

Imre
SZÉCHÉNYI
(1825–1898)

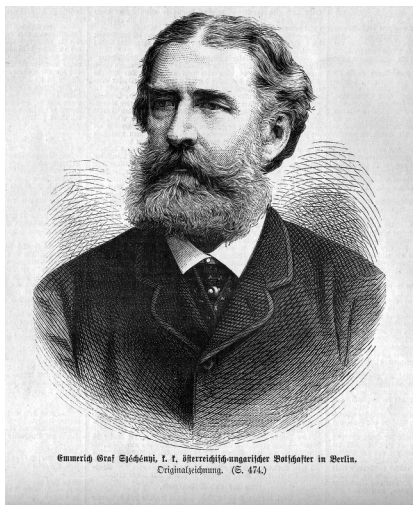
Waltzes and Hungarian Marches

István Kassai, György Lázár, Piano



Imre Széchenyi (1825–1898)

Waltzes and Hungarian Marches



Count Imre Széchenyi of Sárvár-Felsővidék was born in Vienna in 1825. His father, Lajos Széchenyi, was chief court chamberlain for the Archduchess Sophie, mother of the future Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria. Because of his father's position, Imre grew up with Franz Joseph and his brother, later Maximilian I of Mexico. He was educated by private tutors, spoke five languages, played the piano and composed music.

At the age of 20 Széchenyi entered the diplomatic service, stationed first in Rome. In 1848 he was in Stockholm, and from 1850 to 1851 in Frankfurt, where he became friends with the future chancellor Otto von Bismarck. In 1852 he was in Brussels and Paris, and from mid-1854 in St Petersburg, where he formed a lifelong friendship with Johann Strauss. In 1860 he became ambassador to Naples, and in 1878 Austro-Hungarian ambassador to Berlin.

Széchenyi represented Austria-Hungary in Berlin during precarious times. He acted in the name of the Emperor Franz Joseph, signing the Dreikaiservertrag ('League of the Three Emperors' – a treaty between Austria-Hungary, Russia and Germany) in 1881; the Berlin treaty or Congo Conference regarding colonisation in Africa in 1885; and the concurrence of the monarchy to the Mediterranean Agreements in 1887. For his service Emperor Franz Joseph awarded him the Golden Fleece, and Emperor Wilhelm II conferred on him the highest Prussian order, the Black Eagle.

Széchenyi's musical career ran parallel to his diplomatic service. As early as 1845, his *Lullaby*, with a Hungarian text, and an Italian song, *Il Ritrovo in Mare* ('Meeting at Sea') appeared in print. In the 1850s he published 34 dances (polkas, mazurkas, gallops, czardas and waltzes) as well as marches, for fortepiano.

Széchenyi's dances were popular and in demand. Széchenyi often arranged concerts of his own compositions for invited guests.

Széchenyi's publishers were Musée Musical in St Petersburg, Schott in Mainz, Kugler in Pest, Mechetti, Lewy in Vienna, Carl Paez in Berlin and Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig. Many of his works were not published, and exist only as autographs (handwritten documents) or copies. A whole group of compositions are still unaccounted for. Széchenyi died in Budapest in 1898.

Waltzes

Imre Széchenyi composed waltzes throughout his creative period, but unfortunately only a few of them have been preserved. All the waltzes for chamber music performances and for full orchestra have been lost. The orchestral setting of his waltz song *Lieto amor* ('Joyful Love'), is lost and only the piano version survives. It can be heard on *Imre Széchenyi: Forgotten Compositions* (Hungaroton – HCD 32748).

Imre's granddaughter Ferdinandine Eltz née Széchenyi (1923–2016) recalled that the family associated waltzes exclusively with the names of Strauss and Széchenyi. Széchenyi's first waltz known to us, *Le Château de Celles* ('The Castle of Celles') [1], was composed in 1854, before his St Petersburg period. It was dedicated to Countess Marie Isabelle de Liedekerke-Beaufort, née Dopff (1811–1903), whose husband, Hadelin de Gavre, count of Liedekerke-Beaufort de Celles (1816–1890), owned the castle. He was deeply involved in Belgian politics and negotiated, for example, the treaty between Austria and the Papal States. Imre had probably made his acquaintance in Rome.

The *Wintermärchen Walzer*, *Op. 28* ('Winter Fairy-Tale Waltz'), 1858 [3] originated in St Petersburg.

The subsequent waltzes are composed for piano four-hands.

At the end of October 1872, Franz Liszt spent some time with Széchenyi at his country estate in Horpács, Hungary, and worked with him extensively on his music. Liszt took the copy of *Walzer* ('Waltz') [12], to Budapest with him. It was discovered in Liszt's estate, with his personal identification of the author as Széchenyi. The title *Walzer* with the Roman numeral II probably indicates that Liszt had taken another waltz with him, which no longer exists.

