he wrote the *Aria e rondo all'ungherese* [27]–[28] in 1994, Farkas used melodies by an anonymous eighteenth-century composer. In the previous year he had taken part in a music festival in Knittelfeld, Austria, where he was inspired by the playing of the violinists Albert Kocsis and Lore Schrettnner to write for them a piece for two violins accompanied by string orchestra. Since Kocsis passed away unexpectedly before the premiere planned for 1995, all the composer could then do was dedicate the piece to his friend's memory (although the dedication in the published score is to Gerard Goossens, the director of Ascolta Music Publishing). At the request of Lajos Lencsés, the composer made an arrangement for oboe and violin from the original solo-violin parts; thanks to the woodwind instrument, a more colourful and varied-sounding work was the result.³

Farkas shows another aspect of his musicianship in *Musica serena* and *Music for Zánka* for string orchestra. In instrumentation, form and style, these two pieces belong closely together. Although relatively easy to listen to and play, in the hands of professional musicians, these modern divertimentos give the impression of being extremely virtuosic concert pieces. Bartók, with his *Divertimento* and *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* from the 1930s, turned back to a more easily intelligible soundworld. Farkas went a step further along that road, more closely approaching an audience that had become increasingly detached from contemporary music. The direct harmonic personality apparent here enables him to use twentieth-century themes and sounds in his works which are derived not from an invocation of the Romantic era but from an apprehension of Mozartian classical simplicity and clarity of form.

Musica serena [8]–[10] (literally, 'Cheerful Music'), was completed in December 1982, in response to a request from Árpád Balázs, a former student. Balázs and Farkas had both been regularly invited as jury members of musical competitions in Zánka, at the 'children's town' built there on the banks of Lake Balaton. A piece of merit was requested, to be played by young musicians at the National Youth Orchestral Festival. The original title was *Zánkai muzsika* ('Music for Zánka'),

³ The original version, performed by Gyula Stuller, János Rolla and the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, can be heard on Toccata Classics TOCC 0184.

but when it began to be played in an increasing number of places throughout Europe, Farkas changed the Hungarian title to one that was more readily understood: *Musica serena*. Soon after, in 1986, he wrote a second, easier-to-play work, also in three movements and intended as a pendant of the previous piece, and this time it was called *Music for Zánka* [23]–[25].

The orchestral version of *Piccola Musica di Concerto*, written for young musicians in 1962, strikes an even more popular note than the Zánka pieces. Originally composed for string quartet in 1961, with the title *Quartetto semplice*, Farkas wanted to write a piece for domestic music-making which would invoke the spirit of the Haydn quartets. He changed the title at the request of the publishers, Schott. The movements follow the customary order: an opening *Allegro* [16], second-movement *Andante* [17], a Scherzo in third place [18] and a closing *Allegro* [19]. The piece is a true *divertimento* in the original meaning of the word, from which the quartet genre once sprang, a modern echo of Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*. Its freshness has guaranteed it remarkable international success: within a few years of their composition both versions had been performed in Algiers, Austria, Germany, Switzerland and the USA, and even in Australia, by young amateurs and established musicians alike. Like Bartók, Farkas gave only his best to young musicians. He took care not to present the performer with tasks that are technically too difficult, but he didn't hold back a single drop of invention. Although the movements of the *Piccola Musica di Concerto* may sound more archaic than the works which precede them on this disc, the informed analyst will notice that Farkas uses more advanced techniques: he plays with twelve-tone music during the course of the composition.

Allusions to earlier periods also characterise *Maschere*, though its style is utterly individual and twentieth-century. It was written for wind trio (oboe, clarinet and bassoon) because Farkas felt these instruments would best be able to conjure up the rather abstract, 'masked' world of the 'actors' of the movements. These three instruments also have an important role in the chamber orchestra version of this piece.⁴ The genesis of the work was a meeting of past and present: while he was still a student in Rome, Farkas' attention was caught by a book which included illustrations of the Pierrot figures by Gino Severini (1883–1966), and in 1983 Severini's centenary provided the occasion for the composition:

⁴ Recorded by the MÁV Symphony Orchestra conducted by Péter Csaba on Toccata Classics TOCC 0176, released in February 2014.

