

Bartók`s Requiem

*„I left my beautiful homeland,
wonderful Transylvania.
On the way, I looked back,
tears dwelled in my eyes.“*



Documentary – 87 Min.
A Film by Jan N. Lorenzen

A Production of
Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH, Germany and Quality Pictures Kft., Hungary

Funded by Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung and Media Plus



Short Synopsis

(55 words) “Bartók’s Requiem” travels to the most remote villages of Transylvania on the traces of the large composer Béla Bartók. Like Bartók at the beginning 20. Century with the help of a phonograph, documents the film director Jan N. Lorenzen with microphone and camera the traditional culture of the village inhabitants, before it is lost always.

Detailed Synopsis

(200 words) Béla Bartók is one of the most distinguished composers of the 20th century. And yet, already in his lifetime, the celebrated pianist turned his back on European concert halls. Year over year, he travelled to the most remote villages of Transylvania, in order to search for age-old melodies. Bartók asked the aboriginal people to sing into the peculiar horn of his phonograph. In doing so, he collected thousands of folk songs, preserving them on wax cylinders and music paper.

Today, these recordings rest unregarded in the archive of the Museum of Ethnography in Budapest. They conserve the folk music of a culture that – far from civilization - still prospered in Transylvania at the beginning of the twentieth century. Could this music survive the upheavals of the last century? Or did the restrictions of socialism or the political shifts of the 1990s afflict her?

In his film, Jan Lorenzen sets out on a journey to trace the tracks of Béla Bartók accompanied by camera and microphone. He creates a moving documentary about people, who still live in a bygone time, and about a period in a man’s life, who accomplished preserving their musical soul on the cylinders of a phonograph.

Crew

Author & Director	JAN N. LORENZEN
Director of Photography	PETER BADEL
Camera Assistent	KERSTIN UHING
Sound	CSONGOR FASZEKAS
Editing	RENÉ FRÖLKE
Soundmix	MATTHIAS SCHWAB
Musicians	FERENC KESKENY ANTAL KÉMÉNCZY
Transcriptions	KINGA ERÖSS
Shooting Managers	KINGA ERÖSS ZSOKA NOVAK
Production Manager	PETER EFFENBERG
Production Accountant	ANNE FASSHAUER MAGDOLNA POOR
Producers	OLAF JACOBS GABOR SARUDI

Production dates

Original Title	“BARTÓKS REQUIEM.“
English Title	“BARTÓK`S REQUIEM”
Length	87 MIN.
Languages	ENGLISH / GERMAN, HUNGARIAN, ROMANIAN
Subtitles	GERMAN
Shooting format	HD CAM
Screening format	VIDEO & HD, 1:1,66
Sound format	STEREO

Director's Statement

„Bartók and the Transylvanian folk music“; on the surface this appears to be a topic that does not deal with problems of modernity: At the beginning of the 20th century, an influential yet to many unknown composer sets out on a journey to the most remote villages of Transylvania. He intends to collect folk songs and to be inspired for his compositions. Everyone, who is interested nor in Bartók or in Transylvania, might see no reason to go and watch this film.

But everything this documentary appears to be, it is not. It is neither an academic music documentary, nor an ethnographic film. Strictly speaking, it is not even a movie about Béla Bartók, as it does only briefly touch upon his biography. Instead, it is Bartók's method, which we adopted: His gaze was focussed on the cultural identity of Transylvania and its Hungarian and Romanian residents. Once Bartók discovered the importance and the value of the traditional culture still existant there, he also realised, how much it was threatened by modern civilization. His search and his enormous collection was an act against oblivion, against the complete disappearance of an entire culture.

The profound sadness, which we – the film team – felt throughout our work, must have been equal to the despair that took hold of Bartók, when he realised that the traditional culture of Transylvania was to be lost eventually. We caught a last glimpse of this treasure, just before it will decay into mere folklore and a museal scenery for Romanian television stations, such as “Ethno TV”. At the same time, we experienced the tremendous importance which the old ritual songs, especially the songs for the dead must have once held for the cultural life in the peasant villages.

Culture is always a subject to change and the world of the Romanian village is too poor, as to seriously which for it to last. Yet, at the face of the pace in which the Romanian villages and their inhabitants are forced to modernise, that traditional culture will have no time to change but instead vanish. Transylvania will have to face the loss of its proper, distinctive identity. As Bartók once predicted, traditional village culture will feed on the remains of a misconceived urban culture. Most people might not mourn the disappearance of old songs nor even realise their loss, because they readily welcome the comforts of the modern world. Without giving in to an escapist sentimentality about the “good old time”, with this film, we therefore tried to capture that regret about an irretrievable loss of culture.

Jan Lorenzen, January 2008

Béla Bartók

In 1881, Béla Bartók is born in Nagyzentmiklós. The small village is located far beyond any centres of political power or the technological progress of modernity. The people of Nagyzentmiklós live by themselves, remote and deeply rooted in their traditions, whether Romanian, Danube Swabian or Hungarian. Very early in their boy's life, Bartók's parents recognise his talent. Consequently, he takes his first piano lessons at the age of five. Then, in 1889, the early death of Béla Bartók's father tears the family out of their placid life. They move into the city which today is Bratislava – a big town offering Bartók everything he needs for his education. By the age of twelve, he takes musical as well as composition lessons. At the age of 18, Bartók studies at the Royal National Hungarian Academy of Music in Budapest. His graduation there is granted to him without examination – Bartók's talent is out of question. A radiant career in the music halls of the metropolises seems to be initiating.