The *Geburtstag Walzer* ('Birthday Waltz') [6] presumably originated at the time of the 50th birthday of Széchenyi's sister-in-law Mariette (1838–1926), wife of his brother Dénes (1828–1892). On that date – 3 February 1888 – Dénes and Mariette were in Berlin, and it is possible that Imre and his wife, Alexandra, performed this waltz as a birthday gift for Mariette.

The *Drei Walzer* ('Three Waltzes') [8]–[10] were published by Carl Paez in Berlin in 1889.

Unser letzter Walzer ('Our Last Waltz') [4] was played at Horpács in the summer of 1894. The original handwritten score has been preserved. This waltz is his last composition known to us.

Marches

After Liszt's 1872 visit to Horpács he returned to Budapest with another Széchenyi work, the *Ungarischer Marsch* ('Hungarian March') [2].

Liszt revised this composition in November of that year, dedicated it to Imre Széchenyi, and published his arrangement with the title *Bevezetés és magyar induló* ('Introduction and Hungarian March'). Liszt had played this piece on 12 January 1873 at a concert of his works arranged by the publisher Rózsavölgyi in Budapest. On 12 February 1874, during his second visit to Horpács, Liszt once again played the piece at a charity concert in Sopron (near Horpács). In 1873 Liszt permitted the young musician Henri Gobbi, whom he had proposed for a stipend in composition, to transcribe the piece for four hands. This setting of the piece, published by F.C. Kahnt in December 1875, has been recorded for the first time for this album [13].

Four years after the death of Imre Széchenyi, in May 1902, equestrian games took place in Budapest. Széchenyi's *Hungarian March* for piano four hands [11] – from a surviving copy – was played as the opening music. The publisher Rózsavölgyi issued the complete music of the games, including the *Hungarian March*, arranged for piano two hands, with the title *Lovasjáték magyar induló* ('Equestrian Hungarian March').

Imre Széchenyi composed an additional piece with the title *Hungarian Festival March* in 1889, recorded on Hungaroton HCD 32748. Széchenyi's marches are festive or ceremonial rather than military in nature. His brother Dénes illustrated one such march in the watercolour that appears on the cover of this album. In memory of several similar marches experienced at family parties on his estate, Imre Széchenyi composed his cheerful, subtly humorous, not very strict marches.

The *Palais-galop* ('Palace Gallop') [7], appeared in 1853 as the second piece of the *Nouvelles dances* ('New Dances') issued by the publisher André in Offenbach,

near Frankfurt. The piece probably originated in Frankfurt, because Széchenyi was a member of the Bundesversammlung, the permanent representative body of the member states of the German Federation.

The *Csárdás Hongroise* ('Hungarian Csárdás') [5] appeared in 1858 in St Petersburg, published by A. Leibrock. Széchenyi also orchestrated this work and presented the score to the National Széchenyi Library in Budapest. He composed another *Csárdás* for piano four-hands in 1889, which can be heard on *Imre Széchenyi: Forgotten Compositions* (Hungaroton – HCD 32748).

Kálmán Széchenyi

More information appears in the book *In eine bessere Welt entrückt* by Kálmán Széchenyi and Roswitha Széchenyi-Marko (language: German) (Seubert Verlag, 2018).

After the *Complete Dances for Orchestra* (Naxos 8.573807) and *Lieder* (Audiomax AUD9032019) of Imre Széchenyi, the music lover is again rewarded with this new album.

Imre Széchenyi, the consummate diplomat, friend of Johann Strauss and Emil Waldteufel, among others, considered himself an amateur composer. He nevertheless repeatedly surprises us with his professionalism. We are astonished at his waltzes for piano, which move us with their personal musical language and convey an orchestral effect. The recordings of Széchenyi's *Hungarian March* and Franz Liszt's arrangement show that the original (the 'amateur composition') can hold its own against Liszt's version. Both works are characteristic of their composer.

The pieces on this album were recorded on an exceptional instrument, a Bechstein-Flügel from the turn of the century (1908) in its original condition. Not even the strings had been replaced. It had stood in the Bayreuth office of the festival director Wolfgang Wagner. We succeeded in producing an authentic sound, ideally suited to these compositions, on this delicate historical instrument.

István Kassai



Photo: Péter Aczél

The works of Imre Széchenyi have found a place in my heart and I am constantly amazed as I recognise their musical qualities. This recording was another wonderful voyage of discovery of his forgotten works. A musician experiences a special feeling when, through his hands, the sound of the masterpiece emerges once more from the manuscript.

