

Mp3 June De Toth - Bartok Solo Piano Works, Volume 4



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Capturing the essentially trochaic inflections of Hungarian speech with the knowing temperament of a native (Ms de Toth is full blood Hungarian) she lays out the keyboard songs with the patrician air of an old storyteller at a family gathering. 68 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Contemporary, EASY LISTENING: Mature Details: BARTOK AS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD IT BEFORE June de Toth performs Bartok's greatest piano works with an intensity, tonal color, and understanding that are unforgettable. A history making event that is creating international attention. June de Toth is the first woman to record a cycle of Bartok's greatest piano works in a 5-CD box set. Volumes I through V contain the 7 Sketches, Sonata 1926, 15 Hungarian Peasant Songs and Dances, 4 Dirges, Allegro Barbaro, Suite, 42 Hungarian Folk Songs, 3 Burlesques, 6 Roumanian Folk Dances, 10 Easy Pieces, 14 Bagatelles, 3 Rondos, Sonatina, 43 Slovakian Folk Songs, Petite Suite, 10 Roumanian Christmas Carols, 2 Elegies, Improvisations, 9 Little Pieces, and the Out of Doors Suite. REVIEWS "In her exhaustive survey of his solo piano works, June de Toth offers thoughtful and often eloquent readings that reject both hysteria and the kind of kamikaze approach of so many young piano lions. Its overall sobriety and discipline is such that the music speaks for itself. Capturing the essentially trochaic inflections of Hungarian speech with the knowing temperament of a native (Ms de Toth is full blood Hungarian) she lays out the keyboard songs with the patrician air of an old storyteller at a family gathering. Her performances are persuasive. Take particular note of her attractive readings of the 14 Bagatelles: these she portrays with a kind of arid simplicity that enhances their now playful, now lonely ethos. This set would make an ideal introduction to Bartok's piano music, especially if you are still unfamiliar with the bulk of it. These are urbane, honest, eminently intelligible interpretations that will draw the uninitiated into the texts of this extraordinarily rich music." -- AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE June de Toth, a Hungarian-American pianist whose teachers include

Gulda and Firkusny, presents a nicely varied selection of the composer's piano works. Her rhythmic verve, supplemented by lots of drive, is especially good in the dances, and one notices, especially in softer passages, that her tonal and dynamic sensitivity serves Bartok particularly well. The third of the Dirges (Vol.1, track 17) is especially gripping, as is the atmospheric rendering of the final movement of the Op.14 Suite in Vol.2. The piano pickup is warm and intimate." -- STEREOPHILE "In her interpretations, de Toth reveals the "earthiness" of much of this music, as well as its secret personality. Consider de Toth's handling of the Poco Lento on track seventeen of volume one. Without resorting to the headlong savagery favored by some pianists, de Toth is nonetheless uncannily good at creating the bell-like chords (reminiscent of Rachmaninov's C# Minor Prelude) so crucial to the powerful development of the image of this miniature tone poem. Bartok was a master of rhythm and vitality, and mixed them well in a 20th century blender to concoct his catchy folk tunes and dances. Pianist de Toth herself proves to be an artful combiner, measuring requisite proportions of color, warmth, and energy in these pieces. The Three Burlesques falls strangely on the ear coming after the folksongs, yet de Toth is compelling here, as well as in the spell-casting episodes called Four Dirges. That variety of expression, being so finely conceived initially by Bartok and interpreted with insight and compassion by pianist de Toth, should offer grounds for deeper exploration and appreciation of Bartok by the general listener. The Third Sketch alone is worth the price of the disc. Recommended." -- CLASSICAL NET "Bartok's Solo Piano Works: Volumes 1 through 5. These are definitive versions of fascinating pieces by a composer who deserves to be better known. June de Toth is a true champion." -- CLASSICAL MUSIC ARCHIVES THE ARTIST

