Omaggio a

János Sebestyén

organista e clavicembalista

Angelicum Master Series

CD 1 — 76:32

Concerti per organo e orchestra

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

Concerto in do maggiore per organo e orchestra, Hob. XVIII: 1 — ***22:39***

1 I. Moderato — *8:05*

2 II. Largo — *8:25*

3 III. Allegro molto — *6:07*

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Concerto in si bemolle maggiore per organo e orchestra, Op. 4 N. 2 — ***10:37***

4 I. A tempo ordinario e staccato — *1:08*

5 II. Allegro — *5:27*

6 III. Adagio e staccato — *1:29*

7 IV. Allegro, ma non presto — *2:32*

Orchestra da camera dell'Angelicum diretta da **Bruno Amaducci**

Registrazione effettuata nel mese di Ottobre del 1963 sull'organo Tamburini nella sala da concerto dell'Angelicum di Milano. Pubblicato originariamente nel 1964 come **Angelicum LPA 5938**.

Melodie di Natale (selezioni)

Domenico Zipoli (1688–1726)

8 **Pastorale** — *3:47*

Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583–1643)

9 **Capriccio pastorale** — *3:08*

Bernardo Pasquini (1637–1710)

10 **Pastorale** — *3:28*

Giuseppe Aldrovandini (1671–1707)

11 **O bambino mio divino** — *2:10*

Leopold Kozeluch (1747–1818)

12 **Pastorale** — *4:46*

Registrazione effettuata nel 1969 sull'organo Antegnati della Chiesa di San Carlo a Brescia. Pubblicato originariamente nel 1972 come **Angelicum STA 9018**.

Johann Speth (1664–dopo il 1719)

Dieci toccate per organo "Musicalisches Blumen-Felder" (selezioni)

13	**Toccata VI**	*4:14*
14	**Toccata VII**	*2:29*

Registrazione effettuata nel 1969 sull'organo Antegnati della Chiesa di San Carlo a Brescia. Pubblicazione originariamente prevista come **Angelicum STA 9042**. Pubblicato per la prima volta in Italia nel 1981 come **Ars Nova VST 6168**.

Johann Gottfried Walther (1684–1748)

Concerti e variazioni per organo (selezioni)

	Concerto del Signor Telemann in do minore, LV 136	***10:01***
15	I. (Adagio—Allegro)	*5:58*
16	II. Adagio	*2:10*
17	III. (Allegro)	*1:53*
18	**Tema e variazioni sul corale "Meinen Jesum laß ich nicht"**, LV 1	*9:08*

Registrazione effettuata nel 1970 sull'organo Antegnati della Chiesa di San Carlo a Brescia. Pubblicazione originariamente prevista come **Angelicum STA 9041**. Pubblicato per la prima volta in Italia nel 1980 come **Ars Nova VST 6167**.

CD 2 — *78:09*

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Dai XVI concerti trascritti per clavicembalo (selezioni)

	Concerto in sol minore da Georg Philipp Telemann, BWV 985	***8:05***
1	I. (Allegro)	*2:44*
2	II. Adagio	*2:55*
3	III. Allegro	*2:25*
	Concerto in do maggiore dal Principe Johann Ernst di Sassonia-Weimar, BWV 984	***9:36***
4	I. (Allegro)	*3:22*
5	II. Adagio e affettuoso	*3:00*
6	III. Allegro assai	*3:13*
	Concerto in sol maggiore da Anonimo (forse Telemann), BWV 986	***5:22***
7	I. (Allegro)	*2:07*
8	II. Adagio	*1:29*
9	III. Allegro	*1:46*

Concerto in re minore dal Principe Johann Ernst di Sassonia-Weimar, BWV 987 ***7:21***

10 I. (Grave)—(Presto)—(Grave)—Presto—Grave *3:10*

11 II. (Allegro) *2:03*

12 III. Adagio *0:42*

13 IV. Vivace *1:24*

Registrazione effettuata nel 1968 nello studio dell'Angelicum di Milano. Pubblicato originariamente nel 1973 come **Angelicum STA 9015**.

