

Background to Hungary

HUNGARY to her sorrow is in the news, and the focus of this news is on today—dwelling of necessity on the Hungary that is name or portent to us of the West, not on the historical, cultural and ethnic whole that claims a people's love and makes them say: This is my home—or as many must today—this was my home.

As a tribute, and in part an introduction to this other Hungary, 2YC next Thursday, February 21, will broadcast a four-hour programme consisting of folk songs and the works of Hungarian composers, with talks by refugees at present living and working in Wellington.

What is the Magyar (pronounced *Madyar*) language? Klara Bujdosi, an economist, who talks on her country's language in this programme (8.0 p.m.) told *The Listener* that many people ask this question. "They don't know whether we talk a language like German, or a Slav type. Actually we are a race apart, related to no other European family except perhaps the Finns and Estonians. Magyar is a hard language to learn—I know of one New Zealander who speaks it fluently, but then, he is a professor."

Miss Bujdosi went to school in England, then to university in Budapest and later in America. "Because of this early schooling English has always been a second language to me. I am lucky, for it is hard to learn."

Comparing Magyar and English was difficult for in the latter word order was of the utmost importance, whereas in Magyar meaning remained the same even though the order of words is altered completely. Works in other languages could be translated with very little loss into Magyar, whereas the reverse was almost impossible. "Our lyric poetry, for instance, is practically impossible, to translate. This is because it is very rich in words and expressions relating to nature, and the apprehension of nature differs from country to country."

The other speakers in this programme are Josef Fehervari, a librarian, speaking on *Hungary, the Land and the People*, at 7.0 p.m., and Gabor Budai, a lawyer, on *Hungary, Post-War to Present Day*, at 9.30 p.m.

Hungarian Music

Until quite recently Hungarian music to most people has meant the vigorous gipsy czardas of the tea-room orchestras or the Hungarian dances of Brahms and Liszt. Delightful as this music is it hints only slightly at the great wealth of genuine folk music that is still very much alive today in Hungary and Rumania. It is to two modern Hungarian composers that the world owes its greater knowledge of Hungarian folk music—Zoltan Kodaly and Bela Bartok. These two composers were born within a few months of each other in 1882, they were students together in Budapest, and they were both interested in the folk music of their native land. They decided to explore this rich musical life, and equipped with primitive



Edison recording apparatus they tramped the countryside recording thousands of peasant and gipsy songs. Altogether they collected enough material to make over 15,000 gramophone records. They published their first book, "Twenty Hungarian Folk Songs," in 1906. Since those early days both Kodaly and Bartok have grown into very different kinds of composers, but both of them have continually drawn on the folk song heritage they discovered in their youth.

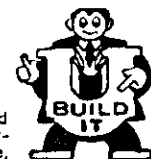
In the special programme works by both Kodaly and Bartok will be played as well as Hungarian folk songs in their original form, and works by the contemporary, but traditional composers, Leo Weiner and Dohnanyi. Bartok has a reputation for difficulty—his earlier works written in the twenties were extremely aggressive and harsh in sound. His later works have lost much of this acerbity, but some feeling of aggression remains in most of his music. The work to be heard, *Divertimento for String Orchestra*, is, however, an easy going one with a first movement based largely on one of Bartok's gayest and most pungent themes. The second movement is the most "Hungarian" of the three, and is dramatic and sombre. The finale begins with a folk dance tune of the simplest kind, which soon becomes more complicated. As the movement nears its end Bartok takes us back to the Hungarian cafe—the first fiddle has a vigorous cadenza to himself, and the work ends with a rousing polka.

Kodaly's two works are the famous *Psalmus Hungaricus*, written in 1923 to celebrate the shotgun wedding of Buda and Pesth in Hungarian mythology, and the *Missa Brevis in Tempora Belli*, written in 1945 while the Russians were "freeing" Budapest from the Germans at the end of the World War II. The *Psalmus Hungaricus* made Kodaly famous all over Europe in the 1920's, but the *Missa Brevis* is not at all well known. The recording to be heard was made in Washington in 1951 at the National Presbyterian Church—the church where it received its first American performance under Kodaly in 1947. It is for mixed chorus and organ and the setting of the Mass ends with a powerful prayer for peace. Kodaly is still in Budapest, where, before the revolution, he lived in a fashionable street and acted as President of the Hungarian Arts Council and the Academy of Music.

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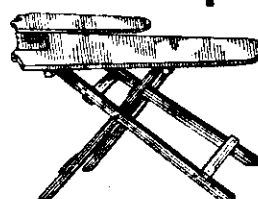


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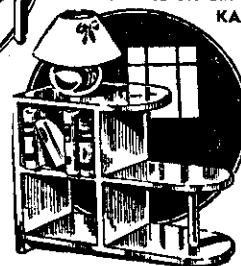


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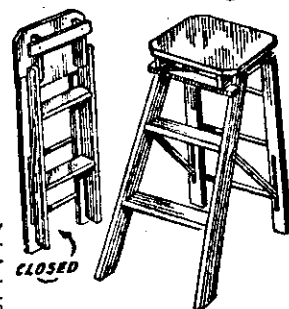
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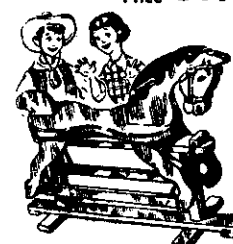
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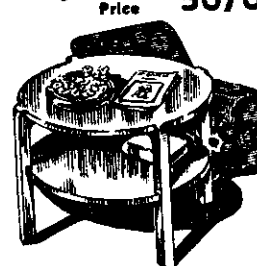
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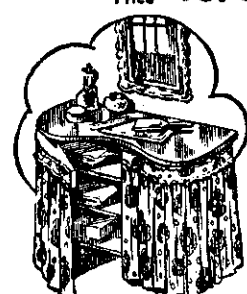
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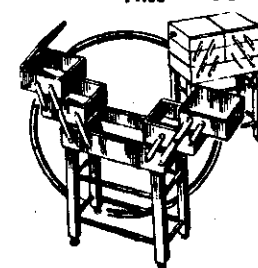
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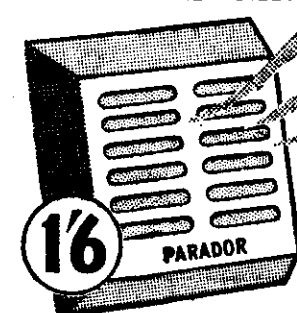
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