

HUNGARIAN MUSIC

Entire
By Béla Bartók

It is almost a truism that contemporary higher art music in Hungary has Eastern European folk-music as its basis. However, there is much misunderstanding and misinterpretation with reference to the relation between our higher-art music and our rural music. Some people believe the development of the former to be a phenomenon similar to that observed in the output of the "nationalistic" composers of the past—as, for instance, Grieg, Dvóřak, Chaikovsky. They do not realize the essential difference between these movements, the older and the newer.

In the past, those composers who were (consciously or subconsciously) to create nationalistic musical styles, sought inspiration from the rural or semi-rural musical products of their own countries. Occasionally they took parts of these elements—rhythms, motifs, certain characteristics of the melodic line, even whole melodies—and embedded them with more or less success, into their own personal styles. This, of course, gave to a composer's work some rather unique features which sounded exotic to Western European ears. It represented a decided gain in the evolution and coloring of the higher art music, but on the whole, it did not affect too much the general characteristics of an individual style, say the Schumannesque features of Grieg—the Brahmsian qualities of Dvóřak. Perhaps, among the older groups, it was Chaikovsky who came nearest to the goal in mirroring the entire musical spirit of his country in his works.

With us modern Hungarians, the case is a different one. We felt the mighty artistic power of the rural music in its most undisturbed forms—a power from which to start, from which to develop a musical style imbued even to the slightest details with the emanations from this virgin source. This was, as I would put it, a totally new musical outlook—or, to use the German technical term, it was a new "Weltanschauung." Our reverence for the Eastern strictly rural music was, so to speak, a new musico-religious faith. We felt that this rural music, in those pieces which are intact, attained an unsurpassable degree of musical perfection and beauty, to be found nowhere else except in the great works of the classics. Incidentally, our adoration was not limited to rural music alone. It encompassed, as well, rural poesy and rural decorative art—or, as I would put it in a single phrase, it extended to rural life as a whole, unspoiled by urban civilization. This extension shows itself, for instance, in our vocal works. In these we have a pre-

dilection for folk-poems to set to music.

In order to preclude misunderstandings, it must be pointed out that the above discrimina-

alities are mixed up within the boundaries of one small country. The reciprocal influence of their folk-music has resulted in an incredible variety of rural

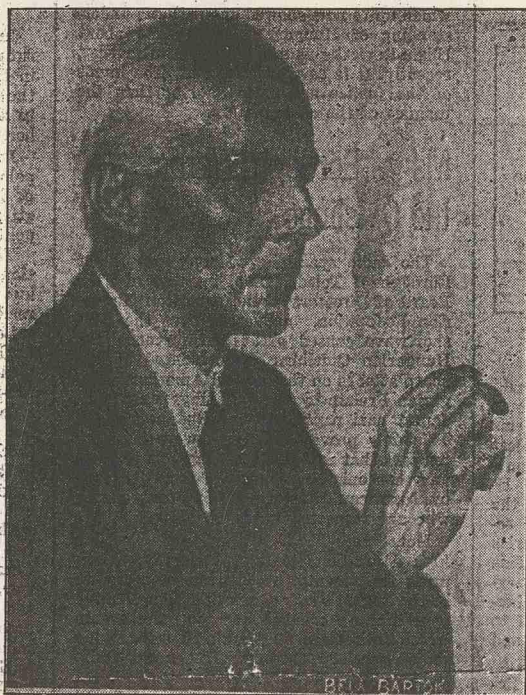
shows that rural folk-music as a source provides various possibilities for the creation of higher art music, and that the use of it as a basis does not necessarily render the results uniform.

It would be going too far to give here a detailed description of the differences between Kodály's works and mine, I will mention only one essential difference—a difference in procedure which may account (at least partly) for the differences in style. Kodály studied, and uses as source, Hungarian rural music almost exclusively, whereas I extended my interest and love also to the folk-music of the neighboring Eastern European peoples and ventured even into Arabic and Turkish territories for research work. In my works, therefore, appear impressions derived from the most varied sources, melted—as I hope—into unity. These various sources, however, have a common denominator, i. e. the characteristics common to rural folk-music in its purest sense. One of these characteristics is the complete absence of any sentimentality or exaggeration of expression. It is this which gives to rural music a certain simplicity, austerity, sincerity of feeling, even *grandeur*—qualities in which the works of the lesser composers became more and more deficient during the romantic period of the 19th century. Apart from the great lessons we acquired from the classics, we learned most from those uneducated, illiterate peasants, who stuck faithfully to their great musical inheritance and even created, in a so-to-speak mysterious way, new styles.

The above mentioned qualities apply to all musical performances of unspoiled rural people, whether vocal or instrumental. Even the greatest performing artists could draw inspiration from them concerning methods of expression as well as technical devices. As the French say, "Les extrêmes se touchent." The highest degree of perfection is to be found, on the one hand, in the achievement of a great artistic genius—on the other hand, in the creations of the illiterate peasant, as yet untouched by urban civilization.

