

# Hans GÁL

MUSIC FOR VIOLA, VOLUME TWO
DIVERTIMENTO FOR FLUTE, VIOLA AND HARP, OP. 80B
SERENADE FOR VIOLIN, VIOLA AND CELLO, OP. 41
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IMPROMPTU FOR VIOLA AND PIANO

Hann

Hanna Pakkala, viola Reijo Tunkkari, violin Lauri Pulakka, cello Niamh McKenna, flute Päivi Severeide, harp Irina Zahharenkova, piano

## HANS GÁL: MUSIC FOR VIOLA, VOLUME TWO

by Richard Marcus

By 1950, the Austrian composer Hans Gál was firmly established in Edinburgh. In 1945, he was appointed Lecturer in Music at the University of Edinburgh, where he taught full-time until his retirement in 1955 (plus another ten years part-time). A British citizen from 1946, he conducted the Edinburgh Chamber Orchestra, founded by the Misses Norma and Theodora de Marco, performed frequently with the Edinburgh Society of Musicians and served as Honorary President of the Society of Recorder Players from its founding in 1957 until his death in 1987. Gál played a vital role in the founding of the Edinburgh International Festival. He guided the festival director, Rudolf Bing (a fellow Hitlerflüchtling), towards key patrons such as Lady Rosebery, a pupil and supporter of Gál's who helped provide funding for the first festival in 1947, and he served on the Festival Committee for many years. Gál welcomed several of his old friends, among them Fritz Busch, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Rudolf Serkin and Bruno Walter, to the festival as participants. Gál himself was invited to perform Brahms' Liebeslieder-Walzer (Op. 52) and Schubert's F minor Fantasy alongside the eminent pianist Clifford Curzon at the 1952 festival. Although Gál's musical life in Edinburgh was full and many-sided, it was vastly different from the one he left behind in Austria and Germany.

Born in Brunn am Gebirge, just to the south of Vienna, in 1890, Gál was surrounded by the most talented musicians of the day. As a young man, he heard Mahler conduct at the Vienna State Opera on several occasions. At age fifteen, he began studying piano with Richard Robert, a Bruckner pupil and one of the most important teachers in Vienna at the time. In 1913, Gál earned his doctorate from the University of Vienna. His dissertation on the stylistic characteristics of the young Beethoven was written under the guidance of Guido Adler, the eminent music historian who had been a friend of Mahler's.

Gál developed an interest in composition at an early age. From 1909 to 1911, he studied form and counterpoint with Eusebius Mandyczewski, who had been a member of Brahms' closest circle of friends. Gál was drafted into the army in 1915, but military service did not deter him from composing, and his works from the First World War include the Serbische Weisen ('Serbian Melodies') for piano duet and the First String Quartet, as well as his opera Der Arzt der Sobeide ('Sobeide's Doctor'), which was premiered in Breslau in 1919. After the war, Gál's reputation as an opera composer began to grow. His second opera, Die heilige Ente ('The Sacred Duck'), was premiered in Düsseldorf in 1923 under Georg Szell and was an immediate hit; it was performed in some twenty theatres over the next ten years. In the late 1920s, Gál and Mandyczewski co-edited the Brahms Complete Edition, published by Breitkopf & Härtel. In 1929, Gál was appointed Director of the Mainz Conservatoire, where he conducted the orchestra and all the choirs and taught harmony, counterpoint and composition. He also served, along with Alban Berg and Ernst Toch, on the selection committee of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein (German Music Society), which organised annual festivals of new music. Several of Gál's works, including the ballet suite Scaramuccio for orchestra and the Second String Quartet, were premiered at these festivals. In the 1920s and 1930s, indeed, Gál's music was widely heard throughout the German-speaking world.

The happy times in Mainz came to an abrupt end in 1933 when the Nazis seized power. Being Jewish, Gál was removed from his post, and the performance and publication of his music were immediately banned in Germany. With no hope of employment, Gál returned to Vienna to be near family and friends. He was forced to flee immediately after the *Anschluss* in 1938. He arrived in London with the intention of carrying on to America, but he and his family had to wait for the proper visas. By the time the paperwork was in order, Britain was fully engaged in the war, and the plan to travel onwards to the States was abandoned.

For Gál, the war years were not only difficult but often traumatic. Sir Donald Tovey wanted to secure a teaching appointment for him at the University of Edinburgh but died before the arrangements could be made. In 1940, Gál was classified as an 'enemy alien' by the British government and was sent to several internment camps, the last being on

the Isle of Man.¹ In 1942, Gál suffered the deaths of several immediate family members, including his mother, who died from complications following a serious accident, and his sister Edith and aunt Jenny, who took their own lives before being deported to concentration camps. The ultimate blow came with the death of Gál's younger son, Peter, by suicide, in December of that year. Even in the darkest times, composition seemed to provide solace for Gál. His Second Symphony and Cello Concerto are among the major works written during the war years.

After the war, artistic tastes began to change, and Gál's music, which is firmly rooted in the Austro-German tonal tradition, gradually fell out of favour. He remained musically active until his death at age 97. One of Gál's last compositions was the Twenty-Four Fugues for Piano (1979), written as a ninetieth-birthday present for himself. He performed the work several times in public, both in Britain and in Germany.

Gál was known not only as a composer but also as a scholar. He wrote or contributed to over a dozen books, including well-received monographs on Brahms, Schubert, Verdi and Wagner. He received several prestigious awards, including two Austrian State Prizes (1915, 1958), the Art Prize of the City of Vienna (1926), the Order of the British Empire (1964), honorary doctorates from the Universities of Edinburgh (1948) and Mainz (1977) and, in 1981, the Austrian Medal of Honour, *Litteris et Artibus*, one of the highest honours of the Austrian state.

One can learn more about Gál's life and work by visiting the Hans Gál Society's website: hansgal.org.

Gál's 120-plus published works span all genres, though chamber music held a special place in his heart. In a note dated 25 September 1948, announcing an approaching concert in Vienna that featured several of his chamber works,<sup>2</sup> he expressed his particular affection for the trio as a genre:

Chamber music, as the most intimate form of expression, is the realm to which the musician repeatedly returns in order to retain the link with the essence of things. In a duo,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> His internment diary, Musik hinter Stacheldraht, was published in 2003 by Peter Lang, Berlin, and an English translation by Anthony Fox and Eva Fox-Gál, Music behind Barbed Wire, by Toccata Press, London, in 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The concert included the *Huyton Suite* for flute and two violins, composed during his wartime internment.

trio or quartet, independent individuals converse with one another. The musical symbol for this process is polyphony: the most perfect and most transparent form of polyphony is three voices; for that reason, I have always had a predilection for the trio as the noblest form of polyphonic setting.<sup>3</sup>

The works on this recording were written over a span of forty years and yet show remarkable consistency in style. Although Gál endured many disruptions in his life, he remained firm in his artistic beliefs. He felt a deep sense of responsibility as a composer – something he learned from Mandyczewski, to whom Gál referred as his 'spiritual father'. Gál wrote that although Mandyczewski may never have uttered those exact words, the core of his teaching could be summed up as follows: 'Anyone who is not confident of answering for every note that he writes at the Last Judgement should not even begin'. 5

#### Trio for Violin, Viola and Piano, Op. 97b (1950)

Gál was a master of orchestration; more fundamentally, he was a composer with a deep affinity for melody, shaping instrumental lines with an almost vocal sensibility. This trio, originally published for violin, clarinet and piano (Op. 97), is heard here in Gál's alternative version, where the viola takes the place of the clarinet, exchanging the ease of projection and agility of the clarinet for the expressive depth and tenor-like clarity of the viola. In doing so, Gál affirms the capacity of the viola to bring a different kind of lyricism to the music – a voice rich in resonance, with a weightier and yet equally singing quality.

