



Leó
WEINER
Divertimentos
Nos. 1 and 2

Romance

Pastorale, Fantasy and Fugue

Hungarian Nursery Rhymes
and Folk Songs

Ditta Rohmann, Cello

Melinda Felletár, Harp

Budapest Symphony
Orchestra MÁV

Valéria Csányi



1	Románc, Op. 29 ('Romance') (1949)	7:36
	Moderato con moto	
	Divertimento No. 2, Op. 24 'Magyar népi dallamok' ('Hungarian Folk Melodies') (1938)	15:00
2	I. Lakodalmas ('Hungarian Wedding Dance'): Tempo di Csárdás (quasi alla Marcia, ma ben moderato)	3:40
3	II. Tréfálkozás ('Teasing'): Allegretto scherzando	4:39
4	III. Panaszos ének ('Lament'): Andante sostenuto	1:43
5	IV. Kanász-nóta ('Swineherd's Song'): Allegro	4:57
	Pastorale, fantaisie et fugue, Op. 23 ('Pastorale, Fantasy and Fugue') (1934)	22:16
6	Pastorale: Allegro amabile –	8:19
7	Fantaisie: Poco adagio (quasi andante) –	7:47
8	Fugue: Vivo e giocoso	6:10
	Magyar gyermek- és népdalok ('Hungarian Nursery Rhymes and Folk Songs') (1955)	9:31
9	No. 1. Szomorú fűzfának harminchárom ága ('Thirty-three Branches of a Weeping Willow'): Andante	1:09
10	No. 2. Szőlőhegyen keresztül ('Through the Vineyard'): Allegretto moderato e grazioso	0:45
11	No. 3. Tavaszí szél ('Spring Breeze'): Allegretto	1:01
12	No. 4. Lányom, lányom, gyöngyvirágom ('Oh My Daughter, My Sweet Lily'): Allegretto mosso e scherzando	0:33
13	No. 5. Gyergyói verbunk ('Recruiting Dance from Gyergyó'): Risoluto	1:25
14	No. 6. Mért küldött a kisasszony ('What Has the Girl Sent Me'): Vivace	0:43
15	No. 7. Mély a Tiszának a széle ('The River Tisza is Deep at the Edge'): Mosso moderato	1:06
16	No. 8. Áll előttem egy virágszál ('Before Me Stands a Flower'): Andante (poco mosso)	0:57
17	No. 9. Eger felé ('On the Way to Eger'): Allegro giocoso e risoluto	1:52
	Divertimento No. 1, Op. 20 'Régi magyar táncok nyomán' ('After Old Hungarian Dances') (1934)	11:44
18	I. Jó alapos csárdás ('Full-Bodied Csárdás'): Tempo di Csárdás (quasi alla Marcia)	2:08
19	II. Rókatánc ('Fox Dance'): Vivace	2:49
20	III. Marosszéki keringős ('Ronde of Marosszék'): Allegretto moderato (quasi andantino)	1:39
21	IV. Verbunkos ('Hungarian Recruiting Dance'): Tempo di marcia (un poco grottescamente)	2:30
22	V. Csúrdöngölő ('Transylvanian Barn Dance'): Presto	2:38
Recorded: 16 21–25 and 17 18–22 October 2018 at Studio 22, Hungarian Radio, Budapest, Hungary; 11 9–17 and 20 1 December 2018, 11–14 March 2019 6–8 at Hungaroton Rottenbiller Street Studio, Budapest, Hungary		
Producers: Péter Acczél, István Kassai • Engineer: Dénes Rédlý • Editor: Péter Acczél		
Publishers: Editio Musica Budapest 1–8 18–22 , Manuscript held in the Hungarian National Library 9–17		

Leó Weiner (1885–1960): Divertimentos Nos. 1 and 2
Romance • Pastorale, Fantasy and Fugue • Hungarian Nursery Rhymes and Folk Songs

Leó Weiner (16 April 1885–13 September 1960), a contemporary of Bartók and Kodály, applied to the Hungarian (formerly Royal) Academy of Music at the age of 16. Like most of his contemporaries, he became a pupil of the prominent composer Hans von Koessler (1853–1926, known in Hungary as 'János Koessler'), who upheld the Brahmsian tradition of German Romanticism. After graduating, and following a short interlude that included a European tour and work as a theatre accompanist, he was appointed a teacher at his alma mater, where he worked until the end of his life. For half a century he taught generations of musicians in his faculty of composition and chamber music.

