

Roland SZENTPÁLI

THREE CONCERTOS
TUBA CONCERTO
THREE DANCES
RHAPSODY

Roland Szentpáli, saxhorn, tuba
Bence Szepesi, clarinet, saxophone, tárogató
Győr Symphonic Band
László Marosi

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE AND SOME NOTES ON MY NOTES

by Roland Szentpáli

I was born on 8 May 1977 in Nyíregyháza, in north-eastern Hungary, near the borders with Ukraine and Romania. I began playing the tenor/baritone horn at the age of twelve, moving on to the tuba the following year under the guidance of Sandor Lukács. I was a student at the Béla Bartók Academy in Budapest from 1991 to 1995, studying with József Bazsinka and Gábor Adamik, and then I continued my studies with László Szabó at the Ferenc Liszt Academy. On the international scene, I have attended courses held by Roger Bobo, Mel Culbertson, Manfred Hoppert and Sam Pilafian, and have been the recipient of numerous scholarships for study abroad.

Among my many successes in solo competitions, the most notable are the first prizes in the International Tuba Competitions in Lieksa, in Finland (2001), Jeju, in South Korea (2000), Markneukirchen, in Germany (2000), Sydney, Australia (1999), Gdansk, Poland (1999), the Balogh-Zilcz Tuba Competition in Budapest (2000) and the European Tuba Competition in Munich (1999), as well as the second prizes in the International Tuba Competitions in Markneukirchen (1999) and Guebwiller, in France (1997).

My output as a composer includes works for chamber ensemble, orchestra and vocal symphonic pieces in a broad variety of styles, among them a *Magnificat*, *Beatus vir*, a tuba concerto, a trumpet concerto, the ballet *Orpheus* and the orchestral pieces *Cataclysms* (premiered in the Auditorium Stravinski in Montreux, Switzerland, on 29 September 2019) and *La Follia*. In February 1994, I performed my Concerto for Tuba and Orchestra in Budapest for a live television broadcast. My music has been played and recorded by the Hungarian Radio Orchestra, Dohnányi Symphony Orchestra, Miskolc Symphony Orchestra and Danubia Symphony Orchestra. And

my ballet *Orpheus* has been broadcast by MÚPA in Budapest, from the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

Besides my busy solo and composition schedule, I have given master-classes and solo concerts in the United States, Japan and many European countries, and I am also Principal Tuba with the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra.

Tuba Concerto (2002)

This concerto is my second work for solo tuba with symphony orchestra. (The earlier one is an unpublished Concertino (1994) that I wrote at the age of seventeen.) The first movement is an ancient 'Ritual' [1]. The inspiration comes from my childhood experiences. Before I started to play music, I wanted to be an anthropologist, and so I read books about the ancient forms of humans, before *Homo sapiens*. I was curious to know how they lived, how they organised their lives, what they ate, and so on. In the first movement the tuba soloist is the leader, the *táltos* or shaman of the group. I imagined that at the beginning a group of people is sitting together, to pray to the gods to solve a problem that is affecting all their lives. The leader starts to play his drums at the beginning to induce a trance and soon he screams out with a request for the gods for solutions. The male and female members answer with moaning. The leader repeats his act, and the second time around everyone stands up and starts to dance together. I imagined an unsophisticated dance, rhythmically and metrically unbalanced. I wanted to create melodic lines that sound as if they were 'out of tune' and imitate the sounds of untuned, ancient instruments. In the middle of this ecstatic dance, the leader suddenly stops, screams and starts to play his drums again. He screams at the people to scare them and show his power and strength. At the end of this act the people start to sing shyly and quietly, and little by little it grows up into the ecstatic dance. At the end, the leader screams again to close the scene.

Immediately after I had finished the first movement and was starting to think about the second, my father called me to let me know that my grandfather had died. He was my last grandparent, and since my other three grandparents had died young, and very early in my life, he was the only one with whom I had a real relationship. I wrote the

second movement in only a few days, transforming my painful feelings and words into musical notes, and so this movement became a ‘Dirge’ [2]. For me this music represents those last words that I was unable to tell him to his face.

The third movement, ‘Rhymes’ [3], is deeply connected to my memories of the place where my grandfather lived – the little village of Máriapócs (near Nyíregyháza, where I was born). My parents used to bring me to my grandparents during the summer holidays, which was always a fantastic experience for me during my childhood. I used to meet the village kids. We played together, eating fruit and vegetables that we picked by the roadside. We trod grapes at harvest time and used to watch the cows coming home in the afternoon. All those things that you never see in a city. Of course, we kids used to tease each other as well. This movement is all about that time.

