

Ouachita Baptist University

## Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

---

Honors Theses

Carl Goodson Honors Program

---

1972

### Béla Bartók: The Uncompromising Hungarian

Sally McCarty

*Ouachita Baptist University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors\\_theses](https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses)



Part of the [Composition Commons](#), and the [Ethnomusicology Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

McCarty, Sally, "Béla Bartók: The Uncompromising Hungarian" (1972). *Honors Theses*. 676.  
[https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors\\_theses/676](https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses/676)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Carl Goodson Honors Program at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact [mortensona@obu.edu](mailto:mortensona@obu.edu).

BÉLA BARTÓK: THE UNCOMPROMISING HUNGARIAN  
HONORS PROGRAM SPECIAL STUDIES

Sally McCarty  
December 12, 1972

# BÉLA BARTÓK: THE UNCOMPROMISING HUNGARIAN

## INTRODUCTION

Years before the earliest recorded compositions by professional musicians, the common people sang; danced; and chanted lullabies, work songs, and prayers to their gods. Gradually, professional musicians and art music developed, and a distinction grew up between art music and folk music. The theory was that everything good and beautiful came from the gifted few and never from the common crowd. It never struck anyone as odd that those who expressed contempt of the people and all their works, continued to borrow all the best productions of the people, such as its finest folk melodies, dance rhythms, scales, and instruments.

It has only been in the last few years that we have been able to get an accurate picture of what real folk music is. Much that has passed for "folk" was in reality a smoothed-out and ornamented version of the real thing. In the past few decades, some of the world's finest musicians have gone into the remoter areas of their countries and have found a wealth of folk music, which is different from anything ever heard from those countries, and much more beautiful.

Béla Bartók, a Hungarian, is one musician who has done extensive folk music research in his own and neighboring countries. As one of the world's most knowledgeable ethnomusicologists, Bartók is known internationally for his researches in folk music. He is considered to be a nationalistic composer in every sense of the word. The sound,

rhythms, and scales of Hungarian folk music became so much a part of him that he began to think in those terms. In the following discussion, it is shown how Bartók first became aware of this folk music, and how he used it in his compositions.

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY YEARS

Béla Bartók was born on March 25, 1881, at Nagyszentmiklós, in the Hungarian district of Ternontal (now in Yugoslavia). He showed an interest in music very early in life. At four he could play from memory, with one finger, as many as forty songs. His mother began teaching him piano at six, and about a year later he was found to have absolute pitch.

Bartók's father was Director of the School of Agriculture and his mother was a school teacher. Both of his parents influenced him musically, but his father died when Bartók was eight years old. His mother supported the family by travelling from one section of Hungary to another, teaching in various schools.

By the age of nine, Bartók had already begun to compose, producing a group of small piano pieces. A year later he made his first public appearance as composer and pianist. Because of the promise he then showed, his mother decided to secure a job at Pressburg, where the musical life was more active than in other cities of Hungary. At Pressburg he studied piano and composition with Laszlo Erkel, who is thought by some to be the forerunner of modern Hungarian music.

During his student days, Bartók was subjected to several important musical influences. The first of these was Brahms, whose romanticism Bartók often tried to imitate in his early works. While at Pressburg he wrote many works showing the influence of Brahms, none

of which have been publishes.

When Bartók left school in 1899, he went to the Budapest Conservatory. Here he studied piano with István Thomán, a pupil of Liszt, and composition with Hans Koessler, a German musician who had interested himself in Hungarian music. At Budapest, as a composer, he got away from the Brahms influence, but he found no substitute.

Bartók is thought to have been attracted more by technical virtuosity than by depth or real musical worth at this time. The virtuosity of Liszt's technique impressed him, but not the clues to an authentic Hungarian music he might have found there. This was to later to become very important to him. Bartók's composition at this time was discouraging. When he brought the sketches of a new quintet to Koessler, he was advised to abandon the work, describing the themes as of little value.

At this time he heard a performance of Richard Strauss' Thus Spake Zarathustra, which affected him deeply. He wrote concerning this performance, "From this stagnation I was aroused as by a flash of lightening by the first Budapest performance of Thus Spake Zarathustra...This work, received with shudders by musicians here, stimulated the greatest enthusiasm in me; at last I saw the way that lay before me. Straightway I threw myself into a study of Strauss' scores, and began again to compose."<sup>1</sup> For a time he was swayed by this deep impression made on him by Strauss, but the growing popularity of a nationalistic music drew him even more. This was a nationalism based on nineteenth century Romanticism, which was Germanic in nature.

