



## Observing March 15th in Kiskőrös, Petőfi Sándor's Birthplace

EPF

*We wanted to know how Petőfi's birthplace observed the holiday for which he was responsible. The office of the Mayor of Kiskőrös, Domonyi László, kindly obliged by sending us information about the celebration. We thank them for their cooperation!*

This year's official invitation to the Kiskőrös city-wide March 15th commemoration of the Revolution and Freedom Fight of 1848 begins with a Petőfi quote: "I am yours, yours, my native land! This heart, this soul; Whom would I love, If I did not love you?" (*Tied vagyok, tied, hazám! E szív, e lélek; Kit szeretnék, ha tégedet Nem szeretnék?*)

The first item on the day's program will be the laying of a wreath at the 1848 Memorial and at the Batthyány memorial plaque at 8 AM. This is to be followed by the handing out of municipal awards at city hall. The theater of the cultural center will be the scene of the holiday commemoration, with the participation of the students of Bem József public school. The memorial speech will be given by the Mayor, Domonyi László.

Then wreaths will be laid at the statues of Petőfi Sándor, Kossuth Lajos, Jókai Mór and General Bem József, as well as at the house where Petőfi was born.

Meanwhile, there will be an exhibit of "Petőfi in the Visual Arts", showing a selection of pieces from the museum's collection.

And from 9AM until 5PM, Petőfi poems, composed between March and

July of 1848, will be recited non-stop by outstanding performers in the yard of his birthplace.

On December 31st, they have what they call "*Petőfi-szilveszter*"; the only time Petőfi's original birth register may be viewed in the Lutheran church.

Kiskőrös initiated the custom of giving a volume of Petőfi's poems to the parents of a child born, anywhere in Hungary, on the same day as the great poet. Inscribed with the child's name, the book is presented the following year, when the child is one year old. Families converge on Kiskőrös, often from many hundreds of kilometers away, for this ceremony during the *Petőfi-szilveszter*.

So Kiskőrös pulls out all the stops when it comes to remembering and honoring its most famous native son!

The following paragraphs are taken from Mayor Domonyi László's speech given on March 15th, 2013:

"We have come here to celebrate freedom, our Hungarian-ness, spring. For decades, we have come here every March 15th. There's nothing else in our history with which we have such a close relationship, which so unequivocally is part

of our traditions, as is '48. We might say we pass it on through generations with our genes. No other national holiday is so closely tied with so much agreement, so much emotion, so much pride...

"Since 1848, not a single generation has been able to live its life without experiencing oppression, war, economic crisis, or dictatorship...

"There is a question we don't openly ask when we gather to remember the Revolution of 1848, but it's still hidden in every festive speech, every remembrance, which we try to walk around and avoid. Are we celebrating victory, or are we mourning defeat? Must we grieve, or be happy and proud?

"Generally the speakers try to surmount the difficulty by declaring that the Revolution was finally beaten down and the cause of Hungarian freedom failed, but the ideal and the memory of the heroes triumphed. I think that today, we celebrate a global victory, one that changed the world, one of the greatest Hungarian successes, of which any nation could rightly be proud. Because not only did the ideal and the memory of the heroes triumph, but the heroes, the revolutionaries triumphed, and yes, achieved their goals.



Left top and bottom: the house where Petőfi was born, right: Domonyi László, Mayor of Kiskőrös,; bottom Petőfi statue in xxxx and

"The Revolution was not beaten down, but revenged, which is very different. Neither did the cause of freedom fail; the soldiers merely laid down their arms, and the fight with weapons ceased. After the years of reprisals, Hungary arose a freer and stronger nation than it had been before the Revolution.

"Because the Revolution triumphed. It achieved its demands, and realized its major goal: it dismantled feudalism once and for all, thereby freeing Hungary forever from the stocks of the Middle Ages.

"How could all this have happened? How could the heroes of '48 bring about such change? That's the secret, the solution of which we seek every March 15th. They did not have supernatural methods and powers. Everything points to the fact that all of them, from Kossuth to Petőfi, from General Bem to the simple *horvéd* on foot, were the same earthly mortals as are we, today's Hungarians. But they knew something that today's Hungarians are just as much in need of as they were then.

"They could believe. Not just in Providence, or in the future. They could believe that their will would change the world. Man can bring about epochal change if he believes in his own free will. If he can transmit this belief to others, if together with others he can multiply it.

"It's not easy to believe. It's not like imagining something, and then yearning for it. We must fight for faith – especially with ourselves. Because one's most difficult enemy is always oneself, or his own unbelief, and if he can overcome that, he can conquer everything.

"Yet everything depends on this today, just as it did in '48: do we believe that our will is capable of changing the

world, at least our Hungarian world? We have to believe it. And we Hungarians together have to multiply our faith too.