attribuito a Johann Sebastian Bach
Otto piccoli preludi e fughe per organo

14 **Preludio e fuga N. 1 in do maggiore**, BWV 553 *3:53*

15 **Preludio e fuga N. 2 in re minore**, BWV 554 *4:23*

16 **Preludio e fuga N. 3 in mi minore**, BWV 555 *4:49*

17 **Preludio e fuga N. 4 in fa maggiore**, BWV 556 *3:34*

18 **Preludio e fuga N. 5 in sol maggiore**, BWV 557 *4:31*

19 **Preludio e fuga N. 6 in sol minore**, BWV 558 *4:10*

20 **Preludio e fuga N. 7 in la minore**, BWV 559 *3:20*

21 **Preludio e fuga N. 8 in si bemolle maggiore**, BWV 560 *4:23*

22 **Fantasia e fuga in la minore**, BWV 561 *12:20*

Registrazione effettuata intorno al 1970 sull'organo Tamburini della Duomo di Rovigo. Pubblicato originariamente nel 1973 come **Angelicum STA 9029**.

Paul Hindemith (1895–1963)
Sonate per organo **(selezione)**

Sonata III über alte Volkslieder (1940)

23 III. "So wünsh ich ihr" Ruhig bewegt *2:14*

Registrazione effettuata nel mese di Ottobre del 1963 sull'organo Tamburini nella sala da concerto dell'Angelicum di Milano. Pubblicato originariamente nel 1964 come **Angelicum LPA 5963**.

János Sebestyén

organista e clavicembalista

L'imperitura eredità musicale di Thomas Gallia

Il progetto di recupero delle registrazioni Angelicum, effettuate da Thomas Gallia, nasce da un mio desiderio di digitalizzare nuovamente, con tecnologie aggiornate, registrazioni analogiche di elevata qualità, che percorrono un lasso di tempo importantissimo dal punto di vista musicale e culturale della mia città: Milano. Incontrai l'Ing. Thomas Gallia per la prima volta nel 1990 ad una cena in casa di Piero Sarti, allora proprietario della casa discografica Sarx Records. Fu per me una occasione straordinaria di incontrare una leggenda vivente delle produzioni discografiche, ovvero l'uomo che realizzò gran parte dei dischi che accompagnarono la mia educazione musicale dalla fine degli anni 60 in poi. Durante la sua lunga carriera, Gallia è stato ingegnere del suono per quasi duemila registrazioni. Tra le sue produzioni per la serie Angelicum si possono trovare artisti illustri come Franco Gulli, Bruno Giuranna, Claudio Abbado, Alberto Mozzati, Antonio Janigro, Alberto Zedda, Goffredo Petrassi, Bruno Maderna e János Sebestyén. Ha anche collaborato frequentemente con figure di spicco nel mondo della musica antica, tra cui Gustav Leonhardt, Paul Badura-Skoda, Scott Ross, Blandine Verlet, Jordi Savall e Skip Sempé.

Piero Sarti e Thomas Gallia erano amici di vecchia data, poiché agli inizi degli anni 60, in ruoli diversi, parteciparono alla gestione dell'Angelicum, una delle più importanti realtà culturali della Milano di quegli anni. Mentre lavoravo alle lunghe sessioni di recupero degli Original Master Tapes, iniziai a cercare in Internet fotografie che documentassero gli studi Angelicum e le registrazioni di Thomas Gallia di quegli anni. Trovai una galleria di immagini molto interessanti, con foto non solo legate alla professione dell'Ing. Gallia, ma anche foto di carattere più intimo e familiare. Il sito in realtà non era dedicato esclusivamente all'attività dell'Ing. Gallia, ma all'organista e cembalista János Sebestyén. Una notte, mentre stavo copiando Master Tapes Angelicum, decido di scrivere all'indirizzo del sito, esponendo il lavoro che stavo portando avanti da qualche tempo e chiedendo se ci fosse la possibilità di avere foto di Thomas Gallia, Paul Déry (suo assistente e socio) e degli studi dell'Angelicum. Con mia grande sorpresa ricevetti una risposta quasi immediata, direttamente da Robert Tifft: il cerchio si stava chiudendo!

