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BARTÓK, HUNGARY,
AND THE RENEWAL OF TRADITION

CASE STUDIES IN THE INTERSECTION OF MODERNITY AND NATIONALITY

DAVID E. SCHNEIDER

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Tradition Rejected

Bartók's Polemics and the Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Musical Inheritance

Naturally a composer will be most influenced by the music he hears the most—the music of his home.

BARTÓK, 1921

Attempting to answer the question “What is Hungarian?” has been a pre-occupation of educated Hungarians since the rise of national consciousness in the early nineteenth century. The question “What is Hungarian in music?” that lies behind so many of Bartók’s essays is itself part of a national debate that had been going on for decades before his compositions and folk-music research redefined and intensified it.¹ Despite the rigidity of some who have striven to define it, Hungarianness (*magyarság*) has never been a static concept. On one level Bartók, like all Hungarian composers, redefined it with every piece he wrote. Certain generalizations can be made, however, in relation to various historical contexts. In the decade before the First World War, *magyarság* was most often defined in opposition to Austria, the dominant partner in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. After 1918, when Hungary gained its independence but lost two-thirds of its territory to its neighbors, *magyarság* was often associated with a desire to regain the “glories” of Hungary’s imperial past. Another, interrelated set of meanings emerged in the 1930s in connection with the rising influence of National Socialist Germany.

In this third phase, historian Gyula Szekfű (1883–1955) brought the question of Hungarian identity to the front lines of scholarly debate by asking a group of Hungary’s leading intellectuals to address it for each of their respective fields. The result was a collection of essays published in 1939 as *Mi a magyar?* (What Is Hungarian?).² The collection contained an extensive article entitled “Magyarság a zenében” (Hungarianness in Music) by Bartók’s closest friend and colleague, the composer and folklorist Zoltán

Kodály (1882–1967).³ His inclusion in Szekfű's volume is testimony to the centrality of music in the discourse about Hungarian identity. Kodály's essay, like so many of his and Bartók's writings, detached musical *magyarság* from the set of musical topics that had come to symbolize the nation with the rise of nationalism in the first half of the nineteenth century. Because Hungarian folk music, like the Finno-Ugric Hungarian language, was distinct from the music of its Indo-European neighbors, Kodály argued that it should replace the nineteenth-century Hungarian style as the building block of a national musical culture. Folk music, Kodály believed, could reinforce an image of the nation proud to set itself apart from the rest of Europe because of its Asiatic roots. Emphasizing Hungary's unique position between East and West, he brought his essay to a close with a pair of leading questions: "One of our hands holds the hand of the Nogay-Tartars, the Votyaks and Cheremiss, the other that of Bach and Palestrina. Can we bring these two distant worlds together? Can we be not only a ferryboat shuttling between the cultures of Europe and Asia, but a bridge—perhaps even dry ground that is an integral part of both?"⁴ The image of Hungary as a synthesizer of Eastern traditions and Western high culture bespeaks an inclusive, liberal vision of the nation. In this formulation, Hungarian music is defined by its openness to both the "primitivism" of its own past and the "refinement" of European high culture. But because what Kodály accepted as Hungary's past was confined to the country's folk music, his version of *magyarság* in music also represented a modernist, neonationalist stance that secured its authenticity by authenticating its national sources.

The idea of synthesizing foreign and native traditions into a national style was hardly Bartók's or Kodály's invention. It was the usual presumption of nationalist composers. To mention only one example, in the mid-nineteenth century Glinka expressed a Russian national ideal by mixing and matching the best of two Western European traditions—Italian bel canto melody and German contrapuntal technique—with Russian folk music. Bartók and Kodály's approach, like Glinka's, stemmed in part from a sense of cultural inferiority, but turned the relative lack of a distinctively native high culture into a source of opportunity and pride. In some respects their technique was not new in Hungary at the beginning of the twentieth century. Mixing of foreign and native musical styles was just what nationally minded Hungarian composers had practiced throughout the nineteenth century. Bartók and Kodály's image of synthesis, however, implied more. In Hungary, East and West were not just international destinations, but ciphers for the two disparate worlds within Hungary's own borders: the Hungarian village and the Hungarian city.

The suggestion of a Hungarian musical unification of the “East” (rural culture) with the “West” (urban culture) touched a raw political nerve and thereby engaged Bartók and Kodály in a domestic social debate. The combination of the culture of peasants and that of the bourgeoisie was, at least through the first several decades of the twentieth century, anathema to the majority of educated Hungarians. In Hungarian the word “peasant” (*paraszt*, from the Slavic *prost*, i.e., simpleton) was no mere neutral descriptive term. It was an insult, in historian Andrew Janos’s words, “a term of disparagement conveying a sense of callous simplicity that made [it] nearly unfit for use in polite society.”⁵

Another layer of rural society, the landowners known as the gentry or petty nobility, even more stridently opposed the idea that the peasantry held something of cultural value in their music. Their opposition derived from their specific social status. Throughout the nineteenth century, increasing numbers of the gentry had fallen victim to the dual blows dealt by the inefficient, out-of-date means of agricultural production on their small estates and their own sense that they were above the lowly work of capitalist enterprise. They found some material recompense for the steady decline in their economic status by entering the civil service. More significantly for music history, they tended to compensate for their loss of political power by claiming themselves as the sole proprietors of the ancient Hungarian national spirit. Their favored music was the fare typically played in cafés and country inns by so-called Gypsy ensembles. To suggest to members of this class that the music of the peasants—the people over whom the gentry wielded their bureaucratic power most vindictively—held the key to authentic Hungarian identity was at least as unsettling for its social as for its artistic implications.

And yet that was precisely what Bartók and Kodály claimed in the spirit of their modernist aesthetics. It was the gentry’s popular musical culture, which was part of both men’s backgrounds, that these composers tried to write out of their musical heritage. For in their judgment, that music was at once more artificial than the traditional music of the peasants, and less artful than art music.

Discovery and Mission

A crucial catalyst for Bartók’s rejection of the musical style long regarded as representative of the spirit of the nation was his discovery of what he would come to call “old-style” Hungarian folk songs during his first folk-song col-

lecting expedition to Transylvania in summer 1907.⁶ The “old-style” melodies bore little resemblance to the Hungarian style as it had been previously conceived, and the strangeness of these songs would become one of the strongest inspirations for Bartók’s modernist style. Precisely because these were not tunes with which he had grown up, they triggered his musical imagination. Integrating the characteristics of these “old-style” melodies and of other folk repertoires—“new-style” songs, instrumental music, the peasant music of non-Hungarians—into a modern musical style was the artistic project that sustained Bartók for the rest of his life.