Hungarian-American pianist June de Toth has championed the piano music of Bela Bartok throughout a critically acclaimed concert career in the United States and Europe. She has just released a 5CD box set of Bartok's Solo Piano Works on the Eroica label. She is the first woman to record a box set of Bartok's greatest solo piano works. In October, 1995, she performed an "All Bartok" recital at the Bartok Memorial House in Budapest, Hungary. She was the only American artist invited by the Hungarian government to take part in this 6-week International Festival of Bartok's works, commemorating the 50th anniversary of his death. She also performed Bartok's music in previous appearances on the European national radio networks of Portugal and Yugoslavia. She featured his "15 Hungarian Peasant Songs and Dances" in her premiere recording on the Da Vinci label of RCA Victor Red Seal Records. In her Town Hall debut, she presented the first public "All Bartok" recital in New York City, which was attended by Bartok's son, Peter.

Her Carnegie Hall debut featured Bartok's "Sonata 1926." She won rave reviews for her performance of Bartok's Third Piano Concerto with the Santa Fe Symphony Orchestra. June de Toth's interpretation of Bartok's solo piano music is decidedly her own. She expresses a lyrical and romantic vision of his early poetic works, which were very much influenced by the French impressionist composer Claude Debussy. Her playing also emphasizes the melodic beauty of the Hungarian and other Eastern European folk songs which Bartok wove so masterfully into his compositions. June de Toth won two major European piano competitions, resulting in scholarships to the Santa Cecilia Academy in Rome and the Mozarteum in Salzburg. Her teachers included Rudolf Firkusny, Friedrich Gulda, Carlo Zecchi, and Kurt Leimer (nephew of Karl Leimer, the acclaimed pedagogue of Walter Gieseking). She was also awarded First Place in the International Piano Concerto competition in Salzburg, which resulted in a highly coveted debut performance with the Mozarteum Orchestra, playing the Brahms Piano Concerto in B-flat. The appearance, a critically acclaimed triumph, led to recitals in Italy, France, Yugoslavia, Spain and Portugal, where critics hailed her as "the best musician sent to us from the States." She has appeared as guest soloist with symphony orchestras in Portugal, Italy, and (former) Yugoslavia; and in the United States with the Santa Fe, Las Vegas, Sun City, Detroit Women's, and Detroit Symphony Orchestras. She made her television debut on PBS-TV in 1991 with an "All Mozart" recital. A full color professionally recorded video tape of this performance is available from Eroica Classical Recordings on the ordering page.

BELA BARTOK A Family in Hungary Bela Bartok (1881-1945) was born in a small provincial town in Hungary called Nagyszentmiklos (now Sennicolau Mare in Rumania). Originally, the Bartok family came from northern Hungary. Bela Bartok senior, the composer's father, was the successful headmaster of an agricultural school at Nagyszentmiklos, and known for his high energy and devotion to the fine arts. The family atmosphere provided their children, Bela and Elza, with intellectual stimulus and even after Bela senior's untimely death in 1888, his wife, Paula Voit, saw to it that her offspring had an excellent education. The Ascent of a Youth Left a widow, Bartok's mother now had to accept teaching positions around Hungary, finally settling in the town of Pozsony (now Bratislava in Slovakia). Fortunately, the town had high culture and a well developed musical tradition. From the age of three, Bartok had exhibited an amazing ear for music, pounding out rhythms on his little drum to perfect time, as his mother played the piano. At four he could play at least 40 folk tunes by memory on the piano, and his mother realized her son had an enormous musical talent. At five he begged his mother to teach him piano, and at nine he

wrote his first composition, a waltz entitled "The Course of the Danube." His first successful public appearance occurred at the age of eleven when he performed his own "The Course of the Danube." At this point, news of his unusual talent reached the ears of some eminent professors, and he was accepted as a student of Laszlo Erkel in Pozsony. At this time in Hungary there were two kinds of music: "high art" music, played in Budapest, which was mainly German, including Wagner and Brahms; and gypsy music, which was wildly popular in the provinces. Young Bartok was influenced greatly by the German music taught him by his teachers, and was equally influenced later by the music of Franz Liszt.

