

Theses of DLA dissertation

Soma Salamon

Interethnic and Areal Relations in the Flute Tune
Stock of Bartók's 1914 Field Recording Trip in
the Maros-Torda County of Transylvania

Advisor: István Pávai, PhD

Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music

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I. Research History

The mainstream of the Hungarian folk music research considers the body of traditional music within the Carpathian Basin as a phenomenon formed by centuries-long coexistence and the interaction of multiple ethnicities. Therefore Hungarian ethnomusicologists have given special attention to the bonds between the folk music traditions of Hungarians and their ethnic neighbors from the onset. Béla Bartók pioneered to examine these relations with scientific accuracy. He sought uncompromising objectivity in his interethnic oeuvre and during the exploration of the ethnic repertoires. Instead of adhering to ideological and political aspects, he built his hypotheses and classification methods upon detailed inquiries: the results of meticulous musical analysis, with attention to ethnographical and cultural anthropological factors. In this regard, there is no basis for allegations misrepresenting his analytic work and musical systematization as pseudo-science subordinated to the ethos of nationalism, as these insinuations are caused by the superficial and insufficient lore of Bartók's oeuvre. Among other publications, his *Népzene és nacionalizmus* (Folk Music and Nationalism), *Race Purity in Folk Music*, *Népzene és a szomszéd népek népzeneje* (Our Folk Music and the Folk Music of Neighboring Ethnicities) prove his

interethnic view, as well as the introduction to the first volume of *Rumanian Folk Music*, where he broaches the ethnic relations of instrumental music as well.

László Lajtha explores the musical tradition of Transylvanian village Szépkényerúszentmárton [Sânărtin, jud. Cluj] in the path of Bartók. In the introduction of his related monograph, published in 1954, he delineates the methods of his field research in the village populated by Hungarians, Romanians, and Roma. In his fieldwork, Lajtha examined the musical interactions within the settlement with special attention. He recorded detailed interviews with the Roma musicians, hired to perform dance music, the Hungarian and Romanian informants as well. In the later decades of the 20th century, the importance of interethnic relations were highlighted by ethnochoreologist György Martin (in terms of folk dance research), and ethnomusicologist István Pávai (with regard to instrumental folk music). Based on the afore-mentioned, we now possess the collected tune stock and evolved methodology of more than a century. It is therefore opportune to forge more deeply in order to explore interethnic bonds within a particularly interesting and diverse reservoir of instrumental tunes collected by Bartók, the premier interethnological pioneer of Hungarian folk music research.

II. Sources

As my study aims to explore the interethnic relations within the instrumental tune stock of the mentioned field trip of 1914, I only take later research results into consideration if accurate discussion of particular phenomena should demand it. Most of my sources were published after 1914. These works have a retrospective approach and therefore are reliable in my research. As primary source, I used Bartók's posthumously published monograph, *Rumanian Folk Music*. I referred almost exclusively to its first volume which displays the instrumental tune stock collected by Bartók. The Hungarian instrumental melodies, collected in the Nyárád [Niraj] region is published in *Bartók Béla hangszeres magyar népzene gyűjtése* [Hungarian Instrumental Folk Music Collection of Béla Bartók] by Lujza Tari. In *A székely táncokról* [About Székely Dances] János Seprődi, a contemporary of Bartók, presents the folk dances of Kibéd [today Chibed, jud. Mureș]. His study is one of my most important sources, as despite of its early (1908) birth, it gives a detailed description of the phenomena mentioned above. Moreover, the study has great relevance on the rural dance music in the neighboring Nyárád region as well. The works of ethnochoreologist György Martin and ethnomusicologist István Pávai provided me solid sources

for the further discussion of questions related to folk dance music. During my research I attempted to adapt the related Romanian literature as well, with special attention to the works of Tiberiu Alexandru, Constantin Brăiloiu and Andrei Bucșan.