Kodály described Weiner in a critique he wrote at the time of his first creative period (1922): 'He belongs in the family of classics such as Mendelssohn and Saint-Saëns, but with some definite Hungarian flavours, which closely binds him to current Hungarian trends in music.' At that time, there were as yet hardly any actual folk references or citations in Weiner's work. As the ethnomusicologist Lujza Tari writes in her influential study: '... [At that time, the Hungarian features of Weiner's music] presented themselves in the following ways: in a heroic–pathetic tone, inherited from the 19th century [...], in the use of the swineherd's dance rhythm beloved by Leó Weiner, which also has a role in *verbunkos* music [...], in his melodies which begin with a Gipsy-like rubato [...]. Although unique, his tone of voice and his art are part of the European currents outlined above', i.e. a part of the era of folk-infused music's maturing, when, in Antal Molnár's words: 'the national direction of national Romanticism left its one-sidedness, and the expressive power of its national features become more universal'. Tari continues: 'The new direction is shown first of all in the frequent use of the pentatonic scale or rather, pentatonic motives', which, at that time, was less a folk criterium and more a sign of a Western education; in the West, some composers had begun in certain cases to utilise pentatonic scales after the possibilities of the seven note diatonic scale were

expanded by the use of twelve notes (chromaticism). As the most dissonant intervals (minor second, tritone, major seventh) are excluded from the pentatonic scale, composers found it useful for portraying certain characters or musical situations, 'at first in wide-ranging melodies with a large ambitus – arching through the circle of fifths and the overtone scale omitting some notes from them (e.g. Liszt, and occasionally Wagner and Verdi).' The pentatonic scale originating from art music was extended by motives inspired by folk music (e.g. Grieg, Dvořák, and later Puccini, Debussy and Hindemith), and we find a mixture of these two kinds of pentatonicism in the music of the early 20th century, including that of Weiner.

The first track on this album is *Romance, Op. 29* (1949), which is an arrangement of the *Op. 14* piece originally written for cello and piano in 1921. In this version the cello solo is accompanied by a sophisticated but subdued harp part along with the string orchestra. The structure of the piece is a loose sonata form. The folk song-like first subject and the accompaniment are both pentatonic at the start as also are the chorale-style chords of the second subject and the free meditation of the cello part. Here the thematic material has a poly-pentatonic relationship with the accompaniment, Weiner adding a hint of French harmony and colours. After the painful sigh of the closing subject comes the extensive development. Pentatonicism comes to dominate, motto-like, in the unison section before the recapitulation following the emotional and dynamic climax of the work. The recapitulation starts as a cadenza with the first subject without the chorale of the second subject—after a nostalgic closing subject and a rather short coda, the movement fades into nothing.

Hungarian peasant music was introduced to Weiner by his composer friend László Lajtha in 1930, through the recordings of the Ethnographic Institute. His previous knowledge of Hungarian folk music probably came from studies written by Kodály and the book by Bartók. What

made Weiner change his style? Maybe it was the assumption that his late Romantic style that had been prominent up to that point was incapable of further development, or the freshness of live Hungarian peasant music, or perhaps it was Bartók, who, although he made no impact in the matter of atonality, definitely influenced almost every composer of the time through his profound connection with musical folklore. Regardless of what was the cause, Weiner maintained a strong interest in folk music. He listened to one phonograph cylinder after another in the Ethnographic Institute, and besides making his own notations, he also notated songs collected by others. If he later used a song in one of his works, he crossed it out in the notated form. From that point on, there is a lot more material originating from folk music in Weiner's pieces. 'And so Weiner's creative path took a turn; while in his first period he created Hungarian music without the use of original folk [...] melodies, now he poured original folk music into the vast melting pot of European music history' comments Tari.

The two *Divertimentos* for strings are among the first pieces of this period. The *Divertimento No. 1, Op. 20* (1934) with the subheading 'After Old Hungarian Dances' is the best-known work by Weiner. He indicates the types of dances in the movement titles. In the first movement, *Full-Bodied Csárdás*, he features two melodies from a fiddler which he could only have known from notation. But he had the chance to hear the material of the second movement live. It is entitled *Fox Dance*, which used to be a popular tune throughout Hungary – although known by various names – while the subject of the second, *maggiore* episode of the rondo is probably the most popular *csördögölő* (a lively male dance involving stamping and clapping) melody among the Székelys. This became Weiner's most successful work, known all over the world, which he rearranged several times (for piano four hands, string quintet, chamber orchestra, folk ensemble, as well as a slightly shorter version for piano). The third movement, *Ronde of Marosszék* is – as Tari concluded – a whirling dance, which Weiner made waltz-like by adding *fermatas* to the 2/4 bars, giving it a more emotional, almost a minuet-like style. The fourth

