



Kalmus Masterworks Library

BÉLA

BARTÓK

DANCE SUITE

(1923)

Edited by R. Mark Rogers

FULL SCORE

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INSTRUMENTATION

2 Flutes (1-2 d. Piccolo)
 2 Oboes (2 d. English Horn)
 2 Clarinets in A or B flat (2 d. Bass Clarinet)
 2 Bassoons (2 d. Contrabassoon)

4 Horns in F
 2 Trumpets in C or B flat
 2 Trombones
 Tuba

Timpani
 5 Percussion (Timp. included)
 Piano
 Celesta (d. Piano 4 Hands *secundo*)
 Harp

Strings
 (9.8.7.6.5)

PROGRAM NOTES

Béla Bartók (in Hungarian usage, the order of the names is reversed, thus Bartók Béla) was born March 25, 1881 in the Hungarian village of Nagyszentmiklós (now Sânnicolau Mare, Romania [for more on the shift of borders and town names as a result of war and political upheaval in the 20th century, see below]). He appeared in public as composer and pianist before he was ten and studied in Pressburg and at the Music Academy in Budapest. As a composer, he was influenced by the music of Brahms, Wagner, Liszt, Debussy and Richard Strauss. Of greater importance was Bartók's interest in Hungarian folk-music. In 1905, he began a life-long study of eastern European folk-music, collecting in all some 7000 melodies. Bartók's love for this music is evident in his own works. In 1907, he became a professor at the Budapest Academy. Apart from concert tours, as a virtuoso pianist, and from journeys as far as Turkey to collect folk-music, he remained there until 1940, when the increasing shadow of Nazi Germany over central Europe precipitated his departure for America. He died from complications of leukemia in New York on September 26, 1945.

Among his works are six string quartets, a sonata and many other important pieces for piano, the 153 pieces of the *Mikrokosmos*, a sonata for two pianos and percussion, two sonatas for violin and piano, a sonata for solo violin, songs and choruses, three piano concertos, a violin concerto, a viola concerto (unfinished), the ballet *The Wooden Prince*, a pantomime *The Miraculous Mandarin*, the opera *Bluebeard's Castle*, the *Cantata Profana*, a *Concerto for Orchestra*, a *Divertimento* for strings, and *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*.

Dance Suite, completed at Radvány (northern Hungary) in August 1923, was composed for a festival concert held on November 19, 1923 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the two cities of Buda and Pest merged into one capitol: Budapest.

Dance Suite combines five different types of dance rhythms (original themes), each followed by a *Ritornello* (an interlude which remains unchanged) and a *Finale* into one symphonic unit.

I. Moderato: The 2/4 rhythm of the opening motive is subjected to widely varying forms of utterance, in ten quick successions of fast and slow tempo; meanwhile the bassoon motive, gradually expanding from narrow intervals to those ever wider, is carried on by the horn (m. 42) and clarinet. It is flung upward and, falling down again, comes to its close. The melodic lines of the English Horn [52] and oboe [64] arise from monotonous beginnings, accompanied by strings which are in turn played *col legno*, or *pizzicato* or with gliding *portamento*. Adding woodwinds, the melody comes to its climax and is cut off by the entrance of the blaring brass [103]; quickly returns to *pp* – the opening motive, repeated by the tuba, trombone and bassoon, dies away. The *Ritornello* [121] is uttered softly by the violins and passed on to the clarinet, but interrupted by - -

II. Allegro molto: The string motive in rising and falling 3rds characterized by its supple and suppressed strength, is brought forth in flexible rhythms, urged on by pulsating strokes in the low winds; it strengthens and grows into a wild dance, until the clarinet presents the *Ritornello* [94], accompanied by muted strings.

III. Allegro vivace: A lively dance built on symmetric four-bar phrases, with syncopated strokes of the accompaniment and long organ points in the basses. Three climaxes, each stronger than the previous, up to the high trill (m. 26), are followed by a rhythmically free middle section, ending at [76], and a second middle section through [125]. The closing passage slows at first, then suddenly *vivacissimo*.

IV. Molto tranquillo: A melancholy, pastoral melody is played by the woodwinds, ever interrupted by veiled harmonies of the divided strings (with harp and piano); the *Ritornello* returns elusively, dying out.

V. Comodo: This shortest movement of the suite begins with heavy, slurred step-like motives over a continual, hollow pedal tone; gloomy, elusive, shadowy sounds, harmonized in intervals of stacked 4ths; finally bursting forth, dark and threatening in the low instruments, and shrill and shrieking in the high.

