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Bartók About the Romanian Folk Music to the General Public

“[...] I have spent many years studying a phenomenon of human life considered more or less important by some dreamers commonly called students of folk music. This manifestation is the spontaneous music of the lower classes, peasants especially. [...] From the very beginning I have been amazed by the extraordinary wealth of melody types existing in the territory under investigation in Eastern Europe. [...] Comparison of the folk music of these peoples made it clear that there was a continuous give-and-take of melodies, a constant crossing and re-crossing which has persisted through centuries”.¹

This is how Bartók expressed himself in 1942 in his paper entitled “Racial Purity in Music” written for the New York journal *Modern Music*. The fundamental folk music experience of Bartók is a recursive topic in his popular science writings, but the individual aspects he highlighted and the ways in which he formulated his message were always adjusted to the external circumstances and his target audience. This time, reflecting on the most urgent socio-political issues of the age, Bartók examines one of the fundamental questions of his folk music scholarship from a special perspective: the question of interaction in folk music. Within the nearly 10,000 Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian and Rusyn (or, to use Bartók’s term, Ruthenian) melodies collected by Bartók in the territory of the multi-ethnic “old Hungary”, the composer found various folk music styles existing side by side, in the creation of which he believed to have discovered the decisive role of interaction between the folk music traditions of neighbouring peoples. His profound scholarly examination of the individual folk music types and musical styles is attested by a multitude of books and studies.² At the same time, this folk music material of such stylistic variety was an inexhaustible and quintessential source of inspira-

tion for Bartók, the composer.³ Thus, having described the process of “crossing and re-crossing” and the genesis of new folk music styles, Bartók’s answer to the question whether it was beneficial for folk music to be “impure” had to be positive.

Initially, Bartók’s ethnicity-based research began in the spirit of the examination of the interactions between different types of folk music. Similarly to Kodály, his fellow folk music collector and composer, Bartók sought to understand the most typical and authentic types of Hungarian folk music, which could serve as a starting point for the renewal of the musical language of the composers and the creation of a novel Hungarian art music. However, as opposed to Kodály, who completed his study of Hungarian folk music with research on history and kinship, Bartók extended his studies to the folk music of the peoples living side by side in the territory of Hungary those days. Besides working on the multiple-layer scholarly analysis of the material collected by Bartók himself, he paid close attention to the folk music collections related to his research interest that were published by other collectors or were in manuscript, the methodical study of which made Bartók the distinguished representative of the emerging discipline of comparative musical folklore.⁴ But the ultimate aim of his comparative studies was to map out the characteristic features of the folk music examined and to explore the authentic and most ancient melody types and properties of certain folk musics. In that respect, Bartók devoted a great deal of attention to the study of the folk music of the two most populous ethnic minorities of the country: the Slovaks and the Romanians. In his folk music collection, the folk song corpus of these three nationalities contains a more or less equal portion of songs for each, in addition to which Bartók also compiled comprehensive, autonomous and thick volumes of folk songs for each

³ A central issue in Bartók’s essays about modern Hungarian art music, his own music and that of his contemporaries – especially of Kodály – is the decisive effect of “peasant music” upon their composition technique that they got acquainted with at the beginning of the century. See *Bartók Béla írásai 1. Önmagáról, műveiről, az új magyar zenéről, műzene és népzene viszonyáról*. Published by Tibor Tallián. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó. 1989. (hereinafter: *BB1/1*)

⁴ It tells a lot about Bartók’s extraordinary commitment to the cause and his agility that at the very beginning already, he contacted Erich von Hornbostel, the director of the Phonogram Archives of Berlin in the lead of comparative folk music research. Throughout his whole career, he looked out for adequate partners for collaboration, and he even repeatedly urged for an institutional international cooperation. About Bartók’s relationships in Berlin, see Vera Lampert: Bartók and the Berlin School of Ethnomusicology. *Studia Musicologica*. September 2008, 49 (3-4). 383-405.

