

## On Lajos Bárdos's Achievements

Lajos Bárdos was one of the outstanding artistic talents of the twentieth century. His unique, captivating personality left an impression on all who came in contact with him. He was a highly effective educator, ethnomusicologist, composer, choir director, author, publisher and creator and founder of music theory education.

Bárdos was born on October 1, 1899 in Budapest. His mother introduced him to the world of music by sending him to study violin at age 10. Bárdos was drafted in the army near the end of World War I after he graduated from Attila High School. He enrolled at the Technical University of Budapest, but after a year of successful engineering studies he switched to the Franz Liszt Music Academy to study composition. The first year he studied under Albert Siklós and subsequently under Zoltán Kodály.

Bárdos enrolled in the Boy Scouts at age 14 and subsequently remained an active leader of the movement. At a large camping jamboree in 1921, he started teaching Hungarian folk songs and composed his first piece for mixed voices, the ever-popular, hauntingly beautiful piece, "Szellő zúg távol". He helped edit the Boy Scout magazine and published two booklets of songs for Boy Scouts in 1925.

His music teaching career started in 1925 at the same high school from which he graduated. In 1929 he was invited to teach at the Liszt Music Academy. He started teaching courses like Gregorian chant, sacred music, harmony and conducting. At the same time, he became the department chairman for secondary music teacher education. In 1949 the Stalinist regime discontinued the sacred music curriculum, and he was appointed chairman of the musicology and music theory departments.

In 1925 he was invited to conduct the Cecilia Chorus in the Városmajor Church. The choir gained international acclaim performing pieces from the old masters, from the new generation of Hungarian composers and his own compositions. He also directed the Palestrina Choir that performed Stravinsky's Psalm Symphony in 1932 with great success. The highly pleased composer wrote a congratulatory letter to Bárdos. He combined these two choirs to create the Budapest Choir in 1941, which soon became the number one musical sensation in the country.

He also directed the choir and orchestra of the famous Coronation Church on Castle Hill [Mátyás Templom]. On Sundays, performances of masses by Beethoven, Liszt, Haydn and Schubert were very popular. Unforgettable evening concerts such as Zoltán Kodály's "Budavári Te Deum" and Beethoven's Missa Solemnis captivated music lovers.

Bárdos dedicated his entire career to the world of Hungarian music, especially vocal music. In 1931 he founded the Magyar Kórus [Hungarian Choir] Publishing House along with classmate Julius Kertész in order to promote this cause. The monthly magazine of the same title reached thousands of choir directors and cantors with freshly published sheet music supplements. A few years later, a second magazine, the Énekszó, (Singing) was launched to promote music education in school. The Éneklő Ifjúság [Singing Youth], dedicated to all youth came next, followed by Zenei Szemle [Music Review] and Zenepedagógia [Music Education]. These leading magazines fueled all aspects of the world of Hungarian music until 1950 when the communist regime confiscated and closed the publishing house.

Bárdos was instrumental in organizing the Singing Youth movement to enhance the enjoyment of music among school children. Eight schools participated at the first concert in 1934 that included a performance of the combined choir to the delight of students and audience alike. Soon many choirs of other towns and from abroad joined the movement.

Bárdos played a leadership role in the Hungarian National Choirs Association, the Hungarian National St. Cecilia Society and the Béla Bartók Circle. During the dark Stalinist days, (1950-1957) he supported the activities of the St. Cecilia Society with his own funds.

He started his research in musicology at the urging of Kodály, who recognized strength, fresh insight, and clear systematization in Bárdos' work. He introduced new terminology and definitions to the body of technical literature. Most notable are his analyses of the works of Bartók, Kodály, Liszt and Schubert.

Some of his popular books include:

- Franz Liszt, Musician of the Future
- Writings on Folk Music
- Folk Music and the Melodies of Bartók
- Modal Harmonies
- On Natural Scales
- 30 Essays
- 10 more essays
- Textbooks

Numerous other articles appeared in publications, including some in English and German.

The compositions of Bárdos were closely linked to music teaching and choir directing. He focused on the relative ease of performing high quality pieces, keeping the singers' view point in mind and making each vocal line enjoyable to sing.

Bárdos composed some 800 pieces including:

- sacred music
- secular pieces
- folk song arrangements
- masses
- songs
- string quartet
- piano, cello, violin and organ music
- theatrical accompaniments

In addition to his stellar musical career, he was a great family man. Bárdos and his wife Irene Waliczky raised eleven children. At the time of his death on November 18, 1986, forty-seven grandchildren, as well as all who knew him, joined in mourning his passing.