

SZABOLCS LÁSZLÓ**Promoting the Kodály Method during the Cold War: Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy and the Transnational Network of Music Educators in the 1960s and 1970s***

“As you perhaps are aware of, American music educators have become very much interested in developments of music instruction in the Hungarian schools. We feel that we can learn much from your experiences in organizing an integrated music program from the nursery school to institutions for higher education.”¹ This comes from a 1966 letter by the well-known American musicologist Bjornar Bergethon, sent to the Hungarian Institute for Cultural Relations, asking for permission to visit Hungarian elementary schools and to observe the educational program that everyone was raving about in the U.S. at that time: the Kodály method. A handwritten note scribbled on the letter gave the following verdict: “His interest in Hungary is genuine, no political agenda behind the intended visit.” Consequently, the American professor received the necessary permission, and he managed to visit five schools during his stay in Budapest, dropping by the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music as well. Bergethon’s newfound interest was far from unique. Hundreds of music educators in the U.S. and

* The archival research conducted for this publication was made possible by support from the Social Science Research Council’s International Dissertation Research Fellowship, with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

¹ Letter from Bjornar Bergethon to Gábor Vigh, November 22, 1966, MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 214. Bergethon established his reputation with a textbook cowritten with Eunice Boardman, entitled *Musical Growth in the Elementary School* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

around the world were discovering the Kodály method during the 1960s and 1970s and were traveling to Hungary to learn about it. Moreover, they were also thinking of ways in which the method could be transplanted and institutionalized within their home countries. With the help of Hungarian pedagogues, they developed several centres and programs inspired by Kodály's conception of teaching music and his vision for universalizing musical literacy. These multiplying professional interactions and energetic plans produced a still-existing transnational network of music educators dedicated to the international dissemination of the Kodály method.

The exchanges and collaborations at the heart of spreading the Kodály method in different countries and continents were happening against the backdrop of the Cold War: a period determined by a global geopolitical and cultural rivalry. How did a transnational network emerge amidst overarching forces directed towards maintaining divisions and antagonisms? How could American and Hungarian pedagogues follow the principles of reciprocity and equivalence within the context of a systemic confrontation that weaponized culture to win prestige and demonstrate superiority? The story of the Kodály method illustrates the simultaneity and interdependence of these two dimensions. As such, its examination brings together two paths of analysis: one focusing on the role and agency of non-state actors in the U.S. and Hungary, and the other examining the Cold War cultural diplomacy goals of the Hungarian authorities. A close inspection reveals how the ideas and the work of a transnational network of music educators were accommodated and eventually exploited by the institutions in charge of Hungarian cultural diplomacy, illustrating the conflict and interdependence at the heart of the cultural Cold War.

Cultural Diplomacy and Transnational Connections during the Cold War

There are two distinct and conceptually significant approaches to constructing a narrative about the period of the Cold War. One, adopting a top-down perspective that focuses on states, diplomatic relations, and policy, tells a story of geopolitical struggle and of a competition in cultural diplomacy efforts to “win the hearts and minds” of the opposing side.² Another approach, focusing on institutions, non-state actors, networks, ideas, and material culture, aims to give shape to a narrative of international collaboration, transnational flows and exchanges, and increasing global integration.³ While the former follows the outcome of a systemic confrontation, and the latter outlines the emergence of an interconnected world, both approaches deal with simultaneous and highly co-dependent postwar phenomena that should be studied together.

The past decades saw increasing attention in scholarship to the “cultural Cold War,” emphasizing the importance of cultural diplomacy in the rivalry between the two superpowers. Such works conceptualized the Cold War as a global ideological and cultural contest to convince populations at home and abroad of the superiority of a given side’s worldview.⁴ A wide array

² See for example Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991); Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997); or Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

³ See for example, Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

⁴ For comprehensive overviews, see Robert Griffith, “The Cultural Turn in Cold War Studies,” *Reviews in American History* 29, no. 1 (March 2001): 150–157; Gordon Johnston, “Revisiting the Cultural Cold War,” *Social History* 35, no. 3 (2010): 290–307; Jessica Gienow-Hecht, “Culture and the Cold War in Europe” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010),

of overt and covert operations was devised and implemented with this purpose in mind, ranging from various channels of media broadcasting to efforts of musical diplomacy, traveling exhibitions, and the distribution of newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and books.⁵ Internationally oriented projects of cultural diplomacy constituted significant frames through which the Cold War was interpreted and experienced. Both in a direct or indirect way, such practices aimed to reinforce the foreign policy goals of the superpowers, contributing to the international legitimization of their forms of power and political culture.

The origins of this cultural contest reach back to the interwar period. As Michael David-Fox shows, the young Soviet state—politically and economically isolated after 1917—created a cultural diplomacy apparatus of a “new type.”⁶ Aiming for a totalizing form of propaganda, special both in scope and nature, the Soviets “developed an unprecedented system for receiving foreign visitors and influencing the image of the Soviet Union abroad.”⁷ The Bolsheviks “aspired to alter not merely the views but also the worldviews of visitors,” to effectively convert them, or at least teach them to “see the Soviet system through different eyes.”⁸ This comprehensive and uncompromising approach to cultural diplomacy foreshadowed the mutually exclusive ideological positions of both superpowers throughout the entirety of the Cold War. Most certainly, it was the propaganda

398–419; Federico Romero “Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads,” *Cold War History* 14, no. 4 (2014): 685–703.

⁵ See: Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 1999); Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); Alfred Reisch, *Hot Books in the Cold War: the CIA-funded Secret Book Distribution Program Behind the Iron Curtain* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013); Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America’s Cold War Diplomacy* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015).

⁶ Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*

apparatus that the Soviet Union brought to its post-WWII rivalry with the U.S. and which became the foundation upon which Khrushchev built his project of interacting with the West after Stalin's death in 1953.

Since Soviet cultural diplomacy sprung from the ideological core of the Soviet experiment, it was necessarily and inevitably anti-American. In the formative years of the Cold War, the Soviets exploited worldwide anti-American discourses and sentiments to the full and perpetuated them ad nauseam until the fall of communism. It is hardly surprising that the distinctly Cold War version of American cultural diplomacy was forged in the crucible of emerging postwar U.S. military and economic dominance and the bitter ideological rivalry with the Soviet Union. Starting in the early 1950s, the U.S. embarked on a worldwide campaign of promoting its own political and social values through cultural products and events.⁹ American cultural diplomacy projects were mostly coordinated by the United States Information Agency (USIA) and were funded from a dynamic mixture of state and private sources.¹⁰ Their upsurge and strength was the result of a proactive as well as a reactive measure, aimed at completely transforming long-standing negative perceptions of America's supposed cultural inferiority and at addressing—or, ideally, dismissing—widespread accusations that racism was prevalent in postwar America.¹¹ Furthermore, the leaders of a newly self-conscious superpower

⁹ See Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

¹⁰ On the USIA see Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹¹ For the interconnectedness of the Cold War and the internationalization of the civil rights movement, see Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000). For a discussion on how the global perception of U.S. race relations influenced American musical diplomacy, see Penny von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

were aiming to complement America's global military and economic hegemony with a corresponding cultural hegemony.¹²