I was 24–25 years old when I wrote this concerto, to a commission from the Phillip Jones International Tuba Competition, Guebwiller, in north-eastern France. The music is full of Hungarian flavour inherited from Bartók and Kodály, as well as touches of other composer idols of mine, such as Prokofiev and Stravinsky.

Rhapsody (2007–12)

The first 40–50 bars of the *Rhapsody* [4] were written in 2007, but it then lay on the table until 2012. The larger part of the piece was composed and orchestrated in Hong Kong, when I worked there as guest principal tuba-player of the Hong Kong Philharmonic. I love my country very much and, even though I had a fantastic time in Hong Kong, I was seriously homesick, and so this music – much like the Tuba Concerto – is influenced by Hungarian folk-music. After the opening clarinet cadenza, I set up the rhythmic drive on a pair of spoons and a metal water can. The structure of the piece doesn’t really match normal sonata form or any of the other traditional structures you might find in a concerto. That’s because I often play jazz and folk-influenced crossover music with tuba, and so my compositional technique is shaped by this idea. In my compositions, instead of a conventional development section, I frequently build up rhythmic ‘groovy’ ostinato material, a written improvisation, where the orchestra or ensemble plays developing background music.

The second part of the *Rhapsody* is based on my favourite folksong from Szatmár-Bereg Megye (the county in eastern Hungary where I was born): ‘Felülről fúj az őszi szél’ (‘The autumn wind is blowing from above’). Here again I did something unusual. The solo instrument never plays the main melody. The chord progression of the melody drives through the movement. And here the soloist picks up a *tárogató*, a traditional Hungarian folk-instrument, and plays a folk-like sequence of written improvisation.

The last part of the piece is similar in conception to the first. The rhythmic energy is provided by the spoons and can. After introducing the major material, a developing written improvisation comes from the solo instrument – here a soprano saxophone. The music passes into a bridge section, before the major melody returns as a kind of refrain or *ritornello*.

***Three Dances* (2007)**

The *Three Dances* for two tubas and big band were commissioned in 2007 by the Portuguese tuba-player Sérgio Carolino, although, unfortunately, he hadn’t played the work before we made this recording. When I discussed the programme with Bence Szepesi and László Marosi, we realised that we required a kind of double concerto, or at least a piece where we two could play solo with band accompaniment. I came up with the idea of recording the *Three Dances*, since at that stage the piece hadn’t been performed, and it was quite easy to re-orchestrate it for symphonic band (later I produced a version for symphony orchestra as well). Stylistically, this piece is neither as explicitly Hungarian nor as classical as the other two works on this album. These *Three Dances* are instead closer to folk-music because of their repeating thematic lines, and the development sections are again written-out improvisations. The musical material is indeed folk-influenced, but by Balkan and oriental traditions. All three movements feature music with a basically forceful character, and require considerable agility from the soloists and bring out the diverse colours of the band.

‘Blow on Fire’ [5] is unusual, in that the ostinato material of the movement is the main theme. On top of (not after) the main theme, the second theme sounds as contrasting material. These two musical themes dominate the movement to the exclusion of

virtually everything else: they are interrupted only once, with a virtuoso orchestral section, before the recapitulation. The movement ends, also unusually, with a double cadenza. 'Oriental Flavours' [6] is a $\frac{9}{4}$ dance, where the rhythmic pulsation turns around all the time. The main melody is simple and the atmosphere sultry; only the contrasting materials refresh the mood. The 'Cinder Dance' [7] is fast, with uneven but repeating pulsation. The main theme is again very simple, but still very challenging because of its rhythms. It is followed by written-out improvisations and orchestral intermezzos. It's a challenge for the conductor as well, because of the odd pulsation of $\frac{9}{4}$ in the second movement and the $\frac{7}{8}+\frac{7}{8}+\frac{2}{4}$ rhythms in the last movement. The piece, in short, is a real blast.

I was very lucky to be able to make this recording with a soloist as outstanding as Bence Szepesi, who in the *Rhapsody* plays three instruments to world-class standard, and of course with László Marosi, who is one of the foremost band conductors of our time. Both of them not only learned my music – they really did feel the meaning of it, and they worked very hard to make this recording as good as it is. And the Győr Symphonic Band, which is full of young talents, is simply fantastic. All of them are dedicated to music and were very open to making this new music happen in the recording, and they did a fantastic job, thanks to Ferenc Szabó, their chief conductor and artistic director.