¹ Bartók, 1942. Bartók’s writings in the scope of the present paper will be hereinafter referred to by the year of creation standing after the author’s name (in case of several writings produced in the same year, by a serial number after the year). The bibliographical data of the texts are included in the list at the end. (*The above quote is presented in its official translation – transl. note.*)

² For the so far most complete list of Bartók’s writings, see Tibor Tallián: *Bartók Béla*. The Appendix was compiled and the volume was annotated by Csilla Mária Pintér. Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa. 2016. 474-484.

nationality, accompanied by analytical studies.⁵ At the same time, on top of this academic analytical and structural work, Bartók deemed it important to keep the general public informed in order to popularize folk music, and in his talks held and articles written on this topic, he was keen to discuss Romanian and Slovak folk music among others. Regardless of the forum of publication, his writings always focused on the features he saw as the most important ones of the given types of folk music, often coinciding with those phenomena that intrigued Bartók the most as a composer. The academic or popular nature and the conclusions of these writings as well as Bartók's opinion about particular issues sometimes differed from each other to some extent. In order to unearth the reasons and formulate a proper interpretation for these divergences – besides familiarizing ourselves with the circumstances in which these essays were created – , we usually have to take into consideration the other parameters of the author's scholarship. In the following summary, however, we can only endeavour to offer a schematic overview of the statements, principal motives and alterations of the messages of Bartók's popular scientific works pertaining to Romanian folk music.

In his writings about Romanian folk music, Bartók usually emphasized the “archaic” and more intact nature of the latter in comparison with the other ethnicities of the country. During his collection trips, Bartók was amazed by the primitive conditions of the linguistic area and the old-fashioned, sometimes exotic melodies of the illiterate population living in closed communities – ideal for the preservation of the ancient traditions – , the uncompromising order of folk customs and their obligatory musical accessories.⁶ It was these musical elements that captured not only Bartók, the

⁵ In Bartók's lifetime only *A magyar népdal*. Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa. 1924. was published, which offered a representative selection of the folk song material that he had discovered until then. The publication of the universal collection, the so-called Bartók-regime incorporating the nearly 13,000 folk songs collected by Bartók till 1934 is still under way. Three volumes of Bartók's Romanian folk music collection appeared in 1967, while his equally three-volume Slovak collection was published between 1959–2007. In addition to his further monographic volumes devoted to the Romanian folk music, his volumes on Arab, Turkish and Serbo-Croatian folk music also belong here. See Tallián: *Bartók*, 474–475.

⁶ His impressions are faithfully rendered by his letters written at the time of his collections. For example, after putting down an especially remarkable melody (augmented fourth) of his latest collection, he writes the following in his letter addressed to Etelka Freund from Belényes (Beiuș) in Bihor county: “I have been floundering in the mud of Szombatság, Rogoz, Drágcséke, Tasádfő, Korbezd and Kotyiklet for seven days now. This is the most interesting part of the country from the perspective of folk music. Everything is archaic here. – For instance, Kotyiklet has never had a school, or a priest; no one can read or write here. An exemplary

scholar, but Bartók, the composer as well: his folk music arrangements and “Romanian-type” works imitating folk music include such melodies and types of melodies which Bartók classified as archaic, typically Romanian and authentic.⁷ He presents this topic especially vividly in 1920 in his – unpublished – essay written for the American journal *Musical Courier*, in which he recalls the ambiance of pre-1918 folk song collecting tours in colourful and nostalgic terms and with uncharacteristic verbosity. After describing the scene and the actors with almost literary sophistication, i.e. the visual and acoustic ingredients of the hustle and bustle of a Romanian village market, the author observes that “their peasant music shows just as great a variety and ancient freshness”, adding that unlike in Slovak or Hungarian folk music, there is “a single archaic and well-conserved layer” dominating the scene here. Then he continues:

[...] this characteristic archaic state – a morsel of Middle Ages – has persisted among the Romanians in its original and uncorrupted form till our days. We can come across this archaic state especially in Bihor (near Oradea) and in Hunedoara (in the southwestern part of Transylvania) where hundreds of small hamlets are inhabited exclusively by illiterate people – a veritable Eldorado for the researcher, who feels that he has travelled several hundred years back in time. If with great pain, one manages to overcome the girls' timidity, if they finally stop their perpetual “mi-e rușine!” (“I feel ashamed”), and three or four girls start to sing the marvellously ornamented oscillating rubato melody in pitch-perfect harmony and with a resounding chest voice, one would imagine being in an enchanted fairy tale⁸

