HUNGARIAN STATE FOLK ENSEMBLE

The Hungarian State Folk Ensemble, regarded as one of the greatest folkloric dance ensembles in the world, was established in 1951. Its aims were to collect and play authentic folk music and to preserve the folk dances and traditional costumes of Hungary and Hungarian-inhabited areas by putting them on stage before the public. During the more than four and a half decades of its existence, the Ensemble has achieved its aim by revitalizing the culture of the Hungarian people. Their rich and colorful repertoire entitles the Ensemble to be regarded as one of the top touring groups in the world.

The Ensemble has performed in 44 countries across four continents and won the admiration of an audience of more than seven and a half million people. In the last few years the Ensemble has encountered special interest in North-America - which was illustrated by their fourth invitation to undertake a three-month coast to coast American tour in 1994. They have also toured the Far East and Western Europe.

The choreographies are all based on authentic dances, some of them collected in isolated villages with dance elements dating back hundreds of years. The extraordinary folk music that inspired Liszt, Bartók and Kodály is put on stage by both the Folk Orchestra and the world-famous Gipsy Orchestra. The members of the Folk Orchestra play authentic, traditional instruments and perform Hungarian folk music at its highest artistic level. The famous Gipsy Orchestra plays both dance accompaniments and performs alone. Their rich repertoire includes folk music which inspired Hungarian and international classical composers such as Liszt, Brahms, Kodály and Bartók.

Aside from its performances around the country and abroad, the Ensemble gives approximately 90-100 annually performances in its Corvin tér theatre, in the Budai Vigadó.
MIKLÓS RÁBAI /1921-1974/

Recipient of Hungary's highest artistic awards: Kossuth Award, Érdemes (meritorious) artist. Founding choreographer of the Ensemble. His works ranged from dance suites based on original folk dances to action packed compositions. His stated goal was to create a Hungarian national ballet. Modern, Hungarian, European was his dream and what he took to the stage. It is he who created Hungarian one act and full length three act dance theatre. The initiator of the so-called trio genre (band, song and dance corps together on the stage). The ballet institute upon his recommendation began their program for training professional folk dancers in 1971.

Works still on the program:

Zoltán Kodály: Kállai Kettős (Kália couples) 1951
Rudolf Maros: Ecseri Lakadalmos (Ecser Wedding) 1951
László Gulyás: Bottle dance 1951
László Gulyás: Háromgurós [three jumps] 1952
'Szüret' [At the grape harvest] 1952
'Elő szeretem' [My first love] 1953
'Kisbojtár' [shepherd's apprentice] 1956
Ballads: Bracsay Ballada, Kata Kádár 1958
'Farsáng Bekölle' [Carnival in Bekölle] 1959
'Békés esték' [Békes nights] 1959
'Svatovac'- a Serbian wedding dance 1965
'Joles napok' [Christmas time] 1969
'Csik balla' - Ball in Csik region - four transylvanian men's dances 1972
'Miklós Kocsár:' Recruiting dance from Derecske. 1974

DEZSŐ LÉTAI /1931-1987/

Choreographer, Erkel award recipient. He went from the Hónvéd (Hungarian Army) Ensemble over to the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble in 1957, then following Rábai's death, Léta became artistic director of the Ensemble until he died in 1981.

Main works:

[Hungarian centuries] - a survey of cultural history in song, music and dance. 1968
[Swabian ball] 1965
Smaller dance drama works:

[Christmas, 1930] 1960
'Tótágas' 1964
'Kegyes történet' 1970
'Góbé és az örökög' 1970
[Before the wedding] 1970
'Kiskakas' [Little rooster] 1974

Men's dance:
Shepherds stick dance (still in the program today) 1958

Girls dances:
[Dances of Galga region] 1974
[By the stream] 1959

SÁNDOR TÍMÁR /1930-

Choreographer, winner of State and Erkel awards, student of István Molnár. Began his career as a dancer in the 'SZOT' Ensemble, then went on to direct the Bartók Ensemble and was one of the initiators of the Hungarian dance house movement. From 1981 until his retirement in 1996, he was artistic director and choreographer of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble. Sándor Timár is a determining personality of staged Hungarian folk dance culture. The excellence of his choreographies started a whole new school of folk dance choreography in Hungary. His central role in initiating the Hungarian dance house movement and his educational methods for teaching dance have gained him recognition the world over and countless awards.

Works created in collaboration with young choreographers:

'Lakodalmas' [Wedding] 1982
'Tánca lábam' 1982

Dance for five young men. Dances from: Southern Plains, Lőrincréve, Szatmár, Kalotaszeg, Maglód, Nádas River region, Madocsa, Rábaköz region, Szék dance cycle, Mezőség Girls dance from Zemplén

Independent full length programs:

['I left my home'], 'Tánczők', Sárköz game, dances from Bag. 1982
'Vallomások', Slavonian girls dance, bottle dance of Tolna County. 1985
['Circle up men'], dances of the Kalocsa region, Matyó, Sóvidék, Somogy bottle dance. 1990

GÁBOR MIHÁLYI /1958-

Choreographer, winner of the Harangozó award, director of the dance company, earned his diploma at the Hungarian college of dance education. Dancer and later soloist of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble since September 1982. From 1996, to December of 97, he was the interim artistic director of the Ensemble. Presently director of the dance company. He has prepared six full length programs for the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble, does ongoing work with other partner ensembles, holds dance courses and workshops, choreographs. His most recent work upon the invitation of the Budapest Chamber Opera is the Armenian Legend dance cantata, which was premiered in summer of 2001. In 2000, he was named 'Artist of the Year' by the Hungarian Dance Association.