This global ideological rivalry notwithstanding, after the immediate postwar years, Cold War cultural diplomacy became inherently Janus-faced: geopolitical competition cohabited with transnational exchanges and collaborations initiated by both state and non-state actors. Embodying the intentions behind the slogan of "peaceful coexistence," the U.S. and the Soviet Union signed the "Agreement on Exchanges in Cultural, Technical and Educational Fields" in 1958.¹³ The details of the agreement were renegotiated and ratified every two years, yet open communication channels remained stable despite the subsequent antagonisms on the level of high diplomacy. Between 1958 and 1988, an estimated five thousand American and a similar number of Soviet graduate students, scholars, and teachers were exchanged through the IUCTG (Inter-University Council on Travel Grants) and later IREX (International Research & Exchanges Board) programs.¹⁴

The engagement of the Soviet bloc with the West and the Global South fragmented the rigid geopolitical idea of mutually exclusive "worlds" both conceptually and practically. The short initial phase of the Cold War morphed into a longer phase in which combative rhetoric and global rivalry was complemented by increased cross-systemic relations. The expansion of such practices de-centred the zero-sum logic predicated on lack of

¹² For discussion on U.S. expansionism, Americanization, and cultural imperialism see Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, "Shame on US? Academics, cultural transfer, and the Cold War: A Critical Review," *Diplomatic History* 24 (2000): 465–494; or Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890–2010* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹³ Usually known as the Lacy-Zarubin agreement after the negotiators, William S. B. Lacy, President Eisenhower's Special Assistant on East-West Exchanges, and Georgi Z. Zarubin, Soviet ambassador to the United States.

¹⁴ Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (Penn State University Press, 2004), 24.

contact and the “total Cold War” was replaced by an interactive détente.¹⁵ Historiography assessing this transformation reconceptualized the Iron Curtain as a transparent “Nylon Curtain” or a “semi-permeable membrane,” which “yielded to strong osmotic tendencies that were globalizing knowledge across the systemic divide about culture, goods, and services.”¹⁶ Scholars like Akira Iriye overturn the historical lens to examine the Cold War from the perspective of global history. He warns that to “assign the central role to the Cold War in periodizing post-Second World War history is to consider geopolitics the key to recent history,” and claims that “it makes just as much sense to periodize the post-1945 years in terms of the history of decolonization, internationalism, human rights, economic globalization, or environmentalism.”¹⁷ This approach de-emphasizes the role of foreign policy and the top-down designs for cultural diplomacy in order to examine the activity of non-state actors, non-governmental organizations, transnational networks, the transfer of ideas and practices, and professional, scientific, or artistic communities.¹⁸

¹⁵ See Oliver Bange and Poul Villaume, *The Long Détente: Changing Concepts of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1950s–1980s* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2017).

¹⁶ György Péteri, “Nylon Curtain: Transnational and Transsystemic Tendencies in The Cultural Life of State-Socialist Russia And East-Central Europe,” *Slavonica* 10, no. 2 (2004): 115. See also Michael David-Fox, “The Iron Curtain as Semi-Permeable Membrane: The Origins and Demise of the Stalinist Superiority Complex,” in *Cold War Crossings: International Travel and Exchange Across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s–1960s* edited by Patryk Babiracki and Kenyon Zimmer (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 14–39.

¹⁷ Akira Iriye, “Historicizing the Cold War,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, edited by Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 16.

¹⁸ See Johanna Bockman and Gil Eyal, “Eastern Europe as a Laboratory for Economic Knowledge: The Transnational Roots of Neoliberalism,” *American Journal of Sociology* (2002): 310–52; Maxine Berg, “East-West Dialogues: Economic Historians, the Cold War, and Détente,” *The Journal of Modern History* 87 (March 2015): 36–71; Stephen Macekura, *Of Limits and Growth: The Rise of Global ‘Sustainable Development’ in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Sarah B. Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Giles Scott-Smith and Ludovic Tournès,

Despite the different scholarly agendas behind the two approaches, what becomes apparent is the simultaneity of the phenomena under examination and the interdependency of the state and supra- or sub-state forces being analysed. Government-run cultural diplomacy projects, like IREX scholarships, enabled cultural and scientific exchanges which went far beyond the strict foreign policy goals of superpowers by initiating intellectual transfers and helping establish professional networks that defied and outlasted the Cold War. State officials on both sides wanted to use scholarly and artistic exchanges as Cold War weapons while the scholars and artists themselves used the Cold War as a tool for professional development and institution building.¹⁹ Within this dynamic, the pursuit of competition, security, and superiority combined, coexisted, and conflicted with the intentions of cooperation, transfers, joint goals, and reciprocity. Consequently, it is useful in analysing the interactions of the period to distinguish conceptually between the Cold War logic of geopolitical struggle and the logic of transnational connections—not only to better understand the processes that shaped the postwar era, but also to avoid unduly favouring one explicatory narrative over the other.

The Transnational Embeddedness of Cultural Propaganda in Cold War Hungary

The history of post-1956 Hungary in the Cold War showcases the intertwined nature of competitive cultural diplomacy and the cooperative intentions of transnational ties. Initially, due to the ramifications of the 1956 revolution, the new regime of János Kádár lacked legitimacy domestically and abroad. However, the next decades saw significant consolidation on both fronts. The

eds., *Global Exchanges: Scholarships and Transnational Circulations in the Modern World* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018).

¹⁹ See David Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 9.

first major international recognition of Kádár's regime came in 1963 in the form of a compromise: the Hungarian mandate was renewed at the UN in exchange for the declaration of a political amnesty aimed to liberate those persecuted for participating in the revolution.²⁰ Like neighbouring states in the Soviet bloc, Hungary was caught between the economically and culturally driven centripetal need to become more open toward the West and the outside world in general, and the centrifugal forces aiming to enforce totalizing social control, homogeneity, and a distinct systemic-ideological identity. The local Hungarian tendencies favouring an opening and those imposing a closure should be understood in the context of larger regional and global phenomena which created a "dual dependency" for the country: a primary one of military-economic nature from the Soviet Union and a secondary one of an economic and cultural nature from Western countries.²¹ The agency—or lack thereof—of small, semi-peripheral East European countries thus consisted in the way they used and incrementally transformed their "scope-of-action" and diversified their tools within the constraints of such dependencies.²² While the tension between striving for more openness on all levels and the paranoid autocratic reflexes reverting to closedness were not resolved until the fall of the regime, starting with the 1960s the emphasis gradually shifted towards the centripetal tendencies that transformed Hungary's Iron Curtain into one of the most transparent and permeable

²⁰ Anikó Macher, "Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1957–1963: Echoes of Western Cultural Activity in a Communist Country," in *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, edited by Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 75–108.

²¹ See József Böröcz, "Dual Dependency and the Informalization of External Linkages: The Case of Hungary," *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 4 (1992): 189–209.

²² The concept of small states' "scope-of-action" within geopolitical force-fields comes from the work of historian György Ránki. For more, see Péter Hanák, "'Range' and 'Constraint': Scope of Action and Fixed Course in György Ránki's Historical Approach," *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 34 (1988): 359–373.

barriers in the entire Communist bloc.²³ The country's gradual (re)integration into the Western-dominated world capitalist system and the state's skyrocketing indebtedness at the end of the 1970s greatly determined this shift.²⁴ Knowledge of and access to the West was neither universal nor easy, being determined by privilege, social status, professional position, geographical location, and gender. Nonetheless, contrasted with the relatively strong isolation of the Soviet Union (and Romania in the 1980s), Hungarian citizens were well informed about both high and popular culture in the West through newspapers, periodicals, and highly frequented cinema theatres.

