

## *Dances of Galánta*

Zoltán Kodály

B. December 16, 1882, Kecskemét, Hungary

D. March 6, 1967, Budapest

*Premiered October 23, 1933 by the Budapest Philharmonic, conducted by Ern Dohnányi.*

*Scored for pairs of flutes (second doubling piccolo), oboes, clarinets, and bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, percussion (small snare drum, triangle, glockenspiel) and strings (approx. 15 minutes).*

The village of Galánta lies in Western Hungary and at the turn of the century was home to a mixed population of Hungarians, Slovaks and Germans. The village was to have a special significance for the composer Zoltán Kodály. It was there that he spent, in his words, “the best years of his childhood.” He moved there at age 2 when his father was posted as a station master, and he returned to the village in 1905 as an ethnomusicologist to make pioneering recordings of folk music with Béla Bartók.

Kodály wrote the *Dances from Galánta* in 1933 for the Budapest Philharmonic Society’s 80th anniversary. By this point, he was beginning to achieve worldwide recognition as a scholar, educator and composer, the latter especially through the nationalistic 1926 opera *Háry János*. The *Dances from Galánta* provides a vivid example of his unique combination of Western classical music and Hungarian folk music, a music he loved and studied extensively.

The work borrows material from the 150-year old style of *verbunkos*, a Hungarian popular music marked by simple structure, syncopation, florid string playing, and wide expressive leaps. It is in a ritornello form: after an improvisatory opening, the clarinet introduces a theme that recurs periodically throughout the work in various moods and instrumentations. Other types of music, at times playful and at times passionate, are interspersed in between. In the extended penultimate section, the strings lead the orchestra into a feverish climax that is cut off by solo wind instruments that offer a final, meditative version of the main theme, after which the whole orchestra presents fiery conclusion.

This is the Detroit Symphony Orchestra premiere of Kodály’s *Dances of Galánta*.

*Program note by David Heetderks, doctoral student in music theory at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance.*