Iniziò da quel momento una fitta corrispondenza con Robert, dalla quale nacque il progetto di recuperare le registrazioni di János Sebestyén, effettuate da Thomas Gallia in Italia, per farne una nuova edizione. Il desiderio mio e di Robert era di utilizzare esclusivamente i Master Analogici Originali (Original Master Tapes) appena ritrovati, utilizzando per la digitalizzazione moderni convertitori e frequenze di campionamento molto più elevate della risoluzione del formato CD. I primi riversamenti effettuati, usando registratori Studer A812 e Nagra T, hanno rivelato un suono particolarmente fedele, con una gamma

bassa profonda e una grande trasparenza nelle alte frequenze, una qualità decisamente superiore alle copie pubblicate su LP negli anni 60 e 70. Questa nuova edizione nasce quindi con l'intento di avvicinare l'ascoltatore il più possibile all'idea di suono, che Thomas Gallia e János Sebestyén avevano fissato su nastro più di 50 anni fa.

Marco Taio

The enduring musical legacy of Thomas Gallia

The recovery project of the Angelicum recordings made by Thomas Gallia was born from my desire to digitize, with updated technologies, high quality analog recordings that document a very important period of time from the musical and cultural point of view of my city: Milan. I met engineer Thomas Gallia for the first time in 1990 during a dinner at the home of Piero Sarti, then owner of Sarx Records. It was an extraordinary occasion for me to meet this living legend of record productions, the man who produced the majority of the records that accompanied my musical education from the late 60s. During his long career, Gallia was sound engineer for nearly two thousand recordings. Among his productions for the Angelicum series one can find illustrious artists such as Franco Gulli, Bruno Giuranna, Claudio Abbado, Alberto Mozzati, Antonio Janigro, Alberto Zedda, Goffredo Petrassi, Bruno Maderna, and János Sebestyén. He also collaborated frequently with prominent figures from the world of early-music, including Gustav Leonhardt, Paul Badura-Skoda, Scott Ross, Blandine Verlet, Jordi Savall, and Skip Sempé.

Piero Sarti and Thomas Gallia were longtime friends, and at the beginning of the 60s, with different roles, they took part in the management of the Angelicum, one of the most important cultural realities of Milan during those years. While working on the long recovery sessions of the original master tapes, I began searching online for photographs documenting the Angelicum studio and Thomas Gallia's recordings from those years. I found a gallery of interesting photos, linked not only to the profession of Gallia, but also photos of a more intimate and familiar character. The website was not dedicated exclusively to Gallia's work, but to that of János Sebestyén, an organist and harpsichordist. One night, while copying the Angelicum master tapes, I decided to write to the website address, explaining the work I had been doing for some time, and asking if there was the possibility of having photos of Thomas Gallia, Paul Déry (his assistant and business partner), and the Angelicum studios. To my great surprise, I received an almost immediate answer directly from Robert Tifft: the circle was closing!

From that moment a close correspondence with Robert began, initiating our project to recover, for a new edition, the recordings of János Sebestyén made by Thomas Gallia in Italy. Our desire was to use only the newly found Angelicum master tapes and to digitize them utilizing modern converters and sampling rates much higher than standard CD resolution. The first transfers we made, using Studer A812 and Nagra T recorders, revealed an accurate sound, with a deep low range and great transparency in high frequencies, a quality much higher than the LP copies published in the 60s and 70s. Therefore, this new edition was born with the intention of bringing the listener as close as possible to the idea of sound that Thomas Gallia and János Sebestyén fixed on tape more than 50 years ago.

