
NAXOS
KODÁLY
Háry János Suite
Summer Evening • Symphony in C major
Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra
JoAnn Falletta

Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967)

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Zoltán Kodály was born on 16 December 1882 at Kecskemét (some 50 miles south east of Budapest), where his father was a railway clerk. The next year his family moved to Szob, then in 1885 to Galánta, a large town close to Bratislava, the capital of modern Slovakia. This was followed by eight years in the largely Slovak town of Nagyszombat (since renamed Trnava), to where his father had been transferred. In 1900 he entered Pázmány University in Budapest, studying German and Hungarian while taking composition lessons at the Academy of Music with Hans Koessler, the cousin of Max Reger, who was notably unsympathetic to traditional music. His doctoral thesis in 1906 was a study of Hungarian folk song, in the collection and investigation of which he was already preoccupied along with his contemporary Béla Bartók.

After an intensive period of study in Berlin, Kodály returned to Hungary to join the Academy, where in 1908 he took over its first year composition class. Over the following years he continued his activities both as a composer and a collector of folk song. He latterly became deputy director of the Academy, which had been granted university status in the short-lived Hungarian Republic established in 1919, but he was temporarily barred from teaching after the collapse of the Republic four months later and the coming to power of Admiral Horthy.

Kodály's music received growing international attention, with several publications as well as increasing performances abroad. Having resumed his duties as teacher, Kodály continued to exercise a strong influence upon younger composers and had an even greater effect over music education in Hungary. His main task was to establish a national Hungarian musical tradition, and for this to be absorbed into a recognisably Hungarian form of art music. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Kodály remained in Hungary whereas Bartók (another opponent of the Horthy regime) found refuge in the United States. Kodály had been accorded various honours at home, and this continued after the advent of communist rule, along with the international recognition of his work as a composer and educator. He died in Budapest on 6 March 1967.

Kodály's best-known work remains his opera *Háry János*, or rather the suite derived from it. Premiered at Budapest's Royal Hungarian Opera House in 1926, this comic 'Singspiel' was well received, even though its offbeat humour and innately Hungarian qualities were always likely to make staging elsewhere infrequent (the British premiere took place, in English, at the Buxton Festival as late as 1982). The composer partly remedied this with his suite, first given in Barcelona on 24 March 1927 by the Pau Casals Orchestra with Antal Fleischer.

Unfolding over four 'adventures', with prologue and epilogue, the opera is best summarised by Kodály in a preface written for Universal Edition and included with the published score:

> 'Every Hungarian is a dreamer. He flees from the sad reality of the centuries into a world of illusion. Háry János's boasting is more than a dream, as it is also poetry … [He] is a primitive poet, and what he has to say is concentrated in a single hero: himself. After we have listened to those heroic feats he has dreamed up, it is tragically symbolic that we encounter him in a grubby village inn. He appears happy in his poverty – a king in the kingdom of his dreams.'

Beginning with the musical representation of a sneeze, indicating that all that follows needs to be taken advisedly, *Prelude: The Fairy Tale Begins* emerges gravely out of the depths of the strings before woodwind then upper strings build a plangent climax, with the briefest of codas in response. Over bells and side-drum, *Viennese Musical Clock* states a perky tune for woodwind and brass against constantly changing instrumental textures, on the way to a spirited final restatement. Opening with a pensive theme from solo viola, *Song* continues with sensuous and audibly folk-inflected

harmonies – cimbalom adding its inimitable tones – while the music gains in atmosphere before heading towards a calmly rapturous conclusion.

Tallest of tall stories, *The Battle and Defeat of Napoleon* contrasts its martial swagger with portentous fanfares before a resplendent climax ceases and alto saxophone intones a mournful recessional above funereal brass. Punctuated by waspish gestures from strings, *Intermezzo* centres on a suave and eloquent theme that finds contrast in its more ruminative trio with woodwind to the fore. Nonchalant woodwind and tramping percussion initiate *Entrance of the Emperor and his Court* with a liveliness carried through to the climax in which elements of both its themes are combined, before heading into a breathless coda for the decisive close.

