

BÉLA BARTÓK
ESSAYS

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I

In these eight conferences I am going to explain to you the main characteristics of the 'New' Hungarian art music.¹ On the one hand, it has features different from those of any other kind of art music. On the other, it has features in common with those found in the art music of other peoples. As an introduction to this subject, I have to explain the meaning of some technical terms which, though much in use, are frequently used in a distorted sense. Two such terms are represented by the words *revolution* and *evolution*.

Revolution, especially, is often misused in connection with contemporary music. Every composer who writes some kind of new music is called a revolutionary musician by many people. Let us now examine the exact meaning of revolution. According to dictionaries, the term denotes reversal of conditions; fundamental change. In other words, it is a destruction of all that existed before and a beginning anew, a start from nothing.

Evolution, on the other hand, almost the same word but without the letter *r*, means development by natural process from something that existed before; that is, a change by degrees. Here, the dropping of one letter is the cause of an essential difference, since the result is a word with quite the opposite meaning. This difference is much more important than it was in the famous 'iota' case concerning the words *homoiousios* and *homoousios*. The former means that the Son [of God] is similar in essence to the Father, but not quite the same. The latter means that the Son is of the same essence as the Father. This slight difference in religious opinion was the cause of much quarrelling and bloodshed in the old Byzantine Empire. Fortunately, times have changed—in the arts, at least!—so that no more blood is shed between adherents of revolution or evolution.

Let me say in advance that revolution in art (for instance, in music) in its strict

1. [Illness forced the cancellation by Bartók of half the planned conferences or lectures which were begun in February 1943 at Harvard University.]

sense would signify the destruction of every previously-used means and a new start from almost nothing—a set-back of several thousand years. Complete revolution in art, therefore, is impossible or, at least, is not a desirable means to an end. Applied to music, it would even mean the elimination of all known musical sounds in use today, and it would require the invention of some kind of different material as a substitute. We can hardly imagine what this new kind of material could be, for any material not consisting of musical sounds would impair the essentials of music; music must be based on musical sounds or else it would cease to be music. Such kind of revolution, carried *ad absurdum*, is sheer nonsense. We can make the statement, therefore, that even the most revolutionary movement in music has its natural limits. It must keep the original material, but it can, at least, destroy the system or systems which have been developed from this material for the past several thousand years and which have been in use until now. Thus, only partial revolutionary tendencies are imaginable, but even these have their very serious shortcomings—as we will see later.

There is, for instance, the quarter tone system. Its best-known representative is the Czech composer Alois Haba. (Another is the Russian composer Vishnegradsky who lived in Paris.) Haba uses the twenty-four quarter tones as Schoenberg uses the twelve tones of the chromatic scale. The former's system, therefore, could be called a hyper-chromatic one, and it is very well imaginable in theory. In practice, however, very serious shortcomings appear. It must be borne in mind that minor seconds, the narrowest distances in the twelve tone chromatic system, already sound rather provoking and harsh, and performers try to attenuate this harshness (quite subconsciously) by slightly augmenting the distance. This can be done, of course, without any difficulty on string instruments and with the human voice, and to some extent on wind instruments. But it cannot be done on the piano and other keyboard instruments, and that is why music crowded with minor second intervals is less provoking when played by the strings. Incidentally, this circumstance does not mean that such intervals—as double stops—should be avoided as far as possible in piano music. On the contrary, for there are different means to mitigate the harshness of such sounds in piano music, as we will see when we discuss differences in dynamic distribution in one of the following conferences.

The distance of a quarter tone is half that of a half tone, and, therefore, a still more disagreeable effect is produced. There is no possibility of attenuating the harshness of a quarter tone interval by augmenting the distance—there is simply no space for such a procedure. Besides, when neighbouring quarter tones are used simultaneously, in the form of double stops, rather disagreeable by-products of sound appear: pulsating beats similar to those produced on the piano when one of the two or three strings which serve a key is slightly off pitch. The continual presence of these unintended

pulsations makes polyphonic quarter tone music almost unbearable. There is no solution: laws and phenomena of physics cannot be annihilated by any kind of revolution.

