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**50 YEARS OF GYÖRGY SÁNDOR**  
**The Legendary Bartók Disciple's Complete Columbia and Sony Recordings**  
**17-CD Box Set**



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**Reviewer Rate: \$43.14**

Few musicians were more significantly linked with a single composer than the late Hungarian-American pianist [György Sándor](#) with his teacher Béla Bartók. The authoritative recordings of Bartók's music that Sándor made for American Columbia between 1945 and 1955 and decades later for Sony Classical during his "golden years" are now being reissued in a single box set of 17 CDs. It also contains his justly famed interpretations of composers ranging from Bach to Rachmaninoff. The earlier, monaural discs have never been issued before on CD.

György Sándor was born in 1912 in Budapest, where he studied the piano with Bartók for four years at the Liszt Academy as well as composition with Zoltán Kodály. He made his public debut in 1930 and, after performing widely throughout Europe, made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1939. The following year he decided to settle in the US, where he took citizenship, taught at two universities before moving in the 1980s to New York's Juilliard School, where his students included Hélène Grimaud and Malcolm Bilson. He continued to perform right up to 2005, the year of his death.

Sándor remained a close lifelong friend of Bartók and was one of only ten people who attended the composer's funeral in 1945. He performed and recorded his music throughout his career, and his

recordings document his special insight into the master's works. Having prepared Bartók's first two piano concertos under the composer's guidance, the year after Bartók's death Sándor gave the world premiere of the Third Piano Concerto with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra and recorded it for Columbia. That premiere now makes its first appearance on CD on Sony Classical. Decades later, in 1989, Sándor made an acclaimed recording of all three concertos for Sony Classical, with Adam Fischer conducting the Hungarian State Orchestra, also included in the new set.

During his first decade with Columbia, Sándor recorded large swaths of Bartók's solo piano music, including the complete *Mikrokosmos* on three LPs. Reviewing the latter, *High Fidelity* wrote: "To hear the entire vast, many-sided, gradually unfolding conception in the authoritative hands of Sándor is an enthralling experience." In the 1990s, the pianist, by then in his 80s, returned to Bartók's solo works, this time recording virtually all of them except the *Mikrokosmos*. About the original 4-CD set, *Gramophone's* reviewer wrote: "I was astonished at the heft, energy and puckish humour of Sándor's 1994 recording of the Piano Sonata, a more characterful rendition than its predecessor, with a particularly brilliant account of the folkish *Allegro molto* finale. *Allegro barbaro* is similarly 'on the beam', while Sándor brings a cordial warmth to the various collections of ethnic pieces, the *Romanian Christmas Carols* especially. His phrasing, rubato, expressive nuancing, attention to counterpoint and command of tone (sample the *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*) suggest the touch of a master, while his imagination relishes the exploratory nature of the *Improvisations*, *Bagatelles* and *Miraculous Mandarin-style Studies*."

In addition to his authoritative Bartók, Sándor recorded a number of other composers in the mono era. His BBC Radio producer in the 1960s described him as "the complete pianist, one of the last old-style keyboard tigers, but free of the exaggerated 'personal interpretations' with which many charismatic figures from the past raise one's eyebrows," and that assessment can be confirmed in his wide-ranging solo Columbia albums of Bach, Schumann and Liszt, as well as in works by Beethoven, Chopin and Brahms and two concertos: Rachmaninoff No. 2 from 1946 with Artur Rodziński conducting the New York Philharmonic and Chopin No. 1 from 1952 with Ormandy and the Philadelphia. All of these enjoy their CD premieres on Sony Classical, remastered from the original analog masters with state-of-the-art 24 bit / 192 kHz technology.