The early years of Kodály's maturity were dominated by chamber music (notably the *Sonata for Solo Cello*, available on Naxos 8.574202), with one significant orchestral piece in *Summer Evening*. Described by the composer as an 'idyll', this was written as his graduation exercise, then first performed at a student concert in Budapest on 22 October 1906. It then remained unheard until 1928, when the advocacy of Arturo Toscanini led Kodály to re-orchestrate the work for a New York concert this conductor gave with the New York Philharmonic on 3 April 1930.

Unaccompanied cor anglais ushers in divided strings, whose modal harmony is redolent of English contemporaries such as Vaughan Williams. An animated episode soon follows with evocative horn calls and furtive woodwind gestures, then a more forceful transition sees the liveliest music so far with especially piquant writing for higher woodwind. This leads into a lilting section with graceful exchanges between upper and lower strings, against which solo violin and woodwind add to the mood of mounting anticipation. A forceful unison gesture is duly curtailed to leave cor anglais and flute musing uncertainly, then strings and woodwind lead to a final upsurge of activity that soon subsides into a serene restatement of ideas from the beginning, as the piece reaches its close in a mood of calm.

It was Toscanini who indirectly caused the completion of the *Symphony in C major* that Kodály had commenced as far back as the 1930s, but was only finished after the conductor's death in 1957. Dedicated to his memory, it was first heard at the Lucerne Festival on 16 August 1961 by the Swiss Festival Orchestra with Kodály's compatriot Ferenc Fricsay. The reception was cordial, though the work was considered something of a throwback to an earlier era. Indeed, its formal economy and orchestral transparency evoke the Classicism of Haydn and Mozart, along with the influence of such interwar symphonies as those by Roussel and Stravinsky, but the musical idiom has a rhythmic vitality and a harmonic astringency readily identifiable with Kodály which have come more into their own since the heyday of post-war modernism.

The opening *Allegro* begins with a purposeful theme on lower strings over timpani, presently heard over the whole orchestra. Its decisive mood finds contrast in a more ruminative theme that draws woodwind and strings into enticing accord, and is rounded off by a spirited codetta. There ensues a concise – if eventful – development of both these ideas on the way to an energetic culmination, soon tailing off to leave the second theme to be reprised on clarinets over lower strings. From here the music heads to a coda which culminates in a fitting burst of animation.

The central *Andante moderato* initially alternates between horn calls and a melody on strings of no mean pathos. Over lower strings, clarinet, flute and oboe inject a note of greater anxiety in a theme with a tangible 'Eastern' flavour, then woodwind continue with curiously archaic gestures that receive a searching response from the strings. Solo violin and clarinet gently alternate with lower strings while the music dies away in a mood of not wholly tranquil calm.

The final *Vivo*, continuing without pause, duly bursts into life with an ardent theme heard on unison horns then strings, its confident manner evident as it alternates with a lively secondary idea on woodwind. A central episode features deft tonal sideslips before the music heads back to its initial effervescence, from where excitement soon mounts towards a peremptory close.

Richard Whitehouse

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Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra



Founded in 1935, the GRAMMY Award-winning Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO) is Buffalo's leading cultural ambassador, presenting more than 120 classics, pops and youth concerts each year. Since 1940, the orchestra's permanent home has been Kleinhans Music Hall. In March 2018, the BPO became the first American orchestra to perform at the Beethoven Easter Festival in Warsaw, Poland. In 2022, they made their 25th appearance at Carnegie Hall celebrating the life and works of Lukas Foss, former BPO music director. Over the decades, the BPO has matured in stature under leading conductors William Steinberg, Josef Krips, Lukas Foss, Michael Tilson Thomas, Julius Rudel, Semyon Bychkov and Maximiano Valdés. During the tenure of JoAnn Falletta, the BPO has rekindled its distinguished history of radio broadcasts and recordings, including the release of over 50 albums of diverse repertoire on the Naxos and Beau Fleuve Records labels. The Philharmonic's recording of John Corigliano's *Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of Bob Dylan* (Naxos 8.559331), featuring soprano Hila Plitmann, received GRAMMY Awards for Best Classical Vocal Performance and Best Classical Contemporary Composition.

