

# “PASSPORT TO HUNGARY” SHOW NOTES

Cape Symphony presents “Passport to Hungary” on Saturday, January 27, 2024 at 7:30 PM, and Sunday, January 28 at 3:00 PM at the Barnstable Performing Arts Center.

## Cape Symphony

[Kevin Fitzgerald](#), Guest Conductor  
[Cape Symphony Musicians](#)

## Guest Artists

[Roby Lakatos](#)  
[The Roby Lakatos Ensemble](#)

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## **About Today's Program**

Cape Symphony's "Passport to Hungary" concert opens with the national anthems of Hungary and the United States.

The 1828 poem “Himnusz” by Ferenc Kölcsey was set to music composed by Ferenc Erkel in 1844 as part of a competition. It was only with the fall of communism in 1989 that it was officially recognized as Hungary’s national anthem. Erkel’s talents extended beyond music composition; he was also a top chess player!

There are eight verses of “Himnusz,” of which the first is sung at official ceremonies. Its English translation is:

O God, bless the nation of Hungary  
With your grace and bounty  
Extend over it your guarding arm  
During strife with its enemies  
Long torn by ill fate  
Bring upon it a time of relief  
This nation has suffered for all sins  
Of the past and of the future!

When the anthem of a visiting country is played, the host nation’s anthem traditionally follows. Our “Star Spangled Banner” is also a poem set to music, with lyrics from Francis Scott Key’s 1814 “Defence of Fort M’Henry,” and music from a well-known British song written by John Stafford Smith which was already popular in America at the time. It became our official national anthem in 1931.

## **DANCES OF GALÁNTA**

Zoltán Kodály, 1933

*I. Lento*

*II. Allegretto moderato*

*III. Allegro con moto, grazioso*

*IV. Allegro*

*V. Allegro vivace*

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) was a teacher and ethnomusicologist as well as a composer. He traveled to remote villages to collect songs, recording them on phonograph cylinders. When he met compatriot, fellow composer and musicologist Béla Bartók in about 1906, they shared that passion for collecting, documenting and preserving Hungarian folk music. They became lifelong friends, and changed the direction of Hungarian music forever.

Kodály’s music is said to be relatively conservative, with an emphasis on melody without subverting established classical forms. It is certainly beautiful, and widely enjoyed.

*Dances of Galánta* was composed for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Budapest Philharmonic Society. Based on the folk music of Galánta (now part of Slovakia), where Kodály lived for several years, it is lively, energetic, full of motion, and utterly charming.

*Dances of Galánta* is in five sections of generally increasing energy. The clarinet plays a prominent role especially in the first, standing in for a traditional Hungarian single reed instrument called the tárogató.

## HÁRY JÁNOS SUITE

Zoltán Kodály, 1926

V. Intermezzo

*Háry János* is a comic folk opera in four acts, based on a story of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Austrian army veteran who sits in a village inn regaling listeners with fantastic tales of his own heroism. In the score's preface, Kodály wrote: "Háry is a peasant... the stories released by his imagination are an inextricable mixture of realism and naivety, of comic humour and pathos." He further comments, "though superficially he appears to be merely a braggart, essentially he is a natural visionary and poet. That his stories are not true is irrelevant, for they are the fruit of a lively imagination, seeking to create, for himself and for others, a beautiful dream world."

The Intermezzo (a short orchestral piece between acts) to the *Háry János Suite* is a whirling, spirited dance, celebrating Háry's single-handed defeat of Napoleon's army in battle (!). It features a traditional Hungarian instrument called the cimbalom, which, Kevin Fitzgerald explains, "is essentially like a large hammer dulcimer, so it looks like a four sided shape, almost like a harp turned on its side. The player has these little hammers, and plays the strings by hitting them with the hammers"

It is a rare treat to see this instrument played live, this side of the pond. "Nobody really knows how to play it here," says Kevin. "You really have to have a musician from Hungary." "We are honored to have Jenő Lisztes of the Roby Lakatos Ensemble play the cimbalom for our Cape Symphony audience!

## HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY NO. 2

Franz Liszt, 1847

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) looms large in music history as a great pianist, a brilliant performer, and an infamous womanizer. It's said he was so good, he had to create music to showcase his tremendous capabilities at the piano, and less charitably, that some of that music had no other discernable purpose! Still, he could play those octaves faster and harder than anyone else. Liszt is said to have invented the piano recital, and certainly embodied the idea of a roaming virtuoso careerist. He's also known to have been a gifted and generous teacher.

Liszt expressed interest in seeking out the folk music of the Hungarian hinterlands like Kodály and Bartók did, but given his preference for touring elsewhere in Europe, never managed to fit it in. The Hungarian Rhapsodies bear out his interest in folk music, if not a devotion to strictly authentic representation. They are defined by infectious rhythms and melodies and stunning capture of the sounds of the Hungarian folk orchestra – solo violin, clarinet, cimbalom, strings.

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 became very popular in Liszt's lifetime, which is said to have annoyed him to the point that he disallowed his own students from playing it. It is far and away the most famous of the set, thanks partly to [Tom and Jerry](#).

## **DANCE SUITE**

Béla Bartók, 1923

I. *Moderato*

II. *Allegro molto*

III. *Allegro vivace*

IV. *Molto tranquillo*

V. *Comodo*

VI. *Finale: Allegro*

“Bela Bartók is, if not the most famous, than one of the most famous Hungarian composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,” says Kevin Fitzgerald. “His pieces are played often – his violin concertos, his piano concertos, his Concerto for Orchestra. His music has been featured in films like *The Shining*, for example.”

