

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

It is with pleasure that I offer this book to English readers, in the hope of supplying them with ample information about Hungarian folk music.

Interest in the subject has never been lacking. Dame Sybil Thorndike, when interviewed once about my music, instantly mentioned a song from Francis Korbay's *Hungarian Melodies*—it was undoubtedly the similarity of our names that caused the confusion. Unfortunately, Korbay's very popular volume contains hardly a single genuine folksong, and the same applies to other popular publications.

Folk music was similarly absent from the repertory of famous town gipsy bands. Only during the last few decades, stimulated by the Hungarian Radio, did they begin gradually to learn traditional peasant tunes, the accompaniment of which still consists too often of inappropriate harmonies derived from their hackneyed routine.

Bartók's book *Hungarian Folk Music* (Oxford University Press, 1931) provided thorough information for those interested. Unfortunately, Bartók's study only reached a small circle of experts—the public scarcely at all. Generally speaking, Hungarian folk music is still identified with gipsy music, and folksong is confused with popular art-music. Yet in its narrower sense, Hungarian folk music has little or nothing in common with the music offered over the radio as 'Hungarian folk tunes' or, since Sarasate, as 'gipsy melodies.' Performed by gipsy orchestras or in other popular arrangements, such music has been the basis of all generalizations about 'Hungarian music' for nearly a hundred years. Nor is it in any way the creation of gipsies, as still frequently asserted owing to Franz Liszt's monumental error.

It is generally possible to identify the composers of the various tunes, that include the themes of Brahms's *Hungarian Dances* and Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. They all lived in the nineteenth century, and the most outstanding were Hungarians of noble descent. To mention but a few: Kálmán Simonffy of Marosvásárhely (1832-1889), Elemér Szentirmay, whose real name was János Németh of Zsid and Vadasfa (1836-1908); Béni Egressy, whose full

name was Benjámín Galambos of Egres (1814–1851). Others came from bourgeois families that had been assimilated, such as Béla Kéler (1820–1882) and Károly Thern (1817–1886), both from the Szepes region which, from the twelfth century onwards, was settled by Germans. Of countless gipsy musicians very few were composers: Miaka Farkas (1829–1890) and Pál Rácz (1837–1886).

The gipsy contribution was not very distinguished, with the possible exception of Pista Dankó (1858–1903); his compositions evidently postdate Liszt, since Liszt's *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* appeared in 1859.

A number of songs, written by still unidentified composers, show by their style that they too belong to this period.

Although text and melody were sometimes written by the same person, the harmonic accompaniment was generally written by another, as happened with polyphonic sixteenth-century *chansons* and the minnesingers' *Töne*.

The Hungarian composers mentioned above were nearly always inexperienced amateurs. The tunes became common property soon after their appearance, and nobody inquired after their origin. Despite the Copyright Law of 1886, everything was freely reprinted until, with the beginning of the twentieth century, the modern idea of author's rights came into existence.

Hence in its essentials the style of Hungarian popular music, as generally known, was formed in the middle of the nineteenth century. Its rhythmical characteristics spring from language and dance; its tunes were a later outcrop of an older type in which Western European influences are traceable. A single feature, the so-called 'gipsy scale,' points to a Southern Oriental (Arabic) origin, and may possibly have reached Hungary through the gipsies:



Gipsies falsify the folksongs they play by introducing the augmented intervals of this scale, which are rarely used by peasants. It should be emphasized, however, that the gipsy scale by no means predominates in gipsy style and that modern major and minor scales are much more frequent.

Gipsy composers followed faithfully in the footsteps of other native and assimilated Hungarians. The most prolific, Pista Dankó, was quite strongly under the influence of indigenous Hungarian peasant music. He wrote more than four hundred songs to contemporary Hungarian texts, whereas other gipsy composers confined themselves to the wordless, and instrumentally conceived, *csárdás*.

This is not to say that real gipsy music does not exist; it consists of short songs in Romany, known and sung today, mainly by nomadic 'tent-colonies'

and to a lesser extent by settled village gipsies; the civilized town-gipsies, and hence the musicians, do not know them at all. Still largely unexplored territory, these songs have virtually nothing in common with the Hungarian popular style or with true Hungarian folksong. A more thoroughgoing stylistic analysis may some day make it possible to trace the origins of certain features in gipsy compositions; but gipsy composers at best are never more than secondary imitators of the true Hungarian style.

In recent decades there has been a revival of the gipsy style which has assumed at least quantitative importance. The chief exponents are again native Hungarians such as Lóránd Fráter of Ipp and Érkeserű (1872–1923) and Árpád Balázs (1874–1941), or assimilated Hungarians such as Ernő Lányi (1861–1923). There is a conspicuous absence of gipsy composers today.

It is entirely erroneous, therefore, to regard the music played by gipsies from about 1850 onwards as 'gipsy music.' It is quite clear that most of the pieces were (and still are) written, not by gipsies but by Hungarians, and any gipsies concerned have taken over a style created by others. In origin and character this style belonged to the town tradition of printed art-music, and had nothing to do with 'ancient tradition' or the like. True, it spread by word of mouth; gipsies performed it without written music, and it was sung by large numbers of musically illiterate people. It was assimilated by the average Hungarian, and more especially by the town-dweller, although a great deal of it also found its way into the villages. Superficial observers may be forgiven for having fallen into the trap of thinking that it was typical folksong.