"March 15th is the festival of the awakening of the Hungarian people's self-awareness. It is the final and desperate cry of an oppressed people's will to live, which had shown the world that there still lives a nation capable of taking care of itself, capable of articulating its feelings and desires, and which is worthy of its illustrious ancestors.

"This is our task today as well. Today too we have to show that we exist, that we are present, that we have enough strength and will to cry out from the depth even of the deepest abyss.

"Today we so easily say, 'we live in difficult times, we have reason for despair.' But let's admit it: so many times since 1848 were we much worse off than we are today. How many times did we have much more serious reason to be afraid, to despair, than we do today...

"In the most dangerous, most difficult times, the fate of the Hungarian nation often was such that desperation tempted people to leave the country. Following beaten down revolutions, wars that had been forced on us and were lost, during the time of dictatorships, hundreds of thousands said goodbye to their country for ever... The overwhelming majority remained and did not give up. This is why those who wanted to crush Hungarian freedom by inducing fear and despair were never able to win.

"Compared to the history of the last 150 years, we live in fortunate times. A whole generation has been able to grow up without personal memory of either war or dictatorship. And the latest generation can learn, from its first

moments of self-awareness, what 1848-49 was like. The little ones sing with great enthusiasm the song "*Huszárgyerek, huszárgyerek...*" and wear the cockade with such pride...

"What message does March 1848 have for us today?...As always, I emphasize the necessity of cooperation, of rallying our tiny nation. We need responsible decisions and persevering, hard work. Even if that is more difficult. We could have learned this from the Freedom Fight, because every success was the result of solidarity and collaboration, and every failure was caused by hotheadedness, shortsightedness, shifting of responsibility, discord. If we have learned from this, let's put into practice what we learned.

"We must cooperate, we must renew our homeland with common efforts locally and nationally, so that finally it will be good to live in it for those who have fought for, struggled and sacrificed for it.

"For those who love this country, its people, its language, its land, its air, its past, present and future.

"For those who love it even when it's not easy to love.

"For those who stay even when it's hard to stay here.

"For those who stand by it, even when it can't express its thanks.

"For those who see it as large, even when it is small.

"For those who believe in the homeland, in the Hungarian people, as did the heroes of 1848.

"Let us cooperate, let us act and believe today too, for them and for us."

*Translated by EPF*

## Megint beszélünk s csak beszélünk...

Petőfi Sándor

Megint beszélünk s csak beszélünk,  
A nyelv mozog, s a kéz pihen;  
Azt akarják, hogy Magyarország  
Inkább kofa, mint hős legyen.

Dicsőségünknek kardja! csak most  
Készültél s már a rozsdá esz.  
Meglássátok, maholnap minden  
Az ó kerékvágásba' lesz.

Ugy állok itt, mint a tüzes ló,  
Mely föl vagyon nyergelve már,  
S prüsszögve és tombolva, ottbenn  
Fecsegő gazdájára vár.

Nem a tettek terén fogok hát,  
Mint egy csillag, lehullani?  
Megfojtanak majd a tétlenség  
Lomhán ölelő karjai?

S nem lenne baj, ha magam volnék,  
Hisz egy ember nem a világ,  
De ezer és ezer van, aki  
A zablán tépelődve rág.

Oh ifjaink, oh én barátim,  
Ti megkötött szárnyú sasok,  
Láng a fejem, jég a szívem, ha  
Végigtekintek rajtatok!...

Föl, föl hazám, előre gyorsan,  
Megállni féluton kívánsz?  
Csupán meg van tágítva rajtad,  
De nincs eltörve még a lánc!

*In this poem, Petőfi laments that the great outpouring of patriotic sentiment which he set off with his declamation of "Talpra magyar!" on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1848 was not followed up by action. He considers that the chain binding the country has not been broken, merely loosened, and is calling on the people to hurry to complete the task.*



*Petőfi in front of the National Museum  
- painting by Zichy Mihály*

## Did you know...

...that there is a church built of ice in the snow-capped mountains of Fogaras? Near Balea Lake in Szeben County, at an altitude of 6,000 feet, a church has once again been built of ice blocks, held together with water and snow. It is modeled on an old Transylvanian church, and can be reached only by ski lift. Blessed by ministers of different denominations on January 29<sup>th</sup>, the church is not only an architectural curiosity, but is also a venue for ecumenical dialogue among the Ortho-

dox, Catholics and Protestants. In the past, Baptisms and weddings have been held there.

This was the ninth winter that the church has been rebuilt and blessed at this location.



*Photos: Exterior and interior of ice church*



# Saying Goodbye to Baron Charles ("Charlie") Balintitt

By: Charles Bálintitt Jr.



*Three years ago, we interviewed Charles ("Charlie") Bálintitt on his 100th birthday (see Magyar News Online, January 2012). Now, with sad hearts, we are saying farewell to this "grand old man" of the New York Hungarian scene. Until we meet again, may you rest in peace!*

He was born Baron Charles Bálintitt de Tövis on December 28, 1911 in Kolozsvár, Transylvania, into a family of landowners near Marosvásárhely.

