

FERENC FARKAS Orchestral Music, Volume Two

Choreae hungaricae: Three Cycles of Hungarian Dances from the 17th Century for string orchestra

Part II: Five Dances

from the Kájoni Codex (1961)

1	I	<i>Moderato</i>	0:26
2	II	<i>Lo stesso tempo</i>	1:18
3	III	<i>Quasi minuetto</i>	0:28
4	IV	<i>Allegro</i>	0:31
5	V	<i>Lo stesso tempo</i>	0:51

Part III: Six Dances

from the Lőcse Tabulaturnbuch (1961)

6	I	<i>Allegro moderato</i>	0:44
7	II	<i>Lo stesso tempo</i>	1:15
8	III	<i>Andante moderato</i>	0:59
9	IV	<i>Lo stesso tempo</i>	1:18
10	V	<i>Allegro</i>	0:28
11	VI	<i>Lo stesso tempo</i>	1:04

12 *Aria e rondo all'ungherese for two violins and string orchestra* (1994) 7:36

Musica pentatonica for string orchestra (1945)*

13	I	<i>Toccata</i>	3:59
14	II	<i>Aria</i>	3:39
15	III	<i>Fuga</i>	2:12

András Jelly: Suite for string orchestra and piano (1973–74)*

16	I	<i>Er macht sich auf den Weg</i>	3:08
17	II	<i>Ali Hussein</i>	4:02

18	III	<i>Fu-Kong</i>	3:08
19	IV	<i>Kwanga</i>	1:06
20	V	<i>Rámáyun</i>	3:58
21	VI	<i>Auf dem Heimweg</i>	1:58

Concertino for trumpet and string orchestra (1984)*

22	I	<i>Allegro</i>	3:20
23	II	<i>Andante moderato</i>	6:30
24	III	<i>Allegro</i>	3:09

Finnish Popular Dances for string orchestra (1935) 5:48

25	I	<i>Askulan neliö</i>	0:59
26	II	<i>Palpankilli</i>	0:30
27	III	<i>Melkutus</i>	0:48
28	IV	<i>Lintunen</i>	1:01
29	V	<i>Vanna piika</i>	1:14
30	VI	<i>Haili –</i>	0:28
31	VII	<i>Kumerus</i>	0:48

Partita all'ungaresca: Hungarian Dances and Tunes from the 16th Century for string orchestra (1974)*

32	I	<i>Basse danse</i>	1:33
33	II	<i>Gagliarda</i>	1:51
34	III	<i>Passamezzo</i>	1:50
35	IV	<i>Saltarello</i>	1:08
36	V	<i>Intermezzo</i>	1:12
37	VI	<i>Hajdútánc</i>	1:42

*FIRST RECORDINGS

TT 67:11

Ferenc FARKAS



Orchestral Music Volume Two Music for String Orchestra

Aria e rondo all'ungherese
Finnish Popular Dances
Concertino for Trumpet
Partita all'ungaresca
Choreae hungaricae
Musica pentatonica
Jelky András Suite

Gyula Stuller, violin
János Rolla, violin
László Tóth, trumpet
Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

FERENC FARKAS: ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME TWO – WORKS FOR STRING ORCHESTRA

by László Gombos

This recording presents two characteristic facets of the Hungarian composer Ferenc Farkas (1905–2000). One is that of a twentieth-century composer who tried, in the language of his own time, to write music intended to be as widely accessible as possible; the other is that of the master-craftsman whose arrangements breathed new life into the old national music of his homeland. This ambivalence derives from Hungarian history. For 150 years from the mid-sixteenth century, Hungary was part of the Ottoman Empire, so that the development of musical life fell far short of that in western Europe. At the beginning of the twentieth century Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály set out to fashion, from Hungarian peasant music, a modern Hungarian repertoire that would stand its ground anywhere, and their folk-music arrangements and folk-inspired original compositions made their sources widely popular. In the 1920s and '30s their initiative was taken up by Ferenc Farkas' generation. But Farkas and some of his peers took on another, third, mission: they cast old, rudimentary Baroque and Classical Hungarian music in a new mould, so that it could be played anywhere in the world. What the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century musicians (often amateurs) were unable to do, Farkas, in full command of the composer's craft, was able to achieve. The *Choreae Hungaricae*, the *Aria e rondo all'ungherese* and the *Partita all'ungaresca* on this disc fall into this category.

