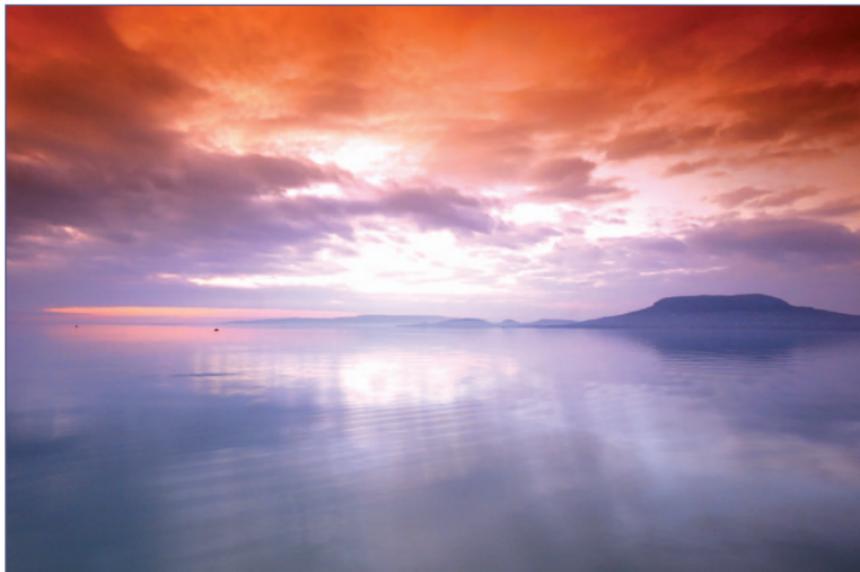


**NAXOS**

**HUNGARIAN MUSIC  
FOR CELLO AND PIANO**  
**Bartók • Dohnányi • Kodály**  
**Liszt • Popper • Rózsa**

**Mark Kosower, Cello**  
**Jee-Won Oh, Piano**



## Hungarian Music for Cello and Piano

**Béla Bartók (1881–1945): First Rhapsody**

**Ferenc Liszt (1811–1886): Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth**

**David Popper (1843–1913): Mazurka, Op. 11, No. 3 • Serenade, Op. 54, No. 2**

**Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967): Adagio**

**Ernő Dohnányi (1877–1960): Rurallia Hungarica, Op. 32d • Sonata in B flat minor, Op. 8**

**Miklós Rózsa (1907–1995): Toccata capricciosa, Op. 36**

The *First Rhapsody* of Béla Bartók for violin and piano was written in 1928 and was dedicated to the violinist Joseph Szigeti, Bartók's long-time friend. Soon after its completion Bartók orchestrated the work and then transcribed it for cello and piano. Unlike much of his work the *First Rhapsody* is an original folk-song arrangement intended to popularise his music as part of a lighter, more popular genre.

The material in the *First Rhapsody* is a synthesis of Transylvanian dance music and a peasant performance style. The *lassú-friss* or slow-fast format is typical of the Hungarian *csárdás*, a traditional folk-dance. The *csárdás* is characterized by a flexible tempo in 2/4 or 4/4 time that begins slow and ends very fast. It can be traced back to the eighteenth-century *verbunkos*, a genre in both music and dance that was often performed during military recruitment exercises. At the time the *verbunkos* was often mistaken as music of the gypsies since they were usually the musicians. This confusion persisted, eventually leading Bartók to write articles that specifically defined Hungarian peasant music on which his music is based.

*Prima parte (lassú)* is a heroic dance that begins majestically with undulating chords followed by a folk-melody in the cello. Both parts are written in Lydian and Phrygian modes, a combination which was of particular use to Bartók. After two statements the undulating chords are left in augmented form underlying the announcement of the B section. More peaceful and inward, the middle section evolves from a two-note motif with a first-beat stress derived from the Hungarian language. The two instruments then begin to dovetail before a call to dance interrupts and the A section returns with renewed vigour.

A passing remembrance of the B section occurs just before the movement ends decisively.

*Seconda parte* is a very animated and lively dance, as suggested by the word *friss* meaning “fresh.” After a few statements of the main theme an increasingly imitative and obsessive dialogue accelerates the action through flexible tempi. On the verge of spinning out of control, a striking sonority suddenly breaks the momentum and suspends time before a second dance theme appears. Initially reminiscent in character of the middle section from *Prima parte* the second dance theme then develops and intensifies in a similar manner as before. The excitement finally subsides when the Coda leads back to a reflective statement of the main theme (the *Alternative ending* is played in this recording). After undergoing a mysterious and suspenseful transformation the movement builds rapidly to a thrilling conclusion.