A parallel lifelong mission was winning for peasant music due recognition as a Hungarian national treasure. It bore fruit in articles, lectures, and longer studies—some aimed at specialists, some at the general public—in which Bartók sought to articulate the differences between Hungarian peasant music, especially the “old-style” pentatonic folk songs that he believed to have been brought to the Carpathian Basin a thousand years before by the Asiatic Magyar tribes, and the newer elements that had come to define the Hungarian style in the popular and concert music of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In his writings intended for the general public, Bartók often exaggerated the difference between peasant music (not all of which was ancient) and more popular Hungarian musical traditions. Although he made more nuanced analyses of the interrelationships between various types of peasant music and Hungarian popular music in several of his scholarly writings, the stark distinctions Bartók drew in his more popular essays have rarely been questioned. The sources of his own music have been interpreted along similarly simplified lines. Despite Bartók’s professed rejection of Hungarian music that was based on the popular notions of the Hungarian style, the composer’s own synthesis of folk music and contemporary art music was not as different from earlier attempts to create a national style as he implied. The most characteristic categories of the nineteenth-century Hungarian music—the instrumental dance music known as *verbunkos* and the sentimental popular song called *magyar nóta*, both disseminated by Gypsy bands and hence called “Gypsy music”—were not unrelated to folk traditions. Their incorporation into national art music stemmed initially from the same aspirations as Bartók’s. Nor was the composer’s own music completely devoid of traditionally accepted elements of the Hungarian style. To assess Bartók’s position in the history of the creation of a specifically Hungarian art music we need first to investigate the roots of the nineteenth-century Hungarian style and his reasons for rejecting it.

The Polemics of a Convert

Typical of Bartók's polemical writings for nonspecialists was a 1911 essay entitled "A magyar zenéről" (On Hungarian Music).⁷ Written some seven years after he had made his first notation of a Hungarian peasant song, but only four years since he had recognized pentatonicism as a crucial structural element of "old-style" melodies, Bartók's essay included a scathing assessment of all previous attempts to create a Hungarian style in music. Writing with a convert's zeal, he effectively removed himself from the traditional lineage of Hungarian music. This view was quickly accepted as an accurate description of Bartók's unique place in Hungarian music history and has only recently come under scholarly scrutiny.⁸ As a prelude to an overdue critique, his words are worth quoting at some length:

According to the natural order of things, practice comes before theory. We see the opposite with Hungarian national music: scientific works were already published years ago dealing with the characteristic features of Hungarian music, an attempt to define something nonexistent at the time.⁹

[Until a few years ago] there was no valuable, distinctive, and characteristically Hungarian art music. The music of Bihari, Lavotta, and a few foreigners—Csermák, Rózsavölgyi, Pecsényánszki, etc.—that is to say, nothing but more or less dilettante musicians all under the influence of Gypsy music and unworthy of the admiration of people of good taste, cannot be taken as a basis [for Hungarian art music].¹⁰ Only dilettante musicologists can discuss these dilettante works in a serious tone of voice. Moreover, all of this is not even national music, because it is surely not Hungarian but Gypsy. That is, its characteristics are the melodic distortions of a foreign people, of the Gypsies.

On the other hand, the endeavors of our serious-minded musicians were also sterile, because, while several of them servilely imitated foreign styles, others, for instance, Ferenc Erkel, tried to solve the task by wedging one or two Gypsy-style tunes or *csárdás* between musical items of Italian character. The mixture of such heterogeneous elements does not produce a Hungarian style, merely a conglomerate lacking any style.¹¹

The haughty, at times xenophobic tone of Bartók's essay is reminiscent of his letters around the time of his symphonic poem *Kossuth* (1903). Such nationalist zeal was not, however, typical of *Auróra* (Dawn), the journal of progressive art and literature in which "On Hungarian Music" appeared. *Auróra*, which ceased publication in 1912 after seventeen slim issues, had caught the notice of Budapest's intelligentsia for its high-brow modern literary offerings and coverage of contemporary art.¹² The magazine covered subjects ranging from Hungarian folk art to the latest artistic trends in

Western Europe, including the Paris seasons of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, and the redesigning of Budapest's public spaces on the model of other great European cities. As its title implies, the goal of the magazine seems to have been to herald the dawn of a new age in Hungarian art and culture. The scope of its coverage suggested that the renovation of Hungarian high art depended both on staying up to date with the latest European trends and on awareness of Hungarian peasant culture. Thus, despite the unusual stridency of Bartók's tone, his call for the renewal of Hungarian music through folk music well fit *Auróra's* implicit mission. Reprinted thirteen times in seven languages,¹³ Bartók's essay, or rather its rhetoric, has encouraged the understanding of Hungarian music in terms of categorical oppositions: Gypsies versus Hungarians (read: peasants); nineteenth- versus twentieth-century music (i.e., Bartók's and Kodály's compositions); amateur versus professional musicians; and original composers versus epigones. Yet as soon as one confronts the messy world of actual musical practice, Bartók's categories begin to unravel.

Distinctively Hungarian music has existed in a continuous tradition since the end of the eighteenth century. Although in "On Hungarian Music" he dismissed all claims to authenticity in Hungarian art music previous to his own, in fact the very nationalism that inspired Bartók to reject his predecessors was a continuation of the fervor of nineteenth-century Hungarian nationalism. Even the music that represented this earlier Romantic nationalism, although not based on the same self-conscious and scientifically rigorous relationship to folk music that he began advocating around 1906, nevertheless relied on a set of conventions that had roots in folk music. This common heritage of folk music explains why a number of melodic and accompanimental patterns typical of the Hungarian style can be found both in Bartók's music and in that of his Hungarian predecessors, who were unaware of peasant music. Bartók's assertion of the superiority of his and Kodály's approach to Hungarian national music was based on an unprecedented knowledge of Hungarian folk music, but the categorical distinctions he made in his article "On Hungarian Music" are not scientific. Rather, they seem to be the fruit of frustration, likely fueled by criticism Bartók had received both for his modernist style and for his radical assertion that only music informed by first-hand experience with folk culture deserved to be accepted as representative of the Hungarian nation. An effective piece of journalism given the atmosphere of jingoistic nationalism in Hungary at the time, "On Hungarian Music" was a polemic undeserving of credence on a par with Bartók's more scholarly work.

