

Creative Capitals (2018) disc 3.

The sixteenth edition of Music@Menlo *LIVE* visits seven of Western music's most flourishing *Creative Capitals*—London, Paris, St. Petersburg, Leipzig, Berlin, Budapest, and Vienna. Each disc explores the music that has emanated from these cultural epicenters, comprising an astonishingly diverse repertoire spanning some three hundred years that together largely forms the canon of Western music. Many of history's greatest composers have helped to define the spirit of these flagship cities through their music, and in this edition of recordings, Music@Menlo celebrates the many artistic triumphs that have emerged from the fertile ground of these *Creative Capitals*.

Western composers, including Georg Philipp Telemann, were irresistibly drawn to the folk music of Central Europe, infusing some of their most popular works with its infectious spirit. With Hungarian music's own nationalist movement in the early twentieth century, Hungary—and especially its capital, Budapest—assumed even greater importance in the Western classical tradition. Ernő Dohnányi, one of the twentieth century's most gifted and versatile musicians, was moreover the first elite Hungarian artist who chose to train at the Budapest Academy of Music rather than studying abroad. His countryman Zoltán Kodály followed suit, establishing Budapest as the epicenter of Hungary's musical culture. Featured on Disc 3 alongside the music of Telemann, Kodály, and Dohnányi is a work by the modernist master György Ligeti, the heir apparent of the Hungarian tradition.

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GYÖRGY LIGETI (1923–2006)

WU JIE, BELLA HRISTOVA, *violins*

2–4 **Duo for Violin and Cello, op. 7** (1914)
ZOLTÁN KODÁLY (1882–1967)
Allegro serioso, non troppo
Adagio
Maestoso e largamente, ma non troppo lento – Presto

BELLA HRISTOVA, *violin*; NICHOLAS CANELLAKIS, *cello*

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13–16 **Sextet in C Major for Winds, Strings, and Piano, op. 37** (1935)
ERNŐ DOHNÁNYI (1877–1960)
Allegro appassionato
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Allegro con sentimento –
Finale: Allegro vivace, giocoso

ANTHONY MCGILL, *clarinet*; KEVIN RIVARD, *horn*; BELLA HRISTOVA, *violin*; MATTHEW LIPMAN, *viola*; DAVID REQUIRO, *cello*; GILLES VONSATTEL, *piano*

GYÖRGY LIGETI (1923–2006)
Ballad and Dance for Two Violins (1950)

Unquestionably one of the most singular compositional voices of the twentieth century (and widely popularized by Stanley Kubrick's appropriation of several of his works in the films 2001: *A Space Odyssey*, *The Shining*, and *Eyes Wide Shut*), György Ligeti was, at the end of his life, widely regarded as Western music's greatest living composer. His music reflects his assimilation of a wide spectrum of cultural elements. Artistically descended from Bartók (one of the few prominent twentieth-century masters whose music he had exposure to in his youth), Ligeti later encountered the avant-garde community emergent at Darmstadt in Germany. In the early 1980s, he extended his sonic palette further, immersing himself in non-European musical cultures: his interest in Caribbean, African, and East Asian music complemented the influence of his own Hungarian heritage. Ultimately, regardless of his aesthetic sources, Ligeti was always guided by his personal sound ideal. Given to sonic exploration and adventure, his music reveals a free-spirited imagination and infinite curiosity. Ligeti's *Ballad and Dance for Two Violins*, composed in 1950, are adaptations of Romanian folk music. They likewise nod to the composer's heritage, as the medium of two violins inevitably evokes Bartók's seminal volume of *Forty-Four Duos for Two Violins*. The idyllic *Ballad* is a study in simplicity, rife with rustic charm. The infectious *Dance*, marked *forte*, *energico*, follows.

ZOLTÁN KODÁLY (1882–1967)
Duo for Violin and Cello, op. 7 (1914)

Though perhaps less celebrated than Béla Bartók, the Hungarian composer, educator, and ethnomusicologist Zoltán Kodály certainly deserves mention in the same breath as his colleague and compatriot. Raised in the Hungarian countryside, he was exposed to both the classical repertoire (his parents were amateur musicians, and the young Kodály learned, largely by his own tuition, to play piano, violin, viola, and cello) and folk songs. Kodály held these complementary musical interests in common with Bartók, whom he befriended while both were in their early twenties. Nationalist impulses, too, prompted their travels through the Central European countryside to collect folk music, whose character would become essential to their respective compositional languages. "The vision of an educated Hungary, reborn from the people, rose before us," Kodály recalled, years later, of his collaboration with Bartók. "We decided to devote our lives to its realization."