---

<sup>1</sup>Halsey Stevens, The Life and Music of Béla Bartók (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

This nationalism was shown in his Kossuth Symphony, which he wrote in 1903, the same year that he left the Budapest Conservatory. This was a Hungarian 'Hero's Life,' whose ten tableaux picture events of the 1848-9 war of independence. Its main figure is the nationalistic and revolutionary leader, Lajos Kossuth, who led Hungary in her war for freedom from Austria. In it is a version of the Austrian National Anthem which caused some trouble at rehearsal. However, the work found an enthusiastic audience, because, "strongly imitative of Richard Strauss and drenched with nationalistic ardor, it was easily comprehensible to the musical intelligence of early-twentieth-century Hungary."<sup>2</sup>

Some of Bartók's works were published at this time. Among these are two Piano Rhapsodies, and a few piano pieces and songs. These were followed in 1905 by the First Suite for orchestra. These earliest works were derivations. "In fumbling for his own vocabulary, Bartók freely borrowed that of those composers who had impressed him most. But for all its imitative strains there was already perceptible the shadow of Bartók's later personality, particularly in his riotous rhythms and in his almost barbaric savagery of speech."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Elie Siegmeister, ed., The Music Lover's Handbook (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1943).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

### FOLK MUSIC RESEARCH

When Bartók was twenty-four years old, he spent a few days at a country home in the interior of Hungary. While there he overheard one of the servants singing a tune to herself. Becoming interested, Bartók asked its source. He found it to be an old peasant song. Upon further questioning he discovered that there was a large number of similar melodies, all Magyar (the chief race living in Hungary) in origin, which were sung in the smaller towns of Hungary. This was Bartók's first realization that there existed a large amount of Hungarian folk music which was different from the sentimental and decorated melodies used by Brahms and Liszt as authentic Hungarian folk music. His curiosity was aroused in the little-known music of his own country, and Bartók decided to travel around collecting folk-song data. He visited some of the more remote areas of Hungary such as small hill towns and secluded villages in the valleys. There he lived with the peasants, making notes of all the songs he heard.

During this trip he ran into another musician named Zoltán Kodály. Kodály had also learned of the existence of native Hungarian folk music. Bartók and Kodály decided to work together, copying down the songs they heard the peasants sing. "For the next ten years Bartók—frequently aided by his friend Kodály—consecrated himself to the herculean task of unearthing Hungarian folk music and bringing



it to the notice of the music world."<sup>4</sup> He became not only a collector of folk tunes, but a serious scientific investigator of their construction and derivation.

In 1907, Bartok was appointed professor of the piano at the Budapest Conservatory. His duties at the Academy were not in the department of composition. From the beginning he refused to teach young composers, for fear of hurting his own creativity. Kodály had joined the faculty in 1906, and in 1908 he became the principal teacher of composition. Together Bartók and Kodály exercised what was probably the strongest influence possible upon the succeeding generation of Hungarian musicians.

After his appointment at the Academy, Bartók started to write again. With the new scores Bartók entered a new phase. The influence of Strauss began to wear off though it was still noticeable for many years. He discovered, through Kodály's interest, the music of Debussy, in which he found similarities to Hungarian peasant music. A few of the scores of this period show the influence of Debussy, but these represent a very small group. In many ways, however, he was ahead of his contemporaries. The piano music of 1908 shows experimentation with bitonality, dissonant counterpoint, and chords in intervals other than thirds, before the works of Stravinsky and Schoenberg in which these devices first came to general notice.

During the next few years he had to face the opposition that almost always confronts a composer of original views, "perhaps in an unusually violent form as the Hungarian public was not in touch with musical developments which were taking place in Western Europe, and

---

<sup>4</sup>Elie Siegmeister, ed., The Music Lover's Handbook (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1943).

a man is not easily a prophet in his own country."<sup>5</sup>

While keeping his position at the Academy, Bartók increased his folk music research. He believed that the music of the Hungarian peasant, examined next to that of ethnically related peoples, would furnish valuable data. He thought that the richest folk music came from groups whose heritage was impure, groups that had "rubbed elbows" with other national or racial groups over a long period of time. A visit to North Africa confirmed this theory. He found the music of the Arabs, isolated in the Sahara, less highly developed and less interesting than that of the Magyars and the surrounding peoples. "The avoidance of foreign influences, he concluded, whether deliberate or not leads to stagnation; enrichment of folk music results from the absorption of such influences."<sup>6</sup>

Bartók did little composing for the next few years. Instead, he became interested in propagandizing for the peasant music of Hungary, in an attempt to impress the Hungarian public with its importance. There is a series of letters with plans for a concert and lecture in Budapest, in which he proposed to present peasant performers. The outbreak of World War I, however, made it impossible for Bartók to continue with the plans he had made.

With Hungary's frontiers closed by the war, Bartók was only allowed to work in a restricted area of his own country for several years. During this period he began his extensive musico-ethnographical writings. His articles on Székler and Transdanubian folk ballads were published in *Ethinographia*. These were followed by a number of articles

---

<sup>5</sup>Oscar Thompson, ed., Great Modern Composers (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1946).

<sup>6</sup>Halsey Stevens, The Life and Music of Béla Bartók (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

in the Hungarian musical and anthropological journals. He expanded his work to write for periodicals in Romania, Germany, France, Italy, England, and later the United States. He wasn't content, however, to publish the results of his research without pointing out its significance for the future of Hungarian art music.