I wrote my piece *Maschere* (Masks) in memory of and for the Centenary of the Italian Futurist and later Neoclassical painter. Severini was fond of painting the figures Pulcinella and Arlecchino with masks. The movements of *Maschere* conjure up the traditional figures of the *Commedia dell'arte*: the pugnacious captain [11], the disgruntled old Pantalone with his affectations [12], the flirtatious Colombina [13], Pulcinella and his poor family [14], and the crafty Harlequin [15].⁵

The *Concertino IV* for solo oboe and strings was written in 1983 for the outstanding Swiss oboist Jean-Paul Goy. It recalls Baroque and Classical traditions not only in its fast-slow-fast sequence of movements but also in spirit. Like many of his contemporaries, Farkas was impressed by the neoclassical trend of the 1920s, which revitalised the apparatus of modern music with Baroque motifs and decorative elements as well as the linear treatment of the parts of concertos. His oboe concerto is called a concertino not just through modesty, but because its miniature dimensions and the exceptional refinement of the parts point to a marked diversion from the Romantic style. Its 'chamber musical' writing sets it at the most remote possible distance from the monumental symphonic concertos of Beethoven and Brahms. The *Allegro* first movement [20] is built on the alternation of two musical features. Here, instead of the *ritornello* form employed by Vivaldi, the four recurrences of the fast beginning flank three slow sections. In contrast to the asymmetrical rhythmic patterns of this movement, the second movement (*Andante, Choral Varié*) [21] suggests ordered regularity. Counterpointed by the oboe, the choral-like music of the strings consists of ten times four harmonies, and the total is intoned a further four times in variations of different character. The oboe plays a long cadenza in the virtuoso final *Allegro* [22] enlivened by its dance-rhythm, and then a short return of the material of the beginning rounds off the composition.

The slow movement of the Concertino is related to the *Ricordanze* [26] composed in October 1986, and scored for clarinet and string trio (violin, viola, cello), where the wind part can be played also on a cor anglais. It was perhaps here that Farkas found himself at the furthest remove from the pleasure-giving of his divertimento-style music: the composition becomes endlessly dense, and every other sound, rhythm and harmony practically has a cosmic meaning. The elegiacally atmospheric work is in the form of a single long movement, where slow and moderately fast sections alternate. Its form is like a centrally pointed symmetrical figure, which before the end

⁵ Typewritten manuscript in the Farkas estate.

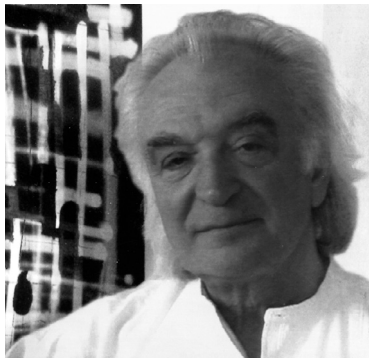
returns to the second section; the ultimate section is a version of the initial one (ABCDEBA or ABCDCBA). Farkas recalled the composition of the work thus:

I wanted to write a one-movement chamber work, in which the clarinet plays the leading role. I dedicated it to my friend György Marton, who played it with his ensemble at its premiere in the Mannheim Trinitatis Church in November 1985.⁶

That performance was one of dozens of gala concerts celebrating Farkas' 80th birthday throughout Europe. Many decades had passed since he had stepped outside Bartók's shadow, demonstrating in his music that in reality he had never ever been in it.

László Gombos, born in 1967, is a Hungarian musicologist, graduating from the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest in 1990 (as chorus-master) and in 1995 (in musicology), and in 1995–98 took part in the Musicological PhD Program of the Liszt University of Music. Since 1990 he has taught music history, at the University of Debrecen from 1998 to 2002, and since 1995 he has been a professor at the Béla Bartók Conservatory in Budapest. Since 1994 he has been a member of the research staff at the Institute for Musicology in Budapest. His main area of interest is Hungarian music of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

⁶ Typewritten manuscript in the estate of the composer.



Born in Dorog, in Hungary, in 1943 **Lajos Lencsés** studied at the Bartók Conservatoire, the Academy of Music in Budapest and at the Paris Conservatoire. Success at the Geneva International Competition in 1968 opened the doors of the world's concert halls to him. In 1971 he became principal oboe of the Radio Symphonic Orchestra of Stuttgart, providing him with a base for his solo career, which has seen him excel also on the cor anglais and oboe d'amore. His broad repertoire embraces composers as disparate as Bach, Bellini, Britten, Cimarosa, Dittersdorf, Dutilleux, Françaix, Handel, Ibert, d'Indy, Jolivet, Koechlin, Martinů,

Mozart, Nielsen, Poulenc, Franz Xaver Richter, Rosetti, Strauss and Vivaldi, and he has naturally championed contemporary Hungarian composers such as Sándor Balassa, Frigyes Hidas and Józs Soproni. He frequently gives master-classes. Over the past three decades he has made more than fifty recordings, many of which have been awarded prizes, for labels which include Bayer, Capriccio, CPO, Hänssler Classics, Hungaroton and Musikproduktion Dabringhaus und Grimm; this is his first recording for Toccata Classics. He was awarded the Diapason d'Or in France in 1990, on which occasion he was described as 'one of the great oboists of our time'. The conductors under whom he has worked – in a concert career that spans Europe, the United States and Japan – include Sergiu Celibidache, Karl Münchinger and Sir Neville Marriner. In 2003 the Republic of Hungary honored him in 2003 as a Knight of the Order of Merit.

