

## Introduction to the Exhibition

“We are thinking of you with love.” Signatures: “Emma” and “Zoltán,” and the date: “28 Aug. 923.” Emma Kodály sent this message on the day of their friend, Béla Bartók and the twenty-year-old Edith Pásztory’s wedding. Ditta Pásztory recalled later the beginning of their relationship: “I passed the entrance examination to the Music Academy in 1922. I requested to become Béla Bartók’s pupil and he admitted me to the second year.” Bartók’s name was not only familiar from pieces from the *For Children* series, that she had played earlier, but also from her mother who had studied with Mrs. Paula Voit Bartók, the composer’s mother, at the Teacher’s Training College in Bratislava/Pozsony—a fact that is documented by her entry in the memory book of Ditta’s mother. The Kodály’s message, the memory book, and a large number of similarly moving personal items and documents were deposited at the Institute for Musicology by their owner and heir Krisztina Voit in 2006.

Béla Bartók’s second wife, the pianist Ditta Pásztory was not only companion to the last 23 years of the composer’s life, mother of their child, Péter, but a duo partner at his concerts in the last period of his career as a pianist and the inspiration behind some of his important compositions. The occasion for Ditta’s debut was provided by the première of the Sonata for two Pianos and Percussion in 1938 and arrangements from the *Mikrokosmos* and the early Second Suite for two pianos war also made for their joint recitals. Several compositions were dedicated to Ditta (or for 31 October, her birthday) from *Village Scenes* (1924) composed at the beginning of their married life to the Third Piano Concerto (1945) intended to be a farewell present. In 1926, Bartók also dedicated to her some of the piano compositions that heralded his renewed style, the Piano Sonata (never performed by Ditta), the famous “Night’s Music” from the *Out of Doors* suite, and two pieces from the *Nine little piano pieces*. Later—with gentle humour—the composer also dedicated to her the “Girls’ Teasing Song” from the Twenty Seven Choruses (1935).

The part of the estate now at the Institute comprises a few pieces of furniture, embroidery, utensils, articles for personal use, cloths, as well as a great number of written documents. Personal articles may be as varied as Bartók’s calendars and address books containing autograph notes or his sunglasses familiar from the pictures taken of him while wandering in the Alps. A huge collection of photographs (both of negatives and positive pictures) belongs to the most precious part of the estate. Side by side with photos from their common life, some

of the nicest pictures of Bartók from his childhood and youth also survive in this collection. Quite often they bear inscriptions in the hand of Bartók’s mother, or a date written on them by the composer himself. On the back of a well-known photo of the five-year-old child we read: “Béla | in the year 1886 | in Nagyszentmiklós | beginning | of his piano studies,” and a later picture was commented on like this: “On his first folkloristic trip | in Csík county 1907 | the discovery of the pentatonic scale.”

Although the correspondence between Bartók and his second wife does not belong to the documents now preserved in the Institute, some unpublished letters by Bartók to his wife, son, and mother-in-law have been found among the many letters, both family and official ones, arranged by Ditta and kept together with the material deposited at the Institute. Family life is also conjured up by a few memorabilia, such as the games (dominoes and nine men’s morris) for long train trips.

The last decades of Ditta Pásztory’s life were devoted to the memory of his husband. Despite living a withdrawn life, she gave some interviews and performed Bartók’s compositions. A number of notebooks have come to light now, in which she collected data concerning Bartók’s concerts and repertoire as well as the pieces she studied with him. Also, she often drafted her answers to questions of interviewers. Most touching of all is her description of her husband’s final hours.

While our main aim has been to present the most interesting new documents of the collection, whose cataloguing is far from being completed, a few items from the earlier collection of the Bartók Archives, especially if they originated in Ditta Pásztory’s possession, were also included in the material on display.

