

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

# Hungarian State Folk Ensemble

Sándor Tímár, Artistic Director and Choreographer

Erzsébet Nagy  
Domokos Szakács  
Dance Directors

László Berki  
Gypsy Orchestra  
Director

Almos Gáspár  
Folk Orchestra  
Director

Sándor Serfözö  
General Director

Friday Evening, February 11, 1994, at 8:00  
Power Center for the Performing Arts, Ann Arbor, Michigan



Large print programs are available upon request from your usher.

# PROGRAM

## “*Elindultam Szép Hazámból*” (“I was leaving my nice country”)

Throughout history, ethnic groups large and small have left their homeland in search of a better life, often to escape political persecution. Whatever the reason, leaving one's homeland is always a powerful emotional experience, Béla Bartók sang this song as he set off on his journey to America:

*I was leaving my nice country,  
My beloved little Hungary.  
I looked back from half-way  
Tears came to my eyes.*

### Overture

Pictures of Matyó . . . . . László Berki - Sándor Tímár

The region of Matyó is famous for its costumes and the rich treasury of folk dances the people have preserved. We open with the *verbunk* or “recruiting dance” and the *csárdás*.

Kalotaszegi Music . . . . . Traditional

Performed by the Folk Orchestra

Play Dance of Sárköz . . . . . S. Tímár

From spring to autumn the young people of Sárköz used to meet in the outdoor “play field” where the girls, dressed in colorful costumes, dance their circle dances which contain some of the oldest elements of European folk dance.

Szegényes and Pontozó . . . . . S. Tímár

In some of the villages of the Küküllő Valley in Southern Transylvania, this slow dance for men is called *szegényes* (“poor”), while the rapid part of the dance is the *pontozó* (“quick steps”).

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 . . . . . Franz Liszt

Performed by the Gypsy Orchestra

DanceWords . . . . . L. Nagy - S. Tímár

The choreography of *DanceWords* is very different from the traditional forms of folk dance although the steps are derived from the dances of the Csángó people of the Eastern Carpathian mountains. Musical accompaniment is replaced with the shouted poem supported by a stringed percussion instrument known as a *gardon*. The dancers wear ordinary street clothes, just as the young people did in the Dance Houses.

László Nagy wrote this poem for the emerging Hungarian Táncház (“Dance House”) movement. Young people in the early Seventies discovered that they could use the beauty

During the last few years, Mr. Tímár has rebuilt this ensemble of young dancers, musicians and singers, who form the foundation for his new integrated presentation of Hungarian folklore. Some of the recently choreographed dances included in the new program reflect political statements about the importance of survival of the Hungarian culture. Mr. Tímár was successful in establishing the new Hungarian State Folk Ensemble to reflect and emphasize the current political changes and the re-establishment of a free Hungarian nation.



**The Hungarian State Folk Ensemble** was founded to revive and preserve Hungarian folk music, song and dance and present them throughout the world. In 1990, the Ensemble embarked on a triumphant tour of North America, following closely on the heels of their great success in 1984 and 1987. In 1984, 1987, and 1990, this spectacular ensemble toured coast-to-coast, hailed by critics in New York, Toronto, Washington DC, Philadelphia, Ann Arbor, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco – a 12-week tour-de-force!

Artistic Director Sándor Tímár's brilliant company preserves true Hungarian folk elements with theatricality and spectacle. These 70 performers are the best in the world of their kind. Based in Budapest, the members of the company are hand-picked from the very best in Hungary, and have been chosen above all other Hungarian folk companies by the government to be its official representative abroad.

The previous Hungarian State Folk Ensemble, under the Artistic Direction of Milos Rabai, also toured the U.S. and Canada in 1966, playing a four-week engagement in New York City. Since the death of Maestro Rabai, the ensemble has been completely reorganized under Sándor Tímár.

The extraordinary folk music that inspired Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály and Franz Liszt is the foundation for the ensemble's panorama of breathtaking dance, sumptuous costumes, magnificent choral singing and intoxicating Hungarian folk and Gypsy melodies. Many people associate Hungarian folk music with that of the Hungarian Gypsy, and much of this type of music was written in the last century and made famous by many Gypsy orchestras. In addition, Hungarians in isolated villages have introduced their own exciting folk music into the current culture.

of folk art to express their disapproval with the political situations through words, music and dance. The poem is dedicated to the Béla Bartók Dance Ensemble which was committed to the renewal and preservation of folk art traditions.