So, through their efforts, did Bartók and Kodály cultivate a distinct Hungarian musical identity, deeply rooted in folk sources. Bartók later extolled his colleague: "If I were to name the composer whose works are the most perfect embodiment of the Hungarian spirit, I would answer Kodály. His work proves his faith in the Hungarian spirit. The obvious explanation is that all Kodály's composing activity is rooted only in Hungarian soil, but the deep inner reason is his unshakable faith and trust in the constructive power and future of his people." Kodály's *Duo for Violin and Cello, op. 7*, has endured as one of the finest essays in the relatively meager repertoire for violin and cello. Indeed, the medium seems barely sufficient to contain the work's muscular

content, as though Kodály were dressing a giant in tight-fitting clothes. Though a relatively early work in Kodály's broad oeuvre (a catalogue including some twenty chamber works, yet more extensive in the realms of vocal, choral, and pedagogical music), the duo nevertheless illustrates the essence of the composer's mature musical language. Primacy of melody is on display throughout the work. The cello begins the first movement with a proud, folk-like theme, proclaimed *forte, risoluto*; the violin comments with equally assertive double- and triple-stopped chords. A lyrical second theme appears, *piano, tranquillo*, paced by steady pizzicati.

Equal to its melodic wealth, the duo demonstrates Kodály's characteristic ear for formal balance and textural proportion. His use of double-stops, polyrhythms, and other devices serves to maximize the piece's sonic breadth, at times creating the illusion of larger instrumental forces. The work moreover makes fearless use of the full range of both instruments, from their resonant low registers to their piercing high range. The work, finally, exhibits egalitarian writing—perhaps, at times, even a competitive one-upmanship—between the two voices, as at the first movement's climax. Despite its piquantly chromatic harmonic palette, the gentle *Adagio* proffers an unassuming, folk-like simplicity. Even in moments of agitation—high-pitched cries in the violin above rumbling tremolandi in the cello—here is music given over more to wistfulness than to fury or despair. A thoughtful violin monody, vaguely redolent of the duo's opening movement, begins the finale's *Maestoso* introduction. The ensuing dialogue between violin and cello soon gives way to the movement's main *Presto* section: a lively peasant dance, in which the folk element of Kodály's language comes to the fore.

GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN (1681–1767) **Canary Cantata, TWV 20: 37 (1737)**

So musically precocious was the young Georg Philipp Telemann—he had taught himself to play the recorder, violin, and zither and composed numerous works, including an opera, by the age of twelve—that his parents feared a career in music inevitable and confiscated his instruments. In 1701, Telemann entered the Leipzig Conservatory to study law. As per his mother's demands, he abandoned music. But the renunciation of his art, thankfully, was short-lived: Telemann's roommate discovered a psalm setting among his personal effects, which was performed at the Thomaskirche, and Leipzig's mayor subsequently commissioned Telemann to compose music for services at the city's two churches, the Thomaskirche and Nikolaikirche, every other week. Telemann steadily became one of Leipzig's preeminent musical figures, spurred in large part by his founding directorship of the Collegium Musicum, a student ensemble that gave public concerts. In 1705, Telemann departed Leipzig for a post as Kapellmeister to Count Erdmann II of Promnitz at Sorau, in modern-day Poland; he subsequently took posts in Eisenach, Frankfurt, and, in 1721, Hamburg, which saw the most productive time of his career. In Hamburg, Telemann composed prolifically, producing sacred and secular vocal music, instrumental music, and more; directed an opera company and another collegium musicum; engraved and published his own music; wrote and published poetry; and emerged as a prominent public intellectual. He was recognized in his lifetime as his generation's finest composer.