The Mixed Origins of the Hungarian Style

The emergence of a distinctly Hungarian musical style in the late eighteenth century seems to have been the result of mixing elements of Hungarian folk music with the common-practice harmony of classical music. Although this markedly national style developed gradually and at the hands of countless anonymous practitioners, the process was not unlike Bartók's own combination of Hungarian folk music with more modern idioms of European art music. Its origins have been traced to a type of melody that began to appear in Hungarian manuscripts in the late seventeenth century.¹⁴ These new melodies, which are believed to have belonged to an earlier oral tradition, were distinguished from dance tunes in earlier Hungarian manuscripts by several new features, most crucially by their use of a characteristic scale. This scale can be described as a Phrygian scale with the second and third scale degrees raised when ascending, or, because the ear naturally reinterpreted the Phrygian as minor when the melodies were harmonized, as a melodic minor scale starting on the fifth scale degree (example 1). Melodies with this particular scale were common not only in Hungarian, but also Polish and Slovakian, manuscripts of instrumental music.¹⁵ Bartók recognized the ethnically mixed origin of this melody type and believed it to be related to Persian-Arab melodies.¹⁶ Yet as he pointed out, despite its unclear national affinities the melody became representative of a particularly Hungarian style. Because in the eighteenth century a song of this type used words referring to the Transylvanian prince Ferenc Rákóczi II (1676–1735), the leader of an anti-Habsburg war of independence (1703–11), these melodies have come to be known as the Rákóczi-melody type (*Rákóczi-nóta dallamkör*) (example 2). From the seventeenth century on, this type of melody existed in both folk-music and popular dance-music repertoires. Whereas in the nineteenth century it became the basis for the new national dance music, in the early twentieth century it was preserved as part of the repertoire collected from Hungarian peasants. Thus although not only “racially” mixed, as Bartók pointed out, but also impure in terms of its mixed popular and folk roots, this melody type came to constitute an important part of the repertoire of Hungarian folk song. The popular song “Szép vagy, gyönyörű vagy Magyarország” (Hungary, You Are Beautiful) from Zsigmond Vincze's 1926 operetta *A hamburgi menyasszony* (The Bride from Hamburg)—a tune now famous for Bartók's adaptation of it in the fourth movement of his Concerto for Orchestra—is a latter-day example of a piece that takes its Hungarian quality from the Rákóczi-melody type (example 3).¹⁷

EXAMPLE 1. Characteristic "Phrygian" scale

EXAMPLE 2. "Rákóczi, Bezerényi" (László Dobszay, *Magyar zenetörténet*, 2nd exp. ed. [Budapest: Planétás Kiadó, 1998], 185)

Rá - kó - czi, Be - ze - ré - nyi, Héj, haj, ma - gyar nép, her - vadsz, mint a lék,
 hí - res ma - gy - a - rok ve - zé - ri!

mert a sas - nak kör - me, kör - me, kör - me kö - zött her - vadsz, mint a lék.

EXAMPLE 3. Zsigmond Vincze, "Szép vagy, gyönyörű vagy Magyarország" (Hungary, You Are Beautiful), from the operetta *A hamburgi menyasszony* (The Bride from Hamburg; 1926)

Szép vagy gyö - nyő - rű vagy Ma - gyar - or - szág gyö - nyő - rűbb mint a nagy vi - lég

The development of the rhythmically loose Rákóczi-melody type into the rhythmically more regular Hungarian style of dance music known as *verbunkos* in the late eighteenth century seems to have been the result of cross-fertilization with another type of folk songs known as swineherd melodies (*kanász-nóták*). Like the Rákóczi melodies, the swineherd melodies owe their name to the text of a well-known example of the type, "Megismerni a kanászt" (One can recognize the swineherd . . .) (example 4). The most typical characteristic of this type of dance tune is a thirteen-syllable rhythmic pattern ♪♪♪♪♪|♪♪♪♪♪|♪♪♪| , which is thought to have been applied to some melodies of the Rákóczi type. Tunes that combine the melodic characteristics of the Rákóczi-melody type with the rhythmic outline of the swineherd type became popular in instrumental music in the eighteenth century. Although the process of transformation cannot be traced in detail, scholars believe that a gradual slowing down of the tempo of these tunes and a concomitant introduction of dotted rhythms common in slow dances of the period resulted in a new type of instrumental music,

EXAMPLE 4. "Megismerni a kanászt" (One Can Recognize the Swineherd), the melody from which the "swineherd-melody type" takes its name

Meg - is - mer - ni a ka - nászt cí - ra já - rá - szá - ról

5
Ú - zött - fűz - őtt bocs - ko - rá - ról ta - risz - nya - szi - já - ról

9
Hüecs ki dísz - nó a be - rek - bő! Csak a fű - le lát - szik

13
Ka-nász boj - tár bo - kor a - latt me - nyecs - ké - vel ját - szik.

EXAMPLE 5. Derivation of the *verbunkos* rhythmic pattern from the "swineherd" rhythm (Dobszay, *Magyar zene-történet*, 190)

Kanász Rhythm

Verbunkos Rhythm

EXAMPLE 6. Late-eighteenth-century Hungarian dance melody (*verbunkos*), 34 *pesti magyar tánc* (34 Hungarian Dances from Pest) (Dobszay, *Magyar zene-történet*, 268)

Kanász Rhythm

often referred to as *verbunkos* (example 5). Bartók himself traced the origin of *verbunkos* to the combination of these two types of melodies.¹⁸

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century an explosion of manuscripts and publications featuring dances combining the rhythmic characteristics of swineherd songs, the melodic formulas typical of the Rákóczi-melody type, the harmonic vocabulary of Viennese classicism, virtuoso embellishments typical of Hungarian Gypsy performers, and phrase structure common to both classical periodic structure and Hungarian folk songs testifies to the establishment and popularity of *verbunkos* dances (example 6).¹⁹ Nowhere were the distinctions Bartók would often invoke between rural and urban, Gypsy and peasant, Hungarian and Western European styles more blurred than in this repertoire.