He lived through all the vicissitudes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – seeing his birthplace become part of Romania, having to flee – twice! – to save his life, serving as a cavalry officer at the Battle of the Don, being arrested under Communism, interrogated at Andrassy út 60 and sentenced to three and a half years in prison (even working in a coal mine).

Even in prison, he kept up his spirits, and carried on great conversations and even philosophical debates with all and sundry. His education, his mastery of languages and his wide intellectual interests made him an ideal cell mate. His sense of humor never left him.

After his release, he married Baroness Éva Apor in the summer of 1956, and together they left for Austria after the Revolution was defeated. Arriving in New York, they raised their children in a Hungarian atmosphere, sending them to Hungarian school and Scouts, and themselves actively participating in the various Hungarian groups. His nickname "Charlie" that accompanied him during his 103 plus years, epitomized the ease with which he could converse with the queen of England or a bum on the street. It also made him well suited to taking leading positions in the various Hungarian organizations in New York.

He left us on February 18<sup>th</sup>, Ash Wednesday. His funeral Mass will be at St. Stephen's Church in New York City, at noon of March 7<sup>th</sup>.

All of us will miss you, "Charlie"! May you rest in peace!

## Tricentennial of Máriapócs Shrine

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*This year marks the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the weeping of the Máriapócs icon. It is actually the second icon to have wept in that small community.*

The year was 1696, when the original icon of Mary wept in the Byzantine rite Catholic church at Pócs, east of Nyíregyháza. That icon was arbitrarily taken to Vienna by the Austrian emperor, and eventually a copy was sent to replace it. Although the people were not too happy to have only a copy, they put it in the place of the original one to cover the eyesore of the empty spot.

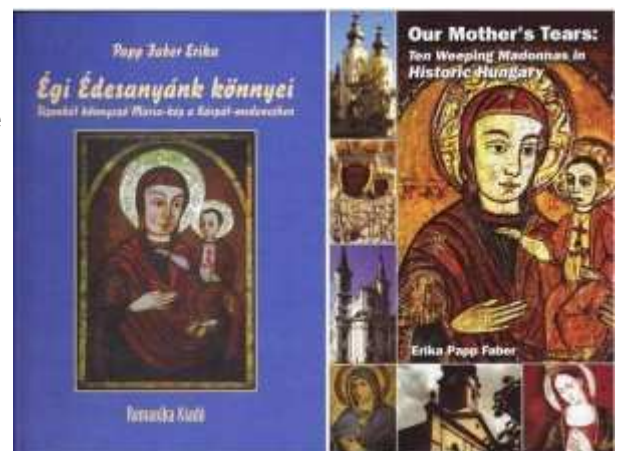
But the copy also shed tears in 1715, much to the joy of the populace, and people began streaming to Pócs on pilgrimage. Much outpouring of grace and many miraculous healings

were recorded, not only then, but ever since. The church became a shrine, and the name of the village was changed to Máriapócs. This is the anniversary which will be observed with jubilant solemnity by the Diocese of Hajdudorog this year.

The icon will be taken on tour around the country, beginning March 8<sup>th</sup>, and will return to Máriapócs on the 24<sup>th</sup>, for the purpose of increasing faith in Mary's Son and to bring people to realize the value and attraction of the Byzantine rite which Mary chose to gift with her tears. (Actually, the icon shed tears a second time in 1903. Both weepings were thoroughly examined by the Church and declared to have been authentic.)

Following the icon's return, the tricentennial celebration will begin with Vespers on March 24<sup>th</sup>. Among the numerous events planned is the addition of a new bell to be hung in the church tower during the annual church festival of August 15-16.

(For the complete story of Máriapócs, see "Our Mother's Tears: ten weeping Madonnas in historic Hungary" /cost: \$10. plus \$3.25 postage/, or "Égi Édesanyánk könnyei: tizenkét könnyező Mária-kép a Kárpát-medencében" /cost: \$20. plus \$3.25 postage/, available from Erika Papp Faber, 88 Main St-C6, Danbury, CT 06810. – The discrepancy between the English and the Hungarian versions is due to the fact that by the time the Hungarian version was ready, more information had become available.)



## Hungarian Day in Turkey

Éva Wajda

*March 15<sup>th</sup> will see commemorations not only in Hungary and among the Hungarian diaspora, but also in – of all places! – Turkey!*



*Székely Bertalan: II Lajos holttestének megtalálása, 1860*

There will be a Hungarian Day on Turkish State Television (TRT) on March 15<sup>th</sup>, on the 167<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1848/49 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence from the Austrian Empire.

The viewers of TRT television will become acquainted with many common connections between the two countries. In addition, several programs will introduce Hungary's historical heritage, mutual economic, educational and cultural connections between the two countries, and also segments of a film portrait of Bartók Béla.