A Promising Pianist After graduating from grammar school in 1899, Bartok set his sights on the illustrious Academy of Music in Vienna, where he was accepted. However, because his close friend and fellow pianist, Ernst von Dohnanyi, decided to enter the Academy of Music in Budapest, which had been founded by Franz Liszt, Bartok followed his example. Early in 1899 he began piano studies with the renowned Istvan Thoman (a pupil of Liszt), and composition with Hans Koessler (a devotee of Brahms). Unfortunately, his studies were constantly interrupted during his first year by bronchial illnesses, including a bout with pneumonia that laid him up for six months. During this time, even the doctors gave up on him. It was only his mother who brought him back to health with careful nursing and a cure in the mountains. In 1901 he was ready to make an appearance at the Academy in a sensational performance of Liszt's Sonata in B minor. Hailed mainly during this period as a promising young concert pianist, Bartok also wrote many works, including chamber music, piano pieces and orchestral compositions. Among these were a Scherzo for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 2, and the sketch of a symphony in four movements. The heavy influences of Schumann and Brahms are evident in these works. Bartok's famous sardonic, grotesque and playful scherzo style was yet to emerge.

Composer and Patriot In 1903, anti-Austrian feelings flared up again in Hungary, and Bartok became caught up in the new nationalistic spirit. He wrote in a letter: "All my life, in every field at all times, and in every way, I shall serve but one aim; the benefit of the Hungarian nation." Twenty-eight years later, he expanded upon this idea, writing: "My guiding idea, which I have been conscious of ever since I found myself a composer, is the idea of the brotherhood of nations, a brotherhood in spite of war and strife. This is the idea I am trying to serve, with the best of my ability, in my music." With the performance in Budapest in 1904 of his massive symphonic poem "Kossuth," Bartok became the object of wild admiration in the Hungarian capital. The subject was the glorification of the Hungarian War of Independence in 1848. Again, this work was filled with foreign influences and technical flaws. The real

voice of Bartok's genius was yet to be heard and was propelled by a set of unusual circumstances, including a surprising change in his entire social, psychological and philosophical beliefs. Sorrow and Transformation In 1905, a stunning blow struck down Bartok's ambition to win recognition as an international concert pianist. He entered the Rubenstein Music Competition in Paris, hoping to win First Prize in both piano and composition. However, Wilhelm Backhaus won the piano award, and no prize was given in composition! A bitterly disappointed Bartok changed career directions almost at once. He made the wrenching decision to give up the life of a piano virtuoso forever, electing instead to dedicate himself, with an all absorbing intensity, to original composition and a lifetime of collecting Hungarian folk music. Unfortunately, during the early stages of his career shift, there was a great deal of criticism of Bartok's "new" music. When the opposition became unbearable, the young composer turned for solace to his beloved folk music collection, finding comfort and a measure of security in its simple purity. Indeed, in his later writings, Bartok emphasized his belief that a simple original folk tune was also a work of art.

Source of Inspiration This new obsession was born almost by accident, when Bartok heard, early in 1904, a beautiful folk melody being sung by a Transylvanian servant girl. He was so fascinated by its freshness and originality that he wrote down the melody on the spot. Bartok was fascinated by the striking tonal difference between folk songs, and the Hungarian gypsy music he had listened to all his life. He was astonished to find that the folk song was based on entirely different musical scales! His increasing interest in folk music led Bartok to one of the most important friendships in his life, when he discovered that his fellow Hungarian composer and colleague, Zoltan Kodaly, was also collecting folk songs in small Hungarian villages nearby. The two men were soon united by their passion for the hidden gems that were sung for them by local peasants. They developed a lifelong friendship, based on mutual respect and a burning desire to preserve authentic Hungarian music forever. Bartok went about his new obsession in a most unusual way. He acquired a very large Edison horn, which was equipped with a wax cylinder. He carried this cumbersome equipment tirelessly over Hungarian hill and dale, persuading the peasants to sing into the horn so that he could record their voices on the wax cylinder. Bartok literally lived with the peasants during these odysseys, feasting on simple peasant dishes and sleeping in their thatched roof houses. In later years, he often remarked that these were the happiest memories of his life. Following each trip, Bartok would rush home, listen to each recording over and over, and painstakingly write down every note of every song! During ensuing years, Bartok's collecting expeditions led him on extensive