From 1921 to 1927 Farkas studied at the Budapest Music Academy, but it was life as a practical musician that equipped him with his extraordinary skill. As a young man he was a *répétiteur*, conducted orchestras and choirs and composed for theatre and film and so had first-hand knowledge of a wide variety of musical styles and situations. His time in Rome between 1929 and 1931 had a considerable influence on him, and it was during this period that he was inspired to make arrangements of older music. He wrote of this time:



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FERENC FARKAS on Toccata Classics



In the pipeline from Toccata Press

FERENC FARKAS ON MUSIC: SELECTED WRITINGS, 1930–95

In 2004 *Vallomások a zenéről. Farkas Ferenc válogatott írásai*, a extensive collection of Farkas' writings, edited by László Gombos, was published by Püski in Budapest. A translation is now in hand for publication in the Toccata Press series 'Musicians on Music'. Initiated in 1983 with an anthology of the writings of Sir Adrian Boult, 'Musicians on Music' has already published the writings of some of the leading musicians of the past century, including William Alwyn, Luigi Dallapiccola, Vagn Holmboe, Hans Keller, Otto Klemperer, Ronald Stevenson and Karol Szymanowski. The most recent title in the series was *A Musician Divided*, an annotated edition of the diaries of another Pole, André Tchaikovsky, and the literary output of a third Polish composer is currently in preparation: Andrzej Panufnik's *Composing Myself and Other Texts: Collected Writings*. Further publications in the series will include the writings of Joaquín Rodrigo, Alexander Scriabin, Roger Smalley, Harold Truscott and John C. G. Waterhouse as well as two further volumes from Hans Keller and Ronald Stevenson.

My example and master in the sensitive refashioning of melodies was Ottorino Respighi, whose student I was for two years in Rome. He and his pupils introduced me to the marvellous treasure trove of early Italian lute music. I noticed how they dusted down, and refashioned the old pieces and restored their former sheen, thus making possible their true renaissance – long before the interest grew in authentic performance.¹

In 1942 he worked on the music for a Hungarian historical film, *Rákóczi nótája* ('Song of Rákóczi'). Not satisfied with using a few well-known melodies to suggest the mood of the time of the War of Independence in 1703–11,² he collected a mound of authentic material in libraries, mostly from manuscript sources, and far more than he required for the film. At the time, the first half of the 1940s, Farkas was working in Kolozsvár (now Cluj in Romania), as the choirmaster at the Hungarian National Theatre, and the director of the Conservatory of Music. He organised performances of early music with his students and local music lovers. He arranged 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 voice-leading with simple counterpoint. In subsequent decades, he made several publications of the pieces he had used to try to resurrect the 'absent' Hungarian Baroque. One such collection is the dozen or so versions of the *Antiche danze ungheresi del 17. secolo*, popular worldwide, with many different instrumentations.³ In the 1950s Farkas made a wind-quintet version of other pieces, and then in 1961 reworked it for chamber orchestra with the title *Choreae Hungaricae*. He selected groups of pieces from three original sources: four dances from the *Vietoris Codex*, five dances from the *Codex Caioni* and six dances from the Lőcse Tablature Book. This CD includes the eleven movements of the second [1]–[5] and third [6]–[11] cycles, in the string-orchestra version without the *ad libitum* oboe and flute parts.

Contemporaneously with his first arrangements of early music at the beginning of the 1940s, Farkas started to experiment in his own works. He tried an application of dodecaphony which differed markedly from Schoenberg's, and also a five-note pentatonic version. He did so partly out of playfulness, and partly to prove that even with a high degree of constraint he was able to compose

¹ Interview with Farkas in 1995, published in László Gombos (ed.), *Vallomások a zenéről. Farkas Ferenc válogatott írásai* ('Ferenc Farkas on Music. Selected Writings'), Püski, Budapest, 2004, p. 197; English translation in preparation from Toccata Press, London.

² In 1703 Francis II Rákóczi (II. Rákóczi Ferenc in Hungarian), the prince who ruled Transylvania, launched an uprising against Hapsburg rule, leading a group of rebels known as the Kuruc. It was ended in 1711 by the Treaty of Szatmár.

³ The version for wind quintet, performed by the Phoebe Wind Quintet, was released on Toccata Classics TOCC 0019.

beautiful, original music. He started to compose *Musica pentatonica*, a three-movement piece for string orchestra, in 1943 in Kolozsvár, and finished it in winter 1944–45 in Budapest, under Soviet siege. The premiere was conducted in 1947 by János Ferencsik. In each section of the piece, instead of the traditional twelve chromatic notes he used only five, then as the work progressed he moved into different pentatonic systems, just as in earlier centuries modulations moved from one key into another (for instance, he started with the notes G-A-C-D-E, then in bar fifteen he moved to D-E-G-A-C, equivalent to the dominant key).