Last year, the Hungarian media presented an all-day Turkish-themed program on October 29<sup>th</sup>, Turkey's national holiday commemorating the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

Turkish Day was a great success both on Hungarian television and radio, and we hope the same interest is shown among the Turkish public.

Statistically, the difference in the size of the two countries is extreme, in that the area of Turkey is 783,562 sq. km with a coastline of 7,200 km, and a population of approximately 81,619,392. By contrast,

the area of Hungary is

83,028 sq. km with a population of 9,919,128, with no coastline.

Turkey's largest city, Istanbul, has a population of 11,174,300, versus Hungary's largest city, Budapest, with a population of 1,646,130.

It might be interesting to see how they approach this topic. (Of course it would help if one spoke Turkish!) But baby, we've come a long way from Mohács!

*(The Turks defeated the Hungarian forces at the battle of Mohács in 1526, in which not only most of the Hungarian troops, but also the king, Louis II and the leading men of the country, including the religious leaders lost their lives. There was no leadership, nor sufficient troops left to withstand the Turkish onslaught, and so the way lay open for the 160 years of Turkish occupation and devastation. It was not the last time*

*Hungary had requested help from the West, which was promised but never realized.)*

## The Wirehaired Vizsla Debuts at New York Dog Show

Éva Wajda

In addition to *komondorok*, *kuvaszok*, *pulik* and regular *vizslák*, this year's Westminster Dog Show also had a new Hungarian entry. Two new breeds made their debut in the Westminster Kennel Club dog show in New York City in February. Joining a field of 192 breeds and nearly 3,000 competitors from around the world was the wirehaired *vizsla*, Falko, from Montreal, Canada. It was entered in the sporting dog category.

The wirehaired *vizsla* is one of ten Hungarian breeds. It is a hunting dog, similar to the smooth-coated *vizsla*, but is regarded as a separate breed. It was created in the 1930's by crossing *vizslas* with German wirehaired pointers to withstand colder winter weather. The wirehaired is a good pointer and retriever, while being gentle, so it is also a wonderful family pet.

To be included in the show, a breed must meet rules set by the American Kennel Club, including having sufficient numbers in the United States, a certain geographical distribution and a parent club that regulates breeding.

*Eva Wajda is a member of the MNO Editorial Board.*



# Saying Goodbye to Charles ("Karcsi bácsi") Nagy

Karolina Tima Szabó

*It is hard to say goodbye to someone who had played such an important part in your life. Just how important can be seen in the interview we published in the February 2014 issue of Magyar News Online.*

Charles Nagy, of Fairfield, our beloved adopted uncle passed on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015 in Bridgeport. He was born in Nagyacsád, Hungary on January 9, 1920 to the late Kálmán and Johanna Magasy Nagy. In his native Hungary, he studied to be an educator, but his education was interrupted by WWII. He was drafted into the army, and got stranded in Austria. After spending three years there, he emigrated to the U.S. in 1949

He, with other Hungarian DPs founded the still existing Pannonia American-Hungarian Club. He was a member of the First United Church of Christ; worked for Trio Industries until his retirement in 1984. He married Margaret Ozsvart in 1955.

After the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, Charles supported the refugees who came to America from Hungary, hired them at Trio Industries, and he and his wife took some into their home until they found a place of their own.

He loved playing golf with his friends; and to the surprise of many, contrary to his advanced age, he learned the computer. He played solitaire, kept in touch with relatives through e-mails and Skype.

In addition to his loving wife and parents he was predeceased by his siblings Kálmán, Dezső, Jolán and Irma.

Charles is survived by his nieces, Erzsébet, Zsuzsanna, Katalin, Borbála, and Sarolta; and several grandnieces and grand-nephews, all in

Hungary. He will be greatly missed by his godsons Dennis and Charles Zsebik and their families, and good friends Robert and Klara Potkay and their family.

His funeral services were held at Lesko & Polke Funeral Home on Thursday, February 26<sup>th</sup>.

Uncle Charles embraced us when we came to the U.S. We are blessed that we had him in our lives. My sons and my granddaughters loved him dearly, and "Karcsi bácsi" will live in our hearts always.



Charles Nagy

## Kárpátalja (Subcarpathia or Transcarpathia)

*By: Maria Szaplanczay Schweikert*

*This is where Árpád led the seven tribes into the Carpathian Basin over 1,100 years ago. It is an area that has seen much turbulence and change. Here is a sketch of 20th century history by someone who was born there.*

The Hungarian name *Kárpátalja* has a few variations. The most common ones are given above.

Presently, the Carpathian Region is part of the Western part of today's Ukraine. For its 1000 years, it was under different ruling countries. I will not get into great details of its complicated history.