This sort of idyllic description is unparalleled among Bartók's writings destined for the public: its genesis can be put down to a very special situation. Bartók's extremely intensive Romanian folk music collection trips from 1909 till the breakout of the war were among the most productive parts of Bartók's scholarship in this period. The abundance of the treasures collected by him on his trips compelled Bartók to continue the exploration of additional areas of the Romanian linguistic territory, so he managed to discover the folk music

village!” (*Bartók Béla levelei*. Ed. by János Demény. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó. 1976. 185.)

⁷ Besides his effort to preserve the authenticity and originality of the folk music, Bartók's melody choices are usually also motivated by the fact that the archaic melodies differing from the major-minor system with their more primitive tonality allowed greater freedom for the composer in the realm of harmonization and arrangement. Bartók talked about that in the most detail in his lectures held at Harvard in 1943 (Bartók, Béla: *Harvard-előadások*. In *BBI/1*. 161–184, 168–174.)

⁸ Bartók, 1920 (*excerpt translated by this paper's translator*).

of a relatively extensive area within quite a short time. At the same time, in an effort to publicize his valuable findings immediately, he found an understanding and helpful partner among the members of the Romanian Academy in the person of D. G. Kiriác. This is how his first ambitious academic publication could appear: the result of his first Romanian collection trip that proved to be a decisive experience for him, the so-called Bihar (Bihor) volume.⁹ He had additional and even more ambitious plans under way, but the breakout of the First World War thwarted them. His reaction to the historical developments was almost prophetic: “I have been long wanting to write to you, but the events aroused such an anxiety in me that I have been virtually paralyzed. My utmost desire is that peace would be maintained at least between Hungary and Romania. But come what may, I shall stay true to the work I have started: I consider it my life-long ambition to pursue and complete the study of Romanian folk music, at least in Transylvania.”¹⁰ Although his achievements were not always received with uniform acknowledgment on either side of the Hungarian-Romanian border, Bartók studied Romanian folk music with consistency and a perfectly scholarly attitude till the end of his life. The most significant final result of these activities of his was the manuscript of *Rumanian Folk Music*, the big Romanian collection finalized by him in America.¹¹ Since all chances of eventual folk music collection were shattered for him after 1918, the nostalgic tone he used in his 1920 writing makes perfect sense.

In his above cited writing, Bartók notes that this “archaic state” was preserved to a varying extent depending on the area. But beyond the social circumstances, Bartók’s observations pertained to the specificities of the musical repertoire. In his experience, the songs¹²

⁹ Bartók, Béla: *Cântece populare românești din comitatul Bihor (Ungaria) / Chansons populaires roumaines du département Bihar (Hongrie)*. București: Librăria Socec & Comp. și C. Sfetea. 1913.; Facsimile editiona: Béla Bartók, *Ethnomusikologische Schriften* III. Ed. Denijs Dille. Budapest: Editio Musica. 1967.

¹⁰ Bartók’s letter dated of 27 September 1914 addressed to the librarian of the Romanian Academy, Ion Bianu. (Demény: *Bartók levelei*, 227.)

¹¹ Bartók, Béla: *Rumanian Folk Music*. Ed. Benjamin Suchoff, I. Instrumental Melodies, II. Vocal Melodies, III. Texts. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1967 (hereinafter: *RFM*). About Bartók’s Romanian relations, collections and compositions with a Romanian folk music relevance, see the works of Ferenc László. His most important collection volumes are the following: *Bartók Béla. Tanulmányok és tanúságok*. Bukarest: Kriterion. 1980.; *Béla Bartók și lumea noastră. Așa cum a fost*. Cluj: Editura Dacia. 1995.; *Béla Bartók și muzica populară a românilor din Banat și Transilvania*. Cluj-Napoca: Eikon. 2003.; *Bartók markában. Tanulmányok és cikkek (1981–2005)*. Kolozsvár: Polis. 2006.