Gál's writing ensures that each instrument maintains a distinct voice while engaging in a finely balanced musical dialogue. Gál himself described the piece in terms that capture both its formal clarity and expressive vibrancy:

The three instruments are used in a permanent lively confrontation, thematic suggestions being treated both melodically and contrapuntally. In the opening movement, in sonata form, the lyrical character of the clarinet [viola] is prevailing, contrasted by a following

Hans Gál, 'Vorliebe für das Trio', 25 September 1948, transl. Eva Fox-Gál and Anthony Fox, Hans Gál private papers, York.
 Eva Fox-Gál and Anthony Fox, Hans Gál: A Century of Music, ed. Gerold Gruber, Hentrich & Hentrich, Berlin, 2016, p. 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Eva Fox-Gál and Anthony Fox, *The Hans Gál Website: Music for Generations* (2001), under 'About Hans Gál: Musical Education', http://hansgal.com/hansgal/2 (accessed 3 July 2021).

*Capriccio*, a kind of scherzo with expressive episodes. The finale, a set of free variations on a theme introduced by the clarinet [viola], moves through changing moods to a brilliant concluding peroration.<sup>6</sup>

The essence of Gál's style – long, melodic lines; rich, contrapuntal texture; lush, Romantic harmony – is heard immediately in the first movement, marked *Moderato assai* 1. The virtuosic piano writing is also characteristic of Gál. The humorous interplay among the instruments in the lighter *tranquillo* section suggests an animated conversation among friends. The second movement, *Andantino capriccioso* 2, begins with an extended passage for solo piano featuring a prominent short–short–long rhythmic figure. When this passage returns, Gál adds a soaring violin obbligato, as can often be heard in his orchestral music. The dialogue is heightened as phrases pass between the instruments, in an interplay of wit and meticulous craftsmanship. Gál's creative imagination is on full display in the finale, *Tema con variazioni* 3, where he uses a recurring passage between variations. After the final occurrence of this passage, a spirited *stretto*, in which the three players seem to be competing in a high-stakes race, brings the piece to an exhilarating close.

#### Serenade for Violin, Viola and Cello, Op. 41 (1932)

Gál was Director of the Mainz Conservatoire when he wrote the *Serenade*, his first string trio. The work was premiered by the Weyns String Trio in Mannheim in December 1932, only four months before Gál was dismissed from his post. The first movement, *Capriccioso* [4], begins with a unison flourish followed by a distinctive three-note figure that returns throughout the movement (Ex. 1). There is an abundance of joyous energy throughout this sonata-form movement.

The second movement, *Cantabile* [5], begins with a poignant melody introduced by the violin. After restating the main theme, the viola is featured prominently in the middle section. The final statement of the theme is heard in the cello. The *Menuetto* [5] starts with a stately melody hinting at Viennese classicism. The mood darkens in the trio, where the cello introduces a yearning melody imitated by the violin. The final

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Eva Fox-Gál, booklet notes for Hans Gál: Chamber Music for Clarinet, Toccata Classics TOCC 0377, 2016.



movement, *Alla Marcia* [7], begins with a cheerful melody that, at times, resembles a rustic fiddle tune. At the end of the movement, Gál neatly ties the piece together with a brief passage in unison that recalls the opening flourish of the first movement.

#### Divertimento for Flute, Viola and Harp, Op. 80b (1957)

Gál's *Divertimento* for Flute, Viola and Harp is adapted from an earlier work for mandolin and harp, written in 1957 for his Viennese friend Vinzenz Hladky, who directed a mandolin orchestra at the Vienna Academy. Op. 80b is dedicated to and arranged for two other friends, the violist Günther Kehr and flautist Renate Kehr Müller, who, along with the harpist Karin Schmeer, gave the premiere in Mainz in 1983 in a radio broadcast for Südwestfunk.

