

# GRAND FINALES

JANUARY 19, 2019

**Darko Butorac**, Conductor  
**Cicely Parnas**, cello

**Zoltán Kodály**  
(1882-1967)

## **Dances of Galánta**

**Edward Elgar**  
(1857-1934)

## **Concerto for Cello in E minor, Op. 85**

Adagio—Moderato  
Lento—Allegro molto  
Adagio  
Allegro—Moderato—Allegro, ma non troppo—Poco più lento

## INTERMISSION

**Béla Bartók**  
(1881-1945)

## **Concerto for Orchestra**

Introduzione: Andante non troppo—Allegro vivace  
Presentando le coppie: Allegro scherzando  
Elegia: Andante non troppo  
Intermezzo interrotto: Allegretto  
Finale: Presto

The Hungarian composer **Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967)** lived in Galánta from ages three to ten when his father was the railroad stationmaster in that Austrian border town. The folk- and gypsy music he heard there as a child became an important part of his adult life. He and his fellow countryman Béla Bartók spent ten summers together (1906-16) traveling to remote villages in Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria to record peasant songs and collect ancient folk music. In addition to being an ethnomusicologist, Kodály was a critic and educator who organized musical events to promote Hungarian music, which he hoped to divorce from Germanic influence. He not only encouraged his composition students to study and incorporate folk elements in their original works, he developed an educational program that employed native music to teach children song and dance. Kodály remained in his homeland during WWII, and he and his Jewish wife, Emma, hid in a convent's air-raid shelter when Hitler's army invaded Hungary in 1944. They survived and had been married forty-eight years when Emma died in 1958. The following year Zoltán married one of his students who was only nineteen. (She became a widow at age 28 when Zoltán died at age 84.)

Commissioned in 1933 to compose a work for the Budapest Philharmonic's eightieth anniversary, Kodály used the model of the *verbunkos*, a Hungarian dance with sections that alternate between fast and slow tempos. He gleaned his themes from a manuscript of Gypsy dance music that was published in Vienna around 1800. The slow introduction of *Dances of Galánta* juxtaposes solos for the cellos, horn, oboe, and clarinet with rapid string passages. Then a lengthy, improvisatory cadenza for the clarinet leads to a slow dance with unusual dotted rhythms and a mostly stepwise, sinuous melody. A contrasting faster dance features the flute, again with complicated dotted rhythmic figures. After the slow first dance is revisited, the oboe plays a cheerful, animated tune. Grace notes in flute and oboe, accompanied by triangle and bells, provide a lighthearted moment. A fast, syncopated dervish, interspersed with a couple

more tempo changes, concludes the colorful display of ethnicity.

**Edward Elgar (1857-1934)** was born in a small town near Worcester, England, where his father tuned pianos and had a music shop. Young Elgar, who taught himself to play numerous instruments, had to quit school at fifteen to help the family, and his lack of formal education caused the musical establishment to dismiss him. Nevertheless, Elgar composed, conducted local music groups, taught violin and piano, and played organ at the Catholic Church. At age 22 he also became bandmaster for the “attendants’ orchestra” at the Worcester and County Lunatic Asylum, where he composed polkas for the patients’ dances because the mental health administrators thought music might be therapeutic (an early example of music therapy). His 1889 marriage to one of his students, who was eight years his elder, was discouraged by her family and frowned upon by the class-conscious British society (the two were also of different religions and economic status). Ten years later, however, Elgar finally earned recognition with *Variations on an Original Theme* or “Enigma Variations” (TSO March 2018). The first two *Pomp and Circumstance Marches* were written in 1901, and three years later Elgar was knighted by King Edward VII. (Lady Elgar, who is the dedicatee of the first Enigma variation, had the last laugh.)

In the summer of 1919, Elgar wrote the cello concerto, which premiered that October at the London Symphony Orchestra’s first post-WWI performance. A solo cello recitative (declamatory singing associated with opera) leads to the full cello section playing an impassioned theme that recurs several times, for just strings, for the soloist, and eventually for full orchestra. It is a haunting melody that will go home with you. The distinctive triple- and quadruple-stopped chords from the opening recitative return at the start of the second movement, which soon becomes a vehicle to demonstrate the cellist’s ability to play rapidly repeated pitches. This **Allegro molto** provides light-hearted relief from the heaviness of the preceding movement. The following “molto expressive” **Adagio** once again demonstrates the composer’s talent for writing for the cello as if it were a voice—one that sings with beautiful lyricism as well as pathos. At the beginning of the last movement, Elgar writes “Quasi recitative” and “cadenza” in the solo part. With the faster **Allegro ma non troppo** section (fast, but not too much), a vigorous theme alternates between cello and orchestra. At the end the multiple-stopped chords indicate the return of the recitative from the concerto’s initial notes, and thus Elgar unifies the composition and brings its emotional tenor full circle.

A native of Hungary, **Béla Bartók (1881-1945)** spent ten summers with Kodály collecting Hungarian, Romanian, and Bulgarian folk music and recording peasant songs on an Edison wax cylinder. He taught piano for twenty-seven years at the Budapest Academy of Music, his alma mater. By 1934 Bartók was able to compose almost exclusively by commission. During World War II, the composer took a strong anti-Nazi stance, and he emigrated to the United States in 1940. For a time he was a research scholar in folk music at Columbia University. Bartók was quite ill in the hospital when Serge Koussevitzky visited him with a commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation; it lifted the composer’s spirits and contributed to his recovery. He finished the short score in just seven weeks and orchestrated the **Concerto for Orchestra** that winter. Koussevitzky conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the premiere in December 1944. “Concerto” generally refers to a work for a solo instrument and orchestra. Bartók explained that his use of the term in this title was based on his featuring each section of the orchestra in a soloistic manner. Written in five movements, it is one of his more accessible, and therefore “popular,” compositions.

Like Kodály, Bartók absorbed the characteristics of his native music and incorporated them into his original compositions. The first movement of the Concerto for Orchestra adopts folk elements such as

drones (sustained pitches, as in bagpipes) and the narrow range and stepwise movement of folk tunes. **“Introduction”** is in classical sonata form and is an example of Bartók’s famous “night music,” an eerie evocation of sounds associated with nighttime. A rhythmic tapping of the drum signifies both the beginning and the ending of the second movement, **“Presentation of the Couples,”** which has five sections, each played by a different pair of instruments. Each couple is separated by a specific interval between pitches, and the pairings in order are bassoons, oboes, clarinets, flutes and trumpets.

**“Elegy”** has a slow tempo and a somewhat mournful character, as suggested by the title. Another example of “night music,” its three themes are based on material from the first movement. The form of the **“Interrupted Intermezzo”** is a rondo of two folk tunes—A B A B A—but with an interruption before the final two sections. Bartók was a bit jealous of, as well as disgusted by, the popularity of Dmitri Shostakovich. According to Bartók’s son, the Hungarian composer included a parody of a march from the Russian composer’s Seventh Symphony after hearing it on the radio. Clarinets play the theme, which is mocked by trombones and repeated in the style of a marching band before it receives one final, unflattering utterance by the tuba. After Shostakovich’s death in 1975, scholarly research suggested that his writing was rife with irony, including parodies of military marching bands; so, in this instance, perhaps we are left with a parody of a parody. A horn announces the **Finale**, a *perpetuum mobile* in sonata form. Bartók showcases his contrapuntal skills in this movement, which concludes with a fugue based on the secondary theme introduced by a trumpet. Resplendent brass conclude the Concerto for Orchestra.

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