In 896, the Hungarian tribes settled in the Carpathian Basin and thus started the history of today's Hungary. Different tribes were going through the region, including Slavic groups like the Ruthenians or Rusyns, who arrived in the area in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Other groups of Slavic ethnicity migrated to the region as well. Later, in the 1500-1600s, Jews started settling in the region. The largest number of Jewish people settled in Mukachevo (in Hungarian: Munkács). They built synagogues, they had their own cemetery. All those different groups lived peacefully side by side, cultivating their own customs, literature and music (*klezmer*, for example, has its roots in that region). They had their schools using their own language. (I grew up in Mukachevo – Munkács – and can attest that I never experienced animosity from different ethnic groups.)

Then World War I broke out. The Germans fought on the Hungarian side and lost, and Hungary's tragic fate was decided by powerful governments. On June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1920 the Treaty of Trianon was imposed on Hungary, affecting over 70% of Hungary which was lost to the neighboring countries. Subcarpathia was given to the newly established country of Czechoslovakia and it was under Czech rule until 1939 – the year when Czechoslovakia broke up. The Carpathian region with its Ruthenian population was given back to Hungary, and it was under Hungarian rule till the Fall of 1944, when the Soviets occupied the region and, in 1945, annexed it.

The Ruthenian population was integrated into the Ukrainian ethnic group, but the Ruthenians (or Rusyns) did not – and do not to this day – want to be called Ukrainians. They wanted to have their own autonomy, and for a day – March 3, 1939 – they were an independent autonomy. It was the shortest lived victory in history.



† 23.01.1972, м. Ужгород  
**ШЕПА МИКОЛА (ВАСИЛЬ), ЧСВВ**  
 \* 27.12.1914, Ігумен Малоберезнянського монастиря,  
 засуджений 1948 на 10 р.  
 † 11.08.1992, м. Мухачево

**ШЕРЕГІЙ АНДРІЙ**  
 \* 10.12.1893, парох с. Макарьово,  
 помер на допиті, † 16.06.1950, Ужгородська тюрма

**ШІМША АНДРІЙ**  
 \* 3.01.1882, священик Виноградівської районної лікарні,  
 † 16.07.1951, м. Явас, Мордовська АРСР

**ШТЕЦЬ ВАСИЛЬ**  
 \* 22.10.1909, парох с. Солониш, засуджений 1949 на 95 р.

Left side: Lake Szinevér; Szolyva Memorial Park with plaques; second name on plaque is that of Maria's great uncle killed in 1950. Right: Munkács fortress; plaques listing persecuted priests on wall of Ungvár Byzantine cathedral.

Ruthenians (and Hungarians) immigrated to the US by the thousands at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and after World War II. The people followed the Byzantine Catholic faith, and priests were needed to serve them. Many priests were sent to the US to establish their own churches. The Byzantine (or, as they are referred to in Europe, Greek Catholic) priests were allowed to marry, so they came with their families. The American Roman Catholics (Western rite Catholics) did not like the idea of priests with families, so in 1929 Rome disallowed married priesthood in the Byzantine Catholic Church as well. Presently, there are discussions about returning to the traditions of the Eastern Rite Catholics, namely allowing the re-establishment of married clergy.

I was born at Szolyva in Hungary at the end of 1943, and grew up in Soviet Ukraine, which until the present time has remained in Western Ukraine. My father, a graduate of the Ludovika Military Academy of Budapest, was a captain there, in Regent Horthy's army. He became a prisoner of war in October of 1944, and spent 11 years in a Soviet *Gulag* (forced labor camp). My maternal grandfather, Toth Elek, was a Byzantine rite Catholic priest at Szolyva.

After the Soviets annexed Subcarpathia, the Byzantine churches were closed or forced to become Orthodox (starting the closing process in 1946, and ending in 1949). The priests were either sent to the Gulag (the Soviet prison system), or were shot or poisoned. My grandfather and a few of my priest relatives were victims of this brutal practice

taking place during the Stalinist Soviet regime. My grandfather's church was among the first ones to be closed. Since my father was a POW in the Gulag, our family, consisting of grandpa, grandma, my mother and me, a 3-yr-old child, was put out on the street, literally. Good people, friends, relatives gave us shelter for a few years till our situation stabilized.



*Monument at Verecke Pass by Matl Péter*

My mother's brother-in-law offered himself up for the family, signing the paper that he would go over to the Orthodox Church so the family would not be harassed and he would not be sent to prison or worse.

In 1951, my grandfather was in the hospital (I don't remember for what), was poisoned there by a KGB agent, and shortly after returning home, passed away. He was 61. About 80 Byzantine Catholic priests were eliminated in one way or another. A car accident was staged against a Byzantine Catholic bishop, Teodor Romzsa, but he survived the crash, so he was transported to a hospital and was poisoned there. He was beatified in Rome in 2001 and is on his way to sainthood.