Verbunkos

Verbunkos, from the German *Werbung* (recruitment), takes its name from the practice of recruiting Hungarian peasants for the Habsburg army. Although recruitment had occurred sporadically in Hungarian lands earlier, the practice began in earnest in 1715 with the formation of a permanent militia and officially ended in 1849 when, after the failed Hungarian War of Independence (1848–49), universal conscription made the practice obsolete.²⁰ Ironically, although the style of music associated with recruitment came to embody Hungary's aspirations for independence from Austria beginning in about 1820, *verbunkos* owes its name to a practice born of Habsburg domination.

In today's parlance the term *verbunkos* is used in a variety of different, if interrelated, ways. Most specifically, *verbunkos* refers to a large group of men's folk dances usually identified by the inclusion of the term in their titles: *Vasvári verbunk* (*Verbunkos* from Vasvár), *Magyar verbunk* (Hungarian *verbunkos*), *Szóló verbunk* (Solo *verbunkos*), to name just a few.²¹ The term becomes less specific when applied to music. Not only is it used to describe the music for dances specifically referred to as *verbunkos*, it also encompasses the music for a number of other folk dances, including men's dances such as the *legényes* (young man's dance) and *botoló* (stick dance), as well as the couple's dance known as the *csárdás* (from *csárda*, country inn).²² *Verbunkos* is also used to refer collectively to a suite of instrumental pieces, arranged in order of increasing tempo and frequently consisting of the following three parts:²³

1. A slow (*lassú*), free introductory section sometimes without a steady beat. Since the middle of the nineteenth century this has been commonly

referred to as *hallgató* (literally: “listening,” best understood as music for listening as opposed to dancing).

2. A dance of medium tempo with a steady beat, sometimes referred to as *közép gyors* (medium fast) or *figura* (figure), which may consist of several dances strung together. Together parts 1 and 2 make up the *lassú* (slow) first section of the series of dances and are not always distinct from each other.
3. A fast dance (*friss*) or series of increasingly fast dances, sometimes referred to as *trio*.

In art music, nationally inspired Hungarian rhapsodies (à la Liszt) take their slow-fast structure directly from this folk/Gypsy practice. In some contexts, the slow dance is also specifically referred to as *verbunkos*, much as “minuet” refers both to a section and to the whole of the dance sequence minuet-trio-minuet.

In the context of art music, *verbunkos* designates a large body of late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century virtuoso instrumental music in duple meter either based on or influenced by the tunes used to accompany folk dances. Because of an outpouring of compositions in this style by virtuoso violinists such as János Bihari, Anton Csermák, János Lavotta, and Márk Rózsavölgyi, historians of Hungarian music commonly refer to the first half of the nineteenth century as “the golden age of *verbunkos*.”²⁴ Notations of these dance tunes are sometimes identified as *verbunkos* by some variation of the word (*Werbung*, *verbunk*, *barbunc*) or by *toborzó*, another Hungarian word for recruitment.²⁵ More often pieces in the *verbunkos* style simply carry titles that suggest the Hungarian or “Gypsy” style—*Ungarische*, *Magyar*, *Zingaresca*—and/or a Hungarian tempo marking such as *lassú* (slow), *lassan* or *lassacskán* (slowly), or *friss* (sometimes *friska*, fast). Most generally *verbunkos* is used to describe the style of all characteristically Hungarian instrumental music of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this case its meaning is no more specific than what is known internationally as the *style hongrois* or Hungarian style.²⁶

FUNCTION AND STRUCTURE

The function of music in recruitment was to accompany the dancing that was part and parcel of festivities intended to break down potential recruits’ resistance to joining the army with an abundance of wine and soldierly posturing designed to glorify military life. Both the music—originally often performed by a peasant bagpiper, later more often by small Gypsy ensembles of strings and hammered dulcimer (*cimbalom*)—and the dances used in recruitment are believed to have overlapped with the folk music and dances

of the region. The musicians, whether a peasant bagpiper or members of a Gypsy band, are thought to have been hired locally rather than imported by the military. It is presumed, therefore, that they would not have been expected or able to play a new or unusual repertoire specifically for recruitment. Similarly, because one intention seems to have been to encourage young men of the village to join in the dancing, it is likely that the dances were already known to them, although the recruiters tried to impress them with new levels of virtuosity. The most detailed description of recruitment in nineteenth-century Hungary is by the Benedictine monk and scholar Gergely Czuczor (1800–1866) from 1843:


We stand in the market square of a small town in which peasants from the surrounding country gather. From among the various noises the harsh music of the Turkish pipe (*tárogató*) strikes our ears. The bobbing guardians of the peace come into sight, and then, behold, there come the soldiers accompanied by a crowd, mostly village youngsters. First comes the sergeant, who with military demeanor steps with most manly seriousness. He doesn't lope, jump, click his heels, or shout, but his every step marks the rhythm of the music—and he lifts his cane to it. . . . Three or four steps behind him come a recruiting company among whom the corporal stands out straight away with his bearing, even if we were not to consider his hazel stick and the gold trimming on his hat. An official facial expression colored with some sauciness and a measured light step are his conspicuous features. He is less serious than the sergeant but of more moderate humor than the young lads, he moves his feet pointedly and stands as something of an example before the young men, because normally he is the master directing the group of dancers, and for this reason his every movement is simple but characteristic, while the young lads surround him with dashing lightness, clicking their ankles and clapping, ornamenting and sharpening their steps. They move round the market like this until the sergeant stops at a suitable place and, leaning on his cane, gives a sign. Then the young men stand round in a circle with the corporal in the center, and with the Gypsy band, usually in uniform, playing a new song, the recruiting begins. While the first verse is being played we do not see any dance steps; but the men either remain in their place clicking their heels or they walk round in a circle and in this way learn the turns and rhythm of the song, and adjust themselves to the dance. Then follows a largely determined series of slow figures—but if not, the corporal announces it, the dancers' eyes watching him while everyone watches his opposite partner. It is characteristic of this part of the dance that it is made up only of systematic and less ornamental steps, so that if the song is eight bars, two bars to the right, one to the left, once more two to the right and one to the left, which is then finished off by two corresponding bars to drop back into place. After they have danced five or six slow verses like this, it is time for something more showy, which is faster and more fiery than what precedes it because now they are moving here


and there and bobbing about, to which the rattling of the swinging swords and the hesitant swaying of the bags contribute and evoke a picture of the true heroic dance. But this, just like the more passionate emotion which it depicts, does not last long, and the music, and with it, the movement, return to the earlier slow and dignified mood. This goes on, alternating two or three times, until at a sign from the sergeant the merry group draws apart.²⁷