journeys over ever increasing distances into Slovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and eventually, all the way into Turkey and Morocco. Strangely enough, the influences of the music of all of these countries can be found in his compositions. By the end of his life in 1945, his precious collection had grown to more than 6,000 tunes. In addition to folk songs, Bartok collected hand carved Transylvanian furniture, pottery, and embroidery for his apartment in Budapest. Some of these treasures can still be seen at the Bartok Memorial House in the wooded Buda hills overlooking the Danube. These idyllic trips always took place during the summer months, when he was free from his teaching duties at the Academy of Music. They continued until 1914 when they were abruptly cut short by the outbreak of World War I.

Rejection and Innovation Shaped by these exciting musical discoveries, Bartok's life philosophy changed abruptly, as he initiated stark modifications in the harmonic basis of his new compositions. Gone were the influences of Johannes Brahms and Richard Strauss. And gone also was the approval of the Hungarian musical public. His adoption of a pantheistic view of the universe also alienated Bartok permanently from his great love at the time, the gifted and beautiful violinist Stefi Geyer. As a result, he suffered a serious emotional crisis, which was observed with alarm and great concern by his intimate circle of family and friends. Despite these numerous setbacks, his first compositions appeared at last, uttering the new and distinct Bartokian sound, not fully matured as yet, but separated unequivocally and forever from the well known harmonies and rhythmic patterns of the previous century. Modal and pentatonic scales, free flowing exotic rhythms, and the use of polytonality were everywhere evident; in his String Quartet No. I; and in his Bagatelles, Sketches, Dirges and Elegies for piano; all boldly and excitingly new, all daringly different, and all influenced by his growing collection of Hungarian folk music and his introduction to the new impressionistic music of Claude Debussy.

The boy wonder had been supplanted by an extremely serious, taciturn and unyielding individual, whose path of genius would remain totally uncompromising, and throughout the coming years, thorny at best.

Marriage and Three Masterpieces In 1908, Bartok finished his String Quartet No. 1, and married his pupil, Marta Ziegler, who was a piano student at the Franz Liszt Academy. Their son, Bela, was born in 1910, and by 1911, Bartok had completed his only opera, "Bluebeard's Castle." The opera is a fascinating psychological drama, addressing a very new theme at the time. Sigmund Freud's theories were creating a sensation, and the man-woman conflict portrayed in the opera was completely new and shocking! It had its premiere at the Budapest Opera House in 1918.

The amazing piano piece, "Allegro Barbaro," was also composed in 1911. Its compelling primitive rhythms