Years after the Soviet Union fell apart, the churches in Kárpátalja taken by the Orthodox after 1946

were returned to the Byzantine Catholics and the Ukrainian authorities allowed a memorial plaque to be placed in the Byzantine Cathedral in Uzhhorod (Ungvár) with all the names of the priests who perished during this period of repressions by the Soviets. (It is still not clear how many millions were victims of Stalin's purges and during the years he was in power. According to documents which are now available to

historians, the estimated 20 millions of people killed during the period of Stalin's reign is a low number.) In Mukachevo, there still stands the corner house that had accommodated the pharmacy of my grandfather's brother István. Naturally, the Soviets took away the pharmacy, but did leave the upstairs for the family. (My Mother's cousin still lives there.) After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the pharmacy was returned to the family, which they now rent out.

There are many beautiful places in Kárpátalja. One of them, Lake Sziénév (Sinevir), is now a national park and a tourist attraction. And then there is Verecke, the Pass through which the Hungarians entered the Carpathian Basin in 896. A monument created by Matl Péter of seven large blocks representing the seven tribes was erected there for the 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary observance in 1996.

*Maria Szaplóczay Schweikert was born in Kárpátalja, which was annexed to the Soviet Union in 1945. She thus attended Russian schools, and learned perfect Russian. She has recently retired after teaching that language in Minneapolis area colleges for 36 years (24 of them at the University of Minnesota), and interpreting for almost 30 years for various official delegations at international conferences.*

# Bartók Béla

Olga Vallay Szokolay

Although not understood by the wide public, Hungarian Bartók Béla was one of the world's greatest composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was more a "musicians' musician" rather than one who would cater to popular tastes. We wish to celebrate his birthday on March 25<sup>th</sup>.

It is as difficult to discuss music without hearing as it is to visualize fine art without seeing. Thus I find it hard to write about Bartók without playing his music to the audience. The task is made even more challenging by the fact that, in this case, hearing would not necessarily convince the listener and "sell" the product. Bartók's music is not light, not easy to listen to, by anyone's standard.

Why then, oh why, do we bother?...

If we consider that much of the prejudiced Hungarian public shudders and would turn off the radio or TV when his work is announced, this is more of a challenge. And they would do that without ever having heard any of his works!

Yet, it is no more shocking than, in its time, Beethoven's *Eroica* being booed off at its premiere, as "sheer nonsense". Today anyone airing such "critique" would be called an idiot. Musical history indicates that every innovator must pass through this spiritual purgatory loaded with malicious judgments.

Bartók, being born on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1881, is technically a child of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His adult life and work, however, represents the calamitous 20<sup>th</sup>. Studded with two world wars, much of the old, familiar world of East and West has changed, for the better to many and for disaster to the rest. The old social standards became antiquated, never to return to the same. And, while revolutions in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were more lo-

calized, isolated, the earth-shattering effects of the World Wars were global.

The Bartók family came from the county of Borsod and his great-grandfather settled in the mixed-national market-town of Nagyszentmiklós, in Bánát (now Sannicolau Mare in Romania). Both his father Béla, a school principal, and mother Voit Paula, a teacher, were excellent musicians. Béla Viktor János was their first child, followed by his sister, Erzsébet, four years later. By then Béla could play more than 40 pieces on the piano. Their father died when he was seven. A few years later the widowed mother, who was the first to introduce her son to music and discovered his talent, moved the family to Pozsony (now Bratislava, Slovakia). The culture of the old city and the proximity of Vienna - the era's music capital - seemed most suitable for her son's further education.

The talented youngster was taught there by renowned pianist Erkel László (the son of Ferenc), until age 18.

Then Béla promptly received an Imperial scholarship to the Vienna Conservatory but, instead, opted for the Budapest Academy of Music. There he studied piano and composition. After performing, on the piano, a symphonic poem of Richard Strauss to the Academy's professors, then to a large audience in Vienna, with frenetic success at age 20, he was recognized for years as one of the most exceptional young pianists of Europe. Upon completion of his studies, his talent distinguished him from his classmates to the point that he became exempted from final exams.

In these years the most frequented music salon of Budapest was at the home of Mrs. Gruber, née Sándor (Schlesinger) Emma (later Mrs. Kodály Zoltán), who gathered young musicians of great talent around her. As one of the prodigies Bartók was invited there. It turned out to be one of the most significant milestones of his life: he met Kodály who had just returned from Paris. He led Bartók away from

his bombastic inspirations such as Richard Strauss, Mahler and Bruckner, and acquainted him with the music of Debussy, inspired by the French impressionists. Bartók discovered the beauty of this new music and realized that while Wagner had reached the pinnacle of musical Romanticism from where there is no further way up, he could find his way to new progress and inspiration following Debussy's art.

