

Márk Fülep: Hungarian Folk Music in Minneapolis

The 2017 Myra Brown International Scholarship winner has an extensive and impressive resume dating back to his youth in Hungary. In August, he shared his skills with others at the 45th Annual NFA Convention—and took home a lifetime of memories.

by Márk Fülep

A friend drew my attention to the NFA's Myrna Brown International Scholarship. Although it piqued my interest, I did not get my hopes up, as I knew the organization has a large membership.

I had performed in flute festivals before—in Canada in 2015 and Switzerland in 2016—but I was especially interested in American flute festivals: In what ways are they different? What repertoire do American flutists play? What instruments do they use? Is there a technique that is specific to them?

As I am a regular performer and have put together and performed close to 1,000 concerts in Hungary, Europe, and Asia, it was easy to submit a last-minute proposal. I was notified a month later that I had been selected. This filled me with tremendous joy!



Márk Fülep

Life in Hungary

I grew up in northeast Hungary in the city of Miskolc. I lived with my parents and seven siblings in an apartment on the seventh floor of a tall block of flats that were built during the era of Communism. My parents appreciate music, and I was the first to attend music school.

Studying Russian was mandatory, but we also could study English, which my brothers and I did. But I was so bad at languages



Márk Fülep brought 12 instruments to the convention.

that my father took me out and told me to do something else. This is how I ended up playing the flute.

I took lessons in a state-supported music school; government support is so strong that all children in Hungary can study music. One music school uses what it calls "Hungaricum"—the Kodaly method, a specialty of Hungary. Two of my brothers became professional musicians; one plays recorder and the other is an opera singer. I practiced for hours daily, and I have given concerts since I was a child.

After completing music high school, I studied with Henrik Pröhle at the Franz Liszt Music Academy of Budapest and graduated with recognition. I participated in more than 40 masterclasses. I have always considered masterclasses more valuable than competitions. I have published articles, transcribed music, composed, conducted, and taught. I performed with a wonderful pianist until his very recent death, and I play in a flute ensemble.

I have always been interested in contemporary music as well as the classics, and in my free time, I play folk music. Currently I teach and I am a soloist. I play on a 14-carat gold flute that belongs to the Hungarian State; this is the instrument I played at the convention in Minneapolis.

At the Convention

During the six months I had to prepare for the convention, I became increasingly aware of the size and prestige of the event. I realized that I would represent my home country and that I would have to speak in English.

Everything was organized and on time. From the first, I could sense the helpfulness and unity among the people managing the convention. I knew that everything would go smoothly, I would have a good time, and I would have no problems with my concert, housing, or other travel details.

I was extremely honored to be part of the 45th NFA Convention. As a soloist with a scholarship, I performed at an internationally recognized, huge flute convention.

My program's theme was Hungarian Folk Music. The first portion covered Hungarian compositions of the late Romantic period, the style of *verbunk*, and Hungarian contemporary music. In the second half, I performed traditional Hungarian shepherd music from different parts of the Carpathian Basin.

I played on shepherds' pipes with five or six holes, a long shepherds' flute, C flutes, and a tilinko (a reed pipe without tone holes). I brought 12 instruments to introduce the music of the following areas: Palóc, Dunántúl, Alföld, Gyimes, and Moldva. To make the Hungarian folk music sound even more authentic, I sang as well—to the great surprise of the audience.

Special thanks to my collaborative chamber music partner, NFA pianist Colette Valentine. She is a great person and an amazing pianist, and I am very happy to know her. She was very well prepared, and it was wonderful to play Doppler, Bartók, and Weiner with her.

I played two more solos by Hungarian composers Laszlo Latjha, who was Bartók's contemporary, and Zoltán Jeney, who is still composing. I always create a contrast by playing both the gold flute and the tilinko overtone flute in the same concert. Although the gold flute is expensive and the tilinko is cheap, they have the same effect: they both appeal to the soul.

Convention Memories

The Annual NFA Convention was a tremendous experience for me. I was amazed by the size and versatility of the audience, which included amateurs, enthusiastic music lovers, solo performers, and flute professors from not only North America but all over the world. There was a festive atmosphere, and I could see the happiness on the faces of the performers and audience alike.

About 3,000 people attended; I have never seen this many flutists together. There were three or four concerts going on at the same time, masterclasses, rehearsals, and an exhibition of instruments and accessories on sale in a huge hall; I could easily have spent another week in this room.

Playing flute in a huge flute orchestras opened up new intellectual dimensions for me. I enjoyed watching people rushing to events carrying different-sized flutes, music stands—even small chairs! It was obvious that in the United States, flute players can afford to purchase, for example, bass or contrabass flutes. In Hungary, those instruments can be found only at universities or in orchestras.

Today, world music has reached classical musicians, and it was included in the convention, which made me feel very comfortable in presenting a program about Hungarian folk music. A movement toward the appreciation of authentic folk music began about 100 years ago, and I think it is extremely



Whether gold or inexpensive, says Fülep, all flutes appeals to the soul.

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important and empowering to continue to observe and appreciate such music today.

Many individual performers provided me with a great life experience. It was amazing to hear Jim Walker, the wonderful Alena Lugovkina, the music of Robert Dick, Ali Ryerson and Matthias Ziegler, and world-class performers such as Jean-Louis Beaumadier, Michel Bellavance, Art Webb, Greg Pattillo, and Ian Clarke.

It was very emotional to celebrate with the legendary master William Bennett and Susan Milan, of whom I have fond memories from when they were in Hungary 25 years ago. Zara Lawler's performance of Berio's *Sequenza*, which was choreographed in a window frame, was memorable. The Fourth Wall Trio's performance was breathtaking: They rolled onto the stage on hoverboards and then performed different kinds of acrobatic moves while playing music.

Looking Ahead

Because of my experience this year, I am eager to learn more about various events and open to new challenges and performances from which I will greatly benefit. I plan to apply for other festivals and conventions as well. I hope to make a CD featuring transcriptions of several flute pieces for alto flute. I also hope to find a publisher for my nearly 100 transcriptions and my compositions.

Congratulations to the convention's organizers, and thank you so much for the wonderful memories. I've been most definitely enriched by a great experience.

Márk Fülep is the 2017 Myrna Brown International Scholarship recipient. Visit fulepmark.hu.