

Béla Bartók and Charles Simonyi

The American of Hungarian origin sponsors the Bartók project of the Salzburg Festival

In overseeing the development of the Microsoft Word and Excel applications, Charles Simonyi helped to make complex technology applicable to everyday use by nearly every person with a computer. Simonyi, born in Hungary in 1949 is an ardent admirer of Bartók. He put into the development of computer programs the same passion he put into airplanes, modern art, the understanding of the arts and sciences and the conquest of space.

The Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences, founded by Charles Simonyi, has become the first foundation to make a US\$ 1 million contribution to the Salzburg Festival. The motivation for this gift came from Simonyi's admiration for Bartók's artistic accomplishments and the Salzburg Festival's decision to highlight the compositional legacy of this giant of 20th century music. "My fund is supporting the Salzburg Festival not for my personal satisfaction but for the recognition it brings to Bartók and Hungarian pride. The Hungarian visitors should feel proud that Bartók is a featured part of the program."

Intendant Jürgen Flimm and Markus Hinterhäuser, the Festival's Concerts Director, have created a program that presents Hungarian composers from the era of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the present. They have taken great care to pair work by Bartók with those of composers who influenced his artistic development.

The highlight of the Vienna Philharmonic's opening concert series on 27 July is Bartók's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Daniel Barenboim at the piano and Pierre Boulez at the podium. This concert will also include Maurice Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* and Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird*. Franz Welsch-Möst will conduct his Cleveland Orchestra in the Piano Concerto No. 3 on 19 August featuring pianist Mitsuko Uchida and *The Wonderful Mandarin* as well as the *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra* with violist Kim Kashkashian on 24 August.

Daniel Barenboim and Lang Lang will give a recital on 28 July in which Bartók's *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* will serve as the centerpiece. Violinist Vadim Repin's recital will feature Bartók's *Rhapsody No. 1 for Violin and Piano* on 14 August. The Quatuor Ebène plays the *String Quartet No. 1* on 18 August, the Hagen Quartet on 26 August the *String Quartet No. 3*. The centerpiece of the Bartók series is a new production of Bartók's only opera, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. The opera performances also include two additional works by Bartók, the *Four Pieces for Orchestra* and the *Cantata Profana*. The Hungarian conductor and composer Peter Eötvös will conduct the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Johan Simons will direct and the German painter Daniel Richter will be responsible for stage design. The premiere is on 6 August in the Grosses Festspielhaus. Béla Bartók's music exhibits many elements of ethnomusicology. He, together with his colleagues including Zoltán Kodály, began venturing into the Hungarian countryside in 1908 in order to learn of the musical foundations of their culture, specifically Magyar folk melodies which were assumed to be part of the Gypsy tradition of music-making. However, Bartók and Kodály determined that Magyar and Gypsy were separate and their work led to the understanding that Magyar melodies are based on pentatonic scales found



**Charles Simonyi
and Susan Hutchison**
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in Oriental folk music from Central Asia to Siberia. Bartók's analytical studies and ethnography were at the forefront of and key to the creation of an entire field of musicology known as ethnomusicology. Simonyi's fascination with Bartók is rooted in more than just an association with his homeland. It could also have something to do with the scientific nature of Bartók's work. "My mom is very musical and she played the piano. When I was small and we were put to bed there were frequently all of these intellectuals at our home. Often they played a violin-piano piece. I would try to go asleep and somehow the music stayed with me. My mom would take us to the opera; we saw *Rosen-*

kavalier first, then *La Traviata*, then others. It wasn't appropriate to take me to Wagner. Later on it was expected for us to learn music. I was learning the piano and my brother learned the violin. I learned the scales, the difference between minor and major; just the basics. Piano teaching was done using Bartók. His *Microcosmos* was used to teach children; actually a great title...! Just tiny...very simple...practice pieces for children. I'm sure somebody with talent would go through them in the first week. My progress was going very slowly and I didn't like the piano very much. At about the same time I discovered computers. I had to approach my mom to my great distress to tell her that

I didn't want to practice the piano and that I instead wanted to practice the computer."

Charles Simonyi moved to the U.S. in 1968. Interestingly, Béla Bartók also moved to the U.S. but the reason was World War II; the move occurred in 1940 and Bartók never felt completely comfortable in the U.S. given the realities of fleeing one's homeland. For Simonyi it was education that necessitated the move. He received his B.S. in Engineering Mathematics from the University of California at Berkeley in 1972, and a doctorate in Computer Science from Stanford University in 1977. He has been a member of the National Academy of Engineering since 1997, elected for his contributions to "widely used productivity software". He received an honorary doctorate from the University of Pécs (Hungary) in 2001.

From 1972 to 1980, Simonyi worked at Xerox Corporation's Palo Alto Research Center (PARC), where he created the first WYSIWYG (what-you-see-is-what-you-get) text editor called Bravo. Simonyi left PARC to join the Microsoft Corporation, where he held the titles of Director of Application Development, Chief Architect, and, most recently, Distinguished Engineer. He left Microsoft in August 2002 to found the Intentional Software Corporation, a software engineering company with an emphasis on productivity applications, where he is currently President and CEO.

The Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences was founded in January 2004. Its gifts have included a US\$ 1 million grant to the internationally acclaimed radio broadcasts of the Metropolitan Opera; US\$ 300,000 for the Seattle Opera's International Wagner Competition and an elementary school opera project designed to convey the excitement of Wagner to public school children; and grants of over US\$ 10 million to the Seattle Symphony, which have gone towards a variety of activities including a "New Europe Festival" featuring the work of Béla Bartók and other Eastern and Central European composers.

In 2005, the Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences created the US\$ 25 million Károly Simonyi

Memorial Endowment Fund at Princeton University's Institute for Advanced Study, to honor his late father. Prior to creating his foundation, Simonyi endowed the Chair for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University in 1995, and the Charles Simonyi Professorship in Theoretical Physics in 1997, also at the Institute for Advanced Study, where he has served on the board of trustees since 1997.

As the fifth civilian space flight traveler, and second Hungarian in space, Simonyi's April 2007 trip to the International Space Station was the latest destination in a life defined by exploration and discovery. Chronicling every step along the way from training to landing on his Web site, www.charlesinspace.com, Charles Simonyi further advanced his three space mission objectives: to advance civilian space flight, assist in space station research, and involve the world's youth in the science of space travel. Simonyi's collaborator and Executive Director of the Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences is Susan Hutchison, who served as his 'mission coordinator' for the Web site and educational programs related to his two-week space flight. Hutchison is best known as a distinguished television news anchor, serving the Puget Sound region as a trusted broadcaster and community activist for 25 years. For much of her career at KIRO-TV (an affiliate of the CBS network), she anchored the highest rated newscasts in Seattle, receiving numerous awards, including five Emmys for producing, writing, and reporting news and documentaries. She interviewed President Ronald Reagan, President Jimmy Carter, Billy Graham, and First Lady Laura Bush.

Charles Simonyi's life is accompanied by his love for classical music. One of the pieces he loves best is Johann Sebastian Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*: "Nothing can compare with J. S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. It's a purposeful piece, a pedagogical piece. When I went to school on my own, I finally had a Hi-Fi and access to LPs. Of course I started to buy classical LPs and it kind of created a connection with my childhood. I had this déjà vu sensation every time I bought an LP and was kind of amazed how much music I recognized from my childhood."