movement, *Verbunkos*, pointedly features the inaccurate playing of the originally recorded fiddler, giving the movement a playful tone, indicated by the instruction '*un poco grottescamente*'. The source of the trio's melody is a tune recorded by a clarinet player, of which Weiner used only the part where the dancer steps in just one place. He added a horn, a trumpet and a piccolo to the strings in this movement, with the instruction '*ad libitum*'. Unfortunately, it is less commonly performed in this fuller arrangement, even though the presence of the three wind instruments fundamentally changes the character of the music. It not only enhances the impact of the movement, it also affects its structural proportions. The fifth movement, entitled *Csördögölő* ('*Transylvanian Barn Dance*') is based on three Transylvanian melodies, arranged into an effective rondo-finale by the composer. There are also piano arrangements of the third and fifth movements (*Three Hungarian Rural Dances*, 1941), and Weiner wrote a clarinet version of the *Csördögölő* with piano accompaniment.

The subheading of *Divertimento No. 2, Op. 24* (1938) is 'Hungarian Folk Melodies' for string orchestra, but Weiner also made a string quartet arrangement of the work. The first movement, entitled *Hungarian Wedding Dance*, is a recording of a Transylvanian fiddler, that Leó Weiner was the first to transcribe from the phonograph cylinder. He created the *maggiore* middle section of the three-part form from a cadence within the group of dances. He had earlier published the movement, arranged for piano solo and violin and piano as *Op. 21*, and in combination with the movement entitled *Teasing* and the *Fox Dance*, he also towards the end of his life turned it into a set of pieces for piano four hands. The character of the main section's second movement, entitled *Teasing*, is made more unusual by a subtle alternation of 2/4 and 3/4 measures. The trio is based on a bagpipe tune. The third movement, *Lament*, is a lyrical song previously published as the fifth piece in the first book of the *Hungarian Peasant Songs* for piano. The melody is transposed down to allow the velvety tone of the strings to enhance the plangent quality of lamentation. The fourth movement bears the title *Swineherd's Song*.

Weiner transcribed the melody several times in various versions from recordings of versions for bagpipes and also sung the latter version being used twice in his works. Bagpipes were usually made of goatskin, and in some regions even the goat's horns were preserved on the instrument. As a result, this instrument has had a devilish reputation in both literature and music ever since the Middle Ages. Weiner also turns the folk song into a rather descriptive Mephistophelean kind of tune, quite uncharacteristic of him. It is as if we were listening to the ballad widespread across Europe in which the Devil entices sinners to join in an unstoppable dance, making them dance their way into death, and straight to Hell.

Although the opus number of the *Pastorale, fantasia et fugue, Op. 23* (1934) falls between the two *Divertimentos*, it belongs to Weiner's first creative period. László Eödsze aptly characterises Weiner in terms of the piece: 'This work of Weiner could be a prime example of Eduard Hanslick's musical definitions, as it promotes the beauty of "sonically moving forms". [...] Of course, it has nothing to do with the new trend dubbed "disordered atonality", yet it is modern, as its fast-changing tonality is moving towards a Bartókian polymodality. He was against monster post-Romantic orchestras and preferred composing for smaller ensembles.' The three movements of the piece are linked together with *attacca* transitioning harmonies. The first movement, the *Pastorale*, is in classical sonata form. The Hungarian-type style is revealed by the pentatonic introduction of the first subject. The movement does not have clear subjects in the traditional sense, its diverse qualities are here created by the harmonies that assume the leading role from the continuously meandering basic motives. The *Fantasia* is divided into three parts – the passionate outburst of the middle section and the strikingly sorrowful lament chorale played before the recapitulation is a rare, intimate exposure of this introverted, modest composer. The dark atmosphere only lightens at the closure. Weiner found the perfect place to insert some real folk music into this piece as well, namely in the *Fugue* of the third movement. The *Fugue* subject, as Lujza Tari states, is in its original folk form, already a condensed melody: '... the traditional

performer features the main motives of a simple melody type in another genre in a condensed form, combining "regös" songs with bagpipe music.' Weiner '...raises this "regös" song, based on the repetition, [...] and accumulation of short motives, to be the core subject of a finer musical genre, a fugue.' The movement uniquely combines the structure of a fugue with sonata form and the quality of a Mendelssohnian *scherzo*, all in the musical language of Weiner. Four years later, Weiner arranged this piece for string quartet without any musical changes: it became his *String Quartet No. 3, Op. 26*.