Alois Haba had another revolutionary idea, concerning musical structure. He proclaimed that repetitions of any kind ought to be avoided in musical works, even those on a large scale. This procedure abolishes the basic law according to which graspable structure or form can be created only by repeats of various kinds. No structure whatever is imaginable in music, if no repeats are used. In other words, Haba's elimination of structure from musical works is a rather barren conception of music. As I feel it, as I see it, both the aforementioned revolutionary ideas have no future. They cannot produce satisfactory results at the present time, nor can they serve as bases for further developments.

The trend of Haba's ideas is toward overcomplication. Other revolutionaries, on the contrary, try to simplify matters: they eliminate this, they eliminate that, and finally arrive at a state of oversimplification—with rather poor results.

I know a musician who is an excellent pianist. His name is I. Weissshaus and he is a former pupil of mine. He was a pioneer of the most daring contemporary music and, among others, gave some concerts in the United States made up exclusively of contemporary piano music. But his ideas about composition were rather queer. For instance, he wrote a song for solo voice, without any accompaniment, of course, in which vowels replace words as the text. Moreover, this song is based on a single tone continuously repeated in various values, with alternating crescendos, diminuendos, fortes, and pianos. You will probably agree that a material reduced in such a way to almost nothing represents a rather scanty approach in the creation of a musical work of value. But this trend has its counterpart in the fine arts, especially in painting, as will be brought out later in this conference.

Weissshaus had another idea concerning the composition of music, this time for orchestra. In fact, he wrote a piece in which one theme eight or ten bars in length is repeated without change throughout the work. The orchestra is divided into twelve groups of instruments, each group playing the theme in unison. The groups, however, enter successively at a half-tone higher pitch until all groups are simultaneously playing the same theme, in the twelve possible keys. Such composition is both an oversimplification and an overcomplication. On the one hand, it is not very interesting to have a theme played over and over again twelve times without change. On the other hand, it is too much for the ear to hear one theme played in twelve different keys at the same time. To my way of thinking, these ideas have no future.

A third concept, of composers other than Weissshaus, is to eliminate sounds of

determined pitch from music. Or, in other words, to write pieces for percussion instruments alone. This idea seems to have been propagated mostly in this [United States] country; in fact, I have seen whole programmes made up only of percussion music. However interesting the use of rhythmic and other devices, I think it is nevertheless a rather monotonous experience for the listener to sit through a programme made up exclusively of percussion music. This is my feeling despite my high personal interest in the exploitation of percussion instruments in various new ways. However, I can very well accept the idea of writing music exclusively for percussion instruments as an accompaniment for dance performance. In this case the dance is the primary, the leading factor, and the percussive noises arranged in systematic order are only accessories. I repeat, to have percussion music only as a means in itself, without other musical background, seems to me somehow exaggerated, and the results monotonous.

Similar tendencies have appeared in literature, especially in poetry, where rhythm and the contrast or similarity of word sounds (or, I would say, the musical harmonies produced by words) are sometimes more important factors than word sense. A further development has been the use of words which have meaning in themselves as individual units, but are at the same time senseless from the contextual viewpoint. These experiments finally lead to the complete elimination of words and the exclusive use of single vowels and occasional consonants. I have seen a printed volume, about fifteen years ago in the Bauhaus colony of Dessau, Germany, made up entirely of such kind of 'poems'! As a matter of fact, the use of vowels solely for the sake of their sound may be considered as a trespass of literary boundaries; in fact, it is an intrusion into music's domain!

In modern painting we can observe similar tendencies. First came the elimination of objects and the exclusive use of various lines, curves, and geometrical forms without any allusion to external shapes existing in nature. These lines, curves, and so forth were used according to certain plans, purposed to give an equilibrium and a harmonious unity to the picture. Kandinsky was the first painter who tried this style and achieved considerable results. His non-objective paintings are still comparatively complicated. After Kandinsky came others who attempted to simplify the means. One of these painters is Dutch-born [Piet] Mondrian who lived in Paris until the French catastrophe [1940] and then came over to the United States. He is very well-known internationally, especially in 'progressive' circles. I saw one of his simplest paintings in the private house of the famous Dutch architect Dudok, in Hilversum, who was given the picture as a present from Mondrian, his friend. It is like this:¹

1. [The illustration, drawn in black india ink on buff-coloured, semi-transparent paper, was found by the editor in the envelope containing the lecture notes.]