The first trio for flute, viola and harp seems to have been the brief *Terzettino* of Théodore Dubois in 1905, but it was Debussy's *Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp* of 1915 that established the combination as a standard chamber ensemble; since then, hundreds of composers have written for it. The grouping brings together three distinct musical personas: the mercurial agility of the flute, the eloquent and tenor-like lyricism of the viola and the stately resonance of the harp. Gál fully embraces the expressive potential of this ensemble, allowing each to assert its character. The adaptation from mandolin and harp to this instrumentation opens up new possibilities for texture and dialogue, shifting the expressive weight of the work and granting it an almost courtly refinement, though never without Gál's wry wit, particularly in the final movement.

In the first, a Prelude marked *Moderato* [3], the buoyant first theme is introduced by the viola. After statements of the theme by the flute and harp, Gál develops contrasting material, including a prominent triplet figure that enhances the pastoral tone. The *Cantabile* [9], derived from an *Intermezzo* in the earlier mandolin work, opens with the flute presenting the extended, song-like first theme. A playful triplet figure, which passes through each instrument, provides contrast in the middle section. Elements in the *Menuetto* [10] are drawn from the second movement of the mandolin work. The movement begins with a bright, jaunty melody in B flat major. The mood changes dramatically in the trio section, when the flute introduces a hauntingly beautiful melody in D minor, imitated by the viola and supported by a simple accompaniment from the harp. The closing rondo, *Allegro energico* [11], opens with a dramatic, falling figure. The swift interaction among the instruments calms when the rondo theme is heard in augmentation, accompanied by a triplet figure. After this brief respite, the pace gradually increases as the movement comes to a satisfying close.

### Impromptu for Viola and Piano (1940)

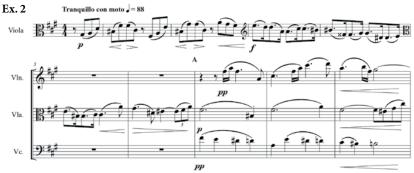
Gál seems to have been particularly taken with the viola in the 1940s. He wrote four chamber works for the instrument, including the Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 101 (1942), and the Suite for Viola and Piano or Orchestra, Op. 102 (1949). The *Impromptu* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Both works can be heard on Volume One of this conspectus, on Toccata Classics TOCC 0535 (2019).

for Viola and Piano [12] was composed in February 1940 for Gál's younger son, Peter, who was learning the instrument after having studied the violin for several years. At the time, Peter was attending boarding school, away from the immediate anxiety of the war. Gál may have presented the piece to Peter while he was on holiday from school, and it is likely that the pair of them played the piece together. The work is playable in first position and, as the publisher notes, is 'excellently suited to young players or those changing to the instrument'. Gál's gift for melody is evident in the piece, where he was able to turn a modest *Impromptu* into something quite exceptional.

#### Trio for Violin, Viola d'amore (or Viola) and Cello, Op. 104 (1971)

Completed nearly forty years after the *Serenade*, Op. 41, the Trio, Op. 104, is representative of Gál's fully mature style. The work was commissioned by the London Viola d'amore Society and completed in 1971. The premiere took place at the Austrian Institute in London in February 1972, with Jean Harvey (violin), Montague Cleeve (viola d'amore) and Margaret Moncrieff (cello). Cleeve had founded the Viola d'amore Society in 1965.



 $<sup>^2\ \</sup> Julia\ M\"{u}ller-Runte, preface\ to\ \textit{Impromptu}\ for\ Viola\ and\ Piano,\ by\ Hans\ G\'{a}l,\ transl.\ Anthony\ Fox,\ Schott,\ Mainz,\ 2008,\ p.\ 4.$ 

The emotional intensity builds as the other instruments enter. Near the end of the movement, the violin and cello share a serenely beautiful passage in octaves, enveloping the viola as it plays fragments of the opening solo. The much lighter Presto 14 is a sonata movement in D major, brimming with dancing melodies, often accompanied by pizzicato. The final movement [15] is a theme and variations. The F sharp minor theme, introduced by the viola, echoes the doleful solo from the first movement. The violin then leads with a gentle, song-like melody in the parallel major. After a series of five inventive variations, the theme returns in the viola in its original key, although Gál concludes the piece, as he did the Serenade many years before, with a lively march in D major.

Richard Marcus is an Associate Professor of Music and Director of Bands at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. He is the US contact for the Hans Gál Society.

The versatile Finnish violist Hanna Pakkala is equally at home on the modern and the Baroque viola. She performs widely as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestralsection leader, appearing at international festivals and prestigious venues across Europe. She studied at the Sibelius Academy, the Hanns Eisler Hochschule für Musik in Berlin and the Franz Liszt Hochschule für Musik in Weimar, under the guidance of Helge Valtonen, Anna Kreetta Gribajcevic, Pauline Sachse and Erich Krüger.

She serves as the principal viola of the Helsinki Baroque Orchestra and frequently collaborates as a guest

principal with various other Finnish orchestras. From 2016 until 2023, she was the principal violist of the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra and a member of the Kokkola Quartet, playing a key role in their artistic development and recordings. She is also dedicated to teaching, sharing her expertise in viola and chamber music at the Sibelius Academy.

Her well received recording Hans Gál: Music for Viola, Volume 1 (Toccata Classics Tocc 0535) was praised in Gramophone, and her discography spans both chamber and orchestral works. She has also undertaken ambitious artistic projects, including a recording of Bach's solo cello suites on Baroque viola, supported by the Wihuri Fund and the Central Ostrobothnia Regional Fund for Artists.

**Reijo Tunkkari** studied violin at the Central Ostrobothnia Music Institute under Juha Kangas and Kaija Saarikettu, as well as at the Edsberg Music Institute in Stockholm with Jennifer Nuttal-Wolf and Endre Wolf. He also studied privately with Eli Goren and Igor Bezrodny.

He has been a member of the Central Ostrobothnia Chamber Orchestra since 1976, serving as its first concert-master since 1994, the same year he became the first violinist of the Kokkola Quartet. With the orchestra, he has premiered nearly 150 works and contributed to over 60 recordings.



As a soloist, Reijo Tunkkari has performed with his orchestra on multiple occasions and recently recorded Hans Gál's Violin Concertino for the CPO label. With the Kokkola Quartet, he has appeared at numerous music festivals in Finland and abroad and has made several recordings.

Teaching has also played an important role in his career. He has been an instructor at Centria and Novia Universities of Applied Sciences, the Central Ostrobothnia Conservatoire, Kaustinen Music High School and various summer courses.

Tragically, Lauri Pulakka (1962–2024) passed away while this recording was being prepared for release. A founding member of the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra (OCO), he served as its first principal cellist and later as co-ordinator of its artistic programme. His distinguished career was further enriched by rigorous academic pursuits, culminating in a doctorate from the Sibelius Academy. He studied cello and Baroque cello under the tutelage of Jane Cowan in the UK, Christophe Coin in Paris and Erkki Rautio in Helsinki. His engagement with early-music performance practices led him to incorporate the viola da gamba into his repertoire.

Beyond his primary role with the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra, his versatility was evident in a wide



Photograph: Ulla Nikul

array of musical endeavours, including work as an orchestral and chamber musician with ensembles such as The Jones Band, the Kokkola Quartet and Barocco Boreale, as well as performing as a soloist with groups like the Sixth Floor Orchestra and OCO. He also took on leadership roles as conductor and orchestra leader, notably with the Finnish Baroque Orchestra and OCO. Additionally, he was an accomplished arranger, music writer, recording producer and educator, teaching at all stages from elementary school to university (Central Ostrobothnian Conservatory, Yrkeshögskola Novia, Sibelius Academy). From 2014 to 2019, he served as artistic director of the Hetta Music Days.

His performances are immortalised on numerous recordings, reflecting his curiosity and versatility as a complete musician, and taking his contribution to musical life beyond the Finnish musical scene upon which he had an immeasurable impact.

The German-Irish flautist Niamh McKenna, born in 1991. is Principal Flute of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, holding the same position with the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra from 2014 to 2019. During the 2013-14 season, she was a member of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Academy in Amsterdam.