Ferenc Liszt's *Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth* (The Nonnenwerth Cloisters) was originally composed around 1841 as a song for voice and piano based upon a text by Felix Lichnowsky. Liszt later made three transcriptions of the song for solo piano, violin and piano, and cello and piano. The last version was probably written around 1860 and was first published in 1883.

Nonnenwerth, in which the poem is set, is an island in the Rhine between Bonn and Koblenz, the site of a 700 year-old Benedictine abbey. Liszt visited this island with Marie d'Agoult and their children during the summers of 1841-43. As their relationship was already strained by 1839 these visits were probably an attempt to bring the family closer together, but in 1844 the couple separated.

*Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth* is sparsely scored and evokes

a religious atmosphere of haunting solitude. The dramatic song is filled with images, fantasy, and memories but always maintains an underlying feeling of nostalgia.

David Popper was one of the great cellists and teachers of his day. Known for his great virtuosity he possessed a tone of great warmth and fullness and played elegantly in a classical style. Born in Prague, he was also a composer and published over 75 works mainly for cello. He was inspired largely by German, Spanish, French, and Russian composers, writing in a wide range of musical styles. Although he composed several more substantial works, the two works recorded here are salon pieces, a genre for which he became famous. He became one of the most powerful influences in modern cello playing through his compositions and his teaching at the Royal Conservatory in Budapest.

The *Mazurka in G minor, Op. 11, No. 3*, was first published in 1874. Written in ternary form the main theme quickly reveals its true comical and charming character after a seemingly stormy and serious opening. The *Serenade, Op. 54, No. 2*, displays exceptional beauty with its nostalgic melodies and breathtaking flourishes. While the *Mazurka* is an artful expression of the Polish dance, the *Serenade* shows the influence of Spanish gypsies.

Written in 1905 for violin and piano Kodály arranged his *Adagio* for viola and piano as well as cello and piano. As a young composer he was influenced by the German Romantics and, in particular, by the music of Johannes Brahms. Despite the presence of these influences the Kodály *Adagio* is decidedly individual in tone. The work consists of melodies and recitations that meditate in a religious atmosphere. Slowly rising from the earthy registers a cello melody is sung through a seemingly ambiguous harmonic progression which imperceptibly intensifies towards the middle section. The piano then introduces a new theme that evokes the sound world of Hungarian folk-music. Syncopated rhythms propel a searching cello line until the music precipitates downward into a passionate recitative. The return of the main theme is then highlighted by the piano's glittering arpeggiated chords played high above the cello melody. After a

climactic cello cadenza the final statement ends symbolically with a plagal cadence.

*Ruralia Hungarica* was originally written as a set of seven pieces for solo piano in 1923. Dohnányi then proceeded to set five of these pieces for orchestra, three for violin and piano, and one for cello and piano (as recorded here). Both works are expressions of the pious life of the Hungarian peasant. *Ruralia Hungarica* is more rhapsodic in nature, however, having many flourishes and decorative ornaments woven into its fabric. The work also contains more frequent outbursts and features the distinctive ongoing tremolos that recall the sound world of the cimbalom. Additionally its form is somewhat veiled by its shorter thematic gestures.

Cimbalom sounds create the backdrop for a declamatory opening in which a collage of thematic gestures are exchanged. As *Ruralia Hungarica* progresses these gestures create artful melodic lines while foreshadowing and reflecting upon the various events. With the arrival of the B section a newfound tranquillity emerges in the key of B flat major. Rolling figures in the piano envelop a shimmering theme in the cello written in tremolo. This momentary repose soon gives way to arpeggiated chords glittering above a transparent cello line (as in the Kodály *Adagio*). The music soars and expands more than before until the arpeggiated chords eventually subside. As the music descends the cello suddenly spirals upward in a fantastic flourish before both instruments ascend to the end.

The Dohnányi *Sonata in B flat minor, Op. 8*, for cello and piano, is a formidable work in four movements written in the tradition of the great Romantic sonata. Dating from 1899 it is a relatively early work that reveals the strong influence of Brahms while remaining innovative, distinctive, and original. The piano-writing is brilliantly conceived and is very demanding (which undoubtedly reflects Dohnányi's extraordinary abilities as a pianist). The cello generally plays a melodic rôle throughout the *Sonata* as the writing is sonorously well suited for the instrument.