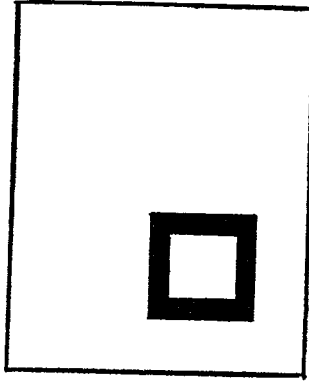


Fig. 3. Bartók's representation of a Mondrian painting

When I saw this painting, I said, 'Well, it seems that scores of such paintings could be turned out every day,' Mr. Dudok, however, replied, 'Oh, no, absolutely no.' Mondrian told him that he, Mondrian, had worked on this painting for several days or perhaps even several weeks. It is quite inconceivable to me why so much pondering and meditating on a simple subject is necessary. But it seems that the proportions, the placing of squares and circles whether filled in or empty, as well as the distribution of black and white in well-chosen balance are very important for the total harmony which should be radiated by the picture!

I have seen other paintings by Mondrian, in private homes, which were not as simple as this. Additions were perhaps a blackened circle in one corner, a broad beam (and the like) in another. But even so, this reduction of means to little more than nothing seems an exaggeration to me. I am only a musician, and I am not competent to judge paintings. But this kind of reduction of means seems to be a rather poor device for satisfactory artistic communication. It is on the same level as the aforementioned Weisshaus song which is based on not more than one scalar degree.

Here we have a remarkable phenomenon: the simultaneous appearance of similar revolutionary tendencies in all three branches of the arts—painting, literature, and music. In painting, this tendency had some success; in fact, Mondrian's pictures and those of similar trend by other painters were bought by people quite regularly. In literature there was less success, and in music no success at all.

If we turn our attention toward Schoenberg and Stravinsky, the two leading composers of the past decades, we will see that their works are decidedly the outcome of evolution. In the succession of their compositions, there is no abrupt turning away from previous devices and no abolition of almost all the means used by pre-

ceding composers. What we will see is a gradual change, leading from the patterns and means of their predecessors, to a style and means of expression of their own.

Let us first look at Schoenberg's works. Anybody who ever heard the very early compositions of Schoenberg, especially his string sextet *Verklärte Nacht*, or his great choral-orchestral work *Gurrelieder*, would recognize that they are a continuation, a further development, or—if I am allowed to use the word—an exaggeration of the Wagner style. As further steps come the two string quartets; the first in one movement lasting about fifty minutes, reminding us somehow of Liszt's piano sonata (only in its lengthy structure, of course, not in its style). Stylistically the quartet is a further development of Wagner's music, very polyphonic, very chromatic, perhaps mingled with Mahler and [R.] Strauss elements. The second string quartet has in its last two movements a vocal part added to the strings. According to Schoenberg's own confession, the second quartet is the last of his tonal works. As a very consistent further development, the next step leads to the three piano pieces of Opus 11—the first Schoenberg work which is said to completely renounce tonality.¹

In these piano pieces, as well as in the following nine or ten Schoenberg works, no pre-established system appears. Later, he constructed a system containing certain rules which he calls the twelve-tone system, and to which he rigorously adhered in all his later works. It would go too far to give a detailed description of his latest works. It can be said, however, that no essential stylistic changes can be discovered in them. They may be still more complicated because of the use of the system, but their style of expression is, in its main features, the same with which he began in Op. 11.