But personal contact is necessary for the composer who would profit most from this rich source of inspiration. A published collection of folk music is dead material. Descriptions do little to enliven it. More help is derived from phonograph records. These, however, are seldom available because they are scattered all over the globe, stored away in museums, and most of them now probably shattered to pieces by bombs. What chiefly matters is human relationship with the peasants—

Continued on Page Seven



BÉLA BARTÓK

tion between past and present is not a qualitative one. In making this discrimination it is not by any means intended to imply that results of the present procedure in making use of rural musical produce are of a greater value than results achieved in the past. The discrimination is made merely to lay stress upon the difference between the outlook upon folk-music as shown in the past and in the present.

How did it come about that this new trend made its appearance just in that corner of Eastern Europe which is called Hungary? The first condition of all is that here were composers endowed with more or less creative power. This is a *conditio sine qua non*. If it is missing, then a country may welter in the greatest wealth of rural music, and yet no gain from it would be possible for the enrichment of higher-art music. In addition to this, Hungary is in an especially fortunate situation with reference to rural music. (Alas! In a very unfortunate one indeed in every other respect.) It is on the crossroads of the most varied styles of folk-

In Eastern Europe there are several peoples, each comprising about ten million souls, living beside each other in a comparatively small territory. In some places, several different nation-

musical styles—without, however, destroying the individuality of each people's folk-music. We find here the most heterogeneous forms of musical expression existing side by side. There are old pentatonic melodies of Asiatic origin. There are modal melodies, partly transformations of the former. There are primitive-looking ~~written~~ motifs, (more or less short), touching only three or four degrees. There are melodies of rather complicated structure and wide range. Even a very peculiar "chromatic" two-part style, restricted to a small area of Dalmatia, a unique phenomenon among known folk-music documents. Probably nowhere else—excepting perhaps in the still unknown Far Orient—can such a variety of rural musical styles be found compressed into so small an area. Hungary is (if not geographically, then spiritually) the center of this area.

There are two of Hungary's contemporary composers who have gained an international reputation—Zoltan Kodály and myself. In spite of our common outlook upon rural music and its part in the development of higher-art music, there is a very marked difference in our works. Each of us has developed his own individual style, in spite of the common sources which were used. And this is very fortunate indeed, because it

AMERICAN HUNGARIAN OBSERVER

A MONTHLY ENGLISH LANGUAGE DIGEST OF EVENTS
OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO AMERICANS
OF HUNGARIAN ORIGIN.

PUBLISHED BY

The Amerikai Magyar Népszava Inc.

350 — 2nd Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

DISTRIBUTED AS A SUPPLEMENT OF THE SUNDAY
EDITION OF THE AMERIKAI MAGYAR NÉPSZAVA.

SINGLE COPY 10 CENTS

BY SUBSCRIPTION \$1.00 A YEAR

This is a Combined

MAY-JUNE ISSUE

In order to advance the date of issue we have combined both the May and June issues into one.

The American Hungarian Observer will appear the first Sunday of the Month regularly.

The Case of Ullein Revicky

Every day by almost everybody Hungary is urged to turn against Hitler, but it seems that many among the urgers are fearful lest their call be headed. Whenever a Hungarian of importance shows any sign that he wants to help the Allied cause, some of the same people who send out the calls for revolt, begin to shout: "The rat; now he tries to leave the sinking ship! Etc., etc." This happened to Eckhardt, to Bethlen, to everyone who ever attempted to lead the Hungarians to fight Hitler, if he happened to be a known Hungarian who might command a following.

This too happened recently to Ullein-Reviczky, former Hungarian minister to Sweden. When the Nazis occupied Hungary, Ullein-Reviczky resigned his post and wrote two or three articles for the New York Times explaining the Hungarian tragedy and the futile struggle of the expelled government against the Nazi machinations in Hungary. But this was an ugly crime in the eyes of the group, which is in the service of Hungary's hostile neighbors who dread every movement that might bring Hungary nearer to the allies camp. What? This man, Ullein-Reviczky, a Hungarian diplomat, wants to come over? Traitor! Rat! He, who conspired against Alexander, King of Yugoslavia, who was murdered with Foreign minister Barthou in Marseille, in October, 1934! He, who helped the murderers to escape, giving them passports and visas to Italy!

We do not know too much about Ullein-Reviczky, but we know that he was a member of the Hungarian Legation in Paris until 1928 and then was transferred to Ankara where he served till August, 1935. From there he was transferred to Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. Seemingly this latter fact was the only basis of the accusations against him. He was in Zagreb at the Hungarian legation, he could have given passports to the murderers, is this not a proof that he actually did it? The accusers forget only, that the time when Ullein-Reviczky went to Zagreb, was August 1935 almost a year after the murder, when some of the murderers were already caught, and others already found refuge in Italy.

These are the facts we know. Moreover, we know, that after the murder of Yugoslavia's king and the murderer's escape Ullein-Reviczky was accepted in Zagreb as persona grata, — what is a necessary precondition of the appointment of any important member of any legation. This does not show the probability that he was considered as an accomplice before or after the fact.