The orderly sequence of events in Czuczor's account may represent a somewhat idealized version of what is often likely to have been a drunken revelry. Several aspects of the description do, however, correspond to features found in contemporaneous notated sources of *verbunkos* music and to the Transylvanian instrumental music that is thought to have preserved early-nineteenth-century Hungarian folk music relatively intact. Among these are the embellished repetitions of eight-bar phrases and the progression from the *hallgató* section (in which the recruiters stand or walk and click their heels) to increasingly fast dances. The particular slow-fast-slow (*lassú-friss-lassú*) pattern Czuczor describes, although not a typical arrangement for folk dances preserved in Transylvania today, does conform to an arrangement (*lassú-trio-lassú*) sometimes found in notations of Hungarian dances from the early nineteenth century.²⁸

MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Like the vast majority of peasant and Gypsy performers in Hungary until after World War II, the musicians who took part in recruitment were, with few exceptions, musically illiterate. The notation of *verbunkos* therefore already points to urban influence. In notated sources *verbunkos* accompaniments largely conform to common-practice functional harmony, while the melodies preserve some Phrygian elements inherited from the Rákóczi-type tunes. Augmented seconds are a particular hallmark of the style. The characteristic scale that sometimes results from these augmented seconds is commonly known as the Hungarian or Gypsy scale, which may be thought of as an ascending harmonic minor scale with a raised fourth degree and thus contains augmented seconds both between the third and fourth and between the sixth and seventh scale degrees. Other typical aspects of *verbunkos* tunes include regular four-bar phrases in $\frac{2}{4}$ time (often notated in $\frac{4}{8}$ for the *lassú*), which frequently betray the influence of the characteristic rhythm of the swineherd song; dotted rhythms, often presented in a series embellished by grace notes and turns; decorative triplet figures; occasional pairs of accented quarter notes (long-long); and *short-long* rhythms in which the short first note comes on the metrically stronger part of the beat or bar.²⁹ Three common rhythmic patterns exhibit this last feature: the so-

called dotted rhythm or *iambus* ♩ or ♪ or ♪♩, which I refer to simply as a *short-long* to avoid confusion with other dotted figures; a syncopation sometimes referred to as *alla zoppa* ♩♩ or ♪♩♩; and the so-called Hungarian choriamb ♩♩♩♩. These rhythms are also typical of Hungarian folk songs; the Hungarian penchant for them may stem from the way in which such rhythms mimic patterns of accentuation typical of the Hungarian language. The *short-long* pattern occurs when the first syllable of a word (always accented in Hungarian) is followed by an unaccented syllable of double duration (e.g., the rhythmic notation of Bartók: , the diacritical mark over the second syllable (ó) indicating doubled length, not emphasis). A variety of stock *verbunkos* figures are illustrated in example 7, which is taken from a collection of pieces originally written for violin, but arranged for piano and published between 1823 and 1832 by the Musical Society of Veszprém County in western Hungary.

An aspect of the traditional *verbunkos* style that is difficult to capture in arrangements for instruments other than strings is the nearly ubiquitous accompanimental figures known as *dűvő* and *esztam*. *Dűvő* (sometimes *dűva*) is taken to be a Hungarianization of the Romany (Gypsy) expression *dui var*, which has the common Indo-European meaning “two times.” This refers to a manner of playing an accompanimental string instrument with two articulated chords for each *portato* bow stroke (notated: ). That is, each pair of notes is played alternately by upward or downward strokes of the bow; the articulation under the slur is the result of stopping the bow and then continuing in the same direction, not from changing the direction of the bow. The word *dűvő*, with its unusual arrangement of two consecutive long vowels, is also onomatopoeic—the slightly different intonations of the *ű* and *ő* imitate the contrasting quality of the first and second articulations in the sets of chords. *Dűvő* provides yet more evidence for the strong relationship between art music and folk music in *verbunkos*, for it is a nearly ubiquitous accompanimental pattern in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Hungarian dances for strings by composers such as Bihari, Csermák, Lavotta, and Márk Rózsavölgyi, as well as a common improvised accompaniment among traditional ensembles. The transcription of *dűvő* given in example 8d likely demonstrates the way the accompanimental figures in the composed examples 8a–c were supposed to have been played. (At slow tempi, *dűvő* is often performed with the second note of the pair slightly longer than the first.)

Esztam is thought to have developed in the course of the nineteenth century as a natural solution to the fashion for playing at tempos faster than were easily sustainable with the *portato* bowing characteristic of *dűvő*. A

EXAMPLE 7. Ignatz Ruzitska, *Magyar Nóták Veszprém Vármegyéből*, “Cholera Verbung”

a. Mm. 1–8 (AS = augmented second; DT = decorative triplet)

Cholera verbung

Moderato
con Espressione.
Erzéssel.
No. 134.
Ruzitska.

3 AS DT *tr*

6 *tr*

b. Mm. 21–30 (SL = short-long; HS = Hungarian syncopation; DT = decorative triplet)

Con animo.

21 SL SL SL SL HS

Trio. *fz* *fz* *fz* DT

25

28 *tr* *fz* *tr*

EXAMPLE 8. *Dűvő* as composed (a–c) and improvised (d)

a. János Bihari, continuous *dűvő* in the second violin part of *15 Ungarische Tänze für 2 Violinen* (1811): Dance No. 1, mm. 1–8; Dance No. 2, mm. 1–10

No. I.
Adagio.

No. II.
Allegro.

Da Capo No. II.

b. Anton Csermák, *Six Hungarian Dances for String Quartet*, No. 3 (1810?), mm. 1–4

Verbunk

p *f* *fz* *fz* *tr*

c. Márk Rózsavölgyi, *Csárdás Serkentő* (Stirring Tune) with *dűvő* accompaniment (1846), part 2, mm. 1–4

Allegro moderato

p *dűvő* *p* *p*

EXAMPLE 8 (continued)

d. *Dűvő* in accompaniment as played by a three-member central-Transylvanian village band in 1971 (Bálint Sárosi, *Hangszerek a magyar néphagyományban* [Budapest: Planétás kiadó, 1998], 202)

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for the *Hegedű* (Violin), the middle for the *Brácsa* (Viola), and the bottom for the *Nagybőgő* (Bass). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 76-80. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 2/4. The *Hegedű* part features a melodic line with triplets and slurs. The *Brácsa* part plays a rhythmic accompaniment of chords with accents. The *Nagybőgő* part plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes with accents.

variation on *dűvő*, *esztam* breaks up the two notes under a slur into an “oompah” figure in which a bass or cello plays the first of the pair and a viola (*brácsa*) or accompanying violin (*kontra*) plays the second $\text{♩} \text{♩}$ (example 9). Although the etymology of *esztam* is less clear than that of *dűvő* (it may have roots in the Romany language or be derived from the Medieval Provençal dance the *estampida*), the two short vowels of *esztam* imitate the quick interchange between the two accompanying instruments.