Between Schoenberg and Stravinsky is the greatest imaginable contrast. No wonder! Stravinsky started from a totally different point or, better, from totally different points (he shows several starts during his career). Everybody knows of his dislike of Wagner. Instead of Wagner, therefore, he turned to contemporary French music and especially to the music of his Russian predecessors as starting points. He admired the transparency of the Mozart style, but it seems that in his youth he did not study Beethoven's music very well, and this, at least, appears in the first volume of his autobiography. In fact, Stravinsky writes that when he planned to write his Piano Sonata [1925]—he was already over forty years old—he thought it would be useful to do some preliminary study in this field. So he turned to the Beethoven piano sonatas and, as he says, discovered that they are very good and interesting music (or words to that effect). This statement means that he did not know the Beethoven sonatas prior to the early 1920's. His very early works, for instance, the Four Etudes for piano, are not very well known. But his *Fireworks*, a dazzling orchestral work, shows the above-mentioned elements as a basis for a start, although it already

1. [There is an indication in the notes for a demonstration here.]

has some features of his own. Then follows *The Firebird* ballet, a more accomplished work. With *Petrushka* a new element enters as a basis: Russian peasant music. This element is retained in a still more perfected style in the following *Le Sacre du printemps*, more or less, perhaps, in *Rossignol* also, and, finally, as the highest accomplishment in his *Village Wedding Scenes* [*Les Noces*].¹

Now, almost all the motives (for instance, of *Sacre*) seem to be Russian peasant music motives or their excellent imitations. And the harmonies into which they are inserted are marvellously suitable for the creation of a kind of apotheosis of the Russian rural music. But, despite the quite incredible novelty displayed throughout, the aforementioned bases as original starting points remain recognizable. Even the origin of the rough-grained, brittle, and jerky musical structure, backed by ostinatos, which is so completely different from any structural proceeding of the past, may be sought in the short-breathed Russian peasant motives. For these, as we have seen, consist of four, two, or even one bar.

After the *Village Wedding Scenes*, a short jazz period followed with a few works.² Then comes again a different period, now and then broken by some digressions, which lasts until the present day. This is Stravinsky's neoclassical period of which the *Pulcinella* music is only a preparatory study. It really starts with his Octet for wind instruments, followed by his Concerto for Piano [wind instruments and percussion], piano solo pieces, and many other works too numerous to mention here. Just at the beginning of this period, when I once met Stravinsky in Paris, he told me that he thinks he has the right to incorporate into his music any material he believes to be fit or appropriate for his purposes. This belief reminds us of Molière's saying: 'Je prends mon bien où je le trouve.' With this conviction, Stravinsky turned to the music of bygone times, to the so-called classical music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for a new starting point. This start again shows pure evolutionary principles and is by no means revolutionary in concept.

The opinion of some people that Stravinsky's neoclassical style is based on Bach, Handel, and other composers of their time is a rather superficial one. As a matter of fact, he turns only to the material of that period, to the patterns used by Bach, Handel, and others. Stravinsky uses this material in his own way, arranging and transforming it according to his own individual spirit, thus creating works of a new, individual style. Had he tried also to transpose Bach's or Handel's spirit into his work, imitation and not creation would have been the result.

As we have seen from the foregoing discussion, those composers who achieved the most in the last decades were not demolishing revolutionaries; indeed, the develop-

1. [A pencilled note between paragraphs reads 'Do they know it [*Les Noces*]?']

2. [A note here indicates that the works are to be listed.]

ment of their art has been, on the contrary, based on a steady and continuous evolution.

And in similar fashion, evolution was the basic principle in the creation of the new Hungarian art music—the subject of our next conference.

II

Before I describe the base on which the new Hungarian art music was to be built, it will be useful to give you a concise picture of how musical matters stood in Hungary at the end of the last century and, in addition, a short survey of the history of that country.