As a consequence, the period of the 1960s and 1970s should not be seen as defined by "Western cultural penetration" or, conversely, by "imperialist subversion," as the propaganda of the two superpowers would have it.²⁵ Instead, it was a period when Hungary's international connections and collaborations multiplied, prospered, and became resilient despite constant interference by geopolitical power-struggles, the secret police, and bureaucratic inertia. The late Cold War was defined by complex processes of negotiating cultural and institutional ties, the leveraging of locally embedded privilege and internationally

²³ For a detailed analysis of openness toward the West in Hungarian cultural policy and cultural production and consumption, see Róbert Takács, "Szovjet és magyar nyitás a kultúrában Nyugat felé 1953–1964" [Soviet and Hungarian openness toward the West between 1953–64], *Múltunk* 60, no. 3 (2015): 30–68; and "A magyar kultúra nyitottsága az 1970-es években" [The openness of Hungarian culture in the 1970s] *Múltunk* 61, no. 4 (2016): 24–56.

²⁴ For an analysis of Hungary's indebtedness see Földes György, *Az eladósodás politikátörténete, 1957–1986* [The political history of indebtedness, 1957–1986] (Budapest: Maecenas, 1995); or Attila Mong, *Kádár hitele: A magyar államadósság története 1956–1990* [Kádár's Credit: The history of the Hungarian state's indebtedness, 1956–1990] (Budapest: Libri, 2012). For an analysis of Hungarian political economy from a world-systems theory approach, see Tamás Gerócs and András Pinkasz, "Debt-ridden development on Europe's Eastern Periphery," in *Global Inequalities in World-Systems Perspective: Theoretical Debates and Methodological Innovations*, edited by Manuela Boatcă, Andrea Komlosy and Hans-Heinrich Nolte (New York: Routledge, 2018), 131–153.

²⁵ For a rather triumphalist take on the impact of American culture in Eastern Europe, see Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

accumulated prestige, and the increasing agency of artists, scholars, scientists, and athletes. The geopolitically and ideologically framed agendas of the Hungarian communist establishment were in a dynamic push-and-pull interplay with the transnational tendencies that motivated and guided many of the leaders and employees of the state's own institutions, from universities to theatres, research facilities, and even ministries.

Cultural diplomacy had an oversized role for the international presence of small, semi-peripheral countries like Hungary that lacked significant economic or military power of their own and, subsequently, had little to no independence in devising their foreign policy. Engaging in cultural diplomacy offered a relatively autonomous field of action, the possibility of expressing cultural uniqueness and of building international prestige without major financial investments.²⁶ Following the Soviet model, Hungarian authorities wanted to simultaneously improve the international image of the Hungarian People's Republic and to closely supervise the cross-systemic mobility of information, goods, and people. Tasked with this significant—and gradually overwhelming—task was the Institute for Cultural Relations (Kulturális Kapcsolatok Intézete), the Hungarian equivalent of the Soviet All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad, or VOKS (and its later reincarnation, the State Committee for Cultural Ties or GKKS).

The Institute was founded in 1949, yet it became the main administrative hub for cultural diplomacy and official travels to and from Hungary only in the early 1960s.²⁷ Reacting to the country's improving international presence, in 1962 the Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSzMP) decided on the expansion of the Institute, transforming it into a nationally competent organ functioning on the level

²⁶ For a discussion of Bulgarian cultural diplomacy during the Cold War, see Theodora Dragostinova, "The East in the West: Bulgarian Culture in the United States of America during the Global 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 53 (2018): 212–239.

²⁷ Anna Kosztricz, "A Kulturális Kapcsolatok Intézete" Archivnet.hu, 4th issue (2015). Available at: http://archivnet.hu/politika/a_kulturalis_kapcsolatok_intezete.html?oldal=5 (retrieved September 5, 2019).

of ministries.²⁸ Covertly, the ICR also had strong ties to the Hungarian State Security (Állambiztonság) that placed its officers in key positions and ran an entire network of informants within the institution. The ICR hosted the Hungarian National Commission for UNESCO from 1963, the National Council of Scholarships (Országos Ösztöndíj Tanács) from 1968, and supervised the Hungarian cultural institutions located in the West (Vienna, Rome, Paris, and Helsinki), the communist bloc (Sofia, Warsaw, Prague, and East-Berlin), and the “developing world” (Cairo and Delhi).²⁹

The ICR was charged with coordinating the propagation of Hungarian culture abroad; initiating cultural and scientific relations with other countries; preparing cultural agreements with a selection of these countries; facilitating the presentation of foreign cultures in Hungary; managing all official cultural delegations to and from Hungary; and perhaps most difficult of all, overseeing the international cultural activities of all Hungarian official organs. It was divided into territorial sections (*területi főosztályok*) according to the prevalent symbolic geography of the Cold War: the First Section was handling relations with “friendly” socialist countries, the Third Section dealt with “developing” countries (mostly in the Global South), while the Second and Fourth Sections addressed contacts with the capitalist countries of Western Europe and North America. Accordingly, the activities of the sections were specifically tailored to address the three geopolitically defined areas. Building cultural relations with socialist countries had the purpose of strengthening the socialist world community, whereas contacts with capitalist countries were intended to

²⁸ “A Magyar Forradalmi Munkás-Paraszt Kormány 3184/1962. sz. határozata a KKI irányításával és szervezetével kapcsolatos egyes kérdésekről [Decree nr. 3184/1962 of the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government about certain questions related to the control and organization of the Institute for Cultural Relations],” MNL OL, XIX-A-33-b, box 195.

²⁹ See Katalin Somlai, “Ösztöndíjjal Nyugatra a hatvanas években: Az Országos Ösztöndíj Tanács felállítása [To the West with a scholarship: The establishment of the National Council of Scholarships],” in *Kádárizmus: Mélyfúrások*, edited by János Tischler (Budapest, 2009), 273–314.

increase the international prestige of Hungary. Towards the countries “recently freed from colonial yoke,” the Institute promised assistance in scientific and professional education, in the organization of their administrative, economic and scientific life, and the distribution of cultural and technological knowledge. Finally, the “needs of the loyal Hungarian émigré communities abroad” were also to be taken into account when devising the ICR’s cultural policy.³⁰

In a 1963 article, János Pataki, chief secretary of the ICR, outlined the official principles of Hungarian cultural diplomacy.³¹ According to Pataki, the goal of propagating Hungarian culture abroad was to dispel previous “faux romantic” conceptions about the country and to showcase the new, socialist way of life. The article confidently declared: “Today it is widely accepted as common sense that while foreign cultural and scientific achievements cannot be imported without the proper critique, all that is useful in them must be adopted.”³² Pataki presented this position as a sign of significant evolution from previous approaches to cultural relations described as either “provincial” or “cosmopolite.” Most likely these two fallacies referred to the isolationism of the Stalinist Rákosi regime on the one hand and the supposedly unprincipled openness of “bourgeois” attitudes on the other—both of which were, by implication, surpassed by the current Kádár regime. As a result, it was the duty of the Party and of the paternalist State to find and navigate a measured middle ground for openness and cultural relations, guaranteeing the “consistent ideological offensive of socialism against the decadent and reactionary currents of bourgeois culture.”³³

More than a decade later, in 1974, a working paper submitted to the Ministry of Culture entitled “On Our Cultural Work Abroad” reconfirmed the same goals for Hungarian cultural

³⁰ József Bognár’s memo on September 13, 1962. MNL OL, XIX-I-4-*jjj*, box 21.

