



PERMANENT MISSION OF HUNGARY
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United Nations Day Gala Concert
New York, General Assembly Hall
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Speech by
H.E. Ambassador Katalin Annamária Bogyay
Permanent Representative

Secretary General and Mme Ban,
 President of the General Assembly and Mrs Thomson,
 Undersecretary General, dear Cristina Gallach,
 Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, Mr Szabo and Mrs Szabo,
 Your Excellencies, Dear Friends, Dear Guests,

UN Day gala concerts celebrate and reflect the work of the United Nations through the universal language of music. It is a great honour for the Permanent Mission of Hungary to co-host the UN Day Gala Concert in 2016.

In the practice of international relations, it is common to look at the world as divided into the developed and developing, democratic and democratizing, rich and poor, North and South. Putting countries into distinct and simple categories serves as a conceptual tool for academicians and politicians alike. But it also obstructs our vision of the true diversity of humanity, and prevents us from understanding the shared values that make us one human family.

As 13th century Persian poet and Islamic scholar, Jalal al-Din Rumi writes:

*“Half of me comes from here, half from everywhere.
 Half of me comes from the pearls of the sea, half from distant shores.”*

I will invite you all to a musical journey tonight which will prove by the end how interconnected we all are.

“Freedom first”

The theme of tonight’s concert is Freedom first. Universal aspiration for fundamental freedoms and human rights which are also enshrined in the UN Charter is one of the main purposes of the Organization. We, Hungarians deeply cherish freedom and independence having been forced to fight for these so many times throughout our history. At the same time, we highly believe in international cooperation and unity to ensure that everyone enjoys these universal principals and rights.

Tonight we remember through musical pieces the heroes all over the world who devoted their lives to fighting for fundamental freedoms, or who had to leave their countries because of political persecution.

As one of the heroes of FREEDOM FIRST, Nelson Mandela writes in his book: Long Walk to Freedom

“I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb...”

This we all have to always remember!

In the first part of the concert you will hear pieces about love torn apart by persecution, love destroyed by foreign occupiers, and love for freedom, a march against oppression. In our musical journey you will meet the musicians, dancers, artists of the Hungarian State Opera, which was opened in 1884.

Actually its orchestra, The Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra, is Hungary's oldest functioning orchestra, looking back on a past of more than a century and a half. Its first concert was given in 1853, under the baton of Ferenc Erkel, who went on to conduct the orchestra's next sixty concerts.

The greatest Hungarian composers like Erkel, Liszt, Goldmark, Dohnányi, Bartók, Kodály, Weiner, wrote many pieces for the orchestra, and world renowned composers – such as Brahms, Dvořák, Mahler, Mascagni, Prokofiev, Ravel, Respighi, Richard Strauss and Stravinsky also frequently introduced their works with the Philharmonic Orchestra .

“Only from the clear Spring”

We, Hungarians have always tried to preserve our own culture, yet were forced to absorb other cultural influences because of our history and geographical position in Europe. In the end, I feel this cross-fertilization with others has proved to be our strength. It has enabled us to be bold and creative like a great Hungarian 19th century musician, Ferenc/Franz Liszt who, recognized that he had developed his creativity through his contact with the world at large and that his music was at the service of all humankind.

Throughout his career he travelled more widely than any musician of his time and in his final years wrote:” My only remaining ambition as a musician is to hurdle my lace into the boundless realm of the future.”

In the coming segment of our program we are listening to the dialogues of musicians coming from different parts of the world.

This dialogue is based on Béla Bartók message:

“My guiding philosophy has always been the idea of different nations uniting into brotherhood, in spite of all the wars and hostility. I have tried to serve the aims of this idea, as best as I can, in my music! So for that reason I do not shrink away from any influence ... no matter the source, as long as it is pure, natural and vital.”

I have invited artists from countries which played a very supportive role here in the United Nations towards my country 60 years ago. Those countries were members of the United Nations General Assembly special committee on Hungary. I am grateful to my fellow ambassadors and permanent missions of Denmark, Sri Lanka, Australia collaborating with us in tonight's program.

“Diversity: a source of inspiration”

I see our world as a global cultural space, a multi-layered treasure, a magic box full of undiscovered jewels. The process of inspiration followed by the creativity of people working together, is, to me the most beautiful aspect of this varied cultural space. For a culture to open its doors wide, it must believe in its own strength, knowing that it is rich enough to nourish other culture, yet sensitive enough to benefit from foreign influences. Hungarian culture has always been open, welcoming at the same time strong enough to inspire other cultures.

Diversity is not a burden but a source of inspiration!

As Mahatma Gandhi said:

“No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive.”

Let us celebrate the power of inspiration, joie de vivre, with Brahms, Johann Strauss and Kodaly in our last segment of the UN -Day Gala. Here I would like to thank Maestro Gerard Schwarz, legendary American conductor who was a real inspiration to create the musical programme of tonight.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sixty years ago, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General was a sixth grader in rural Korea. It was 1956, and people in Hungary were facing a violent suppression of their aspirations. He wondered: “What could we do? How could we best express support from our far-off corner of the world?”

Then it came to him, “We will write to Dag Hammarskjöld!”

As the student chair, H.E. Ban Ki-moon wrote a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

“Dear Mr. Secretary General, “help the people of Hungary so they can have freedom and democracy.”

On the UN Day Gala we would like to thank you for this letter and your service in fighting for peace, freedom, security, development and human rights in all over the world!