As his interests led him into the investigation of the music of other ethnic groups, he broadened the scope of his publications, both musical and literary. While Kodály preferred to study only the music of the Magyars, founding his compositional style upon it, Bartók had gradually become more international in his viewpoint, allowing himself to become involved in the music of Slovaks and Romanians, not only as a scientific investigator but as a composer also.

In addition to his original works and his transcriptions of peasant music, Bartók began the editing of a long series of keyboard music: the Well-tempered Clavier of Bach, music by Couperin and Domenico Scarlatti, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, and a group of piano transcriptions of Italian cembalo and organ works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Most of these were to become the standard pedagogical editions in Hungary, and the basis for piano study not only within the Academy of Music but outside it as well.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS OF RESEARCH

As important as all of the other influences were in Bartók's composition, all are insignificant in relation to the influence of the peasant music of Hungary. The first result of his research was to show that in his early works he had himself mistaken Slovak or Gypsy tunes for Magyar. "They revealed to the world that Hungarian folk music possessed an individuality which the gypsy song, known to the rest of the world, could not even faintly suggest."<sup>7</sup> The Gypsies play popular art song rather than folk song. "But unlike the Gypsy music, the Hungarian folk tunes are undecorated, strongly syncopated, and abounding in amazing rhythm."<sup>8</sup> "True Hungarian folk music is not so pleasingly seductive to the ear as gypsy airs. It is much severer in structure, with hard surfaces of sound"<sup>9</sup>

Probably no other folk music is as dependant on language as the Hungarian. The syllables and their accent are the basis of the rhythm. When greater stress is needed, the grace note is usually used, or often an ejaculation is prefixed to a first phrase. Authentic Hungarian folk songs are built from modal scales. They are based to

---

<sup>7</sup> Elie Siegmeister, ed., The Music Lover's Handbook (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1943).

<sup>8</sup> Marion Bauer, Music Through the Ages (New York: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1946).

<sup>9</sup> Elie Siegmeister, ed., The Music Lover's Handbook (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1943).

a large extent on the Dorian mode and on the aeolian and modern major tonalities. The Mixolydian is fairly frequent but the Phrygian and modern minor less so.

Bartók found a number of different categories of Hungarian peasant music in his research. Among these are marriage and harvest songs, regos (minstrel) songs and children's game-songs different in character from all others, and songs associated with no special occasion, as well as related dance tunes. He made a distinction between the 'popular' art music and peasant music. Popular art music was defined by Bartók as melodies 'from authors who, being musically educated up to a degree, mix in their work the idiosyncrasies of the style of the peasant music of their country with the common-places of the higher types of art music.' Peasant music was 'all the tunes which endure among the peasant class of any nation, in a more or less wide area and for a more or less long period, and constitute a spontaneous expression of the musical feeling of that class.' The origin of the tunes, whether of known authority or from the music of another class, he considered unessential.

Bartók found it necessary to devise an analytical system in order to identify the characteristics of Magyar peasant music. The classification system Bartók used is a modification of that devised by the Finnish ethnologist Ilmari Krohn. There are four considerations: the number of lines in each tune, the height of the final note (caesura) in each line but the last, the number of syllables to a tune-line, and the compass of the tune. The melodic structure of the earliest tunes is short, consisting of one- or two-bar motives; later there are three- or four-line tunes with a 'definite, rounded-off' form, and finally four-line tunes with a perceptible structural plan.

Rhythmically, the earliest tunes are in 'tempo giusto' (unchanging) rhythm, with notes mainly of equal value: 'parlando rubato' tunes in which the rhythms are adapted to word inflections, come later, and finally the variable 'tempo giusto,' in which rhythmic patterns of the 'parlando rubato' tunes are solidified, and much more complex than the older 'tempo giusto' but no longer rubato.

The music as a whole separates into three main groups; the old style, including songs proper and dance songs in the pentatonic scale; the new style, characterized by architecturally rounded forms and heptatonic scales; and a miscellaneous class of mixed character.

Bartók recognized three ways that folk music might be used as the basis for art music. In the first method, the composer uses authentic folk melody, unchanged or only slightly varied, adding introductory and concluding material. There are two subdivisions of this. In one, the added materials are secondary, while in the other the melody is secondary, and the added materials assume greater importance. The second method is one in which the composer uses no authentic folk melody, but invents his own in imitation of folksong. Bartók admits no real difference between these two methods. In the final method, the composer uses neither folk melodies nor imitations of folk melodies. Instead, he absorbs their essence in such a way that it pervades his music.

The greater part of Bartók's own music, especially that since 1908, may be assigned to these categories. In the first subdivision of the first class are such works as the folksong settings in the Bagatelles (no. 4), the Ten Easy Pieces (no. 6), For Children, the Romanian Christmas Songs and Folk Dances, and the Sonatina. The Improvisations, the Three Rondos, and many of the Forty-four Duos

belong in the second subdivision of this class. The two Romanian Dances of 1909-10 are outstanding examples of the second category. The last four Quartets, the Concerto for Orchestra, the Violin Concerto, and most of the other works after 1920 fit into the third category.