Main works:

'Elment a madárka' [The bird has gone]
'Régen volt, soká lesz' [Long ago, long time to come]
'Virágozzál cédrusfa leveleen' [the cedar tree is in bloom]
'Hármas táncütkör' ['Dance Mirror']
'Útik a rézdobot' [Beat the copper drum]
'Táncos Magyarak' ['Dancing Hungarians']
'Naplegenda' ['Sunlegend']

IMRE CSENKI /1912-1998/

Music teacher, composer, conductor. At the Academy of Music, he studied under many teachers not the least of which were Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály. He was director of the famous Debrecen Chorus, and then from 1950, founding artistic director of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble. He was awarded the Kossuth prize in 1952. Most of his works were written for the Chorus of the Ensemble. He also composed works for dance. One of his most famous pieces composed for a Miklós Rábai choreography entitled 'Cigánytánkó' [Gypsy dances] reaped success with audiences for decades. In 1951 upon Csenk'i's request, Zoltán Kodály composed the 'Kállai Kettős' (a Rábai choreography) which is still being performed by the Ensemble. Under his direction the Ensemble's chorus won an award in Paris in 1955.
LÁSZLÓ GULYÁS /1928-1993/

Composer. The founding director of the orchestra of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble. A good part of his works were written for the Ensemble's orchestra, often with choral accompaniment. Also amongst his works are cantatas, music for ballets, children's operas. One of his most significant works 'Széki muzsika' done under approval from the famous instrumental music researcher László Lajtha, is today still in the active repertoire of the Ensemble.

Most significant works for the dance company:

[Spinning party] 1951
[Bottle dance] 1951
'Háromugrós' 1952
[First Love] 1953
[Carnival in Bekölc] 1959
[Békes nights] 1959
[Prisoner's song] 1968
[Soldier's song] 1968
[Little shepherd] - three act story drama

TIHAMÉR VUJICSICS /1929-1975/

Composer. He wrote numerous works for the Ensemble's dance company and orchestra. Sought after composer of music for film. Vujicsics started an extensive folk music collection project and did research on the melody known as the 'Rákoczi march'. He died in an airplane crash in 1975.

Main orchestra works:

Kalotaszig - Concerto
Along the Maros and Küküllő Rivers (Szitár award)

Main works for the dance company:

Ballad of Kádár Kata 1958
'Makar Csudra' - On the basis of Gorkij's novel 1956
[Girl danced into life] - became a film directed by Tamás Banovich
Svatovác - Serbian wedding 1965

Works still used in repertoire of the Ensemble:
Létai: Shepherds stick dance 1958
Rábai: Dances of Drágész 1954

TAMÁS BÁRDOS DARÓCI /1931-
Composer, recipient of the Erkel and Lyra awards. As a student of Szervánszky, he earned his diploma in 1957, then worked for three years as a solfeggio teacher. He became musical director of the Duna Folk Ensemble in 1960. From 1971 until December 1989, he was conductor and orchestra-leader of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble's orchestra. Currently he is teaching and has received the Apáczai Csere János Award.

Main works:
Ady Oratorium 1976

Celebrations 1969
Pressing the grapes
Shepherd's reception
Feast
Bethlehem

Hungarian Centuries
'Hajdúk' 1968

'Hétszínhírág'
Swabian ball 1965

Men's dance
Four Transylvanian men's dances (still performed today) 1972

'Tánera muzsikára' 1974
Sárköz
Hegyköz
Szék

Kricskovics:
In memorium 1979
[Song of the mountains] 1980

LÁSZLÓ BERKI /1941-1997/
He came to the Hungarian State Ensemble in 1960. Lead violinist from 1967. He was a student of Tivadar Országh. A recording he made with the Ensemble's orchestra in the beginning of the 1970's won the Arany-Szitár prize. He was given further awards in the mid 1990's and post-humously awarded the Liszt prize. He also performed as lead violinist with the 100 Member Gypsy Orchestra.

FERENC SEBŐ /1947-

Architect, composer, folk music researcher, a founding member of the Hungarian dance house movement. Director and founder of the Sebő Ensemble, which plays Eastern European folk music and musical arrangements for poetry. A researcher for the Institute of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and a folk music program director at Hungarian Television. Artistic Director of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble since 1996. Author, editor, publisher of numerous publications on folk music and folk music collections. Recipient of an award given by Miklós Rábai in 1975, for 'rejuvenating the vocabulary folk music'.

Significant works for the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble:

'Pikkó Hertzeg'
'Dancing Hungarians'

ANDRÁS VAVRINECZ /1954-

Mining engineer, song-music folk music teacher, folk music researcher, became involved in the Hungarian dance house movement at the beginning stages. Formerly member of the Hegedős Ensemble, then went on to found and direct the Bekecs Ensemble. Collaborator, performer, editor, artistic director on numerous folk music recordings, and editor, proof reader of many publications on folk music. Musical director of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble since 1998. Employed in folk music department of the Hungarian Heritage House (previously called Folk Dancers Resource Center).
Musical arrangements for the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble:

'Virágozzál cédrusfa'
'Dance-Mirror'