The first movement marked *Allegro ma non troppo* is

an epic tale. Heroic gestures, frequent leaps, and an extremely active and densely scored piano part help to create striking similarities to the music of Dohnányi's late-Romantic counterparts. A distinctly Hungarian flavour prevails, however, through the use of tempo rubato, agogic accent, and *bel canto* melodic lines. The movement begins in B flat minor with a mysterious theme in three-octave unison. After a pause chordal brass fanfares in the piano and heroic gestures in the cello begin to intensify the action, signalling the start of an adventurous journey. While the second theme is initially more tranquil the momentum continues to gather through modulating harmonies until the exposition resolves in the key of D flat major. What at first sounds to be a repeat of the exposition soon reveals itself as a deception when the opening material modulates unexpectedly to the key of E major. A turbulent struggle then ensues before a dramatic transition ends the conflict leading directly to the second theme, this time played with a cello counter-melody. The movement ends dreamily with grandeur as the closing material settles in the key of B flat major.

The *Scherzo* could rightfully stand alone as a character piece with its brilliant virtuosity, animation, and melodic charm. Written in ternary form the movement begins with rapid-fire repeated sixteenth notes (semiquavers) in the cello and a daring chordal fanfare in the low registers of the piano. Ten measures later a mischievous theme emerges based on a more melodic use of the sixteenth notes while the piano skips alongside in thirds and sixths. The themes are then juxtaposed throughout the A section and are occasionally highlighted by dazzling piano flourishes. The A section is over with the blink of an eye before the processional B section changes pace. A very noble theme then features the rich sonorities of the cello's mid-registers. With time the procession takes on a more march-like character as the two instruments expand upward and outward in range and scope. After a heroic climax mischievous themes from the A section suddenly reappear in transition back to the beginning.

The *Adagio ma non troppo* is captivating with its powerful dream-like aura. Lyrical singing, suspended

chordal progressions, and flavourful passing tones dominate the textures, creating an imaginative and sublime world based in the key of E major. Despite the dreaminess the movement is essentially classical bearing notable similarities in form, function, and key to the *Andante* from Schubert's *Arpeggione Sonata*. The song-like *Adagio ma non troppo* is powerful in expression but soon proves to be short-lived, serving as a passageway to the *Tema con variazioni*.

The *Tema con variazioni* is the most Brahmsian movement of the *Sonata* as it contains a great variety of colours and textures through the use of orchestral sounds. The movement is light-hearted while maintaining an underlying inner intensity. The *Tema*, marked *Allegro moderato*, begins with a tenor cello melody sung casually over a chordal accompaniment with a trotting bass line. As the *Tema* progresses it gradually becomes more lively and carefree as the piano assumes the melody. *Variation I* is very animated and playful as the cello *pizzicati* alternate in dialogue with the *staccato* piano chords. *Variation II* is highlighted by lyrical woodwind- and string-writing through suspended contrapuntal lines. *Variation III* contrasts massive chords with running sixteenth notes in *tempo rubato* portraying images of Hungarian dance music. While *Variation IV* is poetic in a songful way, *Variation V* recalls the first movement's brass fanfares and heroic gestures. In *Variation VI* the opening theme of the first movement is played as a supporting bass line to a swirling piano part whose flavourful dissonances are suggestive of carnival music. The *Scherzo*'s animated and witty themes are then cleverly applied to *Variation VII* before modulating down a minor third to *Variation VIII* (re-illustrating the key relationship between the second and third movements). *Variation VIII* is based on the third movement and provides a moment for reflection before *Variation IX* restates the *Tema* in bravura fashion running out the door.

Thirteen years after his death Miklós Rózsa is remembered primarily as a composer of film music as he composed over a hundred film scores and won three Oscars for the music to the films *Spellbound* (1945), *A*

*Double Life* (1947), and *Ben Hur* (1959). In addition to his film scores, however, he was also a first-rate composer of traditional art-music, having written over forty orchestral, vocal, and instrumental works. Early in his career his music was discovered, performed, and highly regarded by such legendary conductors as Ernő Dohnányi, Pierre Monteux, and Bruno Walter. Other great conductors such as Charles Munch, Karl Böhm, Carl Schuricht, Frederick Stock, Eugene Ormandy, Sir Georg Solti, and Leonard Bernstein soon began performing his works as well throughout the world, launching his career by the mid 1930s. Miklós Rózsa later wrote concertos for Jascha

Heifetz and János Starker that were given their premières by both artists.