¹² Bartók refers to this folk song category by various terms, most frequently: doina-like songs, horas, parlando songs, songs not related to occasions.

of the Romanian linguistic area were completely different in each region. Based on that, Bartók talks about so-called musical dialects in Romanian folk music as a remarkable phenomenon unseen among other peoples. Although the exact definition of the dialectal areas was slightly and occasionally modified by him, Bartók distinguished three separate areas: the northern dialect including the territories of the one-time Máramaros (Maramureș) and Ugocsa (Ugocea) counties, the dialect of Bihar (Bihor), Hunyad (Hunedoara) and Bânság (Banat) that he had formerly categorized under the umbrella term “southern dialect”, and the “Hungarian-like” or Mezőség (Câmpia Transilvaniei) dialect in the vicinity of the Székelys.

The topic of Bartók’s first lecture for the general public about folk music was also one of these musical dialects. Upon the demand of the Hungarian Folklore Society in March 1914, he presented the Romanian folk music of Hunyad to his audience in Budapest with the cooperation of a couple of village singers and musicians from Hunyad county.¹³ One of the key moments of the performance was the illustration of how recordings were made and the presentation of the phonograph as an essential device for folk song collection and of the gramophone, providing a better sound quality, but not yet used for collection at the time. These audio-recording devices were still quite a novelty in the profession, and even decades later, Bartók could not stress their importance enough. His gramophone recordings made with the informants in Cser (today in Romania) were considered to be a landmark production because they turned out to be the very first recordings of Hungarian folk musicology. What is more, this was the first time that a recording was made of Romanian folk music in general.¹⁴ The choice of the informants and the topic was not accidental. Bartók’s lecture was inspired by the experiences he gathered on his last collecting trip. At the same time, the unique-sounding and extremely ornamented vocal art of the folk music of Hunyad, its living tradition of custom-related songs and equally importantly, the improvisative dance music of the young virtuoso and piper, Lazăr Lăscuș were all noteworthy phenomena of the Romanian folk music to which Bartók always devoted a special attention in his academic syntheses. The greatest appeal of the performance was quite clearly the illustration by live music, in which the repetitive dance music, considered to have a primitive structure, played by the piper must

¹³ Bartók, 1914/1.

¹⁴ Pávai, Réka: Hunyad megyei adatközlők Budapesten. Bartók Béla 1914-es előadása. *Magyar Zene*. August 2002, XL (3). 313-326.

have had a distinguished role.¹⁵ Nonetheless, in the study published immediately after the lecture, the focus was on scholarly analysis. Bartók outlined the characteristic musical features of the dialect area systematically and analysed the selected melody samples, going from the purest types of Hunyad toward the examples reflecting the influence of the melodies of the neighbouring Bánság (for Bartók: Banat).

Bartók's lecture about the folk music of Hunyad basically created a model for his academic discourse about Romanian folk music: the topics raised here recur in his writings about Romanian folk music in the following years and decades. Bartók deemed it important that his audience in Budapest should be familiarized with the particularities of the Romanian use of the text – verse, strophe management, the relationship of music and text, line completion, etc. –, which were in many cases different from the rules of the Hungarian language and folk songs. Although Bartók's talent in learning languages is a well-known fact, the speed and the more-than-native meticulousness he acquired Romanian with is still amazing. He registered the tiniest nuances of the phonetic curiosities of the archaic folk poetry in his notes on folk songs. Though he talked about that only passingly in his later writings addressed primarily to a foreign readership, the importance of textual issues is indicated by the fact that he devoted a separate system and an analytical study to folk song lyrics in his late folk song collections, the Colinda volume and the big Romanian collection. Both of them were published only after his death.¹⁶