At about the same time as Farkas or a little later, Zoltán Kodály and Sándor Veress also wrote some small pentatonic works,⁴ but Farkas was unaware of them. He said of his work:

An ancient core of Hungarian folksongs is built on the pentatonic scale, just like Scottish, Chinese or Chereimian folk-music. In this composition, however, I have not harmonised pentatonic melodies, but the entire musical material, the counterpoint, the subsidiary voices and the harmony, is based on pentatony. I have tried to fashion this filigree pentatonic music into forms borrowed from the Baroque: the first movement is a driving unison Toccata interrupted by choral variations [13]; the expansive lyrical Aria of the second movement [14] is followed by the counterpoint of the last-movement Fugue [15].⁵

For the *Aria e rondo all'ungherese* [12] in 1994, Farkas used melodies by an anonymous eighteenth-century composer. 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, scheduled for 1995, all the composer could do was dedicate the piece to the memory of his friend. The dedication in the published score is to Gerard Goossens, the director of Ascolta Music Publishing.

Farkas' masterpiece of the 1980s was the **Trumpet Concertino (Concertino V)**. As the subtitle indicates, it was the fifth in a series of concertinos, and was preceded by similarly small-scale pieces for harp, piano (or harpsichord), Alpine horn and oboe. It was commissioned by the city of Szeged, a cultural centre in the south of Hungary, for the Szeged Chamber Music Festival of summer 1984. The symmetries of all three movements evoke sonata form. The first (*Allegro*) [22] has a powerful drive, and instead of the development there is an extended trumpet cadenza. The second (*Andante moderato*) [23] is

⁴ Some of the two-part songs in Kodály's *Bicinia Hungarica* (1937–42) and *Children's Dances* (1945) and a number of Veress choruses from the mid-1940s.

⁵ Handwritten text in Farkas' papers.

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.

László Tóth, trumpet, was born in Budapest in 1974 and obtained his degree at the Franz Liszt University of Music in 1999, having already won awards in a number of Hungarian and international competitions. In 2000 he was appointed principal trumpet of the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra and since then has appeared around the globe as both soloist and orchestral musician. He has led master-classes in Japan and the USA as well as in Europe.



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. In 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.

Gyula Stuller (violin) has diplomas from the Guildhall School of Music, under György Pauk, and from the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, under Ferenc Halász. He studied with Nathan Milstein, Sándor Végh, Lóránt Fenyves and Tibor Varga. He has won prizes at several international competitions, among them the Joseph Szigeti competition in Budapest and the Rodolpho Lipizer competition in Gorizia. In 1986 he won first prize at the 20th International Tibor Varga Violin competition in Sion and was appointed Tibor Varga's assistant. In 1990 he was appointed leader of the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. Gyula Stuller has held a professorship at the Fribourg Conservatory since 1996. He was a guest instructor at the Tibor Varga Conservatory and Music Academy between 2002 and 2007. Since 2008 he has held a faculty position at the Conservatoire de Lausanne Haute École de Musique. A number of his students have been prize-winners and play with some of the most prestigious orchestras. Gyula Stuller regularly conducts master-classes in Hungary, Switzerland and Venezuela. Since 2007 he has also been artistic director of the Music Academy of Morges.



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



characterised by a contemplative, meditative tone, which returns as a quotation in the central section of the fast third movement (*Allegro*) [24]. After the sunny, optimistic music by the talented young composer of the *Divertimento* over fifty years before, and the *Musica pentatonica* forty years before, here is the voice of a master nearly eighty years old. The heritage of Béla Bartók's rarified late art seems to be embodied in the conciseness of expression and the spirituality of the piece, particularly in the micro-dialogue of the voices breathing together in the second movement. Farkas exploits the entire gamut of the chromatic scale, and is as eloquent as the passionate expressionists: the sensitive and supple turns of this music are imbued with wisdom and humanity.

The *András Jelky Suite* was also written to commission, around the end of 1973 and January 1974, for the chamber orchestra of the town of Baja in southern Hungary, who took the piece to the chamber-orchestra festival held in Veszprém. As a child Farkas spent several summer holidays with relatives in Baja, where he read the incredible but true story of the local figure András Jelky (1738–83). Jelky set out as a journeyman but in Bavaria and Holland was conscripted into the army; on the way to India he was shipwrecked; he was a tailor on a Dutch ship; returning home from South America he was kidnapped by pirates and sold as a slave; after his escape he was a soldier in China and Indonesia; he was captured by cannibals; and finally became a rich plantation owner in Java, and travelled as Indonesian diplomat in Oceania and Japan. His adventures are illustrated in music in the six movements of the suite, as if the protagonist himself were the narrator: for the fundamental thread of the work is the language of Hungarian music, which is merely adorned with oriental and exotic colouring. The string ensemble is supplemented with a piano, treated not as soloist but merely another instrument in the orchestra. As well as traditional sounds the piece contains many special effects: the players strike the strings with their palms, or the body of the instrument with the end of the bow; at other times a timpani stick is used to strike the lower strings of the piano or the pianist has to hit the lid of the keyboard with the palm of his hand.