György Lázár

English translation: Gladys Thomas

István Kassai



Photo: Péter Aczél

Volkman. Kassai has published numerous articles and studies on music and edited many volumes of sheet music by composers and musicians such as Liszt, Mosonyi, Hubay, Sándor Balassa, Weiner and Cziffra. www.kassai-istvan.hu

György Lázár



Photo: Péter Aczél

György Lázár was born in Budapest in 1967. He studied with Katalin Halmágyi at the Béla Bartók Conservatory in Budapest, with Rita Wagner at the Teacher Training College of the Liszt Academy, Budapest, and attended masterclasses with Malcolm Bilson and Ferenc Rados, among others. Lázár gave the first performance of many of his fellow students' works. After completing his studies, in 1988, he became *répétiteur* of the Opera House in Budapest and since 2005 he has been chief *répétiteur* of the Hungarian National Ballet where he also performs solo recitals and chamber music (including piano concertos by Mozart and works by Hindemith, Bartók and Liszt). Lázár has appeared around the world with the Opera House ensemble and the Ernő Dohnányi Symphony Orchestra, also organising chamber music concerts with musicians from the Opera House. He also plays contemporary music, jazz and Latin American music. Lázár regularly appears with the Yvette Bozsik dance ensemble and the Arts Harmony artists' society, of which he is artistic director. In 2004 György Lázár was awarded the Cross of Merit of the Republic of Hungary.

Photo: Péter Aczél



Count Imre Széchenyi of Sárvár-Felsővidék was a highly regarded Austro-Hungarian diplomat and politician who counted Johann Strauss as a lifelong friend, and whose dances were popular and much in demand in his day. Széchenyi composed waltzes throughout his creative period, but only a few of these have been preserved. His work was of interest to his contemporaries, and among these premiere recordings is Liszt's own arrangement of the *Ungarischer Marsch*. These lively and melodious forgotten gems are brought to life on a 1908 Bechstein piano previously owned by Wagner's grandson, Wolfgang.

Imre
SZÉCHÉNYI
(1825–1898)

- | | | | | | |
|----|---|-------|-----------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 1 | Le Château de Celles ('The Castle of Celles') (1854) | 3:30 | | | |
| 2 | Ungarischer Marsch ('Hungarian March') (before 1873) | 7:59 | | | |
| 3 | Wintermärchen Walzer ('Winter Fairy-Tale Waltz') (1858) | 8:56 | | | |
| 4 | Unser letzter Walzer ('Our Last Waltz') (1894) | 6:58 | | | |
| 5 | Csárdás hongroise ('Hungarian Csárdás') (1858) | 6:15 | | | |
| 6 | Geburtstag Walzer ('Birthday Waltz') (1888) | 5:15 | | | |
| 7 | Palais-galop ('Palace Gallop') (1853) | 2:29 | | | |
| | Drei Walzer ('Three Waltzes') for Piano Four Hands (1889) | 18:08 | | | |
| 8 | No. 1 in C major 6:12 | 9 | No. 2 in F major 7:19 | 10 | No. 3 in G major 4:32 |
| 11 | Lovasjáték magyar induló ('Equestrian Hungarian March') for Piano Four Hands (date unknown) | 3:24 | | | |
| 12 | Walzer vierhändig ('Waltz for Piano Four Hands') (before 1872) | 5:25 | | | |
| 13 | Einleitung und ungarischer Marsch (Bevezetés és magyar induló) ('Introduction and Hungarian March') (1873) (rev. Franz Liszt [1811–1886] as S573/R261, arr. Henri Gobbi [1841–1920] for Piano Four Hands) | 7:01 | | | |

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS (except 8)

István Kassai, Piano • György Lázár 2 4 6 8–13, Piano

Recorded: 24–27 January 2020 at Phoenix Studio, Diósd, Hungary • Musical producer and editor: Péter Aczél
Producer: István Kassai • Engineer: János Bohus • Booklet notes: Kálmán Széchenyi, István Kassai, György Lázár
Piano: Bechstein model 'C' No 88471 from 1908 in its original condition.

Publishers: Les Fils de B. Schott 1, original manuscript used for recording, modern editions by
Schlossberg Verlag, Marktoberdorf 2 4 6 11 12, Leibrock, St Petersburg 3 5, Johann André, Offenbach am
Main 7, Carl Paez, Berlin 8–10, F.C. Kahnt, Leipzig 13 • Sponsor: Kálmán Széchenyi, Buda House of Arts

Cover: *Hungarian March* by Dénes Széchenyi (1828–1892)

© & © 2021 Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd • www.naxos.com