Bartók didn't try to conceal the derivation of the basic elements of his music, or their dependence on folk music. To many people, his main works do not show their national influence at first hearing. His music is very modern, sometimes sounding atonal in harmony, avoiding the more obvious patterns of melody and using a very individual harmonic language. Except for his children's pieces, he never used folk songs directly. It is only after familiarity with Bartók's music that its relation to Hungarian folk music becomes apparent. Bartók was too much of an individualist to be an imitator. Instead he permitted "the spirit of the Hungarian folk song to touch his own music ever so lightly and to spread over it a spell, as though it were a faint perfume."<sup>10</sup>

Bartók developed an idiom of his own in which the elements of Hungarian folk music were absorbed. "His work became dissioant, severe, even grim ultramodern in its avoidance of both consonance and tonality."<sup>11</sup> Like the folk song, his melodies are often derived from the modal scales. Although his harmonies are original and dissonant, they are based on ancient modes and a Magyar pentatonic scale. Since the music was monodic, he had to derive harmonic materials from it, instead of adding Western harmonies to Eastern melodic materials. With the pentatonic scale, in which the oldest of the peasant tunes

---

<sup>10</sup>Elie Siegmeister, ed., The Music Lover's Handbook (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1943).

<sup>11</sup>David Ewen, The Complete Book of Twentieth Century Music (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952).

are cast, the harmonic possibilities are limited to two triads and their inversions, and one seventh chord. All other combinations contain major seconds and perfect fourths. Bartók and Kodály came to consider these 'dissonant' intervals as consonant, and used them without hesitation on points of repose, even final cadences. Since many of the later modal tunes have pentatonic characteristics, he extended the use of the pentatonic harmonies to these modal melodies. Often he uses chords to support melody notes which do not form a part of them, and a system of functional harmony never makes its appearance.

The possibilities for using the materials he had assembled opened up to Bartók gradually. There is not a pronounced influence of Magyar folk song in the compositions of 1905-6. The First Suite for orchestra, written in Vienna in 1905, is almost entirely free from traces of peasant music, continuing the trends already shown in previous works. Bartók's first publication based on Hungarian peasant music was the set of Twenty Hungarian Folksongs in which he collaborated with Kodaly in 1906. Of these songs, for voice and piano, ten had been set by each composer.

Works written during the period before World War I show the growing influence of Bartók's research. Among these are two Romanian Dances, four Dirges (Nénies), the second and third Burlesques, and the Alegro barbaro for piano; Two pictures (images) and Four Pieces for orchestra; and Duke Bluebeard's Castle. Some of the pieces written during Bartók's forced isolation because of the war were a ballet, The Wooden Prince, a Suite for piano, and the Second String Quartet. His Second String Quartet presents for the first time in concentrated form the results of his folksong study. "The whole



direction of Bartók's later writing might be deduced from this one work."<sup>12</sup>

In spite of the insecurity of his position, and political and economic turmoil caused by the war, Bartók still found it possible to write. The work completed under these conditions in 1919 was a pantomime, The Wonderful Mandarin. The score is thought by some to contain a portion of Bartók's most striking music. Its basic fault is that it is based on a plot which couldn't have aroused stronger antagonism if it had been deliberately designed for that purpose.

About this time, Bartók published three significant works on folk music. Also, for the Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians he prepared articles on Hungarian folk music, musical instruments, opera, pantomime, and ballet, as well as on Romanian and Slovak folk music. He contributed brief biographical sketches on numerous Hungarian musicians, as well. With all these activities added to his concert schedule and his duties at the Academy, Bartók produced little music. The only work of this period, dated 1924, is the Village scenes, a setting of five Slovak folksongs from the Zolyom district, for voice and piano.

In 1926, because of the need for new materials for his concert tours, Bartók wrote a large number of works for the piano. At the same time he began working on the Mikrokosmos, designed to introduce young pianists to the technical and musical problems of contemporary writing.

In 1927, Bartók came to the United States to make his American debut with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. He had been scheduled

---

<sup>12</sup>Halsey Stevens, The Life and Music of Béla Bartók (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

to play his Piano Concerto, but, because of inadequate rehearsal, the Rhapsody, opus 1, was substituted. "So the expected violence—a requisite of the explosive 'twenties'—was postponed, and with the blander Rhapsody, already more than twenty years old, Bartók's debut was as a pianist only, not as a composer."<sup>13</sup> Bartók prefaced each of his recitals with a short lecture in English, on the problems of the contemporary composer in relating his music to the national temperament. In his recitals he played mainly his own music, with an occasional work of Kodály. Even though the piano pieces of the most recent period were in the minority, still Bartók found audiences and critics puzzled.

As Bartók's personality evolved, and as he achieved his own individual speech, the music public turned sharply away from him. The chief characteristic of Bartók's music is its intense dynamism and rhythmic strength. "As expressed in his music, his is no gentle spirit. There is at the root of his music a vigorous elemental pulsation which will not be denied, though in recent works it has submitted to a stricter discipline than of yore."<sup>14</sup> It is characteristic of Bartók to use the closed forms of the classical period as a basis for his most advanced works of every period. He frequently uses the piano as a percussion instrument in order to get the rhythmic drive that he desires. The Hungarian cembalom, a folk form of the psaltery, of which the piano is a highly mechanized type, is an instrument struck with hammers. Bartók almost always feels the piano to be a descendant of this percussive instrument and he uses it in this manner.