János Rolla began playing the violin at the age of five. He graduated from the Franz Liszt Music Academy of Budapest in 1969, where he was taught by Dénes Kovács. Though he has become a familiar figure in the world's concert halls as a chamber musician, he is also an excellent soloist. The leader and a founding member of the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, he has been its artistic director since 1979. In appreciation of his work in spreading Hungarian musical

culture both at home and abroad he was awarded the Kossuth Prize in 1985, the highest cultural distinction in Hungary. In 1992 he became a 'Chevalier de la Culture' in France; in 1994 he was given the cross of the Order of the Hungarian Republic by the President; and since August 2004 he has borne the cross of Order with a Star of the Hungarian Republic. He is the founder of the Zemplén Art Festival and, in recognition of his efforts, was elected an honorary citizen of Sárospatak in northern Hungary in 1996. Since 2008 he has been the head of the Chamber Music Department of the Franz Liszt Music Academy of Budapest. Throughout his career he has always aimed to promote the famous Hungarian string tradition around the world.



The **Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra** was founded in 1963 by former students of the Franz Liszt Music Academy in Budapest. The first artistic director of the ensemble was Frigyes Sándor, a renowned professor of the Academy, after whose death the violinist János Rolla took over as artistic director, in 1979. During its half-century of existence the Orchestra has built up an exceptional international reputation, underlined by concerts in more than fifty countries, in such venues as Carnegie Hall in New York, the Sydney Opera House, the Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. The Orchestra's huge repertoire consists of Baroque, Classical, Romantic and modern pieces alike, and it has made more than 200 recordings. The soloists who have played with the Orchestra include Yehudi Menuhin, Jean-Pierre Rampal, Vadim Repin, Sviatoslav Richter, Mstislav Rostropovich and Isaac Stern. The Orchestra consists of sixteen strings, occasionally accompanied by a harpsichord soloist, winds or other instruments.



TOCC 0176



TOCC 0184



TOCC 0019



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FERENC FARKAS Orchestral Music, Volume Three

Old Hungarian Dances

for oboe and string orchestra

(1990; arr. Lajos Lencsés, 2014)* 13:39

- | | | | |
|----------|-----|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | I | Intrada | 2:00 |
| 2 | II | Slow dance | 2:18 |
| 3 | III | Shoulder-blade dance | 1:54 |
| 4 | IV | Dance of the Prince of Transylvania | 1:58 |
| 5 | V | Dance of Lázár Apor | 1:30 |
| 6 | VI | Chorea | 2:31 |
| 7 | VII | Leaping Dance | 1:28 |

Musica serena for string orchestra (1982)* 6:41

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----|------------------|------|
| 8 | I | Allegro | 2:02 |
| 9 | II | Andante moderato | 1:52 |
| 10 | III | Allegro vivace | 1:57 |

Maschere for oboe, clarinet and bassoon (1983)

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----|-------------------|------|
| | | | 7:10 |
| 11 | I | Il capitano | 1:09 |
| 12 | II | Pantalone | 1:53 |
| 13 | III | Colombina | 1:18 |
| 14 | IV | Povero Pulcinella | 1:14 |
| 15 | V | Alecchino | 1:36 |

Piccola Musica di Concerto

for string orchestra (1961)

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----|---------|------|
| | | 10:43 | |
| 16 | I | Allegro | 3:47 |
| 17 | II | Andante | 1:38 |
| 18 | III | Scherzo | 2:48 |
| 19 | IV | Allegro | 2:30 |

Concertino IV for oboe and string orchestra (1983)

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----|------------------------|------|
| | | 11:14 | |
| 20 | I | Allegro | 3:43 |
| 21 | II | Andante (Choral varié) | 4:36 |
| 22 | III | Allegro | 2:55 |

Musica for Zánka for string orchestra (1986)* 5:20

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----|----------|------|
| 23 | I | Sonatina | 1:31 |
| 24 | II | Arietta | 1:26 |
| 25 | III | Rondo | 2:23 |

26 *Ricordanze* for cor anglais
and string trio (1984) 10:12

Aria e rondo all'ungherese for oboe, violin and string orchestra (1994)

- | | | |
|-----------|---------------------|------|
| 27 | Aria | 2:50 |
| 28 | Rondo all'ungherese | 4:52 |

Lajos Lencsés, oboe **1**–**7**, **11**–**15**, **20**–**22**, **27**–**28**, cor anglais **26**

Lajos Rozman, clarinet **11**–**15**

Andrea Horváth, bassoon **11**–**15**

Emily Körner, violin **26**

Andra Darzins, viola **26**

Zoltán Paulich, violoncello **26**

János Rolla, violin **27**–**28**

Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra **1**–**10**, **16**–**25**, **27**, **28**