His friendship with Kodály presented another shared interest: that of folk music. From 1906 on, the two of them together ventured on fieldtrips to the Hungarian countryside, collecting folk songs and recording them on phonograph cylinders. They found that Magyar folk music, erroneously categorized earlier as Gypsy music, motifs of which are even part of Liszt's Rhapsodies and Brahms' Hungarian Dances is, instead, based on pentatonic scales, similar to those in Asian folk music found in regions such as Central Asia and Siberia.

Like Kodály, Bartók incorporated Hungarian peasant melodies into his compositions. However, unlike Kodály who concentrated strictly on Magyar heritage, Bartók embraced music of all neighboring nations, most of which were later annexed to Slovakia, Serbia and Romania. He believed in the possible peaceful co-existence of nations through learning each other's culture and traditions. His pieces, derived from authentic songs, are best illustrated in his two-volume publication of 80 folk tunes, "For Children", for solo piano, and they remain permanent treasures of *ethnomusicology*.

In 1907, he was appointed Piano Professor of the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest. Some of his talented students included Fritz Reiner and Sir George Solti. From here on, his life was divided among teaching, composing, folk song collecting, European concerts and writing scientific works.

It is a wonder that he found the time, in 1909, to marry the 16-year old Ziegler Márta, one of his former pupils with



Bartók was bitterly opposed to the rise of Hitler and the influence of the Nazis in Hungary. He openly expressed his strong anti-fascist views that made his life impossible in his own country. Hitler's *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938 made him decide to make plans to part with his beloved homeland. Thus, on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1940, he gave his last concert in Budapest. He managed to leave for the United States and, by month's end, settled in New York City with his second wife, Ditta, and son, Péter, who joined the U.S. Navy and served in the Pacific during the rest of the war. His older adult son, Béla III, stayed back in Hungary.



Although Bartók was fluent in many languages, including English, their life in immigration was not easy. He was renowned in America as a pianist and teacher, but he could not gain fame as a composer. With his pianist wife, Ditta, they gave concerts and he received a research fellowship from Columbia University to work on their folk music collection.

whom he shared his life for 14 years thereafter. Their son, Béla III, was born in 1910.

In 1911, Bartók wrote his only opera, *Bluebeard's Castle*, that he dedicated to his wife, Márta. To his overwhelming disappointment, the work was rejected by the Fine Arts Commission. For the next few years he did not even compose. He only collected and arranged folk music in the Carpathian Basin. He first revised the opera in 1917 so that it could be premiered in 1918. Since then it has been performed around the globe, as the highest ambition of dramatic sopranos and basso profundo baritone, notably, in Hungarian.

In 1914, he started composing again and by 1917 he wrote a ballet *The Wooden Prince*, and *String Quartet No.2*, followed by two sonatas in 1921 and 1922, respectively. Ac-

ording to the experts, harmonically and structurally these were his most complex works.

Meanwhile, in 1918, he wrote another ballet, *The Miraculous Mandarin*, which was not staged until 1926 because of its intense subjects such as prostitution, robbery and murder.

In the later 1920s, Bartók composed his 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> *String Quartets*, after which his work developed a mature style. His most notable works of the 1930s were *String Quartet No. 5*; *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*; *Divertimento for String Orchestra* and *String Quartet No.6*, his last one.

At age 42, Bartók divorced his wife Márta in June 1923 and, in August of the same year married his 19-year old talented Jewish piano student, Pásztory Ditta. The next year their son, Péter, was born.

Ever since 1940, his health had been deteriorating. By the time his ailment was conclusively diagnosed as leukemia in 1944, the cancer was at an advanced stage. Yet, in 1943 a challenging offer from conductor Serge Koussevitzky, to compose a memorial concerto for his deceased wife, Natalie, infused him with new energy. The ensuing *Concerto for Orchestra*, first performed at Boston's Symphony Hall on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1944, then at New York's Carnegie Hall on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1945, became one of Bartók's most popular

scores. In this period he also wrote his *Sonata for Solo Violin* at the request of Yehudi Menuhin.

It is beyond the scope of this writing to enumerate and appreciate all his work.

He is accused of dissonance while the definition of the word eludes us. His dissonant chords eventually resolve in harmony but sometimes one has to wait for it. We have been living in an incessantly transforming world that Bartók's complex expressionism with its unfamiliar harmonies and strange, often savage rhythm so intensely reflect. His music is psychological. Years ago, I found his Violin Concerto the perfect piece to weep by...

Perhaps this is what maintains his works as constant, successful staples of the whole world's concert halls.

Bartók Béla lost his battle to leukemia on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1945, in New York City. He was buried in Hartsdale, NY. Despite his fame, only ten people, including wife Ditta, their son Péter and pianist friend Sándor György attended his funeral. Some 40 years later, to the consternation of some, the only recognition of the composer was a level marble slab with the inscription: "Bartók Béla, 1881-1945"

In 1988, the Hungarian government requested the U.S. that Bartók's remains be exhumed and brought to Budapest. There his body was reinterred at the Farkasréti Cemetery, with a more recognizable grave-stone.