Bence Szepesi has achieved considerable recognition both in his native Hungary and around the world. A graduate of the Béla Bartók Conservatoire of Music (1988–92) and, with distinction, of the Franz Liszt Academy of Music (1992–97), both in Budapest, he also attended the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris (2002–4) and took part in the doctorate programme of the Ferenc Liszt University of Music, likewise in Budapest (2013–17).

He currently holds a number of positions: he is the President of the Hungarian Clarinet and Saxophone Society, Principal Clarinet of the Dohnányi Symphony Orchestra in Budapest, Artistic Leader of the Budapest Saxophone Quartet (which he founded in 1995), Professor of Saxophone at the University of Miskolc, in north-eastern Hungary, and National Chairman (for Hungary) of the International Clarinet Association.

He has given master-classes across Europe and the USA, among other places at the Conservatorio Nicolini in Piacenza, Italy, the Music School of Vhrnika and the Summer

Saxophone Academy in Podsreda, both in Slovenia, the Gnessin Academy of Music in Moscow, the Music Academy in Wrocław, and at numerous venues in the United States: Stony Brook University (NY), the University of Central Florida, The Juilliard School of Music (NY), the Manhattan School of Music and California State University.

The early part of his career was distinguished by a number of prizes and competition awards, among them the first prize in the Budapest Clarinet Competition in 1985, third prize in the International Clarinet Association Competition in Ghent in 1993, first prize in the Chamber Music Competition in Budapest in 1997 and the second prize in International Saxophone Quartet Competition in Dortmund in 2000. Now he frequently finds himself a juror on such competitions, serving in 2008–9 as President of the Jury at the International Saxophone Competition in Sestri-Levante, south-east of Genoa, as well as being a jury member of clarinet and saxophone competitions in Serbia, Slovenia and his native Hungary, not least at the National Clarinet and Saxophone Competition in Győr. In 2011 he was awarded the Artisjus Prize by the Hungarian Composers' Union in Budapest.

He has appeared as a soloist and as a chamber and orchestral musician in Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Morocco, the Netherlands, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand and the USA, including three appearances at the best-known concert hall in the world, the Carnegie Hall in New York. He is a brand ambassador of D'Addario Woodwinds (USA), RZ Clarinets (the Czech Republic) and BG France.



László Marosi enjoys a career leading orchestras and wind bands at concerts and festivals and in recording studios and academies around the world, appearing in such major concert halls as the Nibelungenhalle (Passau), the Hungarian State Opera House (Budapest), El Teatro Libertador (Córdoba, Argentina), the Palau de la Musica (Valencia) and Sala São Paulo. The orchestras he has conducted include the MATÁV and Dohnányi Symphony Orchestras of Budapest, the Hungarian State Operetta Symphony, the Symphony Orchestra of Guanajuato and the Symphony of Oaxaca (Mexico) and the National Symphony Orchestras of Costa Rica, Honduras and Kazakhstan. Among the elite wind ensembles he has conducted are the Hungarian Central Army Band, the Royal Military Band of the Netherlands, the State Symphonic Band of São Paulo, the Wind Band of the Teatro Libertador de San Martín (Córdoba), the US Navy Band, the US Air Force Band of Europe and the Wind Symphony of Montevideo (Uruguay). He is currently the artistic director of the International Band Festival of Villa Carlos Paz in Argentina and the Artistic Advisor and Conductor for Stormworks Europe Publishing; he also teaches conducting at the University of Central Florida.



A keen proponent of contemporary music, he has premiered many works for orchestra and wind ensemble, including compositions by László Dubrovay, Frigyes Hidas, Karel Husa, Kamilló Lendvay, Christopher Marshall, Vicente Moncho, Nunzio Ortolano, Shulamit Ran, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, Juan Trigos, Guy Woolfenden and Edson Zampronha. He has been making commercial recordings since the 1980s and has appeared on dozens of albums. In 1993, he was asked to serve as the conductor and artistic director of the professional Budapest Symphonic Band, in addition to his responsibilities as the conductor of the Liszt Academy Wind Orchestra. These ensembles have produced several commercial recordings for leading European companies, including Hungaroton. About his recordings of wind-band arrangements of music from Wagner's *Ring* cycle, ClassicsToday said: 'Marosi conducts these Ringlets in a

flowing, energetic manner that some of today's prominent Wagner conductors could learn from.' For Toccata Classics he conducted an album of symphonic wind music by Ferenc Farkas (TOCC 0349).