Marco Taio

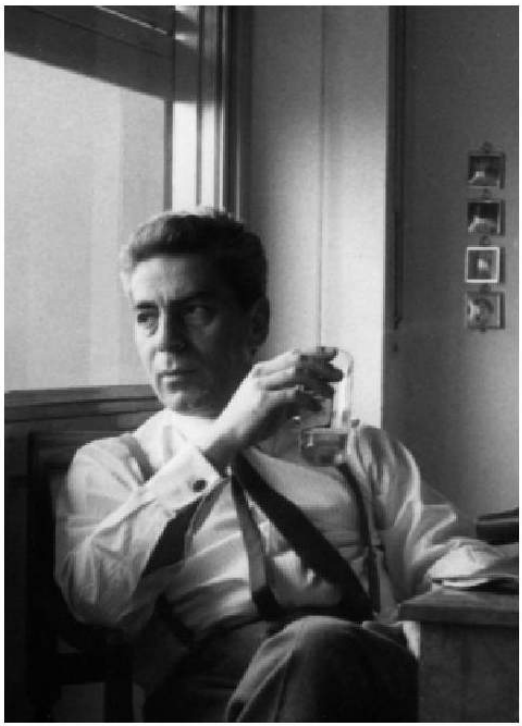
Translated by Emanuele Mazzola

Recording equipment:

Microphones:	Schoeps CM 63 – omni & CM 64 – cardioid (1959) Neumann SM 23 (1961) & SM 69 (1964)
Recorders:	Telefunken M10A ¼ tube stereo master tape machine Studer A62
Mixers:	Telefunken & Studer
Tapes:	Agfa PER 555 or BASF LGR 30
Tape speed:	15 ips
Tape equalization:	CCIR 15 ips 320nWb/m CCIR 35µs

Equipment for digital transfer of tapes:

Recorders:	Studer A812 & Nagra T
Converter:	Lynx Aurora 16
Capture frequency:	96Khz/24bit
DAW:	Sequoia 12



Thomas Gallia; Milan, 1968

Thomas Gallia; Angelicum studio, circa 1963

Paul Déry; Milan, circa 1965

Thomas Gallia, conductor Aldo Ceccato, and Paul Déry; Milan, circa 1965

János Sebestyén; Milan, 1968

Thomas Gallia, Paul Déry, and their compatriot Tibor Kelemen; Angelicum studio, 1968

Paul Déry and Thomas Gallia; Milan, 1971

Sebestyén, Gallia, and Déry: a Hungarian triumvirate in Italy

The present collection encompasses selections from the recordings made for the Angelicum label in Milan with organist and harpsichordist János Sebestyén. Remastered from the original tapes and available here for the first time on CD, they represent not only Sebestyén's first recordings published in Italy, but also the beginning of his productive collaboration with the esteemed audio engineer Thomas Gallia and his colleague Paul Déry. At the same time, they also help tell the engaging story of three Hungarians who found themselves making records in Italy during the 1960s.

János Sebestyén was born in Budapest in 1931 to musical parents. His father, Sándor Sebestyén, was a prominent cellist and educator. His mother, Rózsi Mannaberg, was a pianist. Sebestyén's formal musical education began in 1946 at the newly established State Music Secondary School where he studied piano, organ, and composition with István Antal, János Hammerschlag, and Ervin Major. He continued his studies with Ferenc Gergely at the Academy of Music and graduated there with an organ diploma in 1955. His association with the harpsichord came about in 1957 when he was asked to play the solo part in a performance of Frank Martin's *Petite symphonie concertante*. This concert proved decisive, awakening interest in an instrument that was unfamiliar to many in Hungary at that time. With opportunities for organists being limited, Sebestyén quickly established himself as Hungary's leading harpsichordist. He inspired new works from composers Emil Petrovics and János Decsényi, and his many recitals, radio broadcasts, and performances for television and film, introduced the harpsichord to a large and enthusiastic public. With his founding of the harpsichord department at the Academy of Music in 1970, he secured for the instrument a permanent place in Hungarian musical life.

From his childhood, however, Sebestyén dreamed of being a radio personality, and his association with Hungarian Radio began in 1950 upon the recommendation of composer Elek Huzella. His career there spanned more than fifty years, resulting in hundreds of broadcasts that included programs documenting his travels abroad, the history of Hungarian Radio, and comprehensive surveys of the great musicians of the past century. His popular monthly series *From the Diary of a Radio Reporter* meticulously reconstructed the past, both culturally and politically, through personal interviews and original sound documents. And it was at Hungarian Radio in 1950 that he first encountered Tamás (Thomas) Gallia and Pál (Paul) Déry, the two men who would become his closest friends and most frequent collaborators in the recording studio. Sebestyén provides the following account in his unpublished memoir:

I was familiar with Tamás Gallia from photos in the radio newsletter. I learned only on the very first day that he was the grandson of István Thomán. A smart, tall, handsome man with an Italian-like constitution and face, totally different from Pál Déry, a man considerably overweight even then, who was born in Szeged where his father had a hardware business. Déry was opting for a singer's career and was on good terms with both János Starker and György Sebők. Tamás Gallia in his time was taking piano lessons from Béla Bartók, and thanks to the family traditions could claim acquaintance with half the music world. In spite of his Italian looks he was Hungarian, but completed secondary school in Milan and possessed full command of the Italian language. His father, Branco Gallia, was a bank clerk in Budapest, who was offered the director's post of his bank's branch in Italy, which he was leading as long as it was possible, but then came the war, repatriation, and other things that had to follow ... The young Gallia proved to be an excellent music director, and in addition was attending the Technical University in the mornings and evenings as one of the first students of professor Tamás Tarnóczy. Déry at the same time was the dedicated director of all song-related programs due to his genuine attraction to opera.

Gallia, born in Budapest in 1921, was descended from an illustrious musical family—his grandfather, István Thomán, studied piano under Liszt and was later Bartók's teacher. After graduating with a piano diploma from the Academy of Music in 1944, he studied engineering at the State Polytechnic University. From 1947 he worked at Hungarian Radio, but in 1951 was suddenly transferred by the Ministry to become chief engineer for the state record label MHV, predecessor of Hungaroton. Following the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 he worked in Paris, first for Pathé Marconi then Disques Charlin, and from 1961 he was director of the recording studio at the Angelicum in Milan.

Déry was also removed from his post at Hungarian Radio, where, according to Sebestyén, "two pillars of the director's unit abruptly disappeared." He obtained a position as soloist with the Honvéd Art Ensemble and in October 1956 found himself on tour in China when the revolution broke out. In December, the ensemble departed by train to Moscow where they were to give a gala performance, but the members unanimously staged a strike and refused to perform due to Russian suppression of the revolution. Upon their return to Hungary, the entire ensemble was dismissed for political reasons. Déry then found work as an opera singer in Stralsund, East Germany, and for six years performed many of the leading tenor roles. After returning to Budapest he moved to Milan, where he was initially employed as a copyist by the music

publisher Ricordi. It was during this time that Gallia began formulating plans to establish Sonart, his own independent recording business, and Déry soon partnered with him in this venture.

Sebestyén first visited Italy in June 1963 for a concert in Rome at Sala Casella with baryton soloist János Liebner. It was also during this visit that he first met and interviewed composer Miklós Rózsa. Their ensuing decades-long friendship culminated in Rózsa's Hungarian-language biography *Stories from My Life*, compiled by Sebestyén from their dozens of taped interviews. Before returning to Budapest, Sebestyén visited Milan where Gallia was now studio director at the Angelicum. The Angelicum, an imposing redbrick structure designed by Giovanni Muzio and completed in 1942, was an important cultural center attached to both a church and monastery. Sebestyén offers the following description:

> *On the ground floor there was a concert hall: from 10 AM to 1 PM rehearsals, at 4 PM an English-language film screening, from 6 to 9 PM pause, and at 9 PM another film screening. (It was the only foreign language cinema in Milan.) On Mondays there used to be concerts (no cinema that day) with the "Orchestra stabile dell'Angelicum" (a staff orchestra) with Bruno Amaducci from Lugano as director of music and Achille Berutti as continuo organist and harpsichordist—an excellent musician who passed away early. The organ, strangely enough, had its place under the stage, with several openings peeping out, and when not in service these were closed down and even covered with planks. Nobody suspected that deep down an organ was hiding. A genuine solution by the way. The second floor was dedicated to the finance director, the third to management, on the fourth the great recording studio, and on the fifth the music cabinets for the scores. The general director of the institution was Riccardo Allorto, a well-known and excellent music historian, and he decided on the repertoire and artists for the recordings. The ground floor corridor was decorated with the fancy covers. And the great grand master of this whole establishment was the rigid, yet highly respected, Padre Zucca.*