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JoAnn Falletta


Photo: Heather Bellini

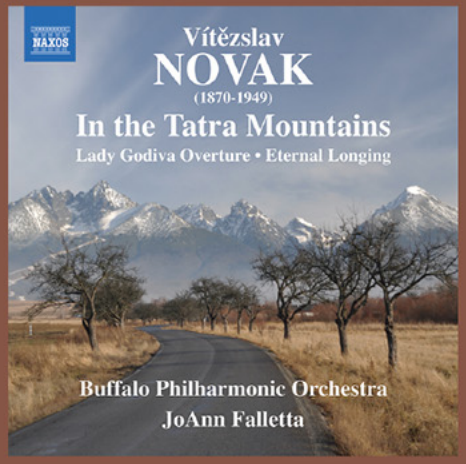
Multiple GRAMMY-winning conductor JoAnn Falletta serves as music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO) and music director laureate of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra. She has guest conducted many of the most prominent orchestras in America, Canada, Europe, Asia and South America. As music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, Falletta became the first woman to lead a major American ensemble. With a discography of over 125 titles, she is a leading recording artist for Naxos. Her GRAMMY-winning Naxos recordings include Richard Danielpour's *The Passion of Yeshua* (8.559885-86) and John Corigliano's *Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of Bob Dylan* (8.559331), both with the BPO, and Kenneth Fuchs' *Spiritualist* with the London Symphony Orchestra (8.559824). Falletta is a member of the esteemed American Academy of Arts and Sciences, has served as a member of the National Council on the Arts, is the recipient of many of the most prestigious conducting awards and was named *Performance Today*'s Classical Woman of the Year 2019 and one of the 50 great conductors of all time by *Gramophone* magazine.

www.joannfalletta.com

Also available



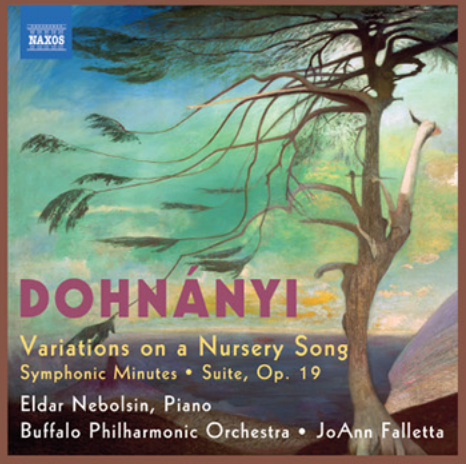
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NAXOS

KODÁLY: Háry János Suite • Symphony in C major

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Zoltán Kodály's life was largely occupied with collecting his country's folk music and devising the internationally renowned method of music education that bears his name. His orchestral output is therefore a relatively small but astonishingly colourful and rhythmic legacy, brimming with Hungarian spirit. *Háry János* is the charming story of a veteran soldier and the 'tall tales' he spins about his life, while *Summer Evening* is a timeless evocation of that gentle moment in the day. The *Symphony in C major* occupied Kodály for over 20 years, the composer's disarming explanation being, 'I was busy with more important work.'

Zoltán KODÁLY
(1882–1967)

	Háry János Suite (1926–27)	**23:35**
1	I. Kezdődik a mese ('Prelude: The Fairy Tale Begins')	3:35
2	II. Bécsi harangjáték ('Viennese Musical Clock')	2:12
3	III. Dal ('Song')	5:33
4	IV. Napoleon csatája ('The Battle and Defeat of Napoleon')	4:02
5	V. Közjáték ('Intermezzo')	4:57
6	VI. A császári udvar bevonulása ('Entrance of the Emperor and His Court')	2:56
7	**Nyári este ('Summer Evening')** (1906, rev. 1929–30)	**16:57**
	Symphony in C major (1930s–61)	**27:16**
8	I. Allegro	9:56
9	II. Andante moderato	9:55
10	III. Vivo	7:18

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Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra • JoAnn Falletta

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Playing Time
68:04

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