Finale (*Allegro*): Continuing without pause, the *Finale* opens with hammering, persistently repeated notes with chromatic slurs, the triplet motive brought forward from the previous movement with harmonies built on nine stacked fourths, a culmination of all that has gone before. The trombone resumes the motive heard at the very beginning; the strings rush in as if with strokes of a whip. After a brief pause, the most penetrating instruments of the orchestra (trumpets, trombones and tuba) vie with each other in a reminiscence of the “third” motive from the second movement, ultimately pushed aside [36] by the opening theme of the suite. The clarinets quote the main theme of the third movement [55]; the *Presto* from the second movement [94] is sounded with maximum power only to fade away into the *Ritornello* [112] in its original form. The energy renews, first with solo viola and continuing with the full orchestra and the *Finale* is concluded with a furious, boisterous shout.

Adapted from Arthur Willner

Béla Bartók's *Dance Suite* was one of three works commissioned by the Budapest city council to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the merging of the previously separate cities of Buda and Pest (one city on either bank of the Danube River) into the singular entity that we know today. The three composers selected were the best-known Hungarian musicians of the times, with the other two being Zoltán Kodály (*Psalmus hungaricus*) and Ernő Dohnányi (*Festal Overture*). All three works were premiered on November 19, 1923. The difficulty of *Dance Suite* and the lack of sufficient rehearsal time resulted in a performance that was shaky at best and received rather coolly. Two years later, the Czech Philharmonic under Václav Talich performed the piece with far greater success. The work was greeted with such enthusiasm that performances throughout Europe and north America soon followed. It is safe to say that Béla Bartók's *Dance Suite* is now regarded as the most successful and universally well-known of the pieces resulting from the commission.

The historical context of the piece is not generally understood today, but suffice it to say that the post-World War I years in Hungary were filled with convulsion and trauma, including a short-lived communist revolution, dismemberment of the country relative to its status in 1914, ill-fated military incursions to recover those lands, counterrevolution, attempts to restore the monarchy, hyperinflation, near national bankruptcy, and the rise of right-wing parties that instituted anti-semitic policies. As some measure of stability slowly emerged, the 50th anniversary celebration of the Budapest merger approached. Eager to pay homage to the cultural diversity and multi-ethnic success of pre-war Hungary, at least in his perception, Bartók intended his *Dance Suite* to celebrate the brotherhood of all mankind and to bring together many elements of the folk traditions that were found throughout the realm.

A most insightful and perceptive essay on Béla Bartók's *Dance Suite* has been written by the eminent scholar and music historian William Kinderman, included as Chapter 5: *Folklore Transformed in Bartók's 'Dance Suite'* in the volume **The Creative Process in Music** (University of Illinois Press, 2017). Please consult this volume for a more complete understanding of this work and its place within the life of the composer.

DANCE SUITE

(1923)

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

edited by R. Mark Rogers

Full Score
A9278

Moderato (♩ = 92)

I

(both players double on Piccolo)

Flutes 1 2

Oboes 1 2
(2nd Oboe doubles on English Horn) 2nd Oboe to English Horn

B♭ Clarinets 1 2
(2nd Clarinet doubles on Bass Clarinet)

Bassoons 1 2
(2nd Bassoon doubles on Contrabassoon)
1st

F Horns 1 3 4

B♭ Trumpets 1 2
con sord.

Trombones 1 2
con sord.

Tuba
con sord. muted

Timpani

Triangle

Snare Drum
Large Snare Drum (Tamburo rullante)
ppp *p* *ppp*

Cymbals

Bass Drum

Tam-tam

Harp

Piano
pp *gliss.* *f*
8va -1
Red.

Violins 1 2

Violas
pizz. *p*

Violoncellos
pizz. *p*

Basses
div. *ff* *pizz.* *p*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9 15

Flutes 1 2

Oboe 1

E. Hn.

Clars. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2
1st & 2nd, unis.

Horns 1 3 2 4

Trpts. 1 2

Trbns. 1 2

Tuba

Timp.

Sn. Dr.

Bs. Dr.

Tam-tam

Harp

Piano

9 15

Violins 1 2

Violas

'Cellos

Basses

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

f *dim.* *p* *mf* *ppp* *pp* *f martellato* *arco* *f* *dim.* *p* *pizz.* *f* *dim.* *p* *pizz.* *f* *dim.* *p* *f* *dim.* *p*

17 ritard.

Flutes 1 2

Oboe 1

E. Hn.

Clars. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2

Horns 1 3 2 4

Trpts. 1 2

Trbns. 1 2

Tuba

Timp.

Sn. Dr.

Bs. Dr.

Tam-tam

Harp

Piano

Violins 1 2

Violas

'Cellos

Basses

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

mf *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

Solo *p* *gliss.* *Solo arco* *gliss.*

ritard.