Sebestyén was introduced to Allorto by Gallia, whose warm recommendation resulted in an invitation to play a concert with the orchestra in October that same year. The program included concertos by Haydn and Handel, and in the days before and after this performance, both works, along with two sonatas by Hindemith, were recorded on the concert hall's "hidden" Tamburini organ. The records were published by the Angelicum label in 1964, a milestone for Sebestyén:

This was the "Grand Overture"—the first two records made abroad. Bruno Amaducci was an excellent conductor, the orchestra was friendly, and the fact that within one session we succeeded to record a whole concerto was a revelation to me (in contrast to the Hungarian practice where one session might result in 7–8 minutes). Here in Italy this was all very natural, here time was money. It was a great learning experience. In Western countries recordings are being made like that ...

In 1967 Gallia visited New York with the prospect of establishing a working relationship with George Mendelssohn, the Hungarian émigré and founder of the Vox label. Mendelssohn accepted Gallia's offer to produce recordings through Sonart, and upon the recommendations of both Gallia and Miklós Rózsa, Sebestyén was engaged as soloist. Mendelssohn initially offered Sebestyén an exclusive contract, but Gallia, already aware of Mendelssohn's financial tricks, felt this would limit their opportunities and advised Sebestyén against accepting his offer.

With a studio at their disposal, and a small yet flexible staff, Sonart was able to produce recordings quickly and economically. Gallia and Déry's working relationship was firmly established by this time, with Gallia responsible for the technical aspects of the recording and Déry serving as producer and editor. They were both assisted by Pasquale Soggiu at the Angelicum. Déry later became proficient with the technical aspects as well, and his patient nature effectively balanced Gallia's sometimes-tempestuous personality. Sebestyén's first marathon session for Vox began in February 1968, and once the initial four albums were complete, Gallia expected him to record additional material, out of friendship, that could be licensed through Sonart. This pattern continued for several years, with the Vox sessions resulting in additional recordings licensed to CBS Italiana, Ariston, and BAM.

Among these "friendship recordings" can also be found the remaining records published by Angelicum. The first to be completed was the Bach recital *Dai XVI concerti trascritti per clavicembalo*, recorded on the studio's often-uncooperative Neupert harpsichord, the only instrument readily available to Sebestyén and Gallia. The master tapes are dated April 1968, although the record remained unpublished until 1973.

Melodie di Natale was recorded at the Church of San Carlo in Brescia. The precise origin of the church's organ is unclear, but it is generally attributed to Graziadio Antegnati—member of the prolific Antegnati family of organ builders active throughout northern Italy for two centuries. The description on the organ case reads: "This instrument, built in 1636 by the Antegnati workshop in Brescia, was restored by

Armando Maccarinelli in 1958 under the technical direction of Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini and Ernesto Meli." Organist René Saorgin described the San Carlo organ as an ideal example of the Antegnati's art. The master tapes for *Melodie di Natale* are dated November 1969 and the record was published by Angelicum in 1972.

Sebestyén made two additional recordings on the San Carlo organ, one devoted to toccatas by Johann Speth, the other to concertos and variations by Johann Gottfried Walther. The Speth master tapes, like *Melodie di Natale*, are dated November 1969, while the Walther dates from June 1970. Both recordings were licensed to the French label BAM and published in 1972, but were among several releases, including Sebestyén's 1973 recordings of Handel and Vivaldi flute sonatas with Lóránt Kovács, that were originally scheduled for publication by Angelicum in an attempt to revive their flagging record business. All of them remained unpublished upon the label's demise but received their Italian release when the Angelicum catalog reemerged under the Ars Nova imprint beginning in the late 1970s.