The following example by Elemér Szentirmay has become world-famous. It is the main theme of Sarasate's *Gipsy Melodies*, in which it appears in a corrupt form. Compare the following original notation:

II.

Csak egy szép lány van e vi-lá-gon, Az én ked-ves ró-zsám ga-lambom.

A jó Is-ten be na-gyon sze-ret. Hogy én né-kem a-dott té-ge-det.

A comparison of this tune with Schubert's *Serenade* illustrates how this style was formed under the influence of West European melodies. It is undeniably Hungarian in essence, but its Western trappings may explain its vast popularity outside Hungary.

The genuine old folk-tradition is not visible even in the musical style that immediately preceded this, the style that flourished in Hungary during the first half of the nineteenth century. It too was town art-music, in essence

nothing but dance music; at first it was even written by foreigners and immigrants, and, like its later counterpart, was to be found in print.

The first *Danses Hongroises*—sometimes just called *Hongroises*—were composed by men with names such as Bengraf, Franz Tost, Drechsler, Mohaupt, Stocker. It is still a mystery where they obtained the Hungarian trimmings for their mediocre pieces, formed and harmonized in the Viennese style. A few copies of anonymous dances of that period, published in Vienna, and including the source of Haydn's 'Rondo all'ongarese,' show traces of an earlier, more primitive, instrumental tradition. This may have survived among gipsy musicians of the day, since scattered traces of it still remain in remote villages.

Later music in this style was provided by János Lavotta of Izsépfalva and Kevelháza (1763–1820), János Svastits of Bocvár (c. 1800–1874), the Vice-Paladin Kázmér of Sárköz (1799–1876), and the physician J. B. of Hunyad (1807–1865)—all Hungarians—and also by the Czech Anton Csermák (1807–1865), self-styled Baronet of Dlujk and Rouhans, the gipsy János Bihari (1764–1827), and a Jew, Márk Rózsavölgyi (1789–1848), whose death inspired Petöfi's famous, deeply-felt poem. Newly-awakened national feeling swept aside differences of birth and background: in the service of 'national music' all found themselves on common ground.

Most of this music now seems old-fashioned and dated; only the compositions of Bihari still teem with life. But since he had no knowledge of musical notation, there will never be any certainty about what is his, and what has been added by those who noted down and copied his music. At all events, several of his pieces are related to traditional Hungarian peasant music. He forms the only link between the peasant tradition and the urban dance music that produced the *csárdás* round about 1830.

The intention of the present work is to throw light on aspects of Hungarian folksong-research which received little or no attention in Bartók's book, conceived as it was as a work of detailed analysis and classification. Reasons of space have prevented the inclusion of many examples, and this is one of the reasons why the reader is often referred to Bartók's work for additional examples. Our knowledge has increased since Bartók's time, particularly with regard to the music of linguistically-related peoples. The relationship of folk music with art-music of all periods and with church music, that is to say, with the historical environment, has become much clearer. The work of collectors—sporadic between 1924 and 1950, but energetically extended with the use of the tape recorder since then—has brought to light many new facts and a considerable number of variants.

Bartók's book retains its value as a reference work and as a well-arranged collection of examples; while the great anthology now in preparation by the Folk Music Research Group, to be published in successive volumes, is designed to complete Bartók's outline. Five volumes of *A Magyar Népzene*

Tára (Corpus Musicae Popularis Hungaricae) have so far appeared, namely: *I Children's Games, II Calendar Customs' Songs, III Wedding Songs, IV Pairing Songs, V Laments*. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences has guaranteed uninterrupted publication of the results of this monumental undertaking. Only when it is completed can a final survey and comparative analysis be carried out. It is also essential that systematically classified collections of the other nations concerned be made available for study.

In the meantime, this book may serve to point the way to greater gains from the comparative study of musical folklore.

Budapest, 1960

Zoltán Kodály

NOTE ON THE NEW ENGLISH EDITION

The new edition of *Folk Music of Hungary* has been expanded by the inclusion of a large number of new musical examples, as well as numerous addenda. The overwhelming majority of these were chosen and drafted by Kodály himself; we not only have his own words about this, but also numerous annotations and supplements to his own copies of the book to guide us. The bulk of my work consisted in supplementing the musical examples and references, in accordance with these annotations.

In a few instances, modifications appeared necessary, even though we could no longer obtain guidance from Kodály: where new facts and results had been brought to light which he did not (or was unable to) consider. This was largely true in the fields of laments and instruments, where two new works—the *Laments* volume in the *Corpus Musicae Popularis Hungaricae V*, and Bálint Sárosi's book on instruments in the *Handbuch der europäischen Volksmusikinstrumente*—have considerably augmented earlier knowledge.

In such cases we have endeavoured to incorporate the new facts and, where possible, to make use of Kodály's formulations from other sources, so as to leave the work, as far as possible, in its original form. We have been particularly careful not to attribute to Kodály statements never made by him.

We hope that in this way the work will not sacrifice present timeliness while preserving that character which has already given it historic value.

Budapest, Autumn 1969

Lajos Vargyas