---

<sup>13</sup>Halsey Stevens, The Life and Music of Béla Bartók, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

<sup>14</sup>Oscar Thompson, ed., Great Modern Composers (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1946).

In 1934, Bartók's studies resulted in two more publications, a pamphlet on the relationship between Hungarian folk music and that of surrounding countries, and a larger volume devoted to the Romanian colinde or Christmas songs. This same year, Bartók resigned from the Academy of Music and became a working member of the Hungarian Academy of Science (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia). Here he was able to devote his whole time to the huge collection of folk music which he, Kodály, and other investigators had collected in the last thirty years. Bartók's time was divided between this and composing for the next four years, until the onset of World War II in March of 1938.

Bartók then realized that he wouldn't be able to stay much longer in Hungary with any hope of continuing his work. Bartók's name wasn't included in the list of "degenerate" composers proscribed by the Nazis, because they were anxious not to offend Hungary at this time. But Bartók refused to let his works be played at German or Italian concerts. "Foreseeing the dangers of 'this system of robbery and murder,' and the eventual take-over of Hungary, he began to consider the possibility of immigrating."<sup>15</sup> It was hard for him to face the idea of living in a foreign country. He went first to Switzerland, to a chalet belonging to a friend. In spite of the troubles going on around him, Bartók wrote, in only fifteen days, what is thought to be one of his gayest, most approachable works, the Divertimento for string orchestra. Beginning a Sixth String Quartet, he was called back to Hungary after three and a half weeks by the death of his mother. The greatest tie binding him to Hungary was now gone, leaving him free to leave Europe. "In the meantime he finished the Sixth

---

<sup>15</sup>Frederic C. Grunfeld, The Story of Great Music: The Early Twentieth Century (New York: Time Incorporated, 1967).

Quartet, the last work he was to complete in Hungary; it had become, in a way, a testament, its harsh, discordant Burletta and its distorted Marcia setting off by contrast the infinite melancholy of the last movement."<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup>Halsey Stevens, The Life and Music of Béla Bartók (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

## CHAPTER IV

### AMERICAN YEARS

Bartók and his wife managed to imigrate to America at the end of October 1940. A lot of criticism has been written about the indifference he met in the United States. Three years passed before anyone thought of commissioning him to write a work for an American orchestra. There were a few concert engagements, but most of the major conductors ignored him. Columbia University was able to find him a very small, badly paid post as "Visiting Assistant in Music." By a happy coincidence, however, it involved doing what he liked best—transcribing and classifying peasant songs from a huge collection of phonograph recordings that had been made in Yugoslavia.

During 1941 and 1942, Bartók was busy with his work at Columbia University. He also completed a book on Serbo-Croatian folksongs, and worked on a collection of 2500 Romanian melodies he had gathered earlier, for which he added an introductory study and notes in the hope of publication. These works, written in English, were his first works in that language.

On January 21, 1943, Béla and Ditta Bartók gave a performance of his Concerto for Two Pianos (the reworked version of the Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion) in a concert of the New York Philharmonic Symphony Society. This was Bartók's last public concert. During the first part of 1943, his health had become worse, and in February there was a complete breakdown.

The summer of 1943 was spent at Saranac Lake, in northern New York. Before Bartók left for Saranac Lake, Serge Koussevitzky came to his hospital room to offer him a commission to write an orchestral work in memory of the late Mrs. Koussevitzky. The circumstances of the commission were concealed from Bartók to keep him from interpreting it as a form of charity. He was still afraid to accept, because of the prospect of not being able to finish the commission, but he finally agreed. As his fever lessened, he found it possible to work 'practically day and night' on the commissioned work. He brought the score of the Concerto for Orchestra with him in October when he came to New York to hear a performance of his Violin Concerto.

With his renewed strength, Bartók wrote a Sonata for Solo Violin which was commissioned by Menuhin. This was the last original score that he completed. When performed in November, 1944, the critics said little in praise of the work. A few days later Bartók was present for the first performance of the Concerto for Orchestra. This, the largest of Bartók's mature orchestral works, was to play a large part in bringing his music to the eminence it now occupies. In December 1944, Ralph Hawkes commissioned a seventh string quartet from Bartók. The following February, William Primrose asked him for a viola concerto. There was also a commission for a duo-piano concerto for Bartlett and Robertson. If there had been time, a whole series of major works was in prospect.

During the summer of 1945, Bartók divided his lessening strength between the Viola Concerto for William Primrose and a new, uncommissioned Piano Concerto which was intended as a legacy for his wife. He devised short cuts to save time. He had his son mark in all the necessary technical details so that he could use his energy only for

writing down the music. He improvised a shorthand in which one or two symbols indicated a whole passage and a chord could be designated with a single stroke.

