

“This is truly wonderful”

Jenő Takács

Bartók’s relationship with Vienna can be traced back to his first visit in 1897 and ends with the concert in the Großer Musikvereinssaal on 18 May 1936, in which Bartók performed Franz Liszt’s *Dance of the Dead*, conducted by Ernst von Dohnányi and accompanied by the Budapest Philharmonic. The suite from Bartók’s pantomime ballet *The Miraculous Mandarin* was performed in the same concert. Spanning almost four decades, there were many events during this period in Bartók’s life that connected him with Austria and Vienna. The statement by Denijs Dille (Note: Founder of the Bartók archive in Budapest) which asserts that Vienna was almost more important for Bartók than Budapest, can thus only be endorsed.

One of these important events was his association with Universal Edition in Vienna. Emil Hertzka (1868–1932), Director of Universal Edition, wrote to Bartók immediately upon reading in the papers about the success of the ballet *The Wooden Prince* (12 May 1917) and suggested adding the work to the list of compositions at his publishing house. And so in 1918, Universal Edition became Bartók’s sole publisher. This was all the more pleasing to him because his Hungarian publisher had not printed any of his works since 1912. The importance of this event for Bartók comes across in a letter which he sent to his friend, the Romanian professor Ioan Busitia, on 9 May 1918: “This year’s great achievement is that I have managed to enter into an agreement lasting several years with a first-class publishing house. ‘Universal Edition’ (Vienna) made me an acceptable offer in January.

After prolonged negotiations we finally agreed on all points and I signed the contract only a few days ago; all my works that are still unpublished or yet to be written will be published over the next few years. This is truly wonderful because, thanks to my publisher at home, none of my works have been published for about the last 6 years and it is rare for foreign publishers to make such an offer to a Hungarian musician. But I will tell you more about that when I see you. In any case, this contract is my biggest success so far as a composer.”