The *Tocatta capricciosa*, Op. 36, was written for Gregor Piatigorsky in 1976. This virtuosic *tour de force* for solo cello is a fantasy on Hungarian themes. The main section embodies the toccata element through running sixteenth notes contrasting improvisatory passages with dance-like elements. A *cantabile* and soulful middle section juxtaposes optimistic fantasy with lamenting reflections. Towards the end of the work musical ideas are developed more quickly and with great intensity leading to a sizzling and resolute finish.

**Mark Kosower**

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## Mark Kosower

One of the outstanding cellists of his generation, Mark Kosower has appeared as guest soloist with orchestras worldwide including the Orchestre de Paris, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the China National Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, the Kansai Philharmonic, and the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra. An Avery Fisher Career Grant winner, he has been guest soloist in the United States with the St Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Ravinia Festival Orchestra, the Buffalo Philharmonic, and the symphony orchestras of Detroit, Florida, Houston, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Minnesota, Oregon, North Carolina, Phoenix, and Seattle, among many others. He has appeared in recital on the Great Performers Series at Lincoln Center as well as at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Aspen Music Festival, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and in major cities throughout the United States and the world. A former Chamber Music Two member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center he has recorded for Naxos, Delos, Ambitus, and VAI.



## Jee-Won Oh

Born in Seoul, the Korean pianist Jee-Won Oh has performed internationally as soloist and chamber musician in the Americas, Asia, and Europe. She has made appearances in some of the world's great musical centres, including the cities of Belgrade, Paris, Salzburg, Rio de Janeiro, Seoul, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington DC. She has performed on the Great Performers Series at Lincoln Center in New York as well as at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, the Salle Gaveau in Paris, Kumho Art Hall in Seoul, and at the Sala Cecilia Meireles in Rio de Janeiro. She has also participated in such prestigious music festivals as the Schleswig-Holstein Festival and the Ernen Musikdorf, and she appears regularly at the Mammoth Lakes Music Festival and the Sitka Music Festival. She was the studio pianist and assistant to the distinguished cellist János Starker for five years and was also Associate Instructor of Piano at Indiana University from 1994 to 1998. She studied with György Sebök and Shigeo Neriki.

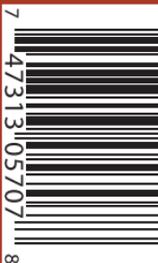


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This anthology of Hungarian music for cello and piano ranges widely from Liszt's haunting *The Nonnenwerth Cloisters* and two salon pieces by the great 19th century cello virtuoso Popper, to composers of the 20th century. Bartók's *First Rhapsody* is an original folk-song arrangement intended to popularise the composer's music as part of a lighter genre. Dohnányi's *Sonata in B flat, Op. 8*, for cello and piano, is a formidable work in four movements written in the tradition of the great Romantic sonata. Rózsa's *Toccata capricciosa*, a fantasy on Hungarian themes, is a virtuosic tour-de-force for solo cello.

## Hungarian Music for Cello and Piano

**Béla BARTÓK (1881–1945)**
**First Rhapsody 10:47**

- 1 Prima parte 4:42  
 2 Seconda parte (with alternative ending) 6:05

**Ferenc LISZT (1811–1886)**

- 3 Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth  
 (The Nonnenwerth Cloisters) 5:46

**David POPPER (1843–1913)**

- 4 Mazurka, Op. 11, No. 3 3:53

**Zoltán KODÁLY (1882–1967)**

- 5 Adagio 8:23

**Ernő DOHNÁNYI (1877–1960)**

- 6 Rurallia Hungarica, Op. 32d 6:52

**David POPPER**

- 7 Serenade, Op. 54, No. 2 3:53

**Ernő DOHNÁNYI**
**Sonata in B flat minor, Op. 8 26:41**

- 8 Allegro ma no troppo 7:58  
 9 Scherzo: Vivace assai 5:23  
 10 Adagio ma non troppo 3:13  
 11 Tema con variazioni:  
 Allegro moderato 10:05

**Miklós RÓZSA (1907–1995)**

- 12 Toccata capricciosa for  
 solo cello, Op. 36 7:35


**Mark Kosower, Cello • Jee-Won Oh, Piano**
*This recording is dedicated with our sincere gratitude  
 and affection to János Starker and György Sebök*


**Includes Free Downloadable Bonus Track (Janacek: *Pohádka: III. Allegro*)  
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