³¹ János Pataki, “Magyarország kulturális kapcsolatai [Hungary’s cultural relations],” *Pártélet* 11 (1963): 52–57.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

diplomacy.³⁴ Its author was Livia Bíró, a long-time member of the Party and a midlevel functionary who regularly articulated the authoritative position regarding cultural policy. She explained the totality of scope and the geopolitical intentions surrounding the role of culture in the global confrontation that was the Cold War:

The international presence and impact of Hungarian culture is not merely a cultural issue because it is perceived as a message from a socialist country, and its reception is the same as the reception of a Hungary that is building a living and existing socialism. As such, every representation of our culture abroad is in the service of cultural propaganda.³⁵

According to Bíró, cultural diplomacy was framed by high expectations that called for consistency, homogeneity, and precise coordination in developing cultural and scientific relations and calculating their ultimate impact. Despite such maximalist expectations, officials on all sides of the Cold War divide gradually discovered that cultural matters were by their very nature heterogeneous, informal, free flowing, self-willed, and their reception unpredictable. Nonetheless, the ICR mobilized its sizable bureaucratic and professional arsenal to facilitate the centrally condoned dissemination of Hungarian culture abroad and to channel foreign culture into Hungary.

To start, it organized and helped organize hundreds of exhibitions on Hungarian and international art, design, architecture, and photography. For example, the Institute initiated commemorative exhibitions for famous Hungarian personalities in several countries, like in 1955 for the tenth anniversary of Béla Bartók's death, and in 1962 for the eightieth birthday of Zoltán Kodály.³⁶ In the case of U.S.-Hungarian

³⁴ Livia Bíró, "A külföldre irányuló kulturális munkáról [On Our Cultural Work Abroad]," November 25, 1974. MNL OL, XIX-I-7-aa, box 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ "Celebrations honoring Zoltán Kodály's 80th birthday abroad," 1963. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 1.

cultural relations, there was an exchange of exhibitions which went from minor events to large-scale projects. The initial steps included exhibitions on Hungarian folk art or music education at U.S. universities, or a 1968 exhibit dedicated to American photographer Edward Steichen in Budapest. This bilateral practice eventually produced a multi-city traveling exhibition about Hungarian Art Nouveau touring the U.S. between 1976–79, and the organization of major American exhibitions in Hungary: “Images of America” (1977), “America Now” (1980), “American Theater Today” (1982), “The World of American Cinema” (1984), etc.³⁷ The ICR was charged with finding new touring destinations for Hungarian artists and ensembles—and making sure that invitations for them were included in future cultural agreements. Modelled on the cultural diplomatic role assigned by Soviet authorities to the Bolshoi Ballet, the flagship act for Hungarian musical diplomacy was the State Folk Ensemble (Magyar Állami Népi Együttes) which started touring in Western Europe already in the 1950s and performed successfully throughout South America in 1965 and North America in 1966.³⁸

Additionally, the Institute had a hand in distributing various kinds of publications for foreign readerships, like the newspapers *Daily News* and *Hungary*, the literary and scholarly journal *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, and various books on Hungary produced by the Corvina publishing house.³⁹ Furthermore, it provided support and censorial oversight to translation projects which aimed to present Hungarian literature to the world, for example the representative anthology of post-1945 Hungarian verse, edited by Miklós Vajda and published jointly by Columbia

³⁷ For the Hungarian Art Nouveau exhibition tour see “An Enlightening Collection from Budapest,” *The New York Times*, March 12, 1978.

³⁸ The ensemble caught the attention of Walt Disney, who apparently made a 65-minute short film about the U.S. performance of the dance group. For an analysis of the Bolshoi Ballet’s tours in the West, see Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).

³⁹ For example, Zoltán Halász, *Hungary* (Budapest: Corvina, 1960); or *Hungary*, text by Gyula Fekete, with 146 black-and-white and 7 colour photos by Balla Demeter, Dobos Lajos, Kónya Kálmán (Budapest: Corvina, 1974).

University Press and Corvina in 1977.⁴⁰ Finally, for those in charge of improving the international image and prestige of the country, no audience was too small or too young. Starting with the 1960s, Hungarian officials received dozens of letters from American elementary schools in which pupils or their teachers were asking for informational materials about Hungary for their social studies classes. Amazingly, the employees of the ICR found time and resources to reply to each of these letters and to send each sixth- or seventh-grader brochures, postcards, and dolls dressed in folk costumes.⁴¹

Despite the strong ideological framing, projects of cultural diplomacy during the Cold War were not unilateral efforts in one-way communication. The implementation, interpretation, and impact of projects that were built on the premise of exchange and reciprocity—like cooperation in international non-governmental organizations, scholarships schemes, participation at summer universities and joint education programs—escaped the conceptual framework of Cold War. In many cases concerning Hungary's international presence, the intention to propagate a positive image of the Hungarian Peoples' Republic was accompanied by the often stronger institutional and professional agendas of the privileged figures animating the cross-systemic interactions.

Conforming to a global trend, starting in the 1960s renowned Hungarian scientists, educators, and artists became members in the world organizations linked to their respective fields, occupying high-ranking positions and hosting one of these organization's world congresses in Budapest. In 1963, János Pataki informed his readers about Hungary's membership in 364 international non-governmental organizations—by 1979, an internal report of the Ministry of Culture talked

⁴⁰ *Modern Hungarian Poetry*, edited and with an introduction by Miklós Vajda. (New York and Budapest: Columbia University Press and Corvina Press, 1977).

⁴¹ For example, an elementary school teacher from the state of New York, Laura Genuth, wrote a letter to János Kádár on January 1, 1963. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 205.

about involvement in 900 such organizations.⁴² Notable examples in the musical field were the International Society for Music Education, holding one of its yearly conferences in Budapest in 1964, and the Federation Internationales des Jeunesses Musicales (today known as Jeunesses Musicales International) bringing its congress to Hungary in 1969. Budapest hosted several other world congresses, e.g. the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art (1969), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (1972), the International Comparative Literature Association (1976), and the International Economic History Association (1982). The World Esperanto Congress was organized twice during this period (1966 and 1983) in Budapest—which also gave home to the World Hunting Expo in 1971. The governmental intention in permitting Hungarian scholars and artists to join such organizations and bring such highly mediatized conferences to Hungary was wholly instrumental, aiming to influence the activity of an independent non-state entity and hopefully using it in the geopolitical struggle against capitalist and “bourgeois” countries. Yet, as the example of the International Economic History Association shows, both the Hungarian historians involved (György Ránki and Iván T. Berend) and the professional community itself was highly resistant to attempts at de-railing the association for Cold War purposes.⁴³

Much like world congresses and international conferences, the summer university courses organized in Debrecen, Esztergom, or Pécs (by the 1970s up to eleven Hungarian cities hosted such courses with participants from 27 countries) were borderline events that mixed the logic of cultural diplomacy with that of transnational scientific and educational collaboration. However, the most significant relationships in the cultural and artistic fields during the Cold War era were forged through

⁴² Pataki, “Magyarország kulturális kapcsolatai,” 53; “A nem-kormányközi kulturális nemzetközi szervezetekben végzett munkánk [Our work in non-governmental international cultural organizations],” 1979. MNL OL, XIX-I-7-dd, box 61.