She studied in Lübeck, Freiburg, Basel, Amsterdam and Helsinki, with teachers who included Petri Alanko, Angela Firkins, Kersten McCall and Felix Renggli. She won the International Crusell Flute Competition in Finland in 2017 and was awarded third prize at the Prague Spring International Music Competition in 2019.

As a guest principal flautist, she has performed with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Finnish and Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestras, the Finnish National Opera Orchestra and the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. She



frequently appears as a soloist with orchestras across Finland, and in 2022 she premiered Kalevi Aho's Concerto for Flute and Harp alongside the harpist Emmanuel Ceysson and the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra under Osmo Vänskä. An active chamber musician, she performs frequently at festivals throughout Finland and internationally.

**Päivi Severeide** is the Principal Harp of the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra and a university lecturer in harp at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. She is also the founder and artistic director of the international Helsinki Harp Festival, dedicated to bringing her instrument and fellow harpists into the spotlight.

She studied at the Sibelius Academy and the Freiburg University of Music, with Reija Bister as her primary teacher, and later with Arielle Valibouse and Sarah O'Brien during her master's studies. She made her solo debut with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in 2004 and has since performed as a soloist with several orchestras, including giving the Finnish premiere of Andrea Tarrodi's Harp Concerto. Her solo and chamber performances have



been featured at Helsinki Festival, Kuhmo Chamber Music and the Gothenburg Harp Days.

In addition to working with major Finnish orchestras, she has performed extensively in Sweden and Norway. For several years before her appointment in Turku, she was the acting principal harp of the orchestra of Finnish National Opera. Alongside the standard harp repertoire, she often premieres new works and collaborates with composers and arrangers. As a member of Ensemble Transparent, she recorded an album featuring Finnish chamber music for harp, flute and viola. Her work with the chamber orchestra Avanti! has provided her with a broad perspective on contemporary music, and her role as Principal Harpist of the Vantaa Pops Orchestra has further enriched her musical versatility.

She is a sought-after jury member for international harp competitions and auditions and has given master-classes at leading music universities across the Nordic countries, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain.

Irina Zahharenkova is one of Estonia's most outstanding keyboard players, equally renowned as a pianist, harpsichordist and fortepianist. She has won numerous international competitions, including the Johann Sebastian Bach Competition (Leipzig, 2006), Alessandro Casagrande Competition (Italy, 2006), George Enescu Competition (Romania, 2005) and Jaén International Piano Contest (Spain, 2004). In 2008, she was a prize-winner at the Arthur Rubinstein Piano Master Competition in Tel Aviv.

She studied at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre with Lilian Semper and at the Sibelius Academy with Hui-Ying Líu-Tawaststjerna. She also specialised in historical keyboards, studying harpsichord with Maris Valk-Falk and fortepiano with Pekka Vapaavuori. Her versatility has led to competition success beyond the modern piano, including prizes at the Prague Spring Competition (harpsichord, 2005) and Festival van Vlaanderen Competition in Bruges (fortepiano, 2004). She was awarded a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship in 2007.

She performs widely across Europe and Japan, appearing at festivals such as the Klavier-Festival Ruhr, Spoleto Festival, Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival and Bergen International Festival. She has appeared as a soloist



with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and many others, working with conductors who include Dmitri Alexeev, Patrick Gallois, Juha Kangas and Leif Segerstam.

Alongside her performing career, she teaches piano at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in Tallinn and the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. Her discography includes recordings of Bach's 'Goldberg' Variations and Scarlatti sonatas, as well as a live recital on harpsichord, fortepiano and modern piano, recorded at the Glasperlenspiel Festival in Estonia.



Recorded on 28 February 2019 in Akustiikka, Ylivieska, Finland (*Impromptu*), on 11–13 October 2020 (Opp. 41 and 104) and 25 April 2021 (Op. 80b) in Snellman's Hall, Kokkola, Finland, and on 5–6 January 2023, Kangasala Arts Centre, Finland (Op. 97b) Producer, engineer and editor: Simon Fox-Gál

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