In a traditional ensemble of four players, the first violinist (*prímás*) plays an embellished melody, and a second violin (*kontra*) or a three-stringed viola with a flat bridge (*brácsa*) plays a *dűvő* pattern in double or triple stops (as in example 9). A bass (*bőgő*) either joins the *dűvő* at the speed of the *kontra* or *brácsa* or plays half that speed. Alternately, and especially at very fast tempi, these instruments may play *esztam*. A cimbalom may double or embellish the melody, join in the rhythm of the other accompanying instruments, or fill in chords with arpeggios. (When one or two instruments in an ensemble play *dűvő* while others play *esztam*, the overall effect is considered to be *esztam*.) Because both *dűvő* and *esztam* tend to emphasize the second or metrically weaker notes of each pair, these accompaniments make for an effective counterpoint to Hungarian-style melodic figures, which often have accents in metrically strong positions.

Magyar nóta

The vocal counterpart of *verbunkos* is the *magyar nóta* (literally: Hungarian tune), a term that was used interchangeably with *verbunkos* in the

EXAMPLE 9. Márk Rózsavölgyi, Csárdás Serkentő with *esztam* accompaniment (1846), part 3, mm. 1–4

Più allegro

The musical score consists of four staves. The top two staves are for the vocal line, and the bottom two are for the piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked "Più allegro" and the dynamics are "f" (forte). The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 2/4. The score shows four measures of music.

first half of the nineteenth century. In its more recent usage it refers to the folk-song imitations that constituted the bulk of Hungarian popular songs in the nineteenth century. Since Bartók introduced the distinction between what he considered the spontaneous creations of the peasants and the “composed” music of the more educated classes, terms such as *népies dal* (folksy song) and *népies műdal* (folksy art song) have been used to distinguish the *magyar nóta* from peasant music. In practice, however, there is no sharp distinction between *magyar nóta* and folk song, although the melody of the former generally conforms more easily to functional harmony, often has longer text lines, and sometimes contains more “difficult” intervals. Like *verbunkos*, the *magyar nóta* grew out of a combination of elements from both art and folk music: eighteenth-century collections of songs for use in schools, *verbunkos* melodies themselves, and Hungarian folk songs.³⁰ Disseminated by traveling companies of actors who sang them in *népszínművek* (folksy plays), by “Gypsy” ensembles that performed them in often highly embellished instrumental renditions, and in sheet-music publications, *magyar nóták* were known to virtually all segments of rural and urban Hungarian society. As with *verbunkos*, composers often used or imitated these popular tunes in concert works in the Hungarian style.

“Gypsy Music”

Having officially gained the right to enter Hungarian towns in 1765, by the last two decades of the eighteenth century ethnic Romanies made up the bulk of the professional performers of music for dance and light entertain-

ment in Hungary.³¹ Therefore although composers of all stripes—professionals, amateurs, Hungarian Romanies, Hungarian nobles, and foreigners—composed *verbunkos* and *magyar nóta*, in common parlance both were considered “Gypsy music.” “Gypsy music” is an overly broad category, a misnomer and a term potentially offensive to those aware of the historical oppression of the Roma or Romany people in East Central Europe. Yet because it was used universally in Hungary in the time period under consideration, it would be misleading to avoid it when describing Bartók’s musical environment. The inherent contradictions and ambiguities of both the term and the music associated with it are emblematic of the contradictions and ambiguities of defining Hungarian music.

As Bartók was fond of pointing out, the term “Gypsy music” has never been understood to describe music composed by professional Romany musicians—although such compositions are occasionally included in the category for reasons of musical style. Nor has the term been used to describe the folk music that amateur Romany musicians perform among themselves, a repertoire commonly labeled “Gypsy folk music.”³² Instead, in common parlance “Gypsy music” refers to the popular music often performed in cafés or restaurants in regions historically belonging to Hungary by professional musicians who are frequently ethnic Romanies. The ethnicity of the performer has never been a wholly accurate gauge of the musical style: Márk Rózsavölgyi, a Hungarian Jew, Anton Csermák, of Bohemian origin, and János Lavotta, a Hungarian of noble extraction, all mastered the virtuosic “Gypsy” style made famous by János Bihari, a Hungarian Romany and the most famous “Gypsy violinist” of his day. Furthermore, “Gypsy” ensembles did not play exclusively *verbunkos* or improvisations on *magyar nóta*: elite bands like Bihari’s played all manner of European ballroom dances in addition to the Hungarian repertoire for which they were most renowned, while the ethnic Romany musicians in villages assimilated into the musical culture of the peasants.

Bartók was not the first to resent the role “Gypsy music” and Gypsy musicians played in Hungarian musical life. The history of this resentment goes back at least as far as the debates sparked by Liszt’s *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (Of the Gypsies and Their Music in Hungary, 1859, published in Hungarian in 1861), which propagated the idea that Gypsies rather than Hungarians were the creative spirit behind the Hungarian style. Although Liszt’s view was immediately criticized by Hungarian musicians, it was accepted by many in Hungary well into the twentieth century. Liszt’s implication that Gypsies created Hungarian music, rather than simply performed or preserved it, was offensive to those

who believed that Hungarian music is the expression of the Magyar soul, and thus should stem from ethnically Hungarian musicians.³³ Bartók was aware that the controversy over “Gypsy music” dated back to Liszt, as is clear from the following passage from his 1931 article “Gypsy Music or Hungarian Music?”: “When Franz Liszt’s well-known book on Gypsy music appeared it created strong indignation at home. But why? Simply because Liszt dared to affirm in his book that what the Hungarians call Gypsy music is *really Gypsy music!* It seems that Liszt fell an innocent victim of this loose terminology. He must have reasoned that, since the Hungarians themselves call this music ‘Gypsy’ and not ‘Hungarian,’ it cannot conceivably be Hungarian music. A century later the situation has not changed fundamentally.”³⁴ For Bartók, clarifying the Hungarian claim to “Gypsy music” was of secondary importance. More offensive to him was that “Gypsy music” occupied a position in Hungarian culture that he believed rightly belonged to Hungarian peasant music.