Bach's *Eight Little Preludes and Fugues*, released late in 1973, was one of the last records published by Angelicum. The master tapes are undated, but the recording, made in the Rovigo cathedral, most likely dates from 1970 or the following year. The cathedral's organ was constructed by Giuseppe Cipriani in 1832, enlarged by Annibale Pugina in 1930, and again by Tamburini in 1960. Sebestyén vividly recalls the late-night session:

> *We recorded the* Eight Little Preludes and Fugues *as "guests"—meaning that Gallia was renting the cathedral for an orchestra, but with them the recording was finished by 10 PM and following a light supper came my turn at around 11 PM. I continued the work "in the dark."*
>
> *We finished around 4 AM—it was a real night rush, and outside the weather was miserable: thunderstorms and torrential rain, not like we were used to at home, but twice as vehement and double the volume of water, so typical of countries near the sea. At dawn all had to be taken down, things packed and transported through the side door under huge plastic covers. "You are a radio man," I often remember hearing as a warning from Gallia, or rather as an order. "Here are the keys, shut everything off and close properly."*

I never was a worrying type, but that night, yes. I switched off the lights one after the other, hastily closed the doors, and found my way down on the stairs. The cathedral, dim as it was, gradually turned pitch black. Red candles, subdued sounds, small creaks and stirrings—all this intensified by the darkness. Penetrating flashes of lightning filled the cathedral and outside it rumbled ominously. I was inching my way in the darkness and felt relief upon finally seeing the dim light coming through the side door. Quickly, out through the falling rain and into the safety of the car waiting outside. Off we drove to Milan.

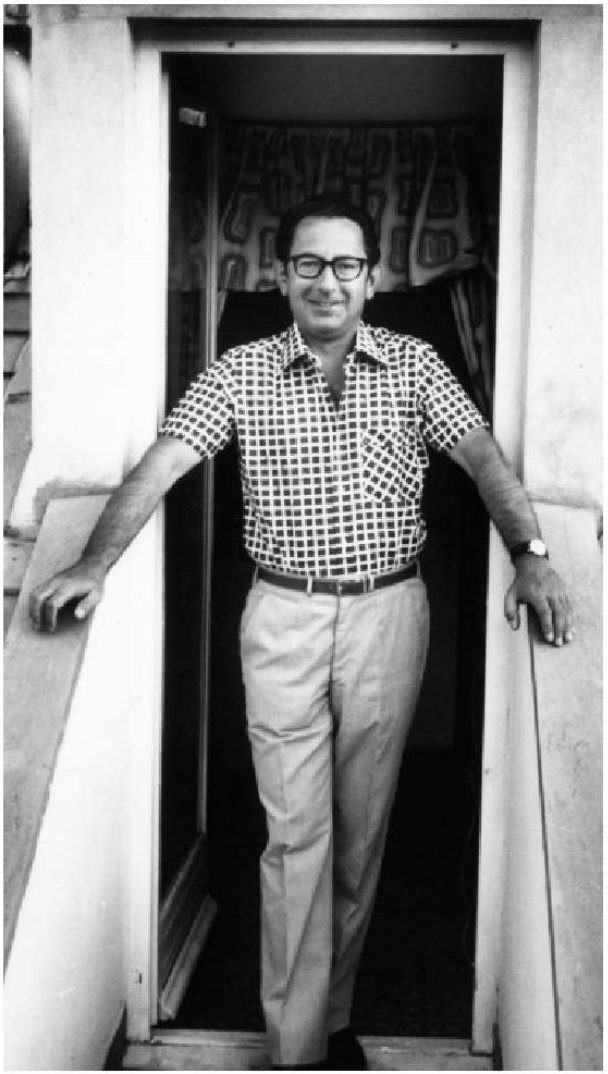
Only for a while though, because after a time the car began to jerk, and under an overhead bridge (fortunately) it stopped for good. Gallia looked darkly at Déry, "You did refuel the car as we agreed, didn't you?" "Forgot ..." groaned Déry. Covering his head with a plastic bag, petrol can in hand, he immediately started off in the direction of a luckily not too far away gasoline station. On return he was driven back by the station staff. This is how our Rovigo adventure happened.