Weiner wrote the *Hungarian Nursery Rhymes and Folk Songs* in 1955, and it has no opus number. The composer made a colourful bouquet out of piano pieces previously written for children, and arranged them for a small orchestra. The strings are joined by a flute, an oboe, a clarinet, a bassoon, two horns and a harp. In the first movement, *Thirty-three Branches of a Weeping Willow*, only the strings play. This archaic folk tune was used by Kodály in *The Spinning Room*, while Weiner based his arrangement on the seventh piece in his *20 Easy Little Piano Pieces, Op. 27*. The rest of the movements featured here were taken with no change from a set of piano pieces entitled *Hungarian Folk Music, Op. 42* – namely numbers 17, 14, 20, 26, 28, 21, 29 and 30. The second movement in *Hungarian Nursery Rhymes and Folk Songs* is a song called *Through the Vineyard*, where girls mock a small lad who was rejected by the army, and the third is one of the all-time most popular Hungarian folk songs, *Spring Breeze*. The cheerful matchmaking song, *Oh My Daughter, My Sweet Lily*, is followed by a *Gyergyói verbunk* ('Recruiting Dance from Gyergyó'), the latter being an instrumental dance, in contrast to the other pieces. The harmonic accompaniment of this movement makes it clear for the listener that in the complete cycle the role of the Hungarian cimbalom, an instrument frequently found in folk ensembles, has been given to the harp. In fact, none of Weiner's symphonic works feature a real cimbalom, even though Mihály Mosonyi had already used this instrument in his symphonic poem entitled *Homage to the Spirit of Ferenc Kazinczy* in 1859, and Kodály's *Háry János* established the unquestionable role



Leó Weiner, 1930s. Photo dedicated to his pupil, Elza Récsei.

of the cimbalom in the symphony orchestra. Why therefore did Weiner refrain from adding this traditional instrument to the orchestra, especially given that he had won a prize for a piece he wrote for the cimbalom when he was still studying at the Academy, and the second half of his life revolved around folk music? I believe his monographer, Melinda Berlász might have an answer to that question: 'Folk music represents an exclusively musical aspect in Weiner's music: a valuable musical material rich in individual features that – as he said – he could stylise into a "classical form" in his work "through careful compositional moderation".' Apparently, this approach of Weiner's goes beyond the formation and harmonisation of musical material, and applies to the instrumentation as well. The sixth movement of this cycle, a *scherzo* entitled *What Has the Girl Sent Me* is followed by a folk song opening with the words *The River Tisza is Deep at the Edge*. The eighth movement is a flower song noted down in the 18th century, *Before Me Stands a Flower*, the original source of which can no longer be found. The final movement, a song beginning with the words *On the Way to Eger* is the most complex and the hardest to perform. Even its structure is more complicated than the rest of the pieces – it is a theme with four variations. Weiner's cycle has not previously been published, nor is there any trace of an earlier recording. The score and orchestral parts have been published online by this author, and may be freely downloaded.

István Kassai

English translation:
Villam Translation Services and Paul Merrick

Ditta Rohmann



Ditta Rohmann is a versatile cellist, appearing as a soloist in prestigious concert halls, improvisatory performances with world music ensembles, collaborative productions with dancers and as a chamber musician. In 2012 she was a prizewinner at the prestigious International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition, Leipzig. Her most influential teachers have been Miklós Perényi, Suren Bagratuni, Ivan Monighetti, Boris Pergamenschikow and Ferenc Rados. She considers it important to apply, develop and pass on the knowledge she has gained. Rohmann formerly taught at the University of Debrecen, and since September 2018 has been an adjunct lecturer at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest. As a result of her collaboration with Hungaroton, five solo albums have been recorded in the past six years, and have received positive reviews worldwide. Her discography includes the solo suites of J.S. Bach, and a portrait album featuring Hungarian cello music, including Kodály's *Sonata for Solo Cello*. She has her own chamber series in Budapest, Bach+, which features exceptional Baroque guest performers.

www.dittarohmann.com

Melinda Felletár



Melinda Felletár was born in Hódmezővásárhely, Hungary. She began studies at the Szeged Conservatory under the direction of Richard Weninger (harp) and Lajos Huszár (composition). She later entered the Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory, where she studied with Vera Dulova. After returning to Hungary, Felletár worked with the Szeged Symphony Orchestra and the National Theatre of Szeged, performing the vast majority of harp repertoire, from concertos by Mozart, Glière, Ginastera, Boieldieu, Damase and Martin to chamber and solo works. Felletár has been a professor at the Szeged Conservatory since 1991. Her first solo album was released in 1996, and in 1998 she recorded Weiner's *Romance* with János Starker. In the same year she also joined the Hungarian Symphony Orchestra, and during the 2003–04 season appeared in three live broadcasts on Hungarian Radio, performing six Hungarian harp concertos, four of which were later featured on an album released on Hungaroton. Felletár graduated with a Doctor of Liberal Arts degree from the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Budapest in 2011. She currently holds the position of solo harpist of the Budapest Symphony Orchestra MÁV.

