

Listening Guide for “Magic of the Magyars”

Composer: Zoltán Kodály, 1927

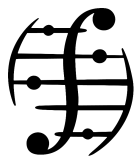
Listening Guide for *Háry János Suite*

Recording: Hungarian State Symphony Orchestra, Matyas Antal conducting

Orchestration: 3 flutes (inc. piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, alto saxophone, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 cornets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, chimes, cymbals, orchestra bells, snare drum, suspended cymbals, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle, xylophone), piano, celesta, cimbalom, and strings.

1. Prelude—The Fairy Tale Begins

Timing	Music	Program and Interpretative points
00:00	<p>We hear a trill in winds and pizzicato strings before a chromatic upward sweep in both, climaxing in volume and pitch before a slow, calm piano downward glissando.</p> <p>Pizzicato is a plucked string sound. Chromatic means in half (small) steps in pitch. Glissando a slide that hits all pitches between two points.</p>	<p>“Aaa-choo!” The orchestra sneezes! Kodály wrote in his accompanying program notes, “According to Hungarian superstition, if a statement is followed by a sneeze of one of the hearers, it is regarded as confirmation of its truth. The Suite begins with a sneeze of this kind! One of Háry’s group of faithful listeners sneezes at the wildest assertions of the old tale-spinner.” This tongue-in-cheek gesture is echoed by the humor in the following movements.</p>
00:17	<p>Cellos and basses play a plaintive melody atop a gentle timpani roll. This melody will form the basis of thematic development in the movement.</p>	<p>Háry János, a known figure in Hungarian lore, is a veteran who returns to his native village and spins highly embellished tales of his life as a soldier. At the village inn, Háry tells of his many adventures, much to the delighted skepticism of his audience. It is easy to imagine this melody as the beginning of a dramatic tale.</p>
00:33	<p>Violas, doubled by bassoons, and violins, doubled by clarinet, enter with the theme in imitation. Horn also joins.</p> <p>Imitation occurs when multiple voices begin a theme at different times so each iteration is heard clearly; it sounds like the parts are imitating one another.</p>	<p>Staggering entrances, or imitation, is a common technique in fugal writing, showing Kodály’s Baroque influences. This movement isn’t strictly a fugue but makes effective use of imitative entrances to build the texture.</p>

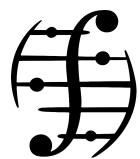


DUPAGE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

1:26	Solo clarinet plays theme in call-and-response with cellos. Call-and-response is just as it sounds; a melody in one voice that is answered by another.	Call-and-response is common in many folk musics around the world.
1:50	Solo oboe and flute play theme in imitation.	Kodály's compositional style is distinguished by an emphasis on clear melodic content.
2:06	The upper voices play the theme while the lower voices swell in chromatic, longer notes.	The drama intensifies: what exploits is Háy building up to?
2:27	Fantasy begins with rapid wave-like gestures in piccolo with melody in cello. The music gradually swells in pitch and volume. Brass briefly punctuates before playing the theme.	This style of music is sometimes called an <i>ombre</i> , or shadow, topic to suggest the fantastical. Trills, circular or wave-shaped melodies, long notes, and chromatic harmonies are all effective means of suggesting magic.
3:03	The full orchestra with rolling snare drum builds to a climax before an abrupt stop on a dissonant chord. Dissonant: sounding harsh, clashing, or not at rest.	Háy's storytelling mode is over-the-top, embracing all theatrical techniques at his disposal.
3:32	Gentle horns play a long, quiet consonant triad while solo flute and oboe gently play the tail of the theme. Consonant: sounding resolved and at rest. Triad: chord built in thirds.	A quiet ending for the movement invites us to lean in to what happens next: the first story. Movements 1, 3, and 5 of the suite provide an atmosphere, and movements 2, 4, and 6 tell specific tales.

2. Viennese Musical Clock

Timing and Form	Music	Program and Interpretative Points
00:00	Chimes repeat four notes.	Chimes can evoke religious spaces, but they can also evoke towns, in which a sounding clock is an organizing sound. Chimes and bells can also signal beginnings, and the



**DUPAGE
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA**

		even-numbered movements in the suite illustrate specific parts of Háy's story.
00:09 A	The winds turn the four-note chime motif into a jaunty eight-measure theme or period . Period: two consecutive phrases, often with parallel beginnings and in which the second phrase seems to answer the first.	Periodicity , or regular phrase structure, is a hallmark of Kodály's compositional style. This particular tune is one that Kodály recorded in 1912. This movement is a Rondo , a form in which an A theme (in this case, the eight-bar theme) returns throughout a movement, interspersed with contrasting material.
00:23 B	The brass pick up a new theme in fanfare with bright piccolo accents.	After heroic actions at the border, Háy travels to Vienna to receive the adulation of the Princess and emperor. Brass instruments historically were outdoor instruments common in royal or military parades, and they have retained their association with heroism, in this context, perhaps a royal parade. Here, though, all the fanfare, combined with the rigid form and phrase structure, as well as what we know of Háy's tendency to stretch the truth, create a heroism that may be less Harrison Ford, more tongue-in-cheek.
00:38 A	The eight-bar period (theme) returns in oboe while the celeste provides a bell-like atmosphere. Flute joins oboe in repetition of theme. As a transition, horns play the first part of the theme in a new key while the snare drum and brass punctuate.	Return of the chimes reminds us of the Viennese location, and the clear return to A feels familiar. The strict rhythm of the theme is also reminiscent of the ticking of clocks.
C 01:00	The winds play a new melody while brass supports in steady quarter notes.	Horns and snare drums are also associated with outdoor musical activity. In a rondo, the point of B, C, and D sections is to provide contrast with A.
1:10	An upward gesture in solo flute leads into another statement of the eight-bar period	The return of A feels humorous, both for the predictability of the theme and the sudden