The Viola Concerto was to remain unfinished. When Tibor Serly saw him on September 21, Bartók was working on the orchestral score of the Third Piano Concerto, struggling to fill in the last few measures. The next day he was taken to the West Side Hospital. There, on September 26, Béla Bartók died.

"After the last bar of the Third Piano Concerto, Bartók had written—prematurely—the Hungarian word vége, the end. For Bartók the man, this was the end; an end such as no man would wish for, in a strange land, far from home, family, friends, all that meant so much to him. But for Bartók the composer, this was by no means an end. It is callous to say, as some have said, that recognition waited only for his death. Such a point of view implies the half truth that a great artist creates only for the future, not for his own time; the essence of that time is in his music, and there were many who during his life heard it with understanding and keenly perceptive enjoyment.

In the years since, with increasing opportunity to know Bartók's music, audiences everywhere have come to realize that here is a colossus among men. And in that sense, there is no longer vége, the end, but only kezkezte, the beginning."<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup>Halsey Stevens, The Life and Music of Béla Bartók (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF WORKS

1. THE DANUBE RIVER, for piano (1892).
2. SONATA, for piano (1897).
3. QUARTET, for piano and strings (1898).
4. THREE SONGS, for voice and piano (1898).
5. STRING QUARTET (1898).
6. QUINTET (1899).
7. LOVE SONGS (1900).
8. FOUR SONGS, for voice and piano, with texts by Lajos Pósa (1902).
  1. Autumn breeze
  2. The girls of Szeged scorn me
  3. There is no such sorrow
  4. Well, well!
9. FOUR SONGS (1902-3?).
10. SCHERZO, for orchestra (1902).
11. SONATA, for violin and piano (1903).
12. KOSSUTH, symphonic poem in ten tableaux (1903).
13. EVENING, for piano (1903).
14. FOUR PIANO PIECES (1903).
  1. Study for the left hand
  2. Fantasy I
  3. Fantasy II
  4. Scherzo
15. QUINTET, for piano and strings (1904).
16. RHAPSODY, opus 1, for piano; also for piano and orchestra, and for two pianos (1904).
17. BURLESQUE, opus 2, for orchestra (1904).
18. SUITE No. 1, opus 3, for large orchestra (1905).
- 19s TO THE LITTLE 'SLOVAK', five songs for a child (1905).
20. TWENTY HUNGARIAN FOLKSONGS, for voice and piano (1906; revised 1938). (Only the first ten were set by Bartók, the remainder by Kodály.)
  1. I set out for my fair homeland
  2. I would cross the Tisza in a boat
  3. László Fehér stole a horse



4. In the Gyula garden
  5. I walked in the Kertmeg garden
  6. In my window shone the moonlight
  7. From the withered branch no rose blooms
  8. I walked to the end of the great street in Tárkány
  9. Not far from here is Kesmargitta
  10. My sweetheart's plowing, jingle, clatter
21. SUITE No. 2, opus 4, for small orchestra (I-III, 1905; IV, 1907; revised 1943).
  22. THREE HUNGARIAN FOLKSONGS FROM THE CSÍK DISTRICT, for piano (1907).
  23. VIOLIN CONCERTO (1908).
  24. TWO PORTRAITS, opus 5, for orchestra (1907-8).
  25. FOURTEEN BAGATELLES, opus 6, for piano (1908).
  26. TEN EASY PIECES, for piano (1908).
    - Dedication
    1. Peasant song
    2. Frustration
    3. Slovakian boys' dance
    4. Sostenuto
    5. Evening with the Széklers
    6. Hungarian folksong
    7. Dawn
    8. Folksong
    9. Five-finger exercise
    10. Bear dance
  27. STRING QUARTET No. 1, opus 7 (1908).
  28. TWO ELEGIES, opus 8b, for piano (I 1908; II 1909).
  29. FOR CHILDREN, for piano (1908-9). Original version, 85 pieces in four volumes; revised version (1945), 79 pieces in two volumes, Vol. I based upon Hungarian folk tunes, Vol. II on Slovakian folk tunes.
  30. SEVEN SKETCHES, opus 9, for piano (1908-10; revised 1945).
    1. Portrait of a girl
    2. See-saw, dickory-daw
    3. Lento
    4. Nontropo lento
    5. Romanian folksong
    6. In Walachian style
    7. Poco lento
  31. TWO ROMANIAN DANCES, opus 8a, for piano (1909-10).
  32. FOUR DIRGES, for piano (1909-10).
  33. TWO PICTURES, opus 10, for orchestra (1910). Also published for piano.
    1. In full flower
    2. Village dance