During a 1990 interview with music historian Allan Evans, János Sebestyén quipped in regard to these recordings and their subsequent reissue that "... you cannot be free from the records, they are coming after you. You want to hurry away, but the records are following ..." Prescient words, for here they are, pursuing him yet again. But this time he need not fear. This collection is offered not to the critics or as a definitive testament to his art, but rather as a modest tribute to this remarkably versatile musician and the adept professionalism of Thomas Gallia and Paul Déry. It is a memento of their friendship, the Angelicum, and the city of Milan, Sebestyén's second home, and in these respects he would no doubt be pleased. Déry died in 1992 and Gallia in 1997, their passing marking the end of Sonart as well. When writing about both men in his memoir not long before his death in 2012, Sebestyén reminisced over the old tapes and photos that document their time together, asking "who will care about these in a few years?" The present edition answers that question.

Robert Tifft

Passages from János Sebestyén's memoir translated by Judit Hidasi

Manuela Pertile; Borca di Cadore, 1971



János Sebestyén; Hotel Fiorina, Santa Margherita Ligure, 1972

Miklós Rózsa and János Sebestyén; Portofino, 1971

Paul Déry, Thomas Gallia, and their assistant Pasquale Soggiu; Valli del Pasubio, 1975

Thomas Gallia; Valli del Pasubio, 1975

János Sebestyén and Thomas Gallia; Angelicum studio, 1975

Evening lessons, harpsichord fireworks

Collecting memories and preserving them was one of the favorite activities of my former teacher and later true friend: János Sebestyén. I will try to collect some memories of him now.

Every time I enter the historical main building of the Budapest Music Academy, especially during the evening hours, I cannot help but recall our harpsichord lessons with János in the 1980s. For many years, the lessons took place in a room situated at the far end of the stage of the Great Hall, and to access it we had to walk behind the stage and under the big organ in a corridor similar to a tunnel. Maybe due to this, the room had a remote, somewhat hidden, nearly secret character. Lessons usually took place in the evening, János typically being most active from late in the day until far into the night. He frequently arrived clad in an elegant suit in preparation for a late-night recording session at Hungarian Radio, to where he would hurry after teaching. Even during the lesson he would sometimes pull a worn scrap of paper from his pocket to make short and hasty notes—apparently struck by a sudden inspiration related to the approaching recording.

Due to a flexible and not entirely fixed schedule, we students often heard each other play while waiting for our own lesson to begin—thus attending the lessons of our fellow students. I have very vivid memories of these moments, being able to observe the passion with which János instructed. He normally waited in silence until an entire piece had been played. If he did not like the interpretation, he would briefly say something like “no, no, not like that” and, still uttering these words, would jump to the instrument, nearly sweeping the student aside, and begin to play the piece, bursting with energy and inspiration, and very vivid colors.

János was by no means a systematic teacher. After having demonstrated a piece, he did not necessarily add further comments. He also did not follow any strict plan regarding repertoire. Every student was allowed to bring to the lessons whatever she or he wanted to play and János seldom suggested specific composers or compositions. But when he did so, it turned out to be most significant for me. This is how I was confronted for the very first time with the music of Soler and Seixas, which then became a love forever.

He allowed us just as much freedom regarding our own interpretations. He never required us to copy his way of playing, not even details like registrations or articulation. We could follow our own path. One

aspect of music making, however, was most important to him: he could not stand any inactive, lazy, or dull approach to music. Still fascinated by the (so-called) historical performance practice, my own playing did not have a strong rhythmic impact. It was instead somewhat "sleepy" and my registrations were of utmost simplicity, which was the "historically correct" trend of those times. János, clearly disliking this, called it "meditative" playing, a remark he made frequently. What he emphasized instead, was the constant flow of the music, with a clear rhythmic profile and much activity and energy. This inner "fire" he required from us gave his own interpretations the typically strong inner drive so characteristic of his playing. I recall only a few concrete sentences from János during the lessons, but I clearly remember him constantly demanding liveliness in music, in every note. Like the core of his teaching, this requirement has accompanied me throughout my career. Also unforgettable were the times he demonstrated his interpretation of a specific piece—perhaps the greatest moments of our lessons. And how important these demonstrations were I understand only now, many years later, realizing how vividly I still remember them and how strongly they have influenced me. For these memories, I will always be profoundly grateful to János.

May this publication be a true documentation of János Sebestyén's energetic and fiery manner of playing, and inspire future generations to new and hopefully lively performances.

Miklós Spányi

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János Sebestyén; Milan, 1968