have made this virtuoso piece a favorite of pianists and audiences alike. During the next 8 years, Bartok suffered some of his harshest musical experiences. His music was rejected by the Budapest public, and there were no concert appearances forthcoming from abroad. He made a solemn vow to completely shut down his public life, and totally dedicate himself to his folk music studies when he declared: "I shall write only for my desk." His folk music travels continued, and in 1913, he arrived in North Africa, where he gathered Arab folk music into his ever increasing portfolio. These influences can be heard in the Suite for Piano; the String Quartet No. 2; The Miraculous Mandarin; and The Dance Suite. Meanwhile, Bartok remained at his post as Professor of Piano at The Budapest Academy of Music, using his summer months to compose. War And The End Of A Dream Bartok's plan of large-scale folk music research journeys came to a crashing end with the outbreak of World War I. A state of depression and frustration sapped his energy, and stopped his creative drive. The war disturbed him greatly -- not only because it resulted in the complete devastation of Eastern Europe, but also because it marked the end of his folk music collecting. He had hoped to continue his collection of Rumanian music, which had produced The Rumanian Folk Dances and Rumanian Christmas Carols in 1915. He was much intrigued by the beautiful music of Transylvania, but the war made further travels out of the question. But there were rays of hope! In 1917, the world premiere of Bartok's ballet, "The Wooden Prince," took place in Budapest, and was a major success. And in 1918, a monumental breakthrough occurred in his artistic life, when he signed a contract with Vienna's Universal Edition for the publication of his future works. In 1919, he completed his pantomime, "The Miraculous Mandarin," a savage work that was destined to have a long and stormy history. Life in Hungary during the 1920's was difficult for Bartok. He was frequently attacked by the press. But fortunately, his compositions were now being performed in European cities, and his reputation began to grow among artists and the musical public outside of Hungary. The Emergence Of A Strong New Musical Voice In 1919, political events in Hungary put Bartok's life and profession in a precarious position. He even explored the possibility of emigration. But events intervened. His growing fame abroad, and his tremendous successes in London and Paris as a composer and pianist, were instrumental in reinforcing his position in Budapest. Suddenly, the entire world started talking about this "really new music," and became fascinated by it. "Bluebeard's Castle" and "The Wooden Prince" were produced in Frankfurt. Other performances of his orchestral works followed in various cities, and his String Quartet No. 3 won the prize of the Philadelphia Musical Fund Society. Bartok played a concert tour of the United

States and Europe in 1927, and another in the Soviet Union in 1929. Books and pamphlets were being written about the strange new original music of the Hungarian genius. All in all, the Twenties were a time of frenzied activity for Bartok, leading to even greater fame for him in the 1930s. Magnificent piano works appeared, among them, the "Sonata 1926;" the "Out of Doors Suite;" "Nine Small Piano Pieces;" and the First and Second Concertos for Piano and Orchestra. Chamber works included String Quartets No. 3 and No. 4. 1930 saw the birth of the grand choral work "Cantata Profana." His personal life changed drastically. He divorced his first wife, Marta, and married another pupil, Ditta Pasztory, who later played many duo piano concerts with her illustrious husband. The Apex - A Final Synthesis Many masterworks followed in the nineteen thirties and early forties. Among them were "Music for String Instruments, Percussion and Celesta," commissioned by Paul Sacher, conductor of the Kammerorchestra of Basel for its tenth anniversary. In 1934 came Quartet No. 5; in 1936, Divertimento for String Orchestra; in 1937, Sonata for 2 Pianos and Percussion; in 1938, Violin Concerto No. 2 and "Contrasts" for violin, clarinet and piano. In 1939, he finished his final String Quartet, No. 6. Political life in Hungary became unbearable for Bartok in the late thirties under its Fascist regime. During this time he refused to participate in Nazified musical organizations, and forbade the performance of his works in Fascist states. As pressures around him grew more intense, he decided to emigrate to the United States, and in the autumn of 1940 made the journey with his wife. His last appearance in Hungary took place in Budapest on October 8, 1940 at the Academy of Music, where he was joined in concert by his wife Ditta. It was a solemn, painful occasion, a last tribute to his beloved country. Their new life in the United States was extremely hard for the Bartok family. Their son Peter was finally able to join them, but circumstances became bleak. Concerts were few, and his compositions seemed to be overlooked and replaced by other composers. In 1940 Bartok was given an honorary doctorate by Columbia University and received a small stipend to work on and catalog a collection of Serbo-Croatian folk songs. He wrote nothing new in 1940, 1941 and 1942, and his homesickness and depression grew worse each day. At the same time, he was stricken with leukemia, which would finally end his life in 1945. Suddenly, in the summer of 1943, Bartok's condition began to improve, and a remission of his leukemia was evident at this time. He was visited by Serge Koussevitzky, the conductor of the Boston Symphony, who asked him to write a new orchestral work for the Symphony, to honor the memory of Koussevitzky's late wife. That summer and fall Bartok miraculously regained strength during his stay at Saranac Lake in New York State, where he wrote his great masterpiece,

