

Mozart, Bartók

It is an exceptional gift but at the same time an enormous challenge for the Budapest Spring Festival to celebrate at the same time two such giants of universal music as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, born 250 years ago, and Béla Bartók, who was born 125 years ago.

Right at the opening concert the world-famous Orchestre de la Suisse Romande will give the Budapest première of a work dedicated to Bartók: Péter Eötvös's piano concerto will be conducted by the composer himself and the soloist will be one of the most outstanding French pianists today, Pierre-Laurent Aimard. And at the final concert the long-awaited star guest, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and its conductor, Daniele Gatti making his début in Hungary, begin their programme with a Mozart overture. The arc between these two pillars will be filled with a wonderful choice embracing all the genres in the repertoire of the two masters. For example, Mozart's complete string quartets will be performed on six evenings by six different but all internationally renowned quartets (Mosaïques, Carmina, Casal, Petersen, Hagen, Leipzig). There is a special treat for opera fans: a daring staging by the exceptionally talented Balázs Kovalik of the three Mozart operas based on librettos by Da Ponte (*Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni*), and performances of the rarely heard *Il re pastore* with the Danish Radio Sinfonietta directed by Ádám Fischer, of *Zaide* with the Budapest Symphony Orchestra, and of *Mitridate* in a production by the Budapest Chamber Opera. And as a surprise, a "contemporary Mozart opera" will also be staged: the composition titled *aqua toffana* is the work of the singer-composer Ágens, who is exploring new perspectives for the music theatre, together with her creative partners.

Paying tribute to their name-giver, the Mozarteum Orchester Salzburg are coming with two major symphonies and the A major piano concerto; the conductor for the evening will be Ivor Bolton and the soloist Lars Vogt. The English Concert and its leader, violinist Andrew Manze will perform the G major violin concerto, the Requiem will be performed by the Hungarian Symphony Orchestra, the K 205 and 251 divertimenti in D major will be played by the Ferenc Liszt Chamber Orchestra, and the A major clarinet quintet by Kálmán Berkes and the Tokyo-Budapest Ensemble he founded. The art of the dance pays tribute with a guest performance by the Béjart Ballet Lausanne titled *Ballet for Life*, a choreography based on music by Mozart and Queen, with costumes by Versace, and the world of the musical is represented by the Budapest Operetta Theatre with its highly successful production of Lévay–Kunze *Mozart!* Mention must also be made of the full-day Mozartiada in the Petöfi Literary Museum, where students of arts colleges can try their abilities in many forms, ranging from programmes for children, through mini concerts and puppet shows, to video projects, giving them a taste of the powerful experience of encounters with the public.

We believe that Bartók's dramatic life career can also be represented sensitively in the frame of a music festival if – in the words of the outstanding musicologist György Króó – the works "hold each other's hands", in a carefully planned structure. For example, in the concert to be given by the National Philharmonics with a programme of the 1st violin concerto (soloist: Barnabás Kelemen), the 1st piano concerto (soloist: Dezső Ránki) and *Concerto* (conductor: Zoltán Kocsis). Or the Twenty-seven Choruses in the soaring voices of the Angelica Girls' Choir, or the performance by the Basel Chamber Orchestra and Christopher Hogwood of the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, composed in the summer of 1936 for this ensemble, shortly after the Twenty-seven Choruses. Concert-goers can also hear *Contrasts*, a work of importance in music history, to be performed by members of the renowned Trio Wanderer joined by the famous clarinetist Paul Meyer. The 2nd string quartet, a masterpiece recognised as a milestone, is included in the programme of the much-travelled Bartók Quartet, the doyen of Hungarian quartets. Extracts from the *Microcosmos* will be played on the piano by Tamás Érdi, and the cimbalom by Ágnes Szakály. The *Concerto for two pianos and percussion* will crown the anniversary concert by Zoltán Rácz, now in the 25th

year of his career. All three of Bartók's stage works can be seen in one evening in the Opera House, but *The Miraculous Mandarin* will also be performed by the Szeged Contemporary Ballet, and *Bluebeard's Castle* (the play by Béla Balázs) will be staged by the Gergely Csiky Theatre of Kaposvár. Fine artists – from Tamás Konok to Zsolt Durkó Jr., from the Buda Castle Tapestry Studio to artists from Transylvania in the Vármegye Gallery – are devoting a whole series of exhibitions to the memory of Bartók.

We have only been able to give a few examples of the tribute that will be paid to the two composers in the focus of the festival, but there is no lack of programmes in other directions too that promise to be sensational. Daniel Barenboim, hailed as one of the world's greatest pianists, is to give a Bach evening in Budapest, and the phenomenal Maxim Vengerov has once again accepted our invitation – this time as soloist for a Shostakovich violin concerto. The Chinese star pianist, Lang Lang, will be the guest of the Budapest Festival Orchestra, and the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra, now in its 153rd season, will perform Chopin's E minor concerto with the highly successful Andrea Lucchesini. We can delight once again in the rich tone of Christian Tetzlaff's master violin at the concert of the orchestra of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, under the baton of the star conductor, Antonio Pappano who has never appeared before in Budapest. The Stuttgart Chamber Choir and its founder, Frieder Bernius are bringing two requiem masses – by György Ligeti and Fauré – to Matthias Church; the instrumental accompaniment will be provided by the Danubia Symphony Orchestra. A real treat for fans of early music will be the performance of a recently discovered opera by the great French baroque composer, Marc-Antoine Charpentier, *Three Biblical Stories*; the research centre operating in the Royal Palace of Versailles has entrusted the staging to Róbert Alföldi.

Our dance programme also includes many interesting attractions; in particular both the profession and ballet fans are looking forward with excitement to the guest performance by the Batsheva Dance Company and the Gyôr Ballet's new production, *Sacre* choreographed by Attila Kun. Operetta fans can enjoy Imre Kálmán's evergreen *Countess Maritza* and the *Gipsy Princess*, while the *Bride's Dance*, a klezmer musical, the Rajkó Youth Gypsy Orchestra and the 100-member Gypsy Orchestra will be of interest to viewers and listeners attracted to folklore. The jazz section features Julian Joseph and Mimi Blais, as crossover the Savaria Symphony Orchestra's Irish-Hungarian evening promises to be a very lively event (the latter will have Márta Sebestyén and the Irish piper Liam O'Flynn). And to top it all: Andrea Rost, the current Hungarian opera diva, in a surprise concert will sing hits by Walter Jurmann, composer of successful Hollywood film music, backed by a combo group. Finally, two titles from the catalogue of exhibitions that speak for themselves: Art and culture in the time of Sigismund of Luxemburg (Museum of Fine Arts), Béla Bartók and dance (Gizi Bajor Theater Museum).

Together with my associates, I respectfully invite you to the events of the 26th Budapest Spring Festival, and thank you for sharing in our joy at the high distinction we have been awarded: in October 2005 the Kultur-Forum Europa founded by Hans Dietrich Genscher gave the European Culture Award to the Budapest Spring Festival in recognition of our activity serving the strengthening of ties among European countries and tolerance using the means of culture.

Zsófia Zimányi
Festival Director