But who cares about the facts? The

Hungarian Music

Continued from Page Three

staying in the villages, living with them observing their life, experiencing their art and their music *as revealed day by day. This Kodály and I could do. For myself I consider the unforgettable hours spent with those people the happiest ones of my life.*

With both of us our works fall into two categories—(1) those in which folk tunes are used altogether or predominantly as thematic material, and (2) those with original themes. In the first category belong, among others, the pieces written with pedagogical purposes—my piano pieces "For Children," my duos for two violins, and most of Kodály's children's choruses, etc. The most outstanding works in this classification are, "Spinning Room" and "Háry János." Both by Kodály, and both stage works, they are veritable apotheoses of the Hungarian rural music of all ages, just as Stravinsky's "Sacre" and "Noces" are a glorification of Russian folk-music.

In addition to these works, Kodály has many folk-tune transcriptions for one voice with piano accompaniment. He composed about one hundred such transcriptions, veritable gems in this field, showing an incredible variety in the handling of the melodies. I have only about thirty pieces of this kind. However, two purely instrumental works of mine—the two rhapsodies for violin and orchestra—also belong to the first category. The part such transcriptions play in the whole output of our works is faintly reminiscent of the part played by the choral melody transcriptions in J. S. Bach's works.

In the second category—comprising such works as Kodály's famous "Psalmus Hungaricus," known and played all over the world—our compositions do not use specific folk-melodies, yet they mirror nevertheless in their minutest details the spirit of rural music. Sometimes this is achieved by inventing and using themes which imitate certain features of that music. My "Dance Suite" for orchestra is an example. The first and fourth dances reflect certain characteristics of Arabic music; the second and third, and the Ritornelle are Hungarian in spirit; the fifth has a peculiarly primitive Rumanian quality. The finale is a synthesis of all these characteristics.

Even the most abstract works, as for instance my string quartets, where no such imitations appear, reveal a certain indescribable, unexplainable spirit—a certain "je ne sais pas quoi"—which will give to anyone who listens, and who knows the rural backgrounds, the feeling: "This could not have been written by any but an Eastern European musician."

on June 19, the American Sick Benefit and Life Insurance Association at Buffalo, N. Y.

Both organizations are nationwide and serve thousands of American Hungarian families in true American and fraternal spirit. To each we say good luck and success to your deliberations.

RUSSIA AND HUNGARY

In an article entitled "Russia and the future of Hungary" Victor Bator discusses in this issue Russia's role in Europe after the war is won and Hungary's possibility to a reconciliation with her mighty neighbor.

Dr. Bator's article speaks for itself. The point of view and the political significance of his article will undoubtedly receive the attention of experts on Central European politics.

The author Victor Bator, whose contribution to the American Hungarian Observer's last issue, "The Tatar Pass" was widely read and praised for the scholarly presentation of the Ruthenian issue—is well known in Hungarian political circles. One of the most prominent lawyers of Budapest in pre-war days, he was a member of the Executive Committee of the "Independence for Hungary" Movement headed by Tibor Eckhardt, which suspended its political activities in this country in July 1942. Dr. Eckhardt's party in Hungary, the Independent Farmer's Party closely collaborating with the Social Democratic Party, urged the Hungarian Government to resist all German demands and withdraw from the war. After the Nazi occupation of Hungary, the leading members of these parties were arrested and the chief spokesman of the Independent Farmer's Party in Hungary, in the absence of Dr. Eckhardt, Endre Bajcs Zsilinszky, whose courageous anti-Nazi speeches caused a furor among Hitler's followers was shot and seriously wounded.

Since the suspension of the "Independence for Hungary Movement," Dr. Eckhardt kept out of the public eye, just as John Pelény, former Hungarian Minister to Washington, who resigned his post when Hungary signed the Axis pact in the fall of 1940 and who also was a member of the Executive Committee of the "Independence for Hungary Movement."

Leftists often accused these men of being anti-Russian, pictured them as strongly opposed to any kind of collaboration with Soviet Russia. The current article of Dr. Bator refutes these charges.

We are glad to publish these refutations because it proves that in the matter of sincere cooperation between Russia and Hungary after the war, even those who certainly cannot be accused of radical leftist tendencies—see eye to eye with us and the great majority of liberal, democratic American Hungarians.

Realistic Hungarian statesmen, despite the ideological differences which exist between them and the Communists are nevertheless looking toward a policy of cooperation with Russia. The immediate task of the Hungarians, to make peace with Russia will be made easier by such clear expressions of good will. We join with Dr. Bator in the belief that realistic Russia will recognize the wisdom of following a genuine good neighborly policy toward all the small countries near her border. Certainly no Russian interest could possibly be served by humiliating Hungary and subordinating her in relation to neighboring states, nor by the subjugation of millions of Hungarians to foreign rule. From the self-evidence of this springs the hope of all Hungarians that after this war, the leaders of Russia will open the door for sincere cooperation between the two countries and thus assure lasting peace in the Danubian valley.

BARTOK ARTICLES CC

Endre Bajcs Zsilinszky

n
de-
orm-
Pa.