Although Bartók claimed in 1931 to have resigned himself to the fact that what he called the “shallow taste” of the “half-educated multitude of urban and semirural populations” would continue to favor “Gypsy music” over his own music and over folk music for the foreseeable future, he was never resigned to the reluctance of educated Hungarians to embrace his favorite cause. In his words: “It is disconcerting . . . to observe how musical artists and writers in high positions endeavor to endow this popular music [Gypsy music] with the attributes of a serious and superior art. In so doing they value it—either because of inherently bad taste or bad intentions—above really serious Hungarian music of a higher order.”³⁵ Lest anyone read the last phrase as praise for his own compositions, he added, “We refer to Hungarian peasant music.” But, given Bartók’s dissatisfaction with the Hungarian reception of his own music at the time, it is likely that he was frustrated with the privileged position of Gypsy music in Hungarian society, seeing it as an insult and a hindrance to the acceptance of his own scholarly and creative work.³⁶

Bartók did recognize that not all the music performed by Romanies was “Gypsy music.” He acknowledged that, in addition to the “Gypsy music” played by professional Romany musicians, Romanies also played “Gypsy folk music,” as well as instrumental folk music in “a genuine peasant style.” The “Gypsy music” of common parlance designated only what Bartók described as “music that is nowadays played ‘for money’ by urban Gypsy bands.”³⁷ The composer’s definition of Gypsy music was thus dependent not on ethnicity, but on musical style as largely determined by the urban or rural environment in which the music was made. Still, although the urban-

rural dichotomy defined categories that differed in important ways, setting them up as mutually exclusive is once again misleading.

The traditional music of the Hungarian village and the popular commercial music of the Hungarian city are best conceived not as entirely separate categories, but as different points on a continuum. The differences between rural and urban styles are clear only at the outer boundaries of this continuum: the ancient stratum of pentatonically based vocal music (what Bartók called “old-style” Hungarian folk song) at one extreme, and, at the other, the *instrumental* improvisations on *magyar nóta* that constituted a significant part of the “Gypsy” repertoire. Bartók’s reduction of rural and urban musics to these extremes occasionally allowed him to focus on a crude and misleading difference between folk song and “Gypsy music,” namely, the presence or absence of text:³⁸ “In folk song, text and music are an inseparable unity. Gypsy performance destroys this unity because without exception it transforms texted folklike art songs into instrumental music.³⁹ This in itself suffices to prove the lack of authenticity in Gypsy performance, even with regard to popular art music. If someone were forced to reconstruct our folklike art music only on the basis of the performances of Gypsy bands, he would be incapable of fulfilling the task, because half of the material needed for reconstruction—the text—goes down the drain in the hands of the Gypsy.”⁴⁰

Bartók’s reasoning here is forced and surprisingly hostile. In his polemical effort to discredit the authenticity of “Gypsy music” he denies what he knew from experience: namely, that the simple act of rendering folk songs on instruments was not sufficient grounds for distinguishing “Gypsy” performances from the performance of instrumental music by Hungarian peasants. Bartók himself reported that he found no “specifically instrumental music among the Hungarians” that was not based on folk songs: in other words, what Hungarian peasants played on instruments were embellished renditions of texted folk songs.⁴¹ This is not to say that there were no differences between the songs the “Gypsies” and Hungarian peasants chose to adapt to their instruments (*magyar nóta* versus Hungarian folk song) or that different styles of embellishment were not typical of each group, but that the differences could not be fairly reduced to the absence of text in “Gypsy” performance. In short, instrumental folk music in Hungary was a hybrid practice that did not represent the degree of purity that Bartók found so attractive in the “old-style” melodies. *Verbunkos* and *magyar nóta*, which together achieved the dominant role in defining the characteristics of distinctively Hungarian music at the same time that Romany musicians came to dominate popular instrumental music in Hungary, sit squarely on

the blurry boundaries between folk music and art music, on the one hand, and peasant music and “Gypsy music,” on the other.

The Status of the Hungarian Style

Why, then, did Bartók choose to dismiss the music of the likes of Bihari, Csermák, and Lavotta, when he could have legitimately argued that their *verbunkos*-inspired compositions represented an early-nineteenth-century form of the synthesis between folk music and art music that he himself was striving for in the context of twentieth-century modernism? The answer is complex and must take into consideration a number of possible factors, personal as well as artistic. Acknowledging the legitimacy of his Hungarian predecessors might have compromised Bartók’s own claims of originality. He may have deemed the discrediting of what had formerly been considered folk music necessary to establish the credentials of the ancient folk melodies, unknown to urban musicians until he and Kodály identified them. Moreover, the association of nineteenth-century Hungarian popular music with Gypsy musicians and the petty nobility had social and political associations from which Bartók was eager to distance his own work.⁴² More pertinent to the present study, however, was his exacting sense of musical quality. As he stated in the 1911 polemic in which he dismissed them, he considered the composers of *verbunkos* “dilettante musicians,” and the music they composed, regardless of its authenticity, “not fit to delight people of good taste.”⁴³ As an academically trained composer, Bartók valued learned compositional techniques such as motivic integration, contrapuntal subtlety, and harmonic complexity. Bihari, who was musically illiterate and had his compositions written down by others, was no Beethoven. (Beethoven did, however, reportedly marvel at Bihari’s playing.)⁴⁴ Yet a lack of academic composerly technique is a poor basis for dismissing Bihari’s contribution to the development of a Hungarian national style.

Bartók’s rejection of the first generation of *verbunkos* composers was based in part on a narrow emphasis on these musicians as composers rather than virtuoso performers. But if the creation of high-art music was not a primary concern of Bihari, Csermák, and Lavotta’s generation, their descendants—Ferenc Erkel (1810–93), Mihály Mosonyi (1815–70), Franz Doppler (1821–83), and Liszt as well as composers of the generation that directly preceded and overlapped with Bartók such as Géza Allaga (1841–1913), Kálmán Chován (1852–1928), Ernő Dohnányi (1877–1960), Jenő Hubay (1858–1937), Árpád Szendy (1863–1922), and Géza Zichy (1849–1924)—

did aim to integrate the *verbunkos* style into the major genres of the concert hall and opera house. If none of these composers save Liszt were among the most harmonically daring of their generation, all were sophisticated musicians, professional composers, and representatives of a tradition that, Bartók's denials notwithstanding, did have a lasting impact on his development. His condemnation of Erkel's operatic music as "a conglomerate lacking any style" because it mixed Hungarian and Italian styles was especially ungenerous. Erkel's choice of different musical styles at different points in his operas arose in part from the dramatic demands of his plots, not, as Bartók implied, simply from compositional ineptitude.