34. THREE BURLESQUES, opus 8c, for piano (I 1908; II 1911; III 1910).
  1. Quarrel
  2. A bit drunk
  3. Molto vivo, capriccioso
35. DUKE BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE, opus 11 (1911). Opera in one act, libretto by Béla Balázs.
36. ALLEGRO BARBARO, for piano (1911).
37. FOUR PIECES, opus 12, for orchestra (1912).
  1. Preludio
  2. Scherzo
  3. Intermezzo
  4. Marcia funebre
38. FOUR OLD HUNGARIAN FOLKSONGS, for 4-part male chorus, acappella (1912).
  1. Long ago I told you
  2. Oh God, why am I waiting?
  3. In my sister-in-law's garden
  4. Farmboy, load the cart well
39. THE FIRST TERM AT THE PIANO, for piano (1913).
40. SONATINA, for piano (1915), based on Romanian folk tunes.
41. ROMANIAN FOLK DANCES FROM HUNGARY, for piano (1915). Transcribed for small orchestra 1917, as ROMANIAN FOLK DANCES.
  1. Stick dance
  2. Sash dance
  3. In one spot
  4. Horn dance
  5. Romanian polka
  6. Fast dance
  7. Fast dance
42. ROMANIAN CHRISTMAS SONGS (colinde), for piano (1915). Two series of ten each.
43. TWO ROMANIAN FOLKSONGS, for 4-part women's chorus (1915).
44. NINE ROMANIAN SONGS, for voice and piano (1915).
45. THE WOODEN PRINCE, ballet in one act (1914/16). Libretto by Béla Balázs. An orchestral SUITE from the ballet, 1931.
46. SUITE, opus 14, for piano (1916).
47. FIVE SONGS, opus 15, for voice and piano (1916). Texts by Béla Balázs.
  1. To kiss
  2. This is my love
  3. In my dream I seemed to see you
  4. Thirstily I wait
  5. Below here in the valley

48. FIVE SONGS, opus 16, for voice and piano (1916). Texts by Endre Ady.
1. Three autumn tears
  2. Sounds of autumn
  3. My bed calls me
  4. Alone with the sea
  5. I cannot come to you
49. FIFTEEN HUNGARIAN PEASANT SONGS, for piano (1914-17).
50. THREE HUNGARIAN FOLK TUNES, for piano (1914-17).
51. STRING QUARTET No. 2, opus 17, (1915-17).
52. EIGHT HUNGARIAN FOLKSONGS, for voice and piano (1907-17).
1. Black is the earth
  2. My God, my God, make the river swell
  3. Wives, let me be one of your company
  4. So much sorrow lies on my heart
  5. If I climb yonder hill
  6. They are mending the great forest highway
  7. Up to now my work was plowing in the springtime
  8. The snow is melting
53. FIVE SLOVAK FOLKSONGS, for 4-part male chorus (1917).
1. Hey, my dear, kind comrades
  2. If I must go to the war
  3. Let us go comrades
  4. Hey, if soon I fall
  5. To battle I went forth
54. FOUR SLOVAK FOLKSONGS, for 4-part mixed chorus and piano (1917).
1. Thus sent the mother
  2. In alpine pastures
  3. Food and drink's your only pleasure
  4. Let the bagpipe sound
55. THREE STUDIES, opus 18, for piano (1918).
56. THE WONDERFUL MANDARIN, opus 19, pantomime in one act (1918-19).
57. EIGHT IMPROVISATIONS ON HUNGARIAN PEASANT SONGS, opus 20, for piano (1920).
58. SONATA No. 1, for violin and piano (1921).
59. SONATA No. 2, for violin and piano (1922).
60. DANCE SUITE, for orchestra (1923).
61. FIVE VILLAGE SCENES, for voice and piano (1924). Slovak folk-songs from the Zolyom district. Numbers 3, 4, and 5 also transcribed for four or eight women's voices and chamber orchestra (1926).
62. SONATA, for piano (1926).

63. OUT OF DOORS, for piano (1926).
1. With drums and pipes
  2. Barcarolla
  3. Musettes
  4. The night's music
  5. The chase
64. NINE LITTLE PIANO PIECES, (1926).
- 1-4. Dialogues
  5. Menuetto
  6. Air
  7. Marcia delle bestie
  8. Tambourine
  9. Preludio, all' ungherese
65. CONCERTO No. 1, for piano and orchestra (1926).
66. STRING QUARTET No. 3, (1927).
67. THREE RONDOS ON FOLK TUNES, for piano (I, 1916; II and III, 1927).
68. RHAPSODY No. 1, for violin and piano (1928).
69. RHAPSODY No. 2, for violin and piano (1928).
70. STRING QUARTET No. 4, (1928).
71. TWENTY HUNGARIAN FOLKSONGS, for voice and piano (1929). Five of the songs orchestrated in 1933.
1. In prison
  2. Ancient grief
  3. The fugitive
  4. Herdsman's song
  5. Székely 'lassú'
  6. Székely 'friss'
  7. Swineherd's dance
  8. Six-florin dance
  9. The shepherd
  10. Joking song
  11. Nuptial serenade
  12. Humorous song
  13. Dialogue song
  14. Complaint
  15. Drinking song
  16. Oh, my dear mother
  17. Ripening cherries
  18. Long ago at Doboz fell the snow
  19. Yellow cornstalk
  20. Wheat, wheat
72. FOUR HUNGARIAN FOLKSONGS, for mixed chorus, a cappella (1930).
1. The prisoner
  2. The rover
  3. The marriageable girl
  4. Song