Considering that Mozart was buried in a paupers' grave, this is not the worst fate. It is their life's work that engraves their name into eternity.

External sources for research:  
"The Classic Alphabet" by Jules Vállay;  
Kanadai Magyarság article by Fáy István;

The Internet

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## Csöröge

*This is an easy to make, light, fritter-like pastry. You may have trouble to stop eating it!*

### Hozzávalók

2 db tojás  
2 evőkanál tejföl  
1 evőkanál porcukor  
kevés só  
1 kanál rum  
35 dkg liszt  
étolaj a kisütéshez

### Elkészítés:

A tojásokat villával felferjük, hozzáadjuk a tejfölt, a porcukrot, a sót, a rumot és az átszitált lisztet. Összedolgozzuk, míg szép sima nem lesz, majd fél órát pihentetjük. Újra átgyúrjuk, azután nagyon vékonyra kinyújtjuk. Derelyemetszővel tetszőleges négyszögeket vágunk, a közepét behasítva bő, forró olajban mindkét oldalát megsütjük.

Jól lecsöpögtetjük, azután meghintjük vaníliás porcukorral. Lekvárral kínáljuk.



# Kicsi a világ!

Charlie Bálintitt Jr

*Love has a way of smoothing over political enmities. This story is a prime example.*



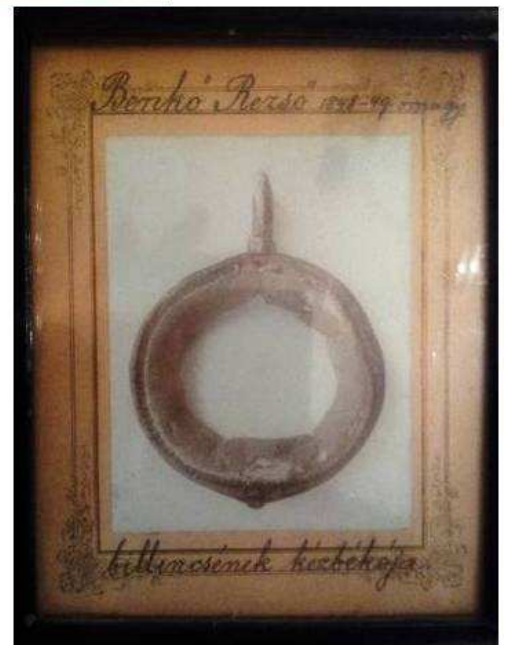
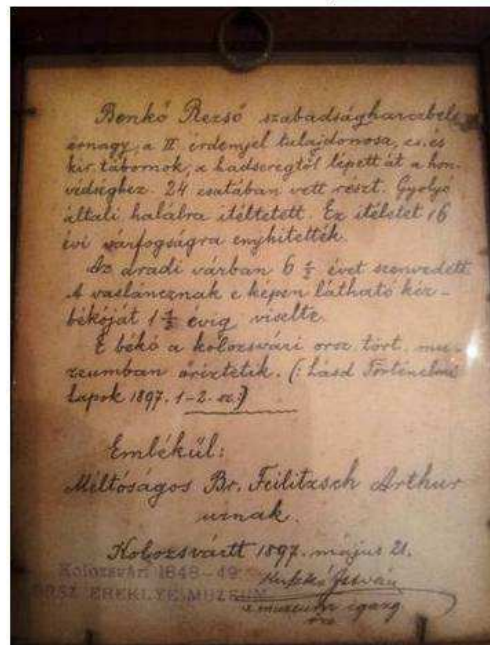
*Benkő Rezső*

As a result of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, Kézdivásárhelyi Benkő Rezső, a major in the Hungarian army at the time, was captured and imprisoned by the Austrians. He was first sentenced to death, a sentence which was then reduced to 16 years in a castle or fortress prison. But in the end, he was released after serving 6 ½ years. He was eventually promoted to the rank of general.

At some point during the time of his imprisonment, Captain (Császári és Királyi lovas kapitány) Feodor Freiherr von Feilitzsch was put in charge of the prison. A number of years later, Feodor had a son who was born on February 19, 1859, while Rezső had a daughter who was born on April 21, 1862. On September 18, 1885 their children: Artúr Freiherr von Feilitzsch and Kézdivásárhelyi Benkő Gizella were married. I'm sure there were many interesting conversations at the wedding and thereafter between their in-laws.

The portraits of Feodor and Rezső have hung on two sides of my parent's dining room for the last 50

years. They were my paternal great-great-grandparents. It is a small world after all!



*Feodor Freiherr von Feilitzch; Artúr; Benkő Gizella; handcuff worn by Benkő Rezső for a year and a half in Arad prison with document attesting its history*

## Magyar News Online

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