So highly regarded was Telemann that only when he declined an invitation to return to Leipzig as Music Director of the Thomaskirche (he leveraged the offer to obtain a higher salary in Hamburg) was the position offered to the second-choice candidate, Johann Sebastian Bach. (Once installed in Leipzig, Bach succeeded Telemann as the Collegium Musicum's Director.) If history has ceased to view Telemann as his era's greatest composer (reflecting more a reappraisal of Bach and Handel than of Telemann), he was unquestionably one of its most versatile and prolific. His oeuvre comprises an extensive catalogue of instrumental music, including solo keyboard, chamber, and orchestral works; numerous annual cycles of church cantatas as well as oratorios, masses, and other sacred music; and a varied range of secular vocal music, from songs to serenatas and cantatas to opera. The secular cantatas, commissioned for weddings, birthday celebrations, civic ceremonies, and other events, constitute a motley body of work. Perhaps the strangest of them is the *Cantate oder Trauermusik eines kunstefahrenen Canarienvogels, als derselbe zum grössten Leidwesen seines Herrn Possessoris verstorben* (*Cantata of Funeral Music for an Artistically Trained Canary-Bird Whose Demise Brought Greatest Sorrow to His Master*)—commissioned by the bereaved master of the work's title. The cantata—known by the less unwieldy handle *Canary Cantata*—is a purposely tragicomic work. Its humor lies in Telemann's deployment of the heady affect of Italian opera (think of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* and *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*) in service of such an utterly mundane subject. “Oh dear! Oh dear!” the singer keens, inconsolably, in the cantata's opening aria, “my canary is dead.”

The following recitative signals a resigned acceptance: “So gehet's mit der Vogel Freude und mit den Dingen dieser Welt... Allein, die Freude ist aus. Er lieget nun gestreckt, und wird mit schwarzer Erd' bedeckt” (“And so goes the joy of a bird, and all the things of this world... Alone now, joy is gone. He's now laid out before me, soon to be covered with black earth”). The second aria gives further voice to the bereaved's desperate sadness, as the master sings, “Ihr lieblichen Canarienvögel, beklaget meine Freud' und eure Zier” (“You lovely canaries, lament my joy and your beauty”). Note the expressive melodic descent of Telemann's setting of the word “beklaget” (“lament”). The master next addresses Death: “Nur dir, dir grausamer Tod allein, konnt der verliebte Ton doch nicht beweglich sein” (“Only you, cruel Death, and you alone, could remain indifferent to that beguiling sound. For you have roughly and rudely devoured that treasured morsel”). The cantata assumes a *buffa* character in the following aria—whimsical arpeggios and quick repeated notes, *allegro*, in a major key—“Friss, dass dir der Hals anschwelle, friss, du unverschämter Gast!” (“Eat, so that your throat swells up, eat, you shameless guest!”) (Death, we shall learn, came to the mourned canary in the form of a cat: “So the bird will scratch you, and tear at you,” the master continues spitefully, “and peck at your stomach and intestines, until you spit it out; eat and may you burst open on the spot!”) The music becomes tender for the master's sentimental farewell—“Mein Canarine gute Nacht!” (“Good night, my canary!”)—before the cantata's catty conclusion, in which the tombstone text is sung in the Low German dialect:

So lasset dieses noch die letzte Ehre sein,
dass ihr schreibt auf den Leichenstein:
“Dat die de Hagel!
Hie ligt en Vagel,

de kunn mann neerteck quinqueleeren,
un alle Minschken konten teren.
Du Streckbeen!
Als du wollst düssen Vagel freten,
so wull ick, dat du wär wat in den Hals geschmeten!”

So let this be his final honor,
that you write on his tombstone:
“Devil take you!
Here lies a bird,
who once sang so beautifully
that he brought joy to everyone.
O Death!
Because you would eat this bird,
I want to wring your neck!”