Hungary had the misfortune to have been invaded and occupied by the Turks in the first half of the sixteenth century. The occupation lasted about two hundred years and it included the capital, Budapest, and the most important part of the country. The continuous struggle during the Turkish occupation, and the war of liberation—which brought not only freedom but also much destruction on the part of the liberating Austrian army—followed by Habsburgian oppression of Hungary, was not at all favourable for the development of civilization, especially in music. We had some troubadours or minstrels; some could even notate their invented melodies in a certain primitive fashion. But, on the whole, their activities were not of any great consequence. Our peasants, of course, only were able to hold fast to their traditional stock of melodies, for their living conditions were somewhat similar to those of the French peasants prior to the French Revolution. In fact, the educated class in Hungary, consisting of counts, barons, and gentry, did not care for the peasants very much; on the contrary, they despised the peasant class and regarded it as good only for the production of labourers, indeed, for serfs for their landed properties.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, musical conditions changed slightly for the better. Some of our big landowners founded their own house orchestras, for instance, the famous Count Esterházy who had Joseph Haydn as house or family composer for many years. Then Liszt appeared, discovered what he called and believed to be gipsy music, which was however Hungarian urban music propagated by gipsy bands, and wrote his Hungarian Rhapsodies based on such material. Our educated people enthusiastically acclaimed these rhapsodies as well as, for instance, Berlioz's orchestral scoring of the *Rákóczi March*. The next emergence was that of Franz Erkel, opera composer, who mingled in his work the then contemporary Italian operatic style with characteristics of Hungarian urban-gipsy music. In other words, Erkel's is a hybrid style of composition. His works are still performed in Hungary, but he was and is absolutely unknown abroad. Everybody believed that the time had come to create an independent, national Hungarian art music. The endeavours that followed, however, did not fulfil this ardent desire. In the second half of the nineteenth century,

some composers toiled toward the development of the Hungarian urban-gipsy style but without permanent success. Others became admirers of Wagner. This admiration, in itself, was not bad; on the contrary, it was a very laudable effort to be up-to-date in music. Really bad, however, was that some of these admirers developed into servile imitators of Wagner. They wrote operas in which the most hackneyed phrases—the offal of the Wagner style—were used throughout. This procedure, in itself, was very bad; indeed, absolutely useless, and it would have been the same in any other country. From the Hungarian point of view it was positively harmful, because the Wagnerian spirit was the absolute antithesis of anything that could be conceived of as Hungarianism in music. So it could not even serve as a basis for further development. Other composers turned to Brahms and imitated his style, which, although totally different from the Wagner style, again was too German in its character, and could not serve as a starting point for us. These were the circumstances and conditions—rather deplorable conditions—at the end of the century.

The leading personalities of our educated classes, however, more and more were urging the creation of a Hungarian musical style. They had in mind something similar to the achievements of the Czech composers Smetana and Dvořák, the Norwegian Grieg, or, especially, the Russians. Plenty of discontent and urging were there, but nobody had the slightest idea what to do or how to begin. The Hungarian rural peasant music was still totally unknown, still to be discovered.

At the beginning of this century, a few young Hungarian composers emerged who had far-going plans. They eagerly studied the classics first in order to acquire the necessary technique in composition. The German Romantic styles of the nineteenth century, however, were not very well suited to their feelings and purposes. Especially Wagner's music was too heavy in its structure, too German in its spirit for them. They had a very healthy reaction against the chromaticism and romanticism of Wagner. Much more impulse could be drawn from Liszt's original works, whose transparency was absolutely non-German, and then, of course, from French Impressionistic music. The innovations contained in these works gave very valuable hints for future possibilities.

All these impulse-giving factors were at the disposal of any composer of any country. The Hungarians, however, had the far-reaching vision which enabled them to turn their attention to an unexploited source, absolutely unknown until then, which was rather unavailable to people in other countries. This source, of tremendous importance, is the rural music of Eastern Europe, especially that of Hungary. And it was not given to the Hungarians as an easy present, a simple 'drop in the lap', for much hard work had to be done first in order for them to discover this music which, as I have already said, was completely unknown to musicians at that time.

The new source, gradually discovered, was very different from the Hungarian urban music propagated by gipsy bands, and rather well-known in the musical world, at that time, in the form of Liszt's Rhapsodies and Brahms's Hungarian Dances. Hungarian urban music has its values, too, and what Brahms and especially Liszt did with it was well done. However, at that time we young composers instinctively felt that this style had its limits and shortcomings, and that it could not serve as a basis for further development. Its shortcomings were a certain trend toward commonplace style, an exaggeration in sentiment, and, in a certain sense, a tendency toward overcomplication.