"Concerto for Orchestra" in 55 days! It was an immediate success in its Carnegie Hall premiere on January 10th, 1944. Also in 1944, Bartok wrote the Sonata for Solo Violin, written for and performed by Yehudi Menuhin. As his strength left him and he grew alarmingly thin, he rallied to see the final freeing of Europe, and the end of World War II. His last work, Piano Concerto No. 3, written for his wife Ditta, was almost completed as he lay dying in his hospital bed at New York's West Side Hospital. Only seventeen measures at the end of the 3rd Movement were left unfinished, they were completed by Bartok's friend and pupil, Tibor Serly in accordance with Bartok's sketches. The lyricism and heartbreaking quality of this final concerto leave the listener with a feeling and knowledge of the great Hungarian composer's reconciliation with life, and the hope for humanity's survival through turmoil and untold suffering. It is the Life Force - truly inextinguishable.

REVIEWS Santa Fe Symphony appearance: "Bartok's Third Piano Concerto, with guest soloist June De Toth, would bring raves anywhere. She injected driving energy into the first movement exposition, and the lamentation and tragic impression soloist and orchestra brought out of the slow movement had a memorable intensity. De Toth clearly strengthened her reputation as an interpreter of Bartok." The Albuquerque Journal Santa Fe Symphony appearance: "June De Toth played Bela Bartok's Third Piano Concerto forcefully, accurately, and easily, as if its difficulties were her delight! The balance of orchestra and piano, and the intricate ensemble playing were fine throughout." - The New Mexican

Lisbon: "A magnificent evening. We've never heard a more perfect interpretation of Bartok's extremely difficult Sonata 1926. One has to be great to do it." Jornal Do Noticias Madrid: "June de Toth's concert was the biggest musical event of the season. Marvelous nuances from pianissimo to fortissimo." - El Triunfo

Carnegie Hall debut: "Her interpretations gave an impression of technical skill and experience, along with musicality of tone and dynamic discretion. Outspoken energy was limited to music which called for it, such as the vigorous episodes of the Bartok Sonata. She played the Chopin Nocturne in D-flat, Opus 27, No. 2 with engaging lyricism of tone and atmosphere." - The New York Herald Tribune

Belgrade: "Pianist June de Toth displayed a very strong musical personality. Her performance of the Brahms Second Piano Concerto was of the highest quality; a marvelous association of physical beauty and professional capacity." - Belgrade Dnevnik

Salzburg: "The Brahms Second Piano Concerto was interpreted magnificently, with ease and power which were incredible." - Salzburger Nachrichten

Santa Fe: "She displayed imposing technique and profound musicianship in Bartok's Piano Sonata. Her performance was powerful and eloquent. Rounded tones emphasized the music's profound relationship to

Liszt and other 19th century composers, without losing the dark fire and the alternative concept of tonal beauty that is the core of Bartk 's genius." - Albuquerque Journal Santa Fe: "June De Toth has made a solid reputation here as a superb interpreter of the Romantics and of contemporary works. Her performance of Bartks' Sonata 1926 was a model of clarity and conciseness coupled with a strong conviction that she was weighing each note perfectly for its place in the whole." - The New Mexican Santa Fe: "Her Debussy-Bartk recital at St. John 's College was a revelation. From a purely virtuosic standpoint, her performance was staggering. A powerful musical personality, coupled with her prodigious technique, resulted in an exciting, satisfying evening" - The Santa Fe Reporter San Francisco:"Her playing looks effortless, coming from the shoulders and arms. Her Debussy-Bartk recital left no doubt about her fluency and power. A prodigious technique." - The Palo Alto Times Paris: "She gave a clear vision of the eternity of the great Gods of music: Chopin, Liszt, Debussy, Ravel, and Bartk. June De Toth possesses a marvelous technique. She made a clear distinction between the styles of Beethoven and Bartk." - Le Guide Du Concert et du Disque

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