Farkas wrote of the Suite:⁶

This composition, to a commission from the Baja Waterworks Chamber Orchestra, is in memory of András Jelky, son of Baja, the journeyman tailor-cum-diplomat. The six movements depict the distant, fairy-tale and yet real figures and locales of the adventures of András Jelky. The piece begins with a quotation from the folksong 'Elindultam szép hazámból' ['I set out from my fair homeland'], showing the start of the intrepid young man's journey, and a storm at sea [16]. In the following movements is

⁶ Handwritten text in Farkas' papers.

a musical portrait of Ali Hussein in Algeria [17], Fu Kong, the cruel gourmet mandarin [18], Kwanga, the native girl in Ceylon who saved his life [19], and Ramayun the fakir stylite [20]. The playful, liberal treatment of the exotic musical material is at times ‘in quotation marks’, at times with ironic exaggeration, and makes no claim to any pretence of scholarly ethnographic authenticity. In the last movement among the serene themes we hear the melody of the homeland: the song of Baja fishermen (‘Hej halászok, halászok’) [‘Hey, fishermen, fishermen’] [21]. The work closes with a coda formed from the retrograde of the folksong at the beginning of the first movement.

In sound and technique, the youthful *Finnish Popular Dances* [25]–[31] are close to arrangements of Hungarian music; only the melodies have been borrowed from the Hungarians’ northern linguistic cousins. This work, too, owes its genesis to Farkas’ work as a film composer:

In Copenhagen in 1935 I wrote music for a film on a Finnish subject. There was a wedding scene, and of course they needed folk-dance music, so I travelled to Helsinki for a few days to get hold of some books on folk-dances and folk-music. While still on the plane home I selected the music I wanted to arrange and even started work composing it. The present version of my *Finnish Popular Dances* arranged for string orchestra was made using the music from the wedding scene with other music added. I mixed together the short-breathed melodies, which in the original are much repeated, to make ABA ternary form as it appears in the dance forms of western European art-music (minuet, gavotte, etc.), and presented them in the usual suite-like arrangement. It was first performed at the 1937 Saratoga Spa Music Festival in New York State.⁷

Of the works on this disc the one to boast the oldest historical sources is the *Partita all’ungaresca*: Farkas used sixteenth-century material, both Hungarian and Hungarian-related, from half a dozen original handwritten manuscripts. He wrote:

As in other similar works of mine, I was led by a dual purpose: to cast the brief musical works, which are valuable to us though at first glance seem insignificant, into a larger musical form; and also to ennoble the crude, dilettante pieces with richer but stylistically tasteful harmonies, and contrapuntal texture.⁸

He began work in 1973 and finished this piece in February 1974. This first version for string orchestra was made for the Musica Humana ensemble in Vác, where they premiered it in 1975. Two years later

Farkas reworked it with the title *Contrafacta Hungarica* for the Berner Bläseroktett (Berne Wind Octet), led by the composer’s son, the conductor András Farkas.

The first movement (*Basse danse*) [32] is a set of variations based on a melody transcribed in 1520 by Fülöp Pominóczky; the second (*Gagliarda*) [33] is a transcription of Bálint Bakfark’s lute piece *Non dite mai*, which is itself an arrangement of an Italian dance tune. The third movement (*Passamezzo*) [34] uses two melodies: the first from a modern collection by Oscar Chilesotti,⁹ the second from Petrus Phalesius’ dance-collection of 1571.¹⁰ The fourth movement (*Saltarello*) [35] is a rondo, whose recurring material is the melody from Sebestyén Tinódi Lantos’ historical song *Sokféle részögről* (‘Several kinds of drunkard’; 1548); the first episode is the Hungarian dance from Haeckel’s lute-book of 1562, and the second episode is a version of the Phalesius melody from the previous movement. The fifth movement (*Intermezzo*) [36] is an arrangement of the song ‘The Story of Eleazar and Antiochus’ from the Hofgreff Chant Book (1546). The sixth and last movement (*Hajdútánc*) [37] is again a rondo, whose theme is the Hajdú Dance from the Dresdner Zithertabulatur of 1592. The first episode comes from August Nörmiger’s collection (1598), and the second is the *Báthory tánc* from a tablature manuscript by Jakobides.

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). In 1995–98 he took part in the musicological PhD programme 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 also 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.

⁹ Chilesotti (1848–1916) was an Italian musicologist and music historian who published a number of collections of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century music; he also wrote on oriental music.

¹⁰ Also known as Pierre Phalèse the Elder, Phalesius (c. 1510–75) was an important Flemish publisher and printer of music, based first in Leuven and then in Antwerp.

⁷ Handwritten text in Farkas’ papers.

⁸ Typescript in Farkas’ papers, dated October 1977.