On the other hand, the opening thought of the 1914 writing is one of the fundamental observations of Bartók that will become a recursive and almost obligatory idea in each of his subsequent essays on Romanian music: “Among our national ethnicities, it is the Romanians who have preserved the archaic state of their folk music in its most intact form. The state of folk music free of urban culture and of

the influence of composed music is characterized by sharply delineated categories of melodies according to the occasion when they would be sung or played.¹⁷ Bartók usually explained the lack of custom-related songs in Hungarian folk music with the more developed living conditions among Hungarians. The five melody categories listed in the Hunyad study (colinda melodies, weddings songs, funeral songs, dance melodies, doina-like melodies) constitute the most important genres of Bartók's Romanian folk music collection, and the categorization was modified by later studies and folk song volumes only in minor details.¹⁸ These melody categories constitute the foundations of Bartók's scientific systematization as well. Although Bartók talks about the various melody types in the preface to the Bihar volume written in 1910-11 already, he does not use this criterion in his arrangement of the melodies.¹⁹ However, the volume on Bánság, edited in 1913, and the one on Máramaros – equally edited in 1913, but published only ten years later – consider these melody categories as the primary criterion for the classification of melodies.²⁰ The highly structured complex system of the big Romanian collection also builds on melody categories. The significance of custom-related songs is highlighted the most by the genre monograph partially published in 1935 in adverse conditions, *Melodien der rumänischen Colinde*, which turns the genre of colinda, so important for Bartók, into the central theme of an independent monograph.

As illustrated by the latter example, from the Romanian ceremonial songs, Bartók devoted the most attention to a characteristic song of Christmas holidays: the colinda. In his study on Hunyad, he

¹⁷ Bartók, 1914/1.

¹⁸ In his ultimate systematization, the vocal volumes of *RFM*, Bartók subcategorizes the melodies not related to occasions, thus besides the parlando – or doina-like – melodies, he distinguishes between tempo giusto melodies, dance melodies with text and melodies with dotted rhythms. Among the custom songs, he also mentions harvesting songs and rainmaker songs. (*RFM/2*, 7-29.)

¹⁹ Bartók's academic honesty is shown well by the episode when in 1914 a Romanian journalist published a sharp, but professionally unfounded criticism about the recently published Bihar volume. Bartók systematically rectified the remarks of his critic in a public rebuttal, but then he listed the actual errors of the volume himself, which had escaped his critic's attention. Here he mentioned it as an error that “the individual melody types have not been distinguished in the classification”. (Bartók, 1914/2)

²⁰ Bartók, Béla: *Volksmusik der Rumänen von Maramureş*. Sammelbände für Vergleichende Musikwissenschaft IV. München: Drei Masken Verlag. 1923.; Facsimile edition: Bartók, Béla: *Ethnomusikologische Schriften* II. Ed. Denijs Dille. Budapest: Editio Musica. 1966. About the planned volume about Banat, see Ferenc László: Bihar és Máramaros között. In László, Ferenc: *Bartók markában*. 62-76.

¹⁵ It is noteworthy that in the article entitled *Primitív népi hangszerek Magyarországon* written by Bartók in 1917, it is almost exclusively Romanian melodies that represent the most ancient instrumental music. See Bartók, 1917. About the antecedents and reception of his lecture in Hunyad, see János Demény: Bartók Béla művészi kibontakozásának éve. Találkozás a népzenevel (1906–1914). In Szabolcsi, Bence and Bartha, Dénes (eds.), *Zenatudományi tanulmányok* III. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó. 1955. 286–459, 431, 440–443. About the musical illustrations of the lecture, see Viola Bíró: A nagy háború küszöbén. Bartók hunyadi gyűjtésének néhány tanulsága. *Magyar Zene*. May 2015, LIII (2). 121-145.

¹⁶ Bartók, Béla: *Melodien der rumänischen Colinde (Weihnachtstlieder)*. Wien: Universal Edition. 1935.; Facsimile edition (including the lyrics of the folk songs): Bartók, Béla: *Ethnomusikologische Schriften* IV. Ed. Denijs Dille. Budapest: Editio Musica. 1968. Bartók, Béla: *Rumanian Folk Music*. Ed. Benjamin Suchoff, III. Texts. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. 1967.