⁴³ For an extensive analysis of the activity of the IEHA, see Berg, “East-West Dialogues,” op. cit.

participation in the various scholarship schemes set up between the geopolitical rivals. During the 1960s and 1970s, Hungary signed a series of agreements on scientific and cultural exchanges with countries in Western Europe, culminating in the one finalized with the U.S. in 1976.⁴⁴ As the country became more open and its institutions more integrated into transnational networks, the scholarship opportunities multiplied. To take the example of the exchanges between the U.S. and Hungary: while initially scholars could only go to America through either the small Inter-University Committee exchange (from 1963) or get a highly prestigious Ford Scholarship (from 1964), the start of IREX in Hungary from 1968 onward significantly increased the cross-systemic mobility of academics. This was complemented by a variety of UNESCO scholarships, the agreement for joint scientific projects between the ICR and the National Science Foundation, invitations to the State Department's International Visitor Program and multi-regional programs, and finally, the introduction of the Eisenhower and Fulbright Scholarships. There were also scholarships that were less high-profile and more independent from official oversight, like the participation of Hungarian writers at the International Writing Program at Iowa City (since 1970) or receiving the István Gombocz scholarship set up by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions for young Hungarian librarians at Kent State University, Ohio, in 1975.⁴⁵ Finally, some of the most complex cases for Cold War interaction and institutional collaboration came in the form of establishing lectureships or chairs for Hungarian Studies at North American universities, like the lecturing position set up by professor Denis Sinor at Indiana University, Bloomington, in 1963 and turned into a

⁴⁴ On U.S.-Hungarian relations, see László Borhi, *Dealing with Dictators: The United States, Hungary, and East Central Europe, 1942-1989* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).

⁴⁵ On the participation of East European writers at the IWP, see Szabolcs László, "Performing for the Capitalists: Cold War Cultural Diplomacy Experienced by Hungarian and Romanian Writers at the Iowa International Writing Program (1967-1989)," *Prisms: Perspectives on South East European History* (Spring 2020).

full-blown endowed Chair in 1979; or the lecturing position created by professor Albert Tezla in 1973 at the University of Minnesota.⁴⁶

Promoting the Kodály Method: Transnational Network and Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy

Although most projects categorized as Cold War cultural diplomacy reveal to varying degrees the inextricable and dynamic mixture of the geopolitical and transnational logics that shaped postwar history, the international dissemination of the music education system labelled as the “Kodály method”—and especially its adaptation in the U.S.—offers an instructive case study.

The life and work of composer, music educator, and ethnomusicologist Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) and the development of what came to be known as the “Kodály method” has been studied extensively.⁴⁷ However, the international success of the method has been taken for granted with no analysis of the mechanisms which made its appeal and dissemination possible in the middle of the Cold War.

Most accounts of Kodály’s efforts from the 1920s until the 1960s to transform Hungarian music education have a teleological narrative leading up to the emergence of a well-rounded concept that was first put into practice on a national scale and then disseminated internationally.⁴⁸ To summarize:

⁴⁶ On the establishment of the Hungarian Chair at Indiana University, see Denis Sinor, “A Peaceful Interlude in the Cold War,” *Hungarian Studies* 19, no. 2 (2005): 243–253. During this period, smaller centres for Hungarian studies were also established at Rutgers University, Columbia University, University of Nebraska, University of California, Santa Barbara, University of Toronto, and Carleton University.

⁴⁷ For an overview, see Michael Houlahan and Philip Tacka, *Zoltán Kodály: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland Pub., 1998).

⁴⁸ For example, Lois Choksy, *The Kodály Method: Comprehensive Music Education from Infant to Adult* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974), or Michael Houlahan and Philip Tacka, *Kodály Today: A Cognitive Approach to Elementary Music Education* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Kodály turned his attention to the musical education of children around 1925, publishing his first works on the topic shortly after.⁴⁹ Following the war, his conceptualization of music pedagogy was broadly institutionalized through the activities of his disciples. With the oft-repeated slogan “Music should be for everyone! (Legyen a zene mindenkié!),” Kodály’s vision was to democratize musical culture by making the reading and writing of music a part of general education throughout the Hungarian school system—a plan that was integrated into the general framework of Soviet-type social engineering schemes of the Rákosi era.⁵⁰ In 1950, the first special music primary school was started in Kecskemét, in which children studied music and choral singing daily, alongside the regular curriculum. Since the universalizing rhetoric of Kodály’s ideas and the pedagogical results were judged positively by the communist establishment, similar music schools (or “singing schools”) were opened across the country. By 1969, there were 86 such schools across Hungary, while in 1990 their number reached 500.⁵¹ Kodály himself developed a love-hate relationship with the communist Hungarian authorities—and was turned both domestically and internationally into an ambiguous cultural icon that could equally represent the alliance of (non-Party member) artists and intellectuals with the Communist Party, and simultaneously, their relative independence from it. Finally, the culmination of the method’s history came with its worldwide dissemination

⁴⁹ Kodály published the first volume of *Bicinia Hungarica* in 1937. English translation: Zoltán Kodály, *Bicinia Hungarica*, translated by Percy M. Young (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1962).

⁵⁰ Péteri Lóránt, “Zene, oktatás, tudomány, politika (Kodály és az államszocializmus művelődéspolitikája, 1948–1967 [Music, education, science, politics: Kodály and the politics of culture during state socialism, 1948–1967],” *Forrás* 39 (2007): 45–63.

⁵¹ See Lynn Hooker, “The Kodály and Rajkó Methods: Voices, Instruments, Ethnicity, and the Globalization of Hungarian Music Education in the Twentieth Century,” *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 6 (2014): 130–147; and Catherine Pierce Sennyey, “The Kodály Method in Post-Communist Hungary: A Decade of Change,” *Kodály Envoy* 2 (2001): 15–16.

starting with the 1960s, being adapted on a large-scale in the U.S., Canada, Australia, Denmark, Finland, Japan, etc.⁵²

This linear narrative was a central part of the creation of the “Kodály method” in the early 1960s as a viable model that could be isolated, defined, compared (e.g. with the Orff method), and eventually exported and adapted to foreign contexts. Models are a form of selective forgetting through which the messiness of history is displaced by a capsule narrative, designed to convey a formula for the desired transformation: in this case, improving the musical literacy of children and the musical culture of a nation.⁵³ Once the model fell into place, its coherent identity papered over the various experimental stages through which the main tools of the method were chosen: the use of folk songs, the tonic solfège singing, the iconic hand signs to indicate scale degrees, and the rhythm duration syllables.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the model was built around the figure of Kodály, giving it a seamless and unitary aspect and obscuring the collective work done by his disciples (Ádám Jenő, György Kerényi, Erzsébet Szőnyi, etc.). Finally, and most crucially for my case study, the retroactive construction of a clearly identifiable model silenced the fundamentally transnational and collaborative nature of how the Kodály method came into existence.

Hungary’s presence in the international canon of twentieth century modern music rested primarily on the worldwide acclaim for the works of Béla Bartók, and to a lesser extent on the recognition of Kodály’s compositions. Yet, due to Bartók’s emigration to the U.S. in 1940 and the Zhdanovian attacks on his music in Stalinist Hungary, the interpretation of his legacy was controversial and contentious on both sides of the

⁵² In 2016, the Kodály method was included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

⁵³ Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America’s Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 45.

⁵⁴ Lois Choksy, Robert M. Abramson, Avon E. Gillespie, David Woods, and Frank York, *Teaching Music in the Twenty-First Century* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall., 2001), 84–88.

Iron Curtain.⁵⁵ Kodály, on the other hand, due to his choice of remaining in Hungary and his ambivalent relationship with the communist regime, could be celebrated domestically and internationally as a truly “autochthonous”—meaning both national and socialist—cultural icon. However, such official propagation by the Hungarian authorities instrumentalized Kodály’s figure and largely ignored his and his disciples’ efforts in reforming music education. Consequently, it was only in the middle of the 1960s that the system of music education inspired by Kodály was elevated from a domestic policy into becoming an international issue.

As late as 1963, János Pataki failed to make any reference to the educational method when listing the Hungarian cultural products or events of international interest, nor was the method mentioned in the worldwide celebrations held to honour Kodály’s eightieth birthday.⁵⁶ The year 1964, however, proved to be pivotal by bringing two events to Budapest that would kickstart the process through which the “Hungarian system of music education” became the globally acclaimed “Kodály method.” The primary event was the conference of the International Society for Music Education (ISME), which had Kodály as its honorary president, and during which Hungarian music educators gave several highly acclaimed and memorable presentations of the “Hungarian system” to pedagogues from around the world. The smaller event was the meeting of the International Folk Music Council, also presided over by the Hungarian composer who personally took the participants on a tour of the “singing school” in Kecskemét.⁵⁷

Afterwards, Kodály and his disciples were flooded with invitations to give further presentations and with requests to receive in Hungary educators and students interested in the

⁵⁵ For an in-depth analysis of the debates over Bartók’s work, see Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided: Bartók’s Legacy in Cold War Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

⁵⁶ Pataki, “Magyarország kulturális kapcsolatai,” op. cit., 54.

⁵⁷ Deeply impressive figures like professor Alexander Ringer of the University of Illinois, who would become a key figure in the transplantation of the Kodály method to the U.S. See Chosky, *The Kodály Method*, 6–7.

method. The composer's 1965 and 1966 visits to the U.S. had a key role in further popularizing the educational method in America, especially through the participation of the Hungarian delegation at the ISME conference at Interlochen, Michigan.⁵⁸ Moreover, it was at a lecture for music educators held at Stanford in the summer of 1966 that many of Kodály's future American "followers" (Denise Bacon, Sister Mary Alice Hein, Sister Lorna Zemke, Lois Choksy, etc.) had the chance to meet the iconic figure at the centre of a brewing international enthusiasm for a new approach to teaching music. The 1960s also saw Hungarian educators, especially Erzsébet Szőnyi, travel from conference to workshop to summer university throughout the U.S. and Canada and tirelessly give demonstrations on the "Hungarian system" to young and old—establishing the foundations of a wide-ranging professional and personal network that cut across the Iron Curtain and belied the divisions of the Cold War.⁵⁹

Increasingly, this network was held together by the common denominator of Kodály's name, even before the method emerged as an identifiable model. This branding was done by design: while not yet using the popular moniker "Kodály method," in her 1966 lecture on the "characteristics of the Hungarian system," Szőnyi called Kodály the "foundation of our whole musical education."⁶⁰ Lois Choksy, author of the most widely used handbook on the method, wrote in 1974 that it was "unlikely that Kodály ever thought of what was taking place in the Singing Schools of Hungary as the 'Kodály Method.' It remained for foreigners visiting Hungary to give Kodály's name

⁵⁸ On Kodály's 1966 visit to the U.S., see Melinda Berlász, "Zoltán Kodály's Visit to Santa Barbara and the Premieres of the *Psalmus Hungaricus* and the *Symphony in America*," *Studia Musicologica* 58, no. 1 (2017): 89–118.

⁵⁹ For example, Erzsébet Szőnyi was invited to the International Seminar on Teacher Education in Music, sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education and held at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in August 1966. Her presentation was entitled "The Principal Characteristics in Hungarian Music Education." See also Jerry-Louis Jaccard, *A Tear in the Curtain: The Musical Diplomacy of Erzsébet Szőnyi: Musician, Composer, Teacher of Teachers* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2014).

⁶⁰ Szőnyi, "The Principal Characteristics in Hungarian Music Education," op. cit., 102.

to what they saw.”⁶¹ The name indeed came from international protagonists translating the Hungarian educational system as a method along the lines of the Szuzuki-, Orff-, Ward-, or Dalcroze-methods.⁶² The model was born out of the interaction of a local practice and a global framework, prompted by the comparative perspective embedded in the field of professional music education. From 1966 onward, its identity solidified in both everyday usage and professional publications.

However, until the middle of the 1970s the international dissemination of the method and the numerous attempts of its adaptation remained an essentially non-governmental, bottom-up, transnational effort animated by the professional network of music educators. The Hungarian teachers of the method and their international partners perfected two practices for winning adherents and transferring knowledge across borders. One was to regularly put the Hungarian “singing schools” on display and to immerse foreign observers in the everyday workings of the music education system. This was accompanied by coursework in the theory of the method at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest. Lacking any financial support from the Hungarian government for welcoming foreign students and teachers, they came to Hungary covering their expenses and fees from grants or their own savings.

For example, in 1967 Denise Bacon, the director of the Dana School of Music, spent most of the academic year 1967/68 in Hungary learning the Kodály method. In a report submitted voluntarily to the Ministry of Education and the ICR, she praised Hungarian schoolchildren’s knowledge of music as “superior to that of most of our music teachers in the U.S. I am afraid to go home and tell our teachers how good these children are for fear they will be discouraged instead of inspired.”⁶³ Her general

⁶¹ Choksy, *The Kodály Method*, 10. In the UK, the Kodály method was known as the “Choral Method” due to the translation work of Percy M. Young. See his article “Kodály as Educationist,” *Tempo* 63 (Winter, 1962–1963): 37–40.

⁶² See Erzsébet Szőnyi travelogues, *Öt kontinensen a zene szolgálatában* [In the Service of Music on Five Continents] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1979).

⁶³ Report of Denise Bacon to the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Cultural Institute, June 17, 1968. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 218.

impression of the impact arising from the introduction of the Kodály method in Hungary reads like the fulfilment of Kodály's utopian intentions:

I am much impressed and interested in the benefits your people seem to receive from this type of education, especially in a cultural sense. What today is done for the whole country cannot possibly be overestimated. ... That the average man or child knows something about music and art and is able to distinguish between great art and mere entertainment is unbelievable and thrilling to me.⁶⁴

It was positive accounts like hers that fuelled the international image of the “Hungarian success story”: a country in which people were educated and musically literate thanks in no small part to the wide application of the Kodály method. In the eyes and the writings of American music educators, Hungary was becoming an indisputably ideal example to emulate. In other words, foreign pedagogues were working on the improvement of the country's international image—without the slightest prompting or control by Hungarian authorities.

Another practice for disseminating the Kodály method internationally, and especially throughout the U.S. and Canada, was for Hungarian music educators to attend summer universities and workshops—and teach the method overseas. Although many of Kodály's disciples travelled widely and frequently, perhaps none had such a packed schedule as Erzsébet Szőnyi's 1969 summer itinerary reveals. She started on July 15, with a workshop organized by Alexander Ringer at the University of Illinois for music teachers who spent the previous academic year in Hungary. Afterwards, she visited another Hungarian educator, Katalin Forrai, leading a workshop at Indiana University. From there Szőnyi travelled to Washington University in St. Louis then flew out to the East Coast to visit Denise Bacon at the Dana Hall School of Music in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Her next destination was San Francisco and

⁶⁴ Ibid.

then Washington University in Seattle, only to travel to Canada shortly after and give a series of lectures at McGill University in Montreal and at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.⁶⁵

Both mechanisms reveal the significant guiding role and heightened agency of Hungarian educators in a global context. The knowledge and skills accumulated by Hungarian teachers through decades of experience in developing and applying the method could not be simply copied and reproduced in different educational contexts without their help. The direct input, guidance, and legitimizing touch of Hungarian partners was crucial in starting most foreign projects based on the Kodály method, especially in the U.S. Additionally, having been Kodály's disciple was an invaluable source of prestige—a direct connection to the late composer conferred an aura of authenticity on the activities and publications of Hungarian educators. This translated into a transnational cultural capital which had the power to legitimize not just summer university courses but entire institutions of education.⁶⁶

Accordingly, the collaborative relationship between American and Hungarian educators was characterized by balance and reciprocity—and not by the otherwise dominant (centre-periphery) power-dynamics of the economic and military spheres of the Cold War.⁶⁷ In this sense, the story of the dissemination of the Kodály method also goes against the conventional narrative of intellectual and technological transfers going from West to East, establishing the gradual hegemony of the former over the latter.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the practices of lively demonstrations and overseas invitations were informal, personal, and ad-hoc—true to their grass-roots nature. They came from the inherent logic of the pedagogical profession and were based on the

⁶⁵ Erzsébet Szőnyi's travel report, submitted November 28, 1969. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

⁶⁶ See for example Szőnyi's foreword in Choksy's monograph.

⁶⁷ See Westad, *The Cold War*, op. cit.

⁶⁸ See Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization*, op. cit.; Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century*, op. cit.; or Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

principles of direct observation, communication, participation, and learning by practice. Once projected across the geopolitical divide separating the Soviet bloc from the U.S. these principles inevitably went against—or outright defied—the overarching logic and animosity of the Cold War. Nonetheless, these essentially transnational and collaborative practices were accepted and institutionalized by the end of the 1970s on both sides of the Atlantic by American private foundations and the communist Hungarian authorities.

Thanks to the activity of American music educators, the popularity of the Kodály method grew rapidly in the U.S., becoming part of undergraduate and graduate curricula, music instruction in numerous schools, and serving as an organizing principle for new institutions or programs. With the financial support of the National Endowment for the Arts, Alexander Ringer established the Kodály Fellowship Program at the University of Illinois in 1968. Through the graduates of the program, he initiated a teaching experiment based on the method in the elementary schools of New Haven, Connecticut.⁶⁹ The Kodály Musical Training Institute (KMTI) was founded in 1969 in Wellesley by Denise Bacon with the help of a Ford Foundation grant of \$184,000.⁷⁰ The young David Rockefeller Jr. acquired an interest for the method, visited Hungary in 1971, and soon became the Chairman for the Institute's Board of Trustees. Smaller centres for the education of the Kodály method were started also in California, Wisconsin, and Indiana. Holy Names College in Oakland, California, hosted the first Kodály International Symposium in 1973 and the Organization of American Kodály Educators was founded in 1975.

More importantly, however, the Kodály method was introduced in thousands of elementary schools across the U.S. A 1979 study that focused on the states of Connecticut, Indiana, and Washington found that nearly half of the music

⁶⁹ See Alexander Ringer, "Kodaly and Education: A Musicological Note," *College Music Symposium* 11 (Fall, 1971): 60–65.

⁷⁰ Press Release by the Council for Public Schools, Boston, Mass., October 26, 1969. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

teachers in their sample had training in the method and used it in their classes.⁷¹ Furthermore, the method made an impact on American popular culture and became part of the zeitgeist after it featured in the 1977 Steven Spielberg movie, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Such popularity and proliferation of usage shows that the informal and transnational initiatives of the 1960s bore fruit by the 1970s in the form of financial support, institutional setting, and universal recognition. It is worthwhile to pause and consider: the official music education system of a communist country (introduced during Stalinism, no less), instructed and mentored by employees of the Hungarian state, was taking American education and pop culture by storm—while the Vietnam War and the invasion of Czechoslovakia dominated headlines.⁷²

The internationalization of the Kodály method and its remarkable success in the U.S. remained a phenomenon without a supervising central authority in Hungary for over a decade. By the time those responsible for the design of cultural diplomacy at the ICR woke up to the possibilities offered by the widespread appeal of the method, both the transnational network of educators and the American institutions were solidified. During this decade, the Hungarian authorities did not initiate any of the contacts, exchanges, or international projects related to the method. The ICR and the various ministries acknowledged its rise to fame and “contributed” to the process by not obstructing the trans-Atlantic mobility of Hungarian educators or the entry of Americans into Hungary. For example, Péter Erdei, who as a fresh graduate of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music was invited in 1968 by Denise Bacon to Wellesley to help her set up the KMTI, was allowed to remain in the U.S. for four consecutive years—a privilege rarely awarded to young scholars during those years. However, when Erzsébet Szőnyi asked the ICR for

⁷¹ See Charles R. Hoffer, “The Big KO: How Widely Are Kodaly and Orff Approaches Used?” *Music Educators Journal* 6 (Feb. 1981): 46–47.

⁷² For an attempt at explaining the success of the Kodály method in the U.S., see Samuel D. Miller, “Zoltán Kodály as Musician-Educator Exemplar: A Critique,” *College Music Symposium* 1 (Spring 1980): 126–134.

assistance in receiving a group of American music educators from the state of Washington, their reply was: “Thank you for informing us, the matter does not concern our Institution.”⁷³

A change in official attitudes came once authoritative figures in the ICR and the Ministry of Culture discovered the extent of the financial and moral support the Kodály method received in the U.S. and realized that the steady influx of students and visitors represented a significant source of hard currency for the Hungarian state. In other words, previously dismissive bureaucrats gradually understood that the transnationally developed and externally funded Kodály method was in fact a veritable gift which fell in the lap of Hungarian cultural diplomacy—and they duly set about to appropriate and exploit this valuable cultural product.

This transformation can be followed through the change in dealing with Denise Bacon and her plans to establish an institution for teaching the method in the U.S. (the future KMTI). She intended to create an institutional setting for the informal practices that had developed since 1964: to regularly bring Hungarian educators to the U.S. and send American teachers to Hungary. Throughout her stay in Budapest in 1968, Miss Bacon made regular visits to the ICR, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to inform them of her plans and to request their help. She was received with reluctance and her offer for collaboration was banished into the limbo of non-conclusive inter-ministerial correspondence, with the diminishing note: “Professional opinion about her very negative—no action needed.”⁷⁴

However, an internal note of the Ministry of Culture from February 1969 already had an appreciative tone, commending her for the tireless efforts exerted in promoting the “cause of Hungarian education abroad” and acknowledging her ability

⁷³ Letter from Erzsébet Szőnyi to the Institute for Cultural Relations, April 7, 1967. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 215.

⁷⁴ Note by József Kerekes, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 7, 1968. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 218.

to win financial support for her ideas in the U.S.⁷⁵ The final recommendation in the note was full-blown support of her plans which could provide Hungary with income and a chance for disseminating cultural propaganda. In a later memo, support was predicated on the condition that the future KMTI would be “professionally and politically irreproachable,” meaning that it would “disseminate the Hungarian method of music education without distortion and maintain appropriate relations with the Hungarian state.”⁷⁶ However, the Ministry also admitted that Hungarian officials had limited leverage in the matter and concluded that the “encouragement and support for Miss Bacon’s initiative is ultimately advisable, considering that the institution would be established with or without our endorsement...”⁷⁷

During this time, Miss Bacon remained highly persistent and staunchly dedicated to building a workable and transparent partnership with the communist authorities, notifying them of every development and inviting representatives to consultations and celebratory events. She was firm on her prerogative to personally interview and select the Hungarian educators to be employed in her institution (accepting the recommendations of Erzsébet Szőnyi, and not of a government body), and in return was ready to promise political concessions that satisfied the Cold War suspicions and taboos of the Hungarian establishment. Namely, she promised not to hire anyone to the KMTI who “has left Hungary since 1956, at least for the first three to five years of the program.”⁷⁸ As a result, in June 1970 the KMTI signed a long-term agreement of collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, establishing a two-year degree for those enrolling in its program: after the first year of preparation at Wellesley,

⁷⁵ Internal note from Róbert Boros, Ministry of Culture, to József Horváth, ICR, February 8, 1969. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 219.