Budapest Symphony Orchestra MÁV



Photo: Kelemen Gergo

The Budapest Symphony Orchestra MÁV (MÁV Szimfonikus Zenekar) was founded in 1945 by the Hungarian State Railways. Since then, it has developed a wide-ranging repertoire from the music of the Baroque era to works by contemporary composers, and is currently ranked among the best professional ensembles in Hungary. The orchestra has performed worldwide, appearing at prestigious venues such as the Große Musikvereinssaal in Vienna, the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, the Philharmonie Berlin, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, and the Shanghai Oriental Art Centre. The ensemble was the only Hungarian orchestra to participate in Tokyo's legendary Three Tenors Production in 1999. Throughout its history, the orchestra has established close connections with eminent artists such as János Ferencsik, Kurt Masur, Herbert

Blomstedt and Charles Dutoit among many others. Renowned soloists such as Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo, José Carreras, Kiri Te Kanawa, Maxim Vengerov and Kristóf Baráti have performed with the orchestra. The Orchestra's discography has been released on various labels. Since 2019, Daniel Boico has been the Orchestra's artistic director and chief conductor, and since 2014, Kobayashi Ken-Ichiro has been its honorary guest conductor. www.mavzenekar.hu

Valéria Csányi



Photo: Zsuzsanna Rózsa

The Hungarian conductor Valéria Csányi (b. 1958, Budapest) studied at the Liszt Academy of Music, obtaining a music teacher's and choral conductor's diploma in 1982 and a conductor's diploma in 1984. She has attended masterclasses given by Karl Österreicher in Vienna, Péter Eötvös in Szombathely and Milan Horvat in Salzburg, and since 1983, has been a member of the Hungarian State Opera, initially as a répétiteur. She was given the opportunity to conduct opera in 1988, leading several works, including premieres, and between 1995 and 2009 she took part in all of the ballet productions of the State Opera. She has worked extensively at the Hungarian State Opera, conducting more than 700 performances. She has toured Austria, Germany, Poland, Spain, Sweden and Mexico. Csányi has made recordings for Naxos including the operetta *Fürstin Ninetta* by Johann Strauss II with the Stockholm Strauss-Orkester [8.660227-28] as well as the first complete recording of Ferenc Erkel's opera *István király* ('King Stephen') [8.660345-46], Leó Weiner's ballet *Csongor and Tünde* [8.573491] and Imre Széchényi's *Complete Dances for Orchestra* [8.573807].

Leó Weiner, a contemporary of Bartók and Kodály, was a profoundly important teacher in Budapest whose own music developed from a more traditional Romantic model – exemplified by the songful *Románc, Op. 29* – to an absorption of his native Hungarian folk music during the 1930s. The two *Divertimentos* for strings, vibrantly orchestrated sequences of dances, are among the best-known works of this period. The later *Hungarian Nursery Rhymes and Folk Songs* draw on some archaic and very popular native melodies. Volumes 1 and 2 can be heard on 8.573491 and 8.573847.

Leó
WEINER
(1885–1960)

Complete Works for Orchestra • 3

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|--------------|---|--------------|
| 1 | Románc, Op. 29 ('Romance') (1949) | 7:36 |
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| 9–17 | Magyar gyermek- és népdalok ('Hungarian Nursery Rhymes and Folk Songs') (1955)* | 9:31] |
| 18–22 | Divertimento No. 1, Op. 20 'Régi magyar táncok nyomán' ('After Old Hungarian Dances') (1934) | 11:44 |

*** WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Ditta Rohmann, Cello 1 • Melinda Felletár, Harp 1

Budapest Symphony Orchestra MÁV

String section only: 1–8 18–22

Valéria Csányi

A detailed track list and full recording and publishers' details can be found inside the booklet.

This recording was made possible thanks to sponsorship from the Advisory Board of the Weiner Trustee of the Liszt Academy, Budapest, and the Buda House of Arts.

Booklet notes: István Kassai • Cover photo: Péter Aczél

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