ERNŐ DOHNÁNYI (1877–1960)
Sextet in C Major for Winds, Strings, and Piano, op. 37 (1935)

Excepting perhaps Franz Liszt, Ernő Dohnányi must be regarded as the most versatile musician to come from Hungary. He was, in addition to being a great composer, one of history’s greatest pianists; he achieved particular notoriety for performing Beethoven’s complete piano music in one season and undertaking all twenty-seven of Mozart’s piano concerti in another. Dohnányi was moreover a supremely gifted conductor and an influential teacher and administrator, as well, playing a crucial role in building Hungary’s musical culture in the first half of the twentieth century. Dohnányi received his formal musical training at the Budapest Academy of Music, where he would later briefly serve as Director. At the time of his enrollment, he was the first Hungarian musician of his level to choose to study at the Budapest Academy; his childhood friend Béla Bartók followed suit, beginning a lifelong trope of Dohnányi leading the way forward for Hungarian musical culture by his example. Some years later, starting in 1915, Dohnányi took it upon himself to raise Hungary’s collective musical sophistication: he independently presented hundreds of concerts, selecting programs that aspired to a higher artistic standard than Hungarian audiences were accustomed to—and, between 1919 and 1921, when guest artists were unavailable, Dohnányi himself performed some 120 concerts a year in Budapest alone.

Bartók credited Dohnányi with providing his country’s entire musical life during these years. But unlike Bartók and Kodály, Dohnányi didn’t mine Hungarian folk music for his compositional vocabulary—which has likely complicated his place in history somewhat, in that he was the chief architect of Hungary’s musical landscape but has inevitably been overshadowed in this respect by those composers who more literally gave Hungary its musical voice. Dohnányi’s music instead celebrates the Romantic legacy of Johannes Brahms and Robert Schumann. Dohnányi’s *Sextet in C Major, op. 37*, composed in 1935, betrays the influence of German Romanticism on the composer’s aesthetic. Yet, while audibly indebted to Brahms and others, Dohnányi’s language remains distinctly his own. Over a suspenseful harmony in the piano and fraught arpeggios in the cello, the horn issues the impassioned first theme of the opening movement (*Allegro appassionato*). Clarinet, violin, and viola take up the melody in turn, quickly establishing the sextet’s broad palette of instrumental colors. A similar anxiety permeates the second theme, introduced

by the viola, followed by clarinet and violin, above a restless piano accompaniment. The tension releases, briefly, as violin and then clarinet present a charming, dotted-rhythm tune. In lieu of a conventional repeat of the exposition, Dohnányi presents an alternate version of it: each theme appears again, in the same order but cast in different timbres. The first theme is presented by the violin, followed by horn, clarinet, and cello. Horn, viola, and clarinet reprise the second theme. The dotted-rhythm tune returns, with the clarinet preceding the violin. Having already thus reimagined the essence of the movement’s principal materials, Dohnányi proceeds to probe them further in the tempestuous development section. Dohnányi follows the *Allegro appassionato*’s stormy energy with a dreamy intermezzo. Lush string chords, dusted with delicate piano flourishes, create a pastel haze. The piano abruptly interrupts the reverie with a militant march, above which clarinet and horn, in unison, intone a stark melody. The full ensemble comes together as this warlike music escalates to a fever pitch. Just as quickly, the march passes, and the intermezzo returns to its previous tranquility.

The clarinet begins the third movement, marked *Allegro con sentimento*, with a guileless, folk-like tune. A series of variations on this theme follows: first, an animated piano variation, powered forward by repeated notes in the cello, and then a *risoluto* variation, involving the full ensemble. The cello surges with soaring lyricism to launch the following variation, marked *più animato, appassionato*. A nimble *presto* variation recalls Mendelssohn’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream* scherzo style. The tempo slows for the honey-voiced fifth variation, weaving together suave legato melodies in all voices. As the music slows to *andante tranquillo*, Dohnányi displays a sleight of compositional invention redolent of Brahms (cf. that composer’s *Clarinet Quintet, op. 115*): the tune morphs into the first movement’s opening theme, revealing that material to be a prefiguration of these variations. From this remembrance of the sextet’s beginning, the music proceeds *attacca* into the finale, marked *Allegro vivace, giocoso*. The piano presents the cartoonish theme, thereafter taken up by the rest of the ensemble with almost inane glee. In similarly impish fashion, the movement’s subsidiary theme resembles a waltz but for its rhythmic hijinks; it places the triple-meter dance in duple time. A final recollection of the sextet’s opening theme—now radiant and triumphant—precedes the work’s boisterous conclusion.

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