

# Hungarian Music in a Central European Context

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## Instructor(s):

Lóránt Péteri  
Anna Belinszky

## Short Description of the Course:

The main goal of the course is to provide a general introduction to the history of Hungarian musical culture with special regard to its Central European environment in the age of modernity. The course concentrates on interactions between highly differing musical styles and genres, and between various national and ethnic groups of Central Europe in the field of musical culture. The course explores the local impact on masters of global importance (Haydn, Mahler, Bartók) and how some of the greatest minds absorbed the new trends of Western art music giving them a salient Hungarian feature (Kurtág, Ligeti).

The first part of the course covers the period from the last decades of the 18th century to the outbreak of the World War I. The exposition of various topics involves the survey of popular genres, e.g. Hungarian csárdás or Viennese Walzer and also that of classical composers of the region such as Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Schubert, Johannes Brahms, Gustav Mahler and some leading figures of Hungarian music, e.g. Ferenc Erkel, Ferenc Liszt and Zoltán Kodály.

The second part of the course focuses on the 20th century. Being Hungary's greatest and most influential 20th century composer, and an artist who can be seen as the link between late romanticism and high (or even post-) modernism, Béla Bartók's life and work will be treated in detail. The last part of the semester gives a survey of how Bartók influenced Hungarian musical composition in the decades after 1950. Besides some politically loaded examples the main protagonists here will be composers who could build upon the Bartókian heritage without losing their aesthetic and political freedom and who became the most important figures in contemporary art music at the turn of the millennium, notably György Ligeti and György Kurtág.

The course includes two organized concert / opera visits.

## Aim of the course:

Getting acquainted with the most important genres, styles, institutions, works and composers of two centuries of Hungarian art music, students are also introduced to the great tradition of Western classical music. They get the necessary intellectual tools for a better understanding of one of the most important cultural phenomena of Central Europe.

## Prerequisites:

A very basic knowledge of Western art music and the geographical and historical frameworks of Central Europe.

## Detailed Program and Class Schedule:

1. Introduction: what is Central Europe? The master of the first Viennese modernism in splendid isolation: Joseph Haydn's decades at the Esterházy court
2. Competing traditions: local popular music, folk music, and their influence on 'art music'
3. The construction of national identity in music: the 'Hungarian style'
4. Multicultural city and national ambitions: the Gründerzeit of musical institutions in Budapest
5. Music and multicultural identity: songs and symphonies by Gustav Mahler

6. The colourful soundscape of the pre-war Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: from operetta to early avant-gardes
7. Visit to the Hungarian State Opera.
8. Roots and crossroads: Bartók's early career and its intellectual background
9. Between avant-garde and tradition: Bartók's middle period and politics in Hungary during the interwar period
10. Aesthetic compromise or new classicism? Bartók's American years
11. The musical scene after World War II in Hungary and in Europe.
12. Political emigration, permanent musical revolution: the musical world of György Ligeti
13. Inner emigration and reticence in music: the musical world of György Kurtág
14. Visit to the Liszt Academy.

**Method of instruction:**

Lectures, free discussions

**Textbook:**

Richard Taruskin: *Oxford History of Western Music*. Oxford University Press, 2005 (pertinent chapters).

**Further reading:**

Lynn Hooker: 'The political and cultural climate in Hungary at the turn of the twentieth century' in: Amanda Bayley (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Bartók*. Cambridge University Press, 2001, 7–24.

David E. Schneider: *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition*. University of California Press, 2006, 8–32. (First Chapter: 'Tradition Rejected. Bartók's Polemics and the Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Musical Inheritance').

Janka Szendrei, et al. 'Hungary'. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edition, 2001

**Grading:**

Grading is based on student performance in three areas: 1) Regular attendance (at least 85% of the classes is required. 2) Submission of two essays (around 1000 words): personal accounts of two given music videos 3) Giving one 15 minute class presentation on a chosen topic

**Instructors' bio:**

**Lóránt Péteri** (born 1976), musicologist, has been lecturing at AIT since the Autumn of 2011. He is professor and head of the Musicology Department of the Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest. He is a member of the Advisory Board of the Gustav Mahler Research Centre (Toblach), of the Council of the Hungarian Musicological Society, and of the Musicological Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He has given papers about the music culture of state socialist Hungary and about the music of Gustav Mahler in international conferences (in Bristol, Brno, Budapest, Canterbury, Cardiff, Dobbiaco, Guildford, New York, Pittsburgh, Radziejowice, and Wrocław). Among his latest contributions is his chapter in *The Routledge Handbook of Music Signification* (2020).

**Anna Belinszky** is a Junior Research Fellow and PhD candidate in musicology at the Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest. Her research examines intersections of music, politics and aesthetics in the 19th century and specifically in the work of Johannes Brahms. Since 2016 she has been lecturing at the Liszt Academy on 19th and 20th century music history. Besides her studies and teaching activities she has been working as a music journalist and program annotator for various Hungarian cultural institutions. She also graduated as a psychologist from Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest.