

## At first only with their own voices - Hungarian recordings on the Lindström labels from 1925 - 45

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Before World War I, the Carl Lindström A.G., Berlin, was one of the world's biggest manufacturers of talking machines and disc records [LOT1], which they offered in a catalogue targeted at the markets of all European countries [LOT2]. The territory of the k.u.k. Austro-Hungarian monarchy was at that time an important market for Lindström. World War I then completely stopped the Lindström productions for Hungary and Eastern Europe.

It took about seven years after the end of the war, until Lindström again entered the Hungarian market. This delay was probably caused by the politically instable early years of the 1920s: Hungary had lost both the war and two third of its territory in the treaty of Trianon in 1920. The rumourous early 1920s were followed by years of temporary prosperity under the government of István Bethlen, when Hungary became a member of the League of Nations and thereby gained access to financial support from abroad. An interesting fact is, that the Hungarian consumers insisted on music sung in Hungarian and in the beginning refused to buy international titles [SIM1]. Another reason surely was that the British Columbia had confiscated the properties of the foreign Lindström companies in World War I [GRO1]. So the reorganisation of Lindström [LOT1] and also the re-engagement in Hungary had to clear these circumstances first.

### Period I: 1926 - 33

In this situation, Lindström in 1926, with Columbia already holding the majority of its shares [LOT1], published the first new recordings in Hungary after the war. They were still recorded mechanically and part of the Parlophon matrix number series 58200 - 337 that had been started already before WW I [LOT2]. An interesting example of them is the following one: The actor Tibor (von) Halmay performs the foxtrott "Halló" (58256, Par 58255/6), accompanied by a band named "Royal Jazz-Tánc zenekar". The recording was made about mid 1926, probably in Budapest. Please note, that the record has no order number, it could be only identified by the matrix numbers on both sides:



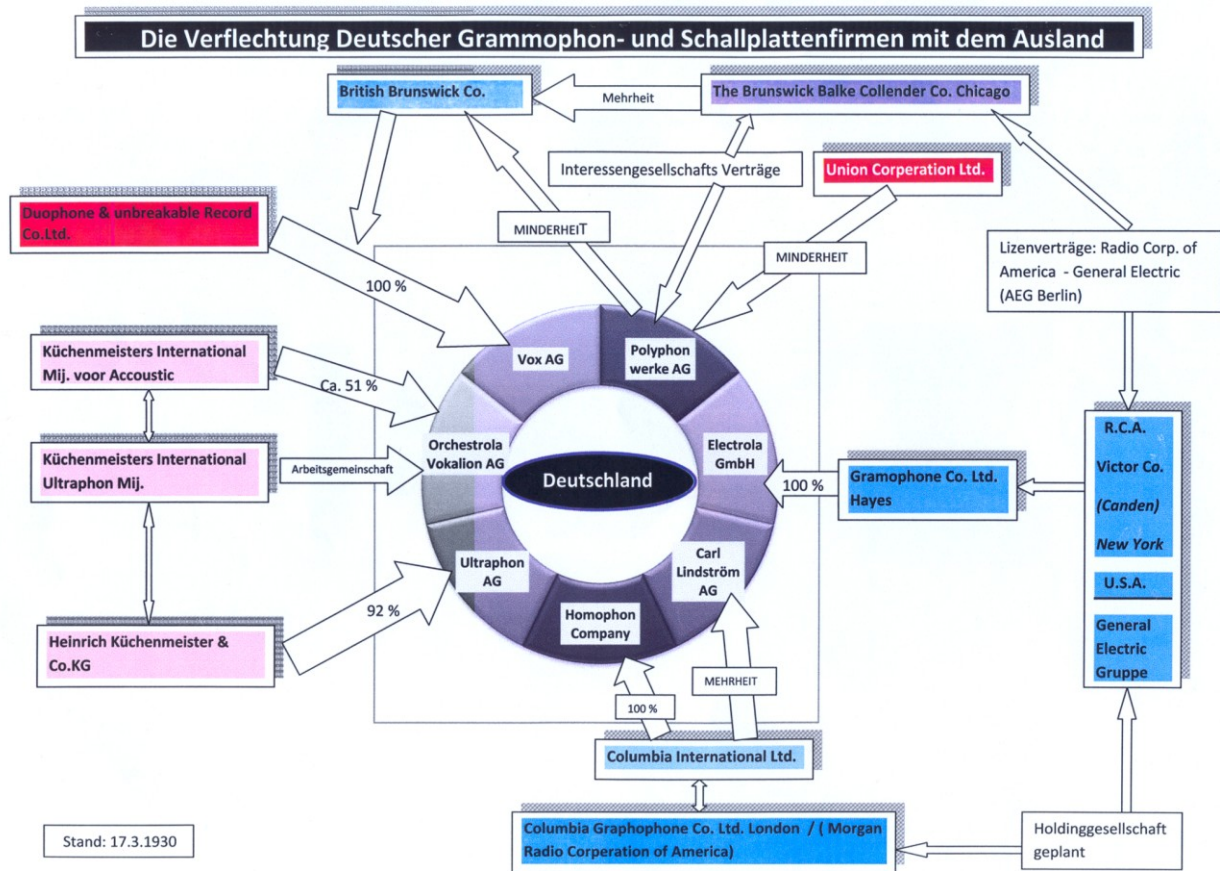
In autumn 1926, Lindström introduced the Western Electric recording process, also used for the Hungarian recordings. These recordings can be identified by the "W" in the wax. The following sound sample is the Hungarian comedy song "Frag' schon!" (Jo 1080, Od A 197008) recored in Bucuresti/Rumania in May 1927 by the Hungarian comedy singer Oszkár Dénes. The production of this record involved three countries: Rumania, where the recording was made (Jo master), the pressing plant in Berlin, Germany, and Hungary, where it was sold:



Just as Tibor von Halmai, Dénes became very popular in Germany only a few years later. His first German success was his role in Paul Abraham's musical "Victoria und ihr Husar" in 1930. The 1927 recording mentioned above in style already very much resembles his famous "scat-style" of the following 1930 recording of "Mausie" (Be 9105, Od O-2984):

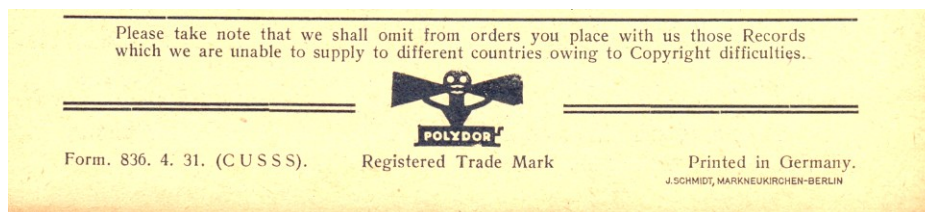


As mentioned above, Lindström at that time already was a part of the global record industry. The picture below shows the relationships between the different companies [SPE1]:



Picture 1: Relationships between the international and German record companies [SPE1].

It might be possible, that the repertoire and the royalties of the recordings (also the Hungarian ones) were influenced or determined by agreements between the global players, i. e. Columbia, RCA Victor and Brunswick [SPE1]. The different European, American and also Asian countries records were produced for by Lindström artists in Lindström facilities seem to have been divided among them: The dance band of Béla Dajos made lots of Czech recordings for the Czech market in the late 1920s / early 1930s [GOE1] but only very few ones for Hungary [SIE1]. The majority of Hungarian dance music records was made by Otto Dobrindt conducting Lindström studio bands. This definitely - at least regarding dance music - reduced the variety in styles offered in Hungarian recordings. Also [SPE1] describes a monopolization of the international artists. At last, issues regarding the repertoire policy of Lindström, especially involving future recordings, were kept secret from the market and the customers [TON1]. The May 1930 supplement of the Polydor branch of the Deutsche Grammophon contains an interesting remark regarding this topic, pointing out, that the foreign recordings are partly not available in all countries due to copyright restrictions:



Picture 2: Comment in a Deutsche Grammophon supplement of May 1930 [POL1].

The Lindström recordings for the Hungarian market were published on the 10" Odeon and Parlophon label, from 1929 on on Homocord, too. Recordings for toy gramophones were pressed on the 6"-Odeonette-label. Almost all of these were recorded in Berlin. The 10" labels used both common and different matrix number series:

Parlophon 10" red label:

- 58337 - 499 (May 1927 - January 1929)
- 58500 - 699 had already been used for Hungarian recordings in 1913
- new series 73000 was started in January 1929 and continued until June 1932
- both series used re-numbered Odeon masters, too
- until 1928 published with matrix numbers as order numbers
- then order number series B. 13001 - approx. 282

Odeon: 10" blue label:

- used some of the Parlophon 58000 and 73000 masters directly
- renumbered them into Ho-masters, too
- made own recordings in the Ho 654 - Ho 1273 series
- Odeon Ho 1 - 460 was used for Berlin / Budapest recordings made in 1910
- Ho 603 - 653 - according to the recording book - was made in Budapest
- The Jo series - around number 1000 - contains some recordings made by Hungarian artists
- All recordings were published within the A 197000 - approx 197370 order number series

Lindex / Odeonette 6" blue label:

- Lindex records only show matrix numbers: 449 – 495
- Maybe not all of them were used, 449, 450, 451, 452, 491, 495 exist
- Lindex records have no order numbers
- One of the matrix numbers was used as order number
- Odeonette records used Hm matrix number series, at least Hm 3 and 8 exist
- in O-24000 order number series, O-24006 known

Homocord 10" black label:

- Columbia had taken over the Homophon AG in 1928 [SPE1]
- made own recordings in the 63000 matrix number series
- The background of matrix 63000 - about 63100 is vague: These recordings still have the characteristic blurred Homocord sound, but seem to have been cut and pressed by Lindström. Maybe Lindström wanted to save money by this, avoiding the licence fees for Western Electric. On these recordings up to 63100 I know, neither a "W" nor an "L" can be found in the wax
- From about 63100 on, the Lindström process was used for the Homocord recordings, too.
- At least two Homocord masters were used on Odeon, too.
- Over all, about 170 records were produced, containing about 300 titles

As you can see, all three labels cross-used their 10" masters, which makes it hard to get an overview of which and how many recordings were produced by each of them. The pressing was except two French records I know all done in Berlin. This is still object of my research. At last, let's have a look at the Lindström studio, where all recordings were made:



Picture 3: The Lindström studio in approx. June 1928 [MAG1].

The picture shows the German State Orchestra under the direction of Dr. Frieder Weißmann. The decoration indicates that the picture possibly has been taken during a public concert. The organ in the background was part of the studio and could probably be covered with a curtain. The next picture shows the outside view of the studio, together with the personnel of an Otto Dobrindt studio band. Dobrindt himself is the 6<sup>th</sup> person counted from the left.



Picture 4: Otto Dobrindt and his orchestra outside the Lindström studio in the end 1920s [SCH1].

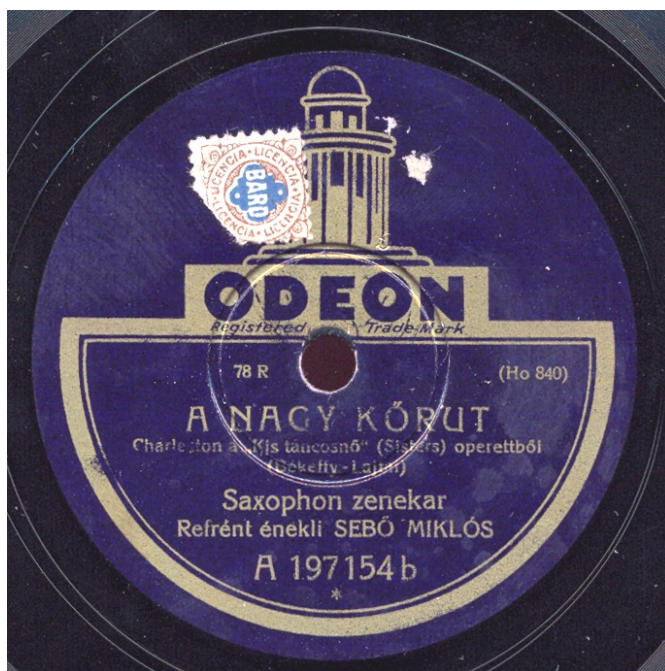
From about May 1927 on, Lindström started to replace the Western-Electric recording process by its own, newly developed one, known by the "L" in the wax. This didn't happen at once but took several tests. The first test was at least one Odeon recording of about May 1927, the master LW Jo 1080 on Hungarian Odeon A 197008 shown above. Parlophon followed in April 1928, there's at least one Hungarian matrix number LW 58403 on Parlophon. The next longer period of testing were several Hungarian masters in August 1928 (L), again followed by W and LW ones. In December 1928, the process was finally changed to L. The Hungarian Odeon masters show the same alternating stampings. In Germany, this happened at once: Odeon 10" was changed in about January 1929, Beka/Parlophon 10" in March 1929. At least one German recording differs from that. It's the German Odeon masters LW Be 6821 / LW Be 6823 on O-2484 by singer Paul O'Montis. These two recordings were made in Berlin in April 27, 1928. This indicates that the new recording process was first tested with rather silent recordings requiring a reduced volume level only. Both Od A 197008 and O-2484 are by solo singers accompanied by a piano. The later, louder orchestral recordings for testing then were the Hungarian ones, Lindström probably regarded less critical repertoire for testing than the German ones.

The vast majority of the recordings of Parlophon, Odeon and Homocord is dance and gipsy music. The dance music recordings were made using mainly German (studio) musicians, first of all bandleader Otto Dobrindt (Parlophon / Odeon) and an anonymous studio band named Homocord tánczenekar (Homocord). The famous orchestra of Béla Dajos only recorded a few Hungarian titles in 1928 and at least one in 1932. This might have been influenced by copyright regulations or royalties, which would support the thesis of the agreements between the global companies.

The following Parlophon dance music recording was made in approx. March 1930, it's the Hungarian foxtrott "Ahol az ember felmászik a fára..." (73197, Par B. 13178). It was taken from the operetta "Viktória" by Paul Abraham. The recording was made by a German studio band under the direction already mentioned Otto Dobrindt and the popular Hungarian vocalist Miklós Sebő. The combination Dobrindt-Sebő was very popular at that time. As you can see by the sticker on the label, the record was sold in Leipzig, Germany.



As some of you might have recognized, this is the earlier version of the well-known German "Ja so ein Mädel, ungrsiches Mädel" from Paul Abraham's operetta "Viktoria und ihr Husar" which later became very popular and was recorded by almost all dance orchestras and various other artists in Germany. In reverse, popular Hungarian songs were published in German versions, too. Please compare the following two recordings:



"A nagy kórut" (Ho 840, Od A 197154) again by Dobbrindt / Sebő recorded in October 1929 and



"Bin ein kleines ungarisches Mädel" (38879, Par. B 12378 by Barnabás von Géczy and Max Mensing, voc. recorded more than one year later in December 17 1930.

It is remarkable, that both singers resemble in their slightly crooning style, reminding a bit of Al Bowlly or Bing Crosby. In return, popular German hits were re-issued in Hungary with new Hungarian lyrics.

The second big part of the pre-1933 repertoire was gipsy music, i.e. Roma bands playing mainly Hungarian folk or folk style songs and dances. A typical gipsy recording is the following Homocord one made about 1930: "Kalendárium csárdás" (63102, Ho H-U 4-195) by the Hungarian singer Margit Bodnán, accompanied by an anonymous gipsy band.



Few of the Hungarian gipsy recordings were published in Germany, too. The following picture shows the announcement of a recording of violinist Imre Magyari on Odeon - unfortunately, I don't know if this record ever was published, I only know one German Parlophon pressing of two different Magyari titles.



Picture 5: Imre Magyari on German Odeon [ODE1].

There were only few recordings deviating from these two main styles dance and gipsy music, such as comedy, poetic or nonsense titles on all three labels or the few dedicated hot dance arrangements played by Teddy Kline on Homocord.

In June 1932 the Parlophon and Homocord recordings were stopped, maybe as a result of the economic crisis. Only the Odeon label was continued until November 1933. Then the German recording and pressing activities ended completely, maybe because Hungary protected its market by taxes on records. Odeon then opened up a recording studio and pressing plant in Budapest, Hungary.



## Period II: 1933 - 45

Very soon, after this, Odeon started its work in Budapest. Around late 1933 / early 1934, the first recordings were made and released in Budapest under the direction of the Hungarian record pioneer Antal Greiner [SIM1/SIM2]. He had been active in the record business before WW I already [SIM2] and still held certain marketing rights for Hungary. In style, the company continued the repertoire of the earlier years, I'd like to introduce to you now. The main focus still was dance and gipsy music. The biggest change to be mentioned was, that now mainly Hungarian artists recorded most of them. Otto Dobrindt no longer recorded for Hungary, and Odeon engaged the recently founded dance bands of Sándor Heinemann and the Mándits-Damith band [SIM3]. Some dance titles of 1933/4 were recorded by the Austrian dance band of Charly Gaudriot, accompanied by the Hungarian vocalist Pál Kalmár. One of the first recordings of the Heinemann band was the title "Nem tudom" with vocal refrain by Anna Sándor (Ho 1288, Od A 197403).

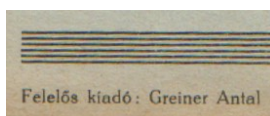


Regarding this recording, I was most impressed by the progressive hot style and the excellent, unidentified saxophone player. The band of Sándor Heinemann at that time performed for the Hungarian radio, too, playing international jazz standards [SIM4].

The following years should become the most active period of Lindström in Hungary: Up to 1940, several hundred recordings were made in the Ho matrix number series. Foreign recordings were published on Odeon as well, mainly British dance bands and coffee-house music, the latter often from German, pre-1933 recordings. The following three pictures show the 1934/5 Odeon catalogue:



Picture 6: The complete Hungarian catalogue Nr. 18 of about 1934/5 [ODE2].



Picture 7: Enlarged bottom line of title page of the catalogue showing the name of Antal Greiner [ODE2].

The advertising in picture 6 shows, that Homocord, even though the production of Homocord records had been stopped in 1932, was still used as a brand for portable gramophones. Please have a look at the Hungarian Homocord portable manufactured in July 1937 I've brought in. The pricing of the records was very high. Pengő 4,- for a 10" Odeon blue label record was about two percent of an above-average monthly salary.

German Odeon records were pressed in Budapest, too, using the original German order numbers. This included both new German recordings after 1933 and also older ones, for example of operetta singer Gitta Alpár that were no longer pressed in Germany as an effect of the cultural policy of the Nazi dictatorship - Alpár was Jewish. The German Lindström records, that were also sold in German pressings in Hungary covered both the big German minority living in Hungary and the fact, that German before WWI was the language of the Hungarian upper class. In return, few of the Hungarian recordings were published in Germany, too. One of them was this medley of Hungarian folk songs ("Ungarische Volkslieder", Ho 1498, Od O-25808) made in about late 1934:



The song you have just listened to is no folk song at all. It's a so-called magyar nóta, i. e. a folk-style song, most of which were written after 1850. "Érik a búzakalász" is by Miska Darázs. Similar in style is the following recording, sung by the actress Márta Eggerth both in German and Hungarian: "Piros pünkösöd napján / Eh' ich dich gesehen" (Be 11039, Od A 4767) recorded in Berlin in 1935 or 1936 and accompanied by the Orchestra of Gyula Kóczé.



Eggerth at that time already was well-known actress, who had started her career in the early 1930s in Berlin and who had already been recording for Lindström from 1932 on. Not only singers and actors, but also comedians enriched the Lindström repertoire. The following couplet was recorded in about 1938 in German by Berta Türk: "Nehm'se 'n Alten" (Ho 2052, Od A 197798). Even though Türk is mentioned as the only author on the label, both melody and lyrics were at least influenced by the German couplet writer/singer Otto Reutter.



During the 1930s, the operetta stayed a very popular form of entertainment, even though a considerable number of Hungarian sound films became a competitor. A very famous composer of operettas was Mihály Erdélyi. The next sound sample of about 1935/6 is from "Dorozsmai szélmalom", that means "The windmill of Dorozsma". It's a foxtrott titled "Künn a dorozsmai határban" (Ho 1669, Od A 197590):



The "Odeon tánc-zenekar" (Odeon dance orchestra) under the direction of Mr. Bohrandt and Mr. Weidinger probably was a studio band. Their style kept dominating the recordings until about 1939. Unfortunately, the quality of them - as just heard - didn't reach the high level of 1933/4. From about the mid 1930s on, also jazz trio recordings were made on Odeon, and in the end of the decade the bigband became popular. Above mentioned Ede Weidinger made Odeon recordings under the pseudonym of Eddy Whyder, and the bandleader Jenő Orlay, aka "Chappy" was engaged by Lindström. Hot dance collectors might remember him as the drummer of the legendary 1927 "Savoy Syncops

Orchestra" of Arthur Briggs. The following jazz transcription of Rossini's overture of "William Tell" / "Tell Vilmos" (Ho 2992, Od A 198248) was recorded by Chappy in autumn 1942:



The following picture shows Chappy and his orchestra:



Picture 8: Jenő Orlay (Chappy) and his Orchestra in the early 1940s [SIM3].

From 1941 on, Hungary was involved in World War II as well. As an ally of Germany, it participated in the German attack on first Yugoslavia and later the USSR. The Lindström company, as "enemy property" was put under German control, so called "Feindvermögensverwaltung" [LOT1]. German war propaganda recordings were pressed in Hungary, too, such as the following "Es ist so schön Soldat zu sein" by an orchestra under the direction of Carl

Woitschach. It's reverse was the march "Wir fahren gegen Engelland", written by Hermann Löns and taken from a German war film. One of the former owners later scratched both label and record surface.



Picture 9: Nazi propaganda recording (left) and reverse of the same record with scratched surface (right).

A more realistic, and in my opinion very impressive document of that war is the following song "A kedvesem katona" (My darling's a soldier, HO 2559, Od A 198030) by the Hungarian singer Vali Rácz. Located in style between rather corny and shocking, it describes a young woman roaming through a city thinking of her beloved man, including her wish he might stay a human in the storm of war. The recording is from about 1941.



During the war, the shortage in raw materials drastically reduced the quality of the sound recordings produced in Hungary. Please have a look at the covers from about 1943, I've brought in: The paper contains sand and wood particles which certainly scratched the surface of the records. The records themselves - like in the beginning of the century - had blisters and bumps in their surface. The Lindström recording process, also on the Hungarian recordings known by the "L" in the wax, was replaced around December 1939 (approx. order number A 197880) by a new one.

This new process led to a more blurred sound. Around summer 1944, when the Eastern front reached Hungary, Odeon shut down production. Up to then, around 1800 recordings had been produced, all in the HO, later HO series correlating to the order numbers of about A 197400 (1934) to about A 198350 (1943/4).

In 1943, Lindström published some Imperial recordings for Hungary, too. The Imperial label had replaced Kristall in 1937, when Lindström had taken over the former Deutsche Crystalate [LOT1]. For these recordings, the Lindström process was used again, the masters were part of the K-U 29000 series. As far as I know, they were all recorded in Budapest, pressed in Germany and then sold in Hungary. The repertoire of the about 120 recordings was half dance music / jazz and half gipsy music. A typical dance recording is the following waltz "Nincs kegyelem" (There's no mercy, K-U 29319 on Imperial JU 3004):



After World War II, Lindström started production again in 1947 but already three years later became part of the Hungarian state-owned record factory.

Now I've reached the end of my talk, and I hope I've shown you that the Hungarian Lindström records are a very interesting field of record collecting and research. As regards the discography of them, still a lot of work is to be done, but I'm positive to be able to complete it, due to many of these recordings are known. This discographical work is not only counting matrix numbers but also involves exploring the music styles of the corresponding period. And sometimes, you find really surprising records, such as the following one I want to play live to you: It's a German Homocord sample record of about 1930 – 32, mx. L H 68189: Mi kell a szőke én nekem, a Hungarian folk song:



The male scandinavian singer is accompanied by a Gipsy or studio band including a cymbalom. For any information on the singer, recording date or circumstances of the recording I'd be grateful.

In the end I'd like to say thank you to the GHT and the organizers of the 10<sup>th</sup> Internationaler Diskographentag and everybody who supported me in preparing this talk.

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