I am good  
 I am good enough for nobody  
 I am scolded on Earth and Heaven  
 My feet are for dance  
 Earth is as bad as Heaven  
 I would be good  
 When I was allowed to be  
 Let us to where we are needed  
 Where we are happy to be  
 Because the spirit sounds in us  
 This life belongs to us

Dances from Kibéd . . . . . S. Tímár

Kibéd is a village in Transylvania where the people still observe ancient customs. The male dancers usually dance the *verbunk*, while couples still dance the slow and the fast *csárdás*.

### INTERMISSION

Dances of Magyarszovát . . . . . S. Tímár

The people of the Transylvanian plains have preserved an amazingly rich music and dance heritage. The uniqueness of the traditional folk art of this region make these dances well-loved home and abroad.

Dances of Udvarhely . . . . . László Lajtha

Hungarian Dance No. 5 . . . . . Johannes Brahms

Performed by the Gypsy Orchestra

Verbunk and Whirling of Bag . . . . . L. Berki - S. Tímár

The elderly women of the Galga region of Budapest still wear the original national costumes. The sprightly whirling dance has the characteristic *bukós* ("bent knees") element of Hungarian dance.

The male dancers perform the fast *csárdás* with very deeply bent knees: this is extremely challenging for the dancers and quite extraordinary to see.

Circle Dance of Slavonia . . . . . S. Tímár

In the South Slavonian region, the women's circle dances derived from springtime rituals where, after Sunday mass during Lent, the girls would parade along the streets of the village singing and dancing.

**Heyduck-Dance Memories or Shepherd Csárdás** . . . . . S. Tímár  
Heyduck dances were 16th- and 17th-century soldiers' dances. It is very probable that they influenced the crook dances of shepherds in the Carpathian Basin. The same forms and musical elements are present in Hungarian, Slovakian, Goral and Transylvanian folk arts. The choreography presents Hungarian, Gypsy, Slovakian and Romanian crook dances of the South Transdanubian and Upper Tisza regions as well.

Shepherds eased the hardships of their lives by coming together to hold dancing competitions. Their dances became ever more intricate and skillful when young girls would come to dance with them.

**Dances of Rábaköz** . . . . . L. Berki-S. Tímár

Trade unions played a considerable role in the preservation of folk traditions by organizing parish feasts where local men and boys would dance the *verbunk*. The favored dances were the ancient *dus* and the slow and fast *csárdás*.

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Sándor Tímár** was born in Szolnok, in Eastern Hungary, in 1930. He started dancing in grammar school and devoted his energies to learning everything possible about this art. In 1951 he became a professional dancer in the Trade Union Folk Ensemble. Later he organized his own company, The Bartók Ensemble, which gained fame in many countries. His further education at the College of Dramatic and Cinematic Art gave him the foundation for his choreographic talent, which is considered one of the foremost in Hungary. As Artistic Director of the Ensemble, he is responsible for selecting the best singers, dancers, and musicians from the many hundreds who eagerly apply. He has been the recipient of numerous prizes and awards in Hungary and abroad, and since 1971, he has been Director of the State Ballet Institute in the area of folk dance. Maestro Tímár was appointed Artistic Director of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble in 1981. His name is a famous one among folk dance enthusiasts throughout the world and he has been decorated with the highly valued "Erkel Prize" in recognition of his choreographic work.

Throughout the world Hungarian folk culture is studied and practiced by folk groups of all nations who are interested, not only in their own, but in the traditions of other nations as well. In America, hundreds of Hungarian societies keep alive these traditions which enrich everyone and help promote greater understanding between people and nations.

Maestro Tímár has dedicated his professional career to the preservation of the true Hungarian folk culture. All of the dances performed by the Ensemble are authentic and date back hundreds of years. In more recent times, Sándor Tímár has choreographed several dances, which reflect the political changes in Eastern Europe. One of these dances strives to establish the unity of spirit, heritage and cultural pride of Hungarians living around the world. This unique presentation will be included in the Ensemble's repertoire symbolizing the mission of the new Hungarian State Folk Ensemble traveling to America for the first time from a free and democratic land.

*Tonight's performance marks the Ensemble's fourth UMS appearance.*



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