refrains from discussing the genre in detail with an expert's caution.²¹ But in his above-mentioned article written in 1920 for the American journal, he writes a brief summary about the colinda, discussed in the first place among songs related to specific occasions, the supplementary details of the custom, and other more spectacular components of it that Bartók deemed interesting for foreigners.²² In his lexicon entry equally written for foreigners in 1924, he mentioned only colinda out of all custom-related melodies as the most important melody group of Romanian folk music (besides doina melodies).²³ He praised this repertoire in similar terms in his article on "Romanian folk music" written for *Zenei Lexikon* edited by Bence Szabolcsi and Aladár Tóth, addressing the Hungarian readers, in which he took advantage of the more generous length available and cited a melody as an example for one of the most typical territories of the genre, from the region of Hunyad.²⁴ Out of his writings for the general public, it was in his study on Romanian folk music written for *Schweizerische Sängerezeitung* in 1933 and the lecture version thereof that he read out in Frankfurt that Bartók summarized the characteristics of colinda in the most detail. His oft-cited description about the paganesque lyrics of colindas is especially vivid²⁵, but he also talks about the subconscious identification of this custom related to the winter solstice with the Christian Christmas tradition and its sporadic "religious" lyrics, about its performance in groups and the musical specificities of these melodies. As for the latter, he highlights the phenomenon of the so-called change of time, typical of most of these melodies. Unlike the uniform beat in traditional Western European music, times of a

²¹ "We do not know enough about colinda melodies. In fact, they show less conspicuous divergences by regions than doina melodies, and the geographical mapping of these differences most likely does not even coincide with the boundaries of the territories of the musical dialects established on the basis of the doina melodies." (Bartók, 1914/1)

²² After describing the difficulties of the collection of songs strictly related to certain occasions, Bartók talks about how colindas were learned, about the alternating manner of singing of the singers assigned into groups and the gift-giving of the house owners who were included in the song. (Bartók, 1920)

²³ Bartók, 1924. Here the author mentions the group of instrumental dance melodies as a third category.

²⁴ Bartók, 1931.

²⁵ "The most important part – perhaps one third – of the text has nothing to do with the Christian holiday of Christmas. Instead of the Bethlehem story, it relates wonderful and victorious fights with an invincible lion (or stag); a legend tells about nine brethren who hunted in the forest until they turned into stags as well; another magical story tells the tale of how the sun married his sister, the moon (in Latin languages, the sun is masculine and the moon is, of course, feminine!) etc. All of them pagan textual relics!" (Bartók, 1933/1 – 2)

continuously changing beat follow each other, usually in a fast tempo "in a savage and fierce performance style".²⁶ Bartók illustrates this musical phenomenon with a sample melody from Hunyad. In his lecture, however, he chose a special manner of illustration: in order to create a musical experience as direct as possible, he played his unique gramophone recordings prepared in 1914 in Hunyad, offering an appropriate sound quality. But beforehand, in order to make sure that the musically less sophisticated members of the audience would also recognize the changing of the times, he played the individual melodies on the piano, too, emphasizing the beginning of each time with a bass note.²⁷ The fact that Bartók discussed this peculiar rhythmic phenomenon in such detail in his scientific and popular scholarship was also motivated by the composer's unique taste in art, as he was especially sensitive to the curiosities of rhythm. This is attested, among others, by the arrangement of the usually time-changing melodies of *Román kolindadallamok*.²⁸ Finally, an example of the more abstract, but all the more important artistic inspiration of the genre of colinda is the *Cantata profana*: the musical arrangement of the libretto created by Bartók on the basis of two colinda lyrics from Maros and Torda about the miraculous transformation of a hunter's sons into deer will be one of the "most intimate creeds" of the composer.²⁹

As it has been mentioned repeatedly, the other most important category of melodies of Romanian folk music is the group of doina-like songs, the study of which became extensive in the 1930s. These songs, most often referred to as parlando melodies at that time and not related to specific occasions, make up more than half of the vocal volume of the big Romanian collection numbering 2,555 melodies. The complex systematization of the latter was one of the peaks of

²⁶ This is where the expression "colinda-rhythm", a Hungarian musical technical term comes from. See János Breuer: Kolinda-ritmika Bartók zenéjében. In *Zeneelmélet, stíluselmélet. A Bárdos Lajos 75. születésnapja alkalmából tartott zenetudományi konferencia anyag*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó. 1977. 84-102.

²⁷ Bartók, 1933/2.

²⁸ Lampert, Vera: *Népzene Bartók műveiben: A feldolgozott dallamok forrásjegyzéke. Magyar, szlovák, román, rutén, szerb és arab népdalok és táncok*. Budapest: Hagyományok Háza. 2005. 99-106.

²⁹ Szabolcsi, Bence: Bartók Béla: *Cantata profana*. In Kroó, György (ed.): *Miért szép századunk zenéje?* Budapest: Gondolat. 1974. 186. About the textual and musical sources of the work, see Ferenc László: *A Cantata profana keletkezéstörténetéhez*. In Ferenc László: *Tanulmányok és tanúságok*. 213-254.; Vikárius, László: *A Cantata profana (1930) kéziratossági forrásainak olvasata*. In *Zenetudományi dolgozatok 1992–1994*. Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet. 1994. 115-159.

Bartók's analytical scholarship.³⁰ The significance of this category of songs was first pointed out by Bartók, the composer, when under the effect of his very first Romanian folk music collection trip – in the year of the trip itself – he composed his first arrangement of the folk songs of Bihar, which was almost immediately followed by other folk song arrangements of Bihar and individual compositions in „Romanian” style.³¹ In his later works, this unique intonation appeared more as a stylistic element organically incorporated into his language as a composer, but in his academic attitude, it was always the folk songs of Bihar that represented the most authentic Romanian folk music – sometimes coupled with their equivalents from Hunyad as we could see in the passage of his article from 1920 quoted above.

Bartók's earliest lecture and study on Hunyad discusses the musical specificities of the two dialects parallel to each other, but they also represent the “most typical melodies of Romanians” in Bartók's major comparative study of 1934 entitled “*Népzeneink és a szomszéd népek népzeneje*” [*Our Folk Music and the Folk Music of the Neighbouring Peoples*].³² At the same time, in his lectures and popular science articles targeting a foreign audience, the author usually presented special melodies from Bihar as the most unique melody type of Romanian folk music.³³ The case of the article versions of 1933 is interesting from that respect. While in the study published in a Swiss paper, Bartók presented a melody from Bihar, in the lecture version of the same study before a Frankfurt audience, Bartók illustrated the songs not related to specific rites by one of the gramophone recordings made in Hunyad in 1914 for lack of a Bihar recording of appropriate quality.³⁴

³⁰ Bartók's work on the big Roman collection – the comprehensive overview of the material, the revision of his notes, the creation of the final systematization – approximately from 1933 to 1940 (the first volume with lyrics was completed mainly in the 1940s) coincides with the works of the universal Hungarian folk music collection in which Bartók studied only songs not related to occasions, the Hungarian equivalents of Romanian parlando songs. The complex examination of the two gigantic materials evolved side by side, but perhaps not entirely independently from each other.

³¹ Cf. *Vázlatok*, BB 54 5th (Romanian Folk Song) and 6th (In Walachian Style) pieces; *Two Romanian Dances*, op. 8a BB 56; *Two Romanian Folk Songs*, BB 57, *Two Images*, op. 10 BB 59 2nd piece (The Dance of the Village)

³² Bartók, 1914/1; Bartók, 1934.

³³ Bartók 1928; Bartók 1929; Bartók, 1933/1; Bartók, 1940-41.

³⁴ Bartók, 1933/2. Based on his own experiences, the phonograph recordings from Bartók's own collection were not suitable for presentation to the general public. At an earlier lecture held in Frankfurt, he attempted to involve the musicians of the local orchestra in order to illustrate the examples of his talk, but as testified by his letters and later accounts, the musicians would always struggle with the

The big comparative study of 1934 was a turning point from several respects in the line of Bartók's writings on Romanian folk music. The voluminous study supplemented by an exhaustive list of examples was first published as an independent booklet, and it basically realized the initial aim of Bartók's folk music collection: the definition of the authentic types of Hungarian folk music and the exploration of its interaction with the folk music of the neighbouring peoples.³⁵ After briefly outlining the general characteristics of the musical dialects and melody categories of Romanian folk music, the section about Romanian folk music discusses the music of Mezőség (Câmpia Transilvaniei), Szilágyság (Sălaj) and Szatmár (Satu Mare) – neighbouring the Székelys – in detail, the area also referred to as a “Hungarian-like” dialect which had not at all, or only passingly, been touched upon in the previously mentioned writings. Bartók points out numerous instances of the direct transfer of melodies as well as autonomous forms created under the influence of Hungarian folk music, but he also supposes a Hungarian influence in the case of the horas from Máramaros with dotted rhythm, considered to be more recent. Finally, he establishes a Hungarian connection between part of the instrumental dance music of Mezőség and the verbunk melodies of Hungarian folk music. His claims were not entirely shared by the Romanian professional literature, and they were equally completed or rectified in several details by later research on Hungarian folk music as well.³⁶