73. CANTATA PROFANA: THE NINE ENCHANTED STAGS, for double mixed chorus, tenor and baritone soloists, and orchestra (1930).
74. CONCERTO No. 2, for piano and orchestra (1931).
75. FORTY-FOUR DUOS, for two violins (1931). Numbers 28, 32, 43, 16, and 36 were transcribed for piano (1936) as PETITE SUITE.
76. TRANSYLVANIAN DANCES, for orchestra (1931). Transcription of the SONATINA for piano (1915).
77. HUNGARIAN SKETCHES, for orchestra (1931). Transcriptions of the following: nos. 5 and 10 of TEN EASY PEECES (1908); no. 2 of FOUR DIRGES (1909-10); no. 2 of THREE BURLESQUES (1911); no. 40 of FOR CHILDREN, vol. I.
78. SZEKELY SONGS, for male chorus, a cappella (1932).
  1. How often I've regretted
  2. My God, my life
  3. Slender thread, hard seed
  4. In Kilyenfalva girls are gathering
  5. = 3.
  6. Do a dance, priest
79. HUNGARIAN PEASANT SONGS, for orchestra (1933). Transcriptions of nos. 6-12, 14, 15, of FIFTEEN HUNGARIAN PEASANT SONGS (1914-17).
80. HUNGARIAN FOLKSONGS, for voice and orchestra (1933). Transcriptions of nos. 1, 2, 10, 11, 14 of TWENTY HUNGARIAN FOLKSONGS (1929).
81. STRING QUARTET No. 5, (1934).
82. TWENTY-SEVEN CHORUSES, for 2- and 3-part children's or women's chorus (1935). Orchestral accompaniments were provided for nos. 1, 2, 7, 11, 12.
  1. Don't leave me
  2. Hussar
  3. Letter to those at home
  4. Play song
  5. I've no one in the world
  6. Alas, alas
  7. Breadbaking
  8. I have a ring
  9. Girls' teasing song
  10. Don't leave here
  11. Loafers' song
  12. Wandering
  13. Courting
  15. Suitor
  16. Sprint
  17. Boys' teasing song
  18. I shouldn't have seen you
  19. Gride
  20. Regret
  21. The bird flew away
  22. Bird song

- 23. Jeering
  - 24. Pillow dance
  - 25. Michaelmas congratulation
  - 26. God be with you
  - 27. Canon: I'm dying for Csurgó
- 
- 83. FROM OLDEN TIMES, after old Hungarian folk- and art-song texts. for 3-part male chorus, a cappella (1935).
    - 1. No one's more unhappy than the peasant
    - 2. One, two, three, four
    - 3. No one is happier than the peasant
  - 84. PETITE SUITE, for piano (1936). Transcriptions of nos. 28, 32, 38, 43, 16, 36, of FORTY-FOUR DUOS for two violins (1931).
  - 85. MUSIC FOR STRING INSTRUMENTS, PERCUSSION, AND CELESTA, (1936).
  - 86. SONATA FOR TWO PIANOS AND PERCUSSION, (1937). Transcribed as CONCERTO FOR TWO PIANOS AND ORCHESTRA, (1940).
  - 87. MIKROKOSMOS, 153 progressive pieces for piano (1926-37). Bartók transcribed seven pieces from the series for two pianos (nos. 113, 69, 135, 123, 127, 145, 146).
  - 88. CONTRASTS, for violin, clarinet, and piano, (1938).
  - 89. VIOLIN CONCERTO, (1937-38).
  - 90. DIVERTIMENTO, for string orchestra (1939).
  - 91. STRING QUARTET No. 6, (193()).
  - 92. CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA, (1943).
  - 93. SONATA FOR SOLO VIOLIN, (1944).
  - 94. THE HUSBAND'S GRIEF, Ukrainian folksong, for voice and piano (1945)
  - 95. CONCERTO No. 3, for piano and orchestra (1945). Unfinished; last 17 measures completed by Tibor Serly.
  - 96. VIOLA CONCERTO (1945). Unfinished; reconstructed and orchestrated by Tibor Serly.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bauer, Marion, Music Through the Ages. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1946.
- Bauer, Marion. Twentieth Century Music; How it Developed, How to Listen to it. New York::London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1933.
- Cross, Milton and Ewen, David. The Milton Cross New Encyclopedia of the Great Composers and their Music. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969.
- Ewen, David. The Complete Book of Twentieth Century Music. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952.
- Grunfeld, Frederic C., The Story of Great Music: The Early Twentieth Century. New York: Time Incorporated, 1967.
- Schonberg, Harold C. The Lives of the Great Composers. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1970.
- Siegmeister, Elie, ed. The Music Lover's Handbook. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1943.
- Stevens, Halsey. The Life and Music of Béla Bartók. New York: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- Thompson, Oscar, ed. Great Modern Composers. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1946.
- Wold, Milo; and Cybler, Edmund. An Introduction to Music and Art in the Western World. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company publishers, 1967.