⁷⁶ Internal note by Róbert Boros, Ministry of Culture, October 1, 1969. MNL OL, XIX-I-4-jjj, box 42.

⁷⁷ Internal note, Ministry of Culture, January 6, 1970. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

⁷⁸ Letter from Denise Bacon to Róbert Boros, January 14, 1970. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

candidates were to spend another year studying at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music and observing the “singing school” in Kecskemét.⁷⁹ Since all costs were covered by the American side, the “support” given to the whole enterprise by the Hungarian authorities—besides sending educational materials and handling logistics—was overwhelmingly symbolic.

The officials responsible for Hungarian cultural diplomacy wished to appropriate, supervise, and influence the Kodály method as a cultural product representative of communist Hungary. According to their hopes, the KMTI “would basically allow us to promote our cultural values in the field of American public education with the financial and moral support of the Ford Foundation.”⁸⁰ Despite such expectations, Hungarian authorities were in fact unable to exercise genuine financial, intellectual, or political control over transnational initiatives like the one realized by Denise Bacon. Given the ICR’s limited power over KMTI in real terms, it wanted to at least win the game of perceptions and to—unfairly—claim credit for the idea. In a letter to the Ford Foundation the ICR declared that they considered the KMTI “another U.S.-Hungarian Project initiated and materialized by the Ford Foundation and the ICR.”⁸¹ This strongly worded claim proved to be an empty promise since the ICR still lacked the means or the strategy to fully engage in the promotion of the Kodály method. In a 1973 letter about her participation in the first Kodály International Symposium organized in Oakland, Szónyi unabashedly confronts the leaders of the ICR for their failure to send any official Hungarian delegate to such a high-profile event attended otherwise by the

⁷⁹ “Általános hosszúlejáratú együttműködési megállapodás a Magyar Művelődési Minisztérium és a Kodály Zenei Képzési Intézet, Wellesley, Mass. között [Long-term agreement between the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and the Kodály Musical Training Institute, Wellesley, Mass.],” June 9, 1970. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

⁸⁰ Internal note by Gábor Vigh, ICR, February 27, 1970. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

⁸¹ Quoted in a letter by Gábor Vigh, ICR, to Ervin Hivatal, Ministry of Culture, June 26, 1970. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 221.

representatives of the IREX, the Ford Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education.⁸²

Gradually, however, the architects of Hungarian cultural diplomacy realized that in order to effectively appropriate the transnational cultural capital associated with the Kodály method they would need to do more than just engage in pompous rhetoric and passive supervision. The process of incorporating the method into the mechanisms of centrally coordinated cultural relations will require proactive organization and meaningful financial contribution. The focus of these emerging realizations was the plan to establish a Kodály Institute at Kecskemént with the aim of channelling the international interest in the Kodály method and coordinating its instruction both domestically and abroad. The rationale of the proposition submitted by the Ministry of Culture to the Department for Agitation and Propaganda was to change the current state of affairs: all initiatives and activity related to the international circulation of the Kodály method originated outside of Hungary. According to the proposition, these projects were “lacking a unifying conception and a coordinated leadership” and it was the duty of the Hungarian state to fill this role.⁸³

By 1973, it also became evident to the authorities that unless they act promptly the international guardianship of the Kodály method might slip away from its Hungarian roots. At the Kodály Symposium in Oakland, Alexander Ringer proposed the formation of an International Kodály Society (IKS) to take charge of the method’s promotion globally. Seeing the IKS as a potential rival for the domestically planned Kodály Institute, the goals for Hungarian cultural diplomacy finally crystallized: get the Institute running as soon as possible; bring the II. International Kodály Symposium to Kecskemét; and tie the IKS to Hungary by institutional, personal, and financial means. And by the fall of 1975 these goals were

⁸² Letter by Erzsébet Szőnyi to Endre Rosta, director of ICR, November 28, 1973. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 11.

⁸³ Proposition for the Department for Agitation and Propaganda about the establishment of the Kodály Institute for Music Education, June 12, 1972. MNL OL, XIX-A-33-a, box 11.

essentially accomplished: through a donation of 600.000 Forints from the government, the IKS became the first international non-governmental organization with its headquarters in Hungary and its Board of Directors overwhelmingly Hungarian.⁸⁴ More than a decade after the Kodály method made its appearance on the international stage thanks to the efforts of a transnational network of music educators, this highly popular and beloved educational model was at long last incorporated into the cultural policy agenda and institutional structure of the country that it all started from. This official gesture brought financial stability and regularity, but also centralization and oversight, eliminating to a certain degree the informality and creative spontaneity inherent to the transnational network and the previous cross-systemic interactions. It also signalled that Hungary was ready to intensify its presence on the international scene after the Helsinki Agreement⁸⁵ and to strengthen its relations with the U.S., leading to a cultural agreement in 1976, the accord of “most favoured nation,” and the return of the Holy Crown to Hungary in 1978.

Conclusion

The period of the Cold War was made and unmade by the intertwining stories of geopolitical competition and transnational interaction. Its socio-political and cultural history was defined by complex processes of negotiating institutional ties, intellectual transfers, local and international privilege, and the increasing agency of artists, scholars, scientists, and athletes. In Cold War Hungary, the geopolitically and ideologically framed agenda of the communist establishment was in a

⁸⁴ Mrs. Kodály was elected honorary president, while the Australian Deanna Hoermann became president. Péter Erdei and László Vikár served as deputy directors, Sister Mary Alice Hein as treasurer, Davide Liani (Italy), Pierre Perron (Canada), and Éva Rozgonyi (Hungary) as members of the board.

⁸⁵ For a discussion of Hungary’s cultural diplomacy after the Helsinki Agreement, see in this volume Róbert Takács, Hungarian Foreign Policy and Basket III in the Cold War Confrontation from Helsinki to Madrid, *Múltunk* 2019 Special Issue, 59-106.

dynamic push-and-pull interplay with the transnational aims of its leading professional cadres, researchers, pedagogues, etc. In many cases regarding Hungary's international presence, the intention to propagate a positive image of the Hungarian Peoples' Republic was accompanied by the often stronger institutional and professional agendas of the privileged figures animating these cross-systemic interactions.

The international career of the Kodály method provides an instructive example of how the geopolitical and the transnational logic of the period interacted within the larger framework of global integration. Faced with a fully developed educational method and a strong professional network by the early 1970s, the architects of Hungarian cultural diplomacy were not leading a global phenomenon, but following it—not initiating promotional projects, but accommodating to existing developments. By wanting to appropriate and exploit the diplomatic value of the Kodály method, state officials in communist Hungary were compelled to recognize the trans-Atlantic ideas and practices of pedagogues and researchers as culturally valuable and prestigious.

It was the universality and malleability of the method that made it so widely appealing, and it was the intellectually, spiritually, and physically hard work of the transnational group of music educators which made its application successful, from Japan to Canada. The flexibility of Kodály's conception and the creativity of those implementing it elevated the international promotion of the method high above the practice of disseminating cultural propaganda in the service of "a Hungary that is building a living and existing socialism," as communist functionaries would have wished it. The Kodály method was neither a product of the communist regime nor a scheme of the Cold War—and so it survived and transcended both, thanks to its complex history and cultural potential.