A	(theme) with celeste and chimes.	shift of orchestration.
1:26 D	A new theme emerges in oboe thirds, picked up by trombone and extended by flute, oboe, and clarinet and accented with triangle.	The thirds in oboe have a sinuous quality, a seductive character that contrasts sharply with the jaunty bright A theme.
1:41 A	We hear a full statement of the eight-bar period, three times in three different keys, with trills, percussion, chimes, and bells.	Closing with full orchestra caps off the story with all the bells and whistles, evoking both a crowd of people and an overblown tale.

3. Song

Music	Program
Kodály's commitment to melodic writing shines, with unaccompanied violas showcasing the complete melody at the outset of the piece and oboe, horn, and cello each playing sweet statements of the melody. This movement also introduces the cimbalom , a Hungarian trapezoidal hammered dulcimer. Listen for its distinctive timbre, tremolo vacillation between two notes, and upward and downward sweeps.	<p>This piece is an adaptation of a folk song from the <i>Singspiel</i>, a statement of Hány's devotion to his fiancée Örzse.</p> <p>In addition to a context/storytelling divide between the odd-numbered movements and even-numbered ones, the movements also similarly divide into rural/folk and urban environments. Movements 1, 3, and 5 are suffused with Hungarian folk elements, from melody to instrumentation.</p>

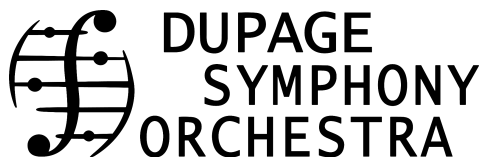
4. The Battle and Defeat of Napoleon

Music	Program
Kodály showcases military instruments at the beginning of the piece, with bass drum, cymbal, trombones, and trumpets. The march tempo also sets the militaristic tone, and ending the phrase in an augmented fourth or tritone also gives the theme a disjointed, awkward quality. A contrasting B section of the piece features trombone and tuba glissandi, making them sound sillier than they are heroic. The overall effect is of a fake seriousness, of a military scene that is just a	Hány confronts the French army and defeats soldiers one by one, until only Napoleon is left. Kodály's notes for the premiere read "Hány's fantasy pictures a Napoleon made in the image of his own burly peasant imagination—an immensely tall and formidable Napoleon who, shaking in every limb, kneels before his conqueror and pleads for mercy."

bit “off.”

5. Intermezzo

Timing and Form	Music	Program
<p>00:03</p> <p>A</p>	<p>After a loud rise, the strings and clarinets play the main theme in octaves.</p> <p>The cimbalom plays the same theme but in shorter duration throughout, offering a compelling rhythmic vitality to the piece.</p>	<p>This piece is the most frequently performed separate from the suite, both in the original orchestral form and as transcriptions.</p> <p>The prominence of the cimbalom and dotted, jerky rhythms are characteristic of Kodály’s desire to showcase his national musical heritage.</p>
<p>00:22</p>	<p>The theme repeats.</p>	<p>Kodály attributes the melody to early-19th-century piano method book by István Gáti, itself labeled “Magyar.”</p>
<p>00:41</p>	<p>We hear a contrasting, dignified theme, <i>ponderoso</i>, evocative of the opening of a <i>verbunkos</i>.</p> <p><i>Ponderoso</i>: heavy, ponderous <i>Verbunkos</i>: military recruiting dance</p>	<p>In the opening of a <i>verbunkos</i>, a high-ranking military officer would begin the dance with slow, stately steps. The music would speed up and become more raucous as lower-ranking officers joined.</p>
<p>1:12</p>	<p>Repeated with brass.</p>	
<p>B</p> <p>1:45</p>	<p>We hear a noticeable musical contrast, significant enough to mark a new section. Solo horn plays <i>dolce</i> (sweetly), in a major key. Accompaniment is tonic-dominant.</p>	<p>This movement is in ternary (ABA) form, meaning that it consists of three large sections: A, a contrasting B, and a return to A.</p>
<p>2:11</p>	<p>The melody repeats in low strings, and full strings play its second half.</p>	



2:45	A short solo for clarinet is followed by full orchestra, and a short gesture from solo flute, orchestral pizzicato, and brief motif from low strings lead into the return of A.	Kodály highlights different instrumental timbres either to build texture or create contrast.
A 3:20	The return of A, with repetition of theme as before.	It is not uncommon in a ternary form for an A theme to return orchestrated and organized exactly as before.
3:58	The <i>verbunkos</i> returns, with repetition of theme as before, with a large <i>ritardando</i> at the end before a homorhythmic , exciting final cadence. Homorhythmic: parts playing in the same rhythm, as in a hymn in the Protestant tradition.	Orchestrated as previous.

6. Entrance of the Emperor and His Court

Music	Program
As opposed to previous movements in which Kodály seemed to be interested in highlighting various instrumental timbres, the full orchestra is often playing in this movement. Listen for the entrance of the emperor himself in a striking moment of trombone and trumpet fanfare toward the end of the movement.	One of the storytelling movements, this piece depicts Hány returning to court to receive the accolades of the emperor and the people after defeating Napoleon.