III. Methods of Research

In my study, I apply a multi-level comparative analysis on the flute tunes recorded in Bartók's field trip in Maros-Torda county [today jud. Mureș] of Transylvania, in 1914. In the first volume of his *Rumanian Folk Music*, Bartók publishes the instrumental melodies within a meticulous typologic system based on their musical attributes. As first step of my comparative research, I grouped the Hungarian data recorded in the Nyárád region according to this system. These obtained groups, composed of morphologically identical tunes, have proven effective as benchmark for the next level of comparison, for which I sought particular concordances in repertoire. Finally, I surveyed the relations of performing manner, fingering systems, melodic rhythmization and ornaments.

IV. Research Outcome

The interethnic analysis of the melodies recorded in the field trip corroborates Bartók's observations about a strong Hungarian-Székely

influence on the Romanian music of the Upper Maros [Mureș] Region. This impact however is mutual, symbiotic, and its intensity depends on the location of the given Romanian villages as well as on the extent of their interaction with Hungarian-inhabited areas. The non-Hungarian peculiarities are the most abundant in the northernmost settlements within the area of the field trip. Meanwhile in villages situated in the further south, the signs of the Nyárád [Niraj] Region's proximity (dances, dance tunes and inherent rhythmization of Hungarian origin, jaj-nóta types, with extended line structure) are obvious. The interethnic influence affects the melodies of the Hungarian flutes from the Nyárád [Niraj] Region as well. The Romanian shepherds of the northern villages, hired by the Hungarians of the Nyárád [Niraj] Region, left their trademark on the local repertoire, as can be observed at the *Juhait kereső pásztor* (in Romanian: *Când păcurarul/ciobanul a pierdut oile*), a specific program music genre of Romanian origin depicting a shepherd who seeks his lost sheep. The musical connections, discovered in the research, prove the organic musical relation of the coexisting ethnicities of the region. Musical phenomena of shared usage and adapted impacts confirm the importance of the interethnic aspect within Transylvanian instrumental traditional music; moreover these results enlighten the need for complex analysis. The approach of Bartók

as a researcher is based on the scientifically objective interpretation of the recorded items, instead of adherence to political or ideological views. His complex and multi-dimensional oeuvre, his progressive methods in ethnomusicology, his thorough and precise observations prove that discovering the folklore-phenomena within the Carpathian Basin cannot be achieved through setting ideology-based hypotheses, but by analytic, systematizing and comparative research, focusing on interethnic and areal relations.

V. Activities related to the subject of the dissertation

I first encountered with the melodies recorded in Bartók's 1914 field trip as a first-grader of the Folk Music Department at Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music. In 2014, I was awarded with a special prize for performing the flute melodies of Kornya Sándor, an informant of Bartók, in the *Fölszállott a Páva* contest. The set, played there by myself, was recorded on the *Táncház Népzene 2014* compilation album as well. In spring 2017, I joined to the field recording trip of Ferenc Ségercz and Balázs Szokolay Dongó in the Görgény/Gurghiu valley. There we followed the 1914 route of Bartók, visiting Kincsesfő [Comori, jud. Mureș], Görgényhodák [Hodac, jud. Mureș] Erdőidecs [Idicel de padure, jud. Mureș] and Alsóidecs [Ideciu de jos, jud. Mureș]. In these villages we recorded multiple informant fluters. In

Erdőidecs [Idicel de padure, jud. Mureș] we discovered the use of the *fluier mare*, a specific edge-blown flute, also documented by Bartók. In Görgényoroszfalu/Solovăstru, we recorded multiple tunes from a fiddler, who was unknown for the Hungarian revival until that time. In the fall the same year I also recorded fiddle tunes in Felsőrépa [Râpa de sus, today Vătava jud. Mureș] and flute melodies in Marosliget [Dumbrava. jud. Mureș] I performed and interpreted the melodies of 1914 field trip in various countries in Europe as well as in the United States. I have given multiple lectures, presentations related to the topic. In 2018, I participated in the *Pedagogies, Practices and the Future of Folk Music in High Education* conference in Glasgow with a paper focusing on the possible interpretations of Bartók's flute field recordings. In 2019, I introduced the fingerings and applicatures used in Transylvanian flute music as a participant of the 45th ICTM World Conference in Bangkok. Also that year, I presented the flute types used in the Hungarian folk music and the history of the Hungarian ethnomusicology as a guest of the Berklee College of Music, Boston.