A more significant lesson that this comparative study yielded with respect to Bartók's views on Romanian folk music was his discovery related to the long song.³⁷ After submitting his manuscript to the printing house, Bartók had an opportunity to study the phonogram collection of the Romanian Composers' Association of Bucharest in February 1934, and consequently, he realized with astonishment

unusual rhythmic patterns of the folk melodies (Bartók, 1932). That may have contributed to the fact that in the following year, he used gramophone records for his lecture about Romanian folk music.

³⁵ Bartók, 1934. The title of the original lecture version of the paper, “The impact of Hungarian folk music on the folk music of the neighbouring peoples” expresses the author's intended message more accurately (Bartók, 1933/3).

³⁶ Tiberiu, Alexandru: *Béla Bartók despre folclorul românesc*. București: Editura Muzicală. 1958.; Bereczky, János, Domokos, Mária and Paksa, Katalin: Magyar-román dallamkapcsolatok Bartók román gyűjteményében (Rumanian Folk Music Volume II). In Vargyas, Lajos (ed.): *Népzene és zenetörténet IV*. Budapest: Editio Musica. 1982. 5-109.; László: *Bartók și muzica populară a românilor*. 66-71.

³⁷ About the inspirational importance and role of the horă lungă in Bartók's compositions, see Péter Laki: A hosszú ének: a népzene nemzetközi alaptípusa. In László, Ferenc (ed.): *Bartók-dolgozatok 1981*. Bukarest: Kriterion. 1982. 190-196.

that the extremely archaic and improvisative long song (*horă lungă*) from Máramaros that he had thought to be an isolated phenomenon was actually common in the whole territory of old Romania, so in fact, it had to be regarded as the most ancient type of Romanian folk music. He published his discovery at once in an afterword attached to the study. The *horă lungă* melody type was Bartók's favourite example for demonstrating the transnational interactions of melodies with the tools of comparative music folklore. He found melody types resembling the samples he collected in Máramaros in his Arab collection from Algeria, in the heroic song of Ukrainians (*dumy melody*) through the study of various publications and exchanges of experience as well as in certain Persian and Iraqi melodies. Following his collection trip in 1936 in Turkey, through the intermediary of Constantin Brăiloiu, prominent Romanian folk music researcher, even the "uzun hava" melody of Turkish folk music was added to the representatives of this melody type.³⁸ Finally, in the closing part of his American article published in 1942, Bartók points out a connection between the Rákóczi Song of the Hungarians and the long melody: in fact, the common features of these two melodies were confirmed on a wide-ranging instrumental repertoire by subsequent research.³⁹

Although the relationship between Bartók and the general public was not by any means smooth in terms of his activities as a composer and an artist, he was keen to express his views in matters of folk music in every stage of his life, selecting the most appropriate topic and methodology with utmost care in order to conquer his audience. The overview of Bartók's writings on Romanian folk music is very instructive from that perspective, too, as they include multiple types of texts originating from various stages of his artistic career. Besides our occasional allusions to this aspect, the primary aim of our paper was to sketch Bartók's main claims regarding Romanian folk music: what he deemed important to share with his public and when, and how all of that fitted into Bartók's global view on Romanian folk music.

³⁸ Bartók, 1938; About Brăiloiu's role and his multifarious relationship with Bartók, see Ferenc László: Az együttműködés dokumentumai Constatin Brăiloiu Bartók Bélához intézett leveleiből. In *Tanulmányok és tanúságok*. 106-157.

³⁹ Bartók, 1942; Domokos, Mária: A Rákóczi-nóta családfája. *Magyar Zene*. September 1980, XXI (3). 249-263.

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