

DLA Theses

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Colinda and its appearance in the 20th
century Romanian and Hungarian
art music

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No 28 Post-Graduate School of the
History of Arts

Budapest

2016

I.

The ethnographic literature of Romanian folk costume *colindat* is particularly diverse, far-reaching and significant. The same applies to the tunes related to the ritual. Colindas are Romanian Christmas, precisely speaking winter-solstice songs. The genuine scientific significance of these songs was recognized and released by Béla Bartók in his scientific works. However, considerable achievements were gained by Romanian colinda-research in line with and proceeding to Bartók's pursuit. We are just mentioning the works of Sabin V. Drăgoi, Constantin Brăiloiu, Ovidiu Bîrlea, Traian Mîrza, Iosif Herțea, and Ioan Bocșa-Szenik Ilona authors from recent times.

The literature related to the musical settings of colindas by Romanian composers is not rich by any means. We can only rely on a limited number of analytical studies in this area. However, Sigismund Toduță can be regarded as an exception, almost all outstanding Transylvanian musicologists have studied his life work. Regarding other authors I was applying primarily art presentations (the periodical *Muzică*, playlists), final theses, PhD dissertations and shorter studies released in university publications. In addition to these sources oral communication has played an important part.

Bartók and his relation to the colindas has been analyzed thoroughly, thanks to Ferenc László's researches.

However, the *Rumänische Weihnachtslieder* for piano, for example, have not been considered with sufficient attention, at least in my opinion. The works of György Kurtág involved in the subject have only been treated in reviews and art presentations.

II.

The sheet music of the pieces analyzed in my thesis have been published, mainly by the Editura Muzicala, Bucharest and Editio Musica Budapest. The authors or their successors were ready to make the unpublished works available in every case. Let me say thanks to Éva Péter, the teacher of Babeş-Bolyai University of Sciences and Márkos-researcher, for the sheet music of the Albert Márkos' work.

III.

One chief objective was to explore and present how the components rooted in the features of rituals and folk songs appear in colinda-adaptations (and in other works inspired by colindas). I consider these relations very important.

I find it is also important that Hungary be familiar with the Romanian folk music researches and music settings. It is an essential issue because of Bartók, too.

In the course of writing my thesis I treated analysing the works with primary importance. I believe that the aesthetic lessons and the general tendencies of the history of music can be drawn and shown starting from this analysis. I also frequently applied the means of sample analysis. It proved to be suitable in the case of works applying similar toolbars and works created as series.

I mainly focused on introducing the given historical and personal context, and exploring the folk music relations.

IV.

The author of this thesis has been deeply affected by the history and culture of Transylvania and particularly by the world of Romanian colindas. The interest in the colindas began at the age of thirteen when I first met with *Cantata*

Profana. Since then experiences and effects have been continuously gathering and as a result this thesis has been written.

When considering which features made this genre distinguished for the composers in the course of settings it is the unique tonality and rhythm that stand in the first place. Another important feature is the freedom and openness of shaping, and the extraordinary diversity of the individual forms. Dissymetry, search for rearranging crystal-clear, regular forms is essential in music and in arts in general. All this asserts itself on different levels in the genuine colindas.

We also have to consider the characteristics of the genuine colinda-performance and the spirituality which has been permeating this genre especially since *Cantata Profana*. Colindas have become important for the Romanian composers because of the genre's national character.

In the terminology of the Hungarian musicology the term "colinda-rhythm" has been established and used for the last decades by which we mean the specific type of rhythm-change, the counter-relay. With reference to folk literature I am not in favour of this term because this type of rhythm-change is not only characteristic of colindas and the rhythm-pattern of the colindas can not only be classified in solely one category but at least three different categories: *distributive system*, *giusto silabic*, *aksak*. In any case

it is a fact that Bartók must have met with this occurrence in the Romanian folk music and later these effects influenced all his works.

The colinda-references of Hungarian composers are all unambiguously Bartók-centered. This can be attributed on one hand to the spirituality of *Cantata Profana* and on the other hand to the characteristics of the piano-cycle *Romanian Colinda-tunes*. Colindas have the features of Christmas songs both in their mood and their harmonization, they are similar to lullabies, they have idyllic tone and soft swinging. An important teaching of my thesis is that all this is not characteristic of the genuine performance of *colindat*.

It is not usual in DLA dissertations, however I considered it important to develop and elaborate certain details of my research work in forms of reviews, studies and lectures, also because I got invitations from Transylvanian forums.

Publications:

- “In the wake of Bartók and Brailoiu – Szenik Ilona systemizing colindas”. *Erdélyi Múzeum* 2015/2
- “The customs system of Romanian colindat”. *Korunk* 2015/12
- “Bartók Béla si colindele romanesti”. *Observator Cultural* nr. 534 (2015)

Lectures:

- “Bartók Béla and the Romanian colindas”. Given on 25 September 2015 on the Bartók-marathon organized by the Bucharest Hungarian Institute.
- “The Romanian colindas in the works of post-Bartók Hungarian composers. Given in Nagyvárad, on 28 May 2015 at the Bartók-conference organized by the Partium Christian University. (To be published soon by Partium Publishing House.)