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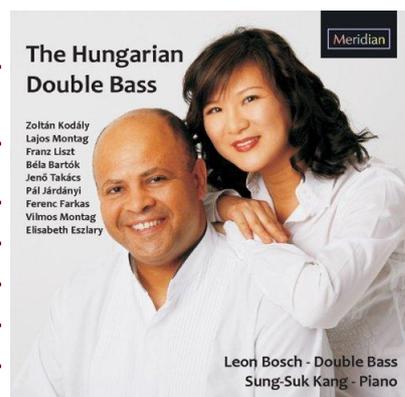
CD Review by [James A. Altena](#)

THE HUNGARIAN DOUBLE BASS • Leon Bosch (db); Sung-Suk Kang (pn) • MERIDIAN CDE 84597 (66:55)

KODÁLY Adagio. Epigrams. L. MONTAG Extrême. LISZT La Lugubre Gondola. BARTÓK Sonatina. TAKÁCS Altungarische Hofballmusik. JÁRDÁNYI Melody. FARKAS Népdalszonatina. V. MONTAG Silhouette. ESZLARY Sonatina

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This is the fifth recital disc issued by double bassist Leon Bosch on Meridian. The four previous CDs were titled The British Double Bass, The Russian Double Bass, and two devoted entirely to music of the 19th-century double bassist Giovanni Bottesini, The Virtuoso Double Bass. Steven E. Ritter reviewed the second Bottesini disc in Fanfare 34:2 and praised Bosch’s playing as “superb.” I will second that motion. No one need fear hearing an hour of scratchy sawing à la the opening solo to the slow

movement of Mahler's First Symphony; Bosch has a lovely, rich, glowing tone and technique to equal any virtuoso cellist. He also has a special connection to this repertoire; although born, raised, and trained in South Africa, one of his teachers there was the Hungarian double bassist Zoltán Kovats, to whom the disc is dedicated. Bosch was obviously an apt pupil, for these performances are utterly idiomatic in their rhythmic inflections and melodic contours. Pianist Sung-Suk Kang provides simpatico support throughout.

Three of the works offered here are transcriptions or adaptations. The Adagio of Zoltán Kodály is originally for viola; Liszt's La Lugubre Gondola was arranged by Bosch from the piano original; Bartók's Sonatina is twice removed from the piano original, being a transcription for double bass of a transcription for violin and piano by André Gertler. The remaining works, by Jenő Takács (1902–2005), Pál Járdányi (1920–66), Ferenc Farkas (1905–2000), Elisabeth Eszlary (b.1917), and the brothers Lajos Montag (1906–97) and Vilmos Montag (1908–91), are originals for double bass. The Bartók, Farkas, and Eszlary sonatinas are all three-movement works in the standard fast-slow-fast sequence; the Kodály Epigrams are seven songs adapted as technical studies; the other works all consist of one movement, the longest (at 14:00) being that of Takács. Virtually all of these compositions are thoroughly grounded in Hungarian folk music; they are without exception engagingly tuneful and straightforward in structure.

The recorded sound is clean and clear, and the two performers are well balanced. Booklet notes are detailed and informative; however, there are several frustrating inconsistencies in the spelling of titles. On the back tray card, the respective titles of works by Kodály, Montag, Takács, and Farkas are given as Epigrams, Extrême, Alte ungarische Hofballmusik, and Népdalszonatina; in the booklet they are given as Epigramme, Extreme, Altungarische Hofballmusik, and Sonatina. I have used here the versions on the tray card except for the Takács piece, where the booklet version is clearly the correct one. While this disc may appear to be offbeat and esoteric, it should provide pleasure to anyone who enjoys music for a solo stringed instrument and piano. Warmly recommended. James A. Altena

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