Yet, Béla Bartók maintains a deep bond to nature. Already at an early age, he goes on extensive trips into the countryside. In 1904, his interest in folk songs is awakened by the singing of an 18 year old chambermaid. This rising passion is further enhanced by the acquaintance with Zoltán Kodály, the famous ethnomusicologist. At last, the failure of his only opera "Bluebeard's Castle" in front of the Hungarian Fine Arts Commission brought Bartók to dedicate his life and work more intensely to folk music and to move back to the region where he was born. His urge for the traditional popular culture and his search for a unifying, national style drive Bartók further on, only to plunge deeper and deeper into the most remote parts of the country. "It is my goal to fraternise the people." he writes. For Bartók, the traditional folk songs are the key to this goal.

Bartók anticipates the dangers proposed by modernity that lie ahead of the old folk traditions. He fears that the cultural life of the village will only be nourished by the remains of urban culture. Béla Bartók is obsessed with his collection of folk music. The outbreak of the First World War puts a temporary end to Bartók's expeditions. He retreats into his city apartment in order to re-engage in composing. It is there that he founds his world wide fame, most famously interweaving traditional folk music in his ballet "The Wooden Prince".

At the same time, upheavals in Europe do not leave Bartók unimpressed. Particularly due to his own strong national consciousness, Bartók strictly condemns National Socialism and refuses to perform in Germany at that time. Back home in radical right-winged Hungary, his liberal attitude makes life difficult for the musician. The outbreak of the Second World War finally forces Bartók to leave his beloved homeland. In 1940, he immigrates to the United States where he dies of leukaemia on the 26th of September 1945 in New York City – with no return to the villages of Transylvania.

Jan N. Lorenzen

Author, director

Jan N. Lorenzen was born in 1969 in Hamburg. After he finished school he began studying history in Hamburg and Berlin. From 1994 till 2000 he worked as an editor for MDR, section contemporary history. Since 2001 he works as a free editor and director. Besides others he published "Erich Honecker. Eine Biographie" (Rowohlt-Verlag 2001).

Selected Filmography:

Am Rande eines Krieges. Der Ungarische Aufstand 1956

MDR/ ARD 1996, 45 min., with Kurt Tetzlaff

Stalin gegen Hitler. Das Duell der Diktatoren

MDR/ ARD 1998, 75 min., with Christian Klemke

Die Sekretäre. Walter Ulbricht und Erich Honecker

MDR 1999 90 min., with Christian Klemke

Roter Stern über Deutschland. Die sowjetische Militärherrschaft 1945 bis 1994

ORB/ ARD 2001, 3 x 45 min., with Christian Klemke

Grimme Award 2002 / category information and culture

48 Stunden Afghanistan. Die Kriegserinnerungen des Oberst Wasenin

ORB/ WDR/ ARD 2002, 45 min., with Christian Klemke

Alltag einer Behörde – Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit

MDR/ ARTE/ MDM 2002, 90 min.; with Christian Klemke

International Leipzig Festival For Documentary and Animated Film 2002,

International Filmfestival Biarritz 2003

Stalingrad

ORB/ ARD 2002, 2 x 45 min.; with Christian Klemke

Die hungernde Stadt – Leningrad im Zweiten Weltkrieg

MDR/ ARTE 2002, 2 x 45 min, with Christian Klemke

Die Agentenjagd – Atomspione im Visier des FBI

MDR/ ARTE 2003, 45 min., with Titus Richter

Leben in Trümmern. Dresden 1945

MDR/ARTE 2004, 45 min, with Hannes Schuler

Die großen Schlachten

ARTE/ ARD 2006, 3 * 52/ 45 min, with Hannes Schuler

Sonderauftrag Führermuseum

ARTE-France/ AVRO/ ORF/ MDM/ Media 2006, 90 min / 2 * 52 min, with Hannes Schuler

Tod in den Wolken. Luftspionage über der DDR

ARTE, MDR 2007, 52/ 45 min, with John Goetz, Michael Marten, Claudia Schön

Bartóks Requiem

2008, 87 min

Festivals

32. Duisburger Filmwoche, November 2008

2. Crossroad of Europe Film Festival, Lublin, Poland, April 2009

Doc Buenos Aires, Argentinien, October 2009

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Hoferichter & Jacobs

Gesellschaft für audiovisuelle Medien und Kommunikationstechnologien mbH

Company Profile

Since 1996, Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH continuously produces reports, documentaries and feature films. Our main focus lies with contemporary topics realised in long formats. We are interested in exceptional, intriguing and fascinating stories baring the potential to be told, in a highly qualified manner, to both a German and an international audience. We aim to find an adequate realisation for unique stories strengthened by a convincing authorial stance and a gripping narrative approach. Dealing with such various filmic forms as the docu-soap, docu-dramas and different hybrid formats during the last years has often led us into the fascinating borderlands between reality and fiction.

At the moment, our main focal point is on further developing individual filmic approaches and visual styles. Working together constantly with a range of authors and directors creates the core of this intention – the mutual knowledge of individual strengths and weaknesses gives the opportunity of shared success. At the same time, Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH increasingly produces on an international scale: In 2004, more than two thirds of our productions have been realised as an international co-production. In pursuing this further, we can produce films for which a national market would have been proven too small. Numerous awards, festival invitations as well as an abundance of international sales support this stance.

The Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH team consists of nine permanent employees. Olaf Jacobs, together with the producers Carolin Scheffler and Anne Stephan, accounts for the film productions. Peter Effenberg supervises the production process and all technical services.

Matthias Hoferichter left the company in 1999. Olaf Jacobs is CEO. In between 2003 and 2006, Hoferichter & Jacobs acted as executive producer of the European Film Academy's master classes. The company holds shares in the Cocopelli Musikverlag GmbH, in the art & pictures Medien GmbH and in the PentAlpha Verlag für Kunst und Medien gGmbH, Leipzig.