Bartók was a musicologist, as well; he traveled around Hungary learning and documenting what people were playing on the violin, and incorporated those themes and melodies into his own work, innovating and modernizing in his own compositions. “He was reaching for a new language,” says Kevin, “somewhere between Stravinsky and Hungarian folk music.”

*Dance Suite* was commissioned to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the joining of the cities Buda and Pest to create the Hungarian capital, Budapest. It consists of five parts, with themes brought together in the finale. *Dance Suite* premiered to mixed reviews, Bartók lamented the poor performance, citing inadequate musicianship and too short rehearsal time. Over time, though, *Dance Suite* has been very well-loved, and supports Bartók’s reputation as one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s great composers.

Kevin Fitzgerald is delighted to be performing it. “Bartók is part and parcel with the classical music repertoire, but *Dance Suite* is not done as often, and I think it’s a terrific, exciting exploration of the crossroads between modernism and Hungarian folk music,” he says. “It is demanding for an orchestra, but so worth it. The piece affects audiences very strongly.”

Sit back and take it in.

## **Intermission**

After intermission, says Kevin Fitzgerald, “the crown jewel of the performance comes out. We have Hungarian violinist [Roby Lakatos](#) and the [Roby Lakatos Ensemble](#) joining us as our guests. Roby is an absolute virtuoso violinist; he is an expert in what he describes as the Gypsy style of playing. It’s a very specific style of violin playing that involves a lot of slides and fast notes, and just absolute virtuosity. It’s super expressive... the height of expression.”

The following pieces are all Roby’s own arrangements, chosen to showcase his virtuosity and style. “This gives you a reverse look into the spirit behind the classical pieces we played in the first half,” says Kevin. “They’re not exactly folk tunes... they are embellished, there’s even something from *Fiddler on the Roof* in there, reflecting the rich connection and overlay between Jewish traditional music and Eastern European folk music.

“You will be absolutely blown away by Roby and his group.” Here we go!

## **TIC-TAC**

Darius Blasband

Software developer and entrepreneur [Darius Blasband](#) is also an avid musician and composer. He has produced two albums with Roby Lakatos.

## **ON THE WAVES OF THE BALATON**

Jenő Hubay

Jenő Hubay (1858-1937) was born into a family of musicians in Pest, Hungary, and trained on the violin from early childhood. He was advised by Franz Liszt as a young man. Over the years, he composed several operas, four violin concertos, and many encore pieces, incorporating themes from Hungarian folk music.

## **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF SUITE**

Jerry Bock

Jerrold Bock (1928-2010) won the Tony Award for Best Composer and Lyricist for the 1964 musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, based on stories about Jewish life in an Imperial Russian village at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Criticized as both “too Jewish” and “too sanitized,” *Fiddler* nonetheless became wildly popular, holding the record for longest running Broadway musical until *Grease* knocked it out of the top spot.

## **FLIGHT OF THE BUMBLEBEE**

Nikolai-Rimsky-Korsakov, 1900

“Flight of the Bumblebee” is a Russian orchestral interlude written by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908) for one of his operas. It evokes the crazed and seemingly unpredictable flight pattern of a bumblebee. While incidental to the opera it was composed for, “Flight of the Bumblebee” is very familiar today as a standalone piece (you might recognize it from *The Muppet Show* episode in which performance artist Gonzo the Great attempts to eat a tire on stage with the piece playing in the background).

## **FIRE DANCE**

Roby Lakatos

Roby Lakatos says: “Rhythm is the most important thing for me; it is the soul of music, it is the rhythm changes that make our music unique. No two concerts are ever the same. We have a frame for our music, we don’t go outside of it because then it would tend to chaos, but within the frame we move freely. Every time, something interesting comes out.”

## **MEMORY OF BIHARI/HEJRE KATY**

Ivo Csàmpai/János Bihary

Roby Lakatos is a direct, seventh-generation descendant of legendary Hungarian violinist, composer and Verbunk master János Bihari, the “King of Gypsy Violinists” famously admired by Beethoven, Brahms and Liszt. This medley piece is a Roby Lakatos arrangement.

**NINA**  
Darius Blasband

Frequent Roby Lakatos collaborator Darius Blasband named this piece for his daughter.

*Encore*

**CSÁRDÁS**  
Vittorio Monti, 1904

This rhapsodical folkloric concert piece is said to be Italian composer and violinist Vittorio Monti's most famous work. It has seven sections, and is generally expected to be performed with expressive variations in tempo at the soloist's discretion, and with many dynamic changes. Enjoy its air of spontaneous inspiration!

*Please note the program is subject to change.*

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## **Tickets for “Passport to Hungary”!**

Join Cape Symphony for “Passport to Hungary” at the Barnstable Performing Arts Center, 744 West Main Street, Hyannis on Saturday, January 27 at 7:30 PM, and Sunday, January 28, at 3:00 PM.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [capesymphony.org](https://www.capesymphony.org), call the Box Office at 508-362-1111, email [tickets@capesymphony.org](mailto:tickets@capesymphony.org), or visit 2235 Iyannough Road in West Barnstable, MA. The Box Office is open Monday – Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Once box office operations move to the concert venue for the weekend, we can only be reached by email.

*Only tickets purchased on Cape Symphony's secure website or through the Cape Symphony Box Office are legitimate and guaranteed. Exchanges or credits will only be honored for tickets purchased on the Cape Symphony website or through the Cape Symphony Box Office.*

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## **Behind the Scenes**

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*With thanks to Wikipedia and The Rough Guide to Classical Music*

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