László Vikárius



Péter Bartók, Béla Bartók and Ditta Pásztory, 1932



Ditta Pásztory, c.1920

## A Chronology of Ditta Pásztory’s Life

- 1903 Born on 31. October at Rimaszombat (today: Rimavská Subota, Slovakia). Her mother, Kornélia Petrovics was a piano teacher, her father, Gyula Pásztory taught mathematics and physics at the local secondary grammar school.
- 1910 The first music lessons. Her mother taught her piano and her father music theory.
- 1917 Entered Mór Somogyi’s Conservatory in Budapest but continued to live at Rimaszombat.
- 1921 Diploma from Somogyi’s Conservatory.
- 1921/22 Studied with Arnold Székely.
- 1922 Admission to the Royal Academy of Music, and, at her own request, she became Bartók’s pupil.
- 1923, 28 August, Marriage with Bartók.
- 1924, 31 July, Péter Bartók’s birth.
- 1923–27 Continued her studies with Bartók.
- 1927 Ditta fell ill, and was prohibited to play the piano for years. She received treatments at the Budakeszi Sanatorium and at Davos (Switzerland).

1930's She resumed her studies with Bartók. They were practicing works of different genres (concertos, chamber works as well as two-piano pieces) on two pianos.

1937, 16 January Ditta's début at the première of the *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* at Basel.

1938–42 They gave approximately 20 two-piano recitals.

1940, 8 October their last concert in Budapest.

1940, 31 October, their arrival in New York.

1940, November, New York, the performance of the *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*.

1943, 31 January, New York, Carnegie Hall, Ditta's last recital with Bartók at the première of the *Concerto for two Pianos and Orchestra* (the concerto version of the *Sonata*).

1944, 2 July, New York, Brooklyn Museum, the broadcasting of the series *Ask the Composer*. Ditta played as soloist. Program: David LeVita's interview with Bartók, *Sonatina, Suite op. 14, 1<sup>st</sup> Rondo*, "Bulgarian Rhythm 1" (*Mikrokosmos* no. 113), "Evening in Transylvania," Bartók–Serly: arrangements of pieces from the *Mikrokosmos* for piano and chamber orchestra – cond. by Tibor Serly.

1945, 26 September, Bartók died at the West Side Hospital in New York.

1946 Ditta returned to Hungary.

1946–1948 Ditta's stay at Miskolc as a guest of her aunt, Mrs. Vilmos Fábán.

1948–1949 Moved into a flat in Krisztina körút 17. Engineer Jenő Pásztor, Ditta's younger brother built a recording studio in Ditta's flat with the support of Péter Bartók.

1959 Recording sessions at Ditta's flat.

1962 The complete *Mikrokosmos* released (Qualiton).

1964 The complete *For Children* released (Qualiton).

1960's Ditta performed publicly again. Began to give interviews and recitals in Hungary and abroad.

1964, 28 September, Vienna, the Recording of the Third Piano Concerto with the Viennese SO conducted by Tibor Serly (Keyboard Records).

1967, 25 September, Budapest, Hungarian Radio, Recording of the *Seven Pieces from the Mikrokosmos* with Erzsébet Tusa (Qualiton).

1967, November, Budapest, Hungarian Radio, Recording of the *Suite for two Pianos*, op. 4b, with Maria Comensoli (Qualiton).

1968, 28, 29, 30 August Recording of the *Concerto for two pianos and Orchestra* with Erzsébet Tusa (piano), József Márton and Ferenc Petz (percussion) and the Orchestra of the Hungarian Radio conducted by János Sándor.

1975, 14 January, Iserlohn, Radio broadcasting of the *Sonata for two piano and Percussion*, and the *Seven pieces from Mikrokosmos*, with Maria Comensoli.

1975, 17 and 19 April, Budapest, interview with Ditta by László Somfai (television broadcasting).

1976, 10 November, interview with Ditta by Tibor Serly.

1981 The Centenary of Bartók's birth. Radio and Television interviews for Hungarian and Foreign Radio and Television Companies.

1982, 21 November, Ditta's death.

*Virág Büky*

The exhibition was mounted jointly by the Museum of Music History and the Bartók Archives of the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

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*Édes Dittám*

**Dearest Ditta**



Temporary exhibition from the estate of  
**Ditta Pásztor Bartók**

At the Museum of Music History  
of the Institute for Musicology  
of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences  
(1014 Budapest I., Táncsics u. 7.)

11 May — 17 June 2007  
Open every day, except Monday,  
between 10 am and 4 pm.

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