Still, despite the impressive achievements of some of Bartók's Hungarian predecessors and contemporaries in Hungarian opera (Erkel's *Hunyadi László* [1844] and *Bánk bán* [1861]; Mosonyi's *Szép Ilonka* [1861]; Hubay's *A falu rossza* [1896]; and Zichy's *Rákóczi Trilogy* [1905–12]), oratorio (Liszt's *The Legend of St. Elisabeth* [1862]), and symphony (Dohnányi's *Symphony in D Minor* [1901]), the Hungarian style was admittedly more prevalent in lighter compositions. In addition to the ever popular *magyar nóta*, the most common genres at the turn of the century included light character pieces (salon music), virtuosic show pieces (rhapsodies and fantasies) based on popular tunes, and symphonic suites—all genres that tended to limit thematic development and thus had little prestige among the German-trained musicians like János Koessler (1853–1926) and Ödön Mihalovich (1842–1929) who dominated the atmosphere at the Music Academy.⁴⁵ As a critic writing for the *Esti Újság* (Evening News) observed in 1903:

[At the Music Academy] nobody inspires the students to become Hungarian. Occasionally Ödön Mihalovich composes a *kuruc* song. Koessler, always practical, tells his students, "so be it, go ahead and try writing something in the Hungarian style." With brilliant erudition, Géza Molnár holds forth about the construction of Hungarian melodies. Some professors, among them the excellent Béla Szabados [1867–1936] and László Kun [1869–1939], are deeply committed Hungarian artists in their own limited spheres. But the general spirit at the Academy, no matter how they try to cover it up, is German. Brahms is their idol, and the young musicians are taught to worship him.⁴⁶

Kodály, like Bartók a student of Koessler's, confirmed the opinion of this anonymous reviewer in his recollection that their teacher disapproved of using any style other than a Germanic one for more than an occasional splash of color. Kodály further remembered that Koessler responded in German to Debussy's *Pelleás et Mélisande* with the comment "Mann kann nicht einen ganzen Abend im Dialekt sprechen."⁴⁷

Bartók did not share Koessler's prejudice against the sustained use of Hungarian elements in serious concert music and incorporated them liberally in several of the pieces he wrote under his tutelage. But, despite their different orientations and the young composer's distress at Koessler's apparently harsh criticism of his compositions, Bartók did apparently agree with his teacher's highbrow attitude toward musical quality. As he reported in a tone of deep indignation to his mother at the beginning of his final year at the Music Academy:

When I registered for composition, the secretary sez [*asszonyga*]: well, then you'd better write some music now. I referred to my symphony. He sez: yes, but compose—he sez—something Hungarian. At that I started to laugh. To this he sez: aha, you see! you're all that way. If we sez you should compose something Hungarian, you start laughing. Hearing this the director came over to me and suggested [János] Arany's [poem] "Rodostó."⁴⁸ He sez one could compose something on that and work in the strains of the Rákóczi March.—What a notion, I really must congratulate myself!⁴⁹

Bartók appears to have been congratulating himself on disdaining both the secretary, who, he implies, had the small-mindedness to believe that a work in the Hungarian style (implying a lighter genre) would be more worthwhile than his symphony, and the director, whose idea of what would make a work Hungarian was the mere incorporation of the most hackneyed musical symbol of Hungarianness. His contempt of the existing Hungarian style would be hard to distinguish from Koessler's.

The same documents also indicate that outside of elite circles in which Bartók moved there was indeed significant interest in fostering Hungarian music in Budapest. That he was aware of this interest is clear not only from the account of his exchange with the secretary of the Music Academy, but also from his attention to articles in the press. Already before reading the article in *Esti Újság* that criticized the Germanic orientation of the Music Academy,⁵⁰ Bartók had reported that Aurél Kern, music critic of the jingoistic *Budapesti Hírlap* (Budapest News), had gone so far as to recommend closing of the Music Academy because of the non-Hungarian orientation of the faculty.⁵¹ His reaction to Kern's stridently nationalistic stance shows that despite his own nationalist sentiments, he was unwilling to compromise artistic quality in the pursuit of his political ideals:

What do you say to Aurél Kern's outburst on Sunday! To his proposal to shut down the Music Academy!!! *There is some truth to what he says.* But don't pick on the Music Academy! What does he want?! Is there even just one Hungarian [who is a great] cellist?⁵² Or is there a Hungarian composer who could replace Koessler? (and who would undertake the professorship?) . . . Let

them struggle against the tyranny of the Austrian army. Nobody is forced to go to the Music Academy. In contrast, everyone is forced into the Austrian army, and they issue commands in German. That is an affront! That should be, must be changed! But who can help it if, for example, we have no cellist! At least it's better to study music here at home in Hungarian, with the exception of a few subjects, than to study every subject abroad!⁵³

By the middle of his last semester at the academy (spring 1903), Bartók himself would express his aggressively anti-Austrian sentiments in music when he began composing his symphonic poem *Kossuth*. In so doing, however, he did not abandon his elitist stance. He intensified it by integrating traditional musical markers of Hungarianness into the most complex, modern musical style known in Hungary at the time.

Although the traditional markers of the Hungarian style would be strongest in *Kossuth* and the other works preceding Bartók's discovery of "old-style" folk songs, these markers would never be entirely banished. The Hungarian style was too complex, too much infused with elements that derived from Hungarian peasant music, and too deeply ingrained in his compositional assumptions to be excluded wholesale from his own music. In short, Bartók the polemicist could reject his Hungarian past much more easily than could Bartók the composer. Justifiably proud of his music's unprecedented and intricate relationship to genuine peasant music, Bartók's genius as a musician also lay in his unique ability to reinterpret and transform—which is to say, to develop and continue—the nineteenth-century Hungarian inheritance he so vigorously professed to reject.