Born in Sárvár, in western Hungary, László Marosi began his musical education at the age of five, continuing at the Music Gymnasium, with both piano and trombone as his main subjects. He studied conducting at the Liszt Academy of Music with Tamás Breitner, the director of the Pécs Opera. From 1982 to 1997 he worked as the conductor of the Hungarian Central Army Orchestra, during which period he recorded a number of works by Liszt and several contemporary Hungarian composers. He also conducted his ensemble for radio and television productions and toured with the group throughout Europe. His book, *Two Centuries of Military Music in Hungary: A History of Hungarian Military Music, Conductors and Marches, 1741–1945*, was published by Editio Musica Budapest in Hungarian in 2011 and in English in 2015.

Between 1989 and 1994, László Marosi conducted more than fifty performances annually with the Budapest State Operetta Theatre Orchestra. He was invited to guest-conduct the MATÁV Symphony Orchestra, and toured Europe with the Strauss Symphony Orchestra (1996 and 1998). As guest conductor, lecturer and adjudicator, he has appeared around the world.

Following his professional career in Hungary, he matriculated at Florida State University, where he earned a Masters in Conducting and a Ph.D. in Music Education and frequently conducted the University Symphony Orchestra, serving as Associate Conductor of the FSU Wind Orchestra during the academic year 2002–3.

For his contributions to Hungarian contemporary music, he has twice been awarded the Artisjus Prize by the Hungarian Composers Union. In 1998, he was awarded the FAME prize at the Mid Europe Wind Music Festival in Schladming, Austria, for his international conducting activities, and in 2013 was awarded the Research Incentive Award from the University of Central Florida for his publications and recordings of the music of Frigyes Hidas.



The **Győr Symphonic Band** was founded in September 1998 with the support of the István Széchenyi University, the János Richter Secondary School of Music and the Universitas-Győr Foundation. The wind and percussion students of the two educational institutions take part in the work of the orchestra, which also provides them with orchestral practice. One of the founders of the band, Ferenc Szabó, has been its conductor since the beginning and remains its Artistic Director. The repertoire includes pieces of original concert wind literature, transcriptions of well-known wind composers, especially classical music, and music from musicals and films.

The Győr Symphonic Band held its first public concert in June 1999, at the opening of the Győr Theatre Festival, gaining first place in the music competition held by the Siklós International Wind Orchestra Festival, and also received one of the diamond-jubilee prizes

awarded to three of the sixteen participating ensembles and winning the special prize of the Hungarian Institute of Culture. Ferenc Szabó was awarded the title of 'best conductor of the festival'. In March 2008, shortly after the death of the composer Frigyes Hidas, the Band performed his works for wind orchestra at a memorial concert.

One of the most significant achievements of the Band is the way in which it sets an example and offers a professional development path for similar amateur bands operating in the region. The main task of the ensemble is still to promote and present the widest possible range of modern concert wind-music literature, to prepare the students for the demanding orchestral work they can expect. In addition to the students of its two founding educational institutions, the Győr Symphonic Band encourages the active participation of students studying other subjects in Győr.



Recorded on 24–26 October 2014 in the Concert Hall of the University of Győr, Hungary

Sound engineer: Szabolcs Kapui

Mastering: Zsolt Gyulai

Producers: László Marosi, Roland Szentpáli and Bence Szepesi

Cover photograph: Oláh Gergely Máté

Cover design: David M. Baker (david@notneverknow.com)

Booklet essay: Roland Szentpáli

Typesetting and lay-out: Kerrypress, St Albans

Executive Producer: Martin Anderson

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ROLAND SZENTPÁLI Three Concertos

Tuba Concerto (2002)	19:56
1 I Ritual	8:51
2 II Dirge	5:05
3 III Rhymes	6:00
4 Rhapsody (2007–12)*	14:33
Three Dances (2007)*	17:56
Version for saxophone, saxhorn and symphonic band (2013)	
5 I Blow on Fire	6:25
6 II Oriental Flavours –	4:24
7 III Cinder Dance	7:07

Roland Szentpáli, bass tuba 1–3, **bass saxhorn** 5–7
Bence Szepesi, clarinet 4, **soprano saxophone** 4–7, **tárogató** 4
Győr Symphonic Band
(Artistic Director: Ferenc Szabó)
László Marosi, conductor

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*FIRST RECORDINGS