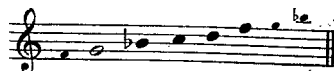
So, the start for the creation of the 'New' Hungarian art music was given, first, by a thorough knowledge of the devices of old and contemporary Western art music: for the technique of composition; and, second, by the newly-discovered rural music—material of incomparable beauty and perfection: for the spirit of our works to be created.

Scores of aspects could be distinguished and quoted in regard to the influence exerted on us by this material; for instance, tonality, melody, rhythm, and even structural influence. I will talk now about tonal influences, and to what essential results they led.

Even at the beginning of our exploration of Hungarian peasant music we were rather surprised to find the common major and minor scales absent for the most part, especially in what seemed to us to be the most genuine folk melodies. Instead, we found the five most commonly used modes of the art music of the Middle Ages, and besides these, some others absolutely unknown from modal music, and furthermore, scales with seemingly oriental features (that is, having augmented second steps):



None of the scales illustrated above can be expressed as octave segments of the diatonic scale; wherever they are begun on the keyboard, black keys will occur. In addition, in the seemingly oldest Hungarian material, we found a 'defective' scale as a main characteristic combined with a special melodic structure called descending structure:¹



The above is an anhemitone pentatonic scale; that is, a five-tone scale without half

1. [This editorially-selected music example, missing from the author's draft, was taken from Bartók's *Hungarian Folk Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 17. The whole note G indicates the final tone to which Bartók transposed the *tonus finalis* of almost all his folk music transcriptions. (After the system of the Finnish folklorist Ilmari Krohn.)]

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steps. Just as there are seven modes according to the seven octave segments of the diatonic scale, there are, also, five pentatonic modes according to the five imaginable octave segments of the anhemitone pentatonic row of degrees:¹



The first scale in the foregoing music example is very well-known from the Chinese music, and the last is the only one used in 'Old' Hungarian melodies. The remainder are found in the music of various peoples of Eastern Russia and Central Asia.

The anhemitone pentatonic scale, with its peculiar leaps because of the missing second and seventh degrees, is the very opposite of the chromaticized heptatonic scale used, for instance, in Wagner's music. So we took it—quite subconsciously—as the most suitable antidote for the hyperchromaticism of Wagner and his followers. Thus, we had two different starting points for our creative work: the modes of our rural melodies and the pentatonic scale of our oldest music. I will talk first about the influence of the modes on our works, especially on my own music, and the peculiar results to which it has led.

But before doing so, I have to make a slight digression to the past, into the periods of Western European art music of 150 or 200 years ago. At that time, as we all very well know, the exclusive rule of the major and minor scale was already strongly established, and the use of the previously reigning modes eliminated. Nothing extraordinary can be reported about the use of the major scale at that time. The minor scale, however, because of its duality, represents a different case. For the so-called melodic minor scale has two different types: the ascending form with major sixth and seventh degrees, and the descending type in which these degrees are minor. All this is very well-known, and I don't mention it for its own sake. What is perhaps less known is the fact these two types were used simultaneously; one type in one part and the other in another part. This superposition of the two scalar types leads sometimes to rather modern-sounding dissonances. Let us take *A* minor as an example. The superposition of the upper half of both scales, in which the deviation occurs, will have as a result the simultaneous sound of *g#* and *g♭*, *f#* and *f♭*, or both. A very important circumstance is this: the composers of those times did not mean to create new and unheard-of dissonant chords by the procedure; the resulting chords were of no importance at all. What mattered was the unbroken line of the two parts; the one demanding *g♭* and *f♭* for the descent, the other *f#* and *g#* (referring, of course, to *A*

1. [The editorially-constructed music example is in accordance with Bartók's note to 'write down and play examples of other pentatonic scales'.]

minor). If we consider the two types as modes of the minor scale, for they really *are* modes, then those portions of a work which use them simultaneously would represent a kind of bi-modality.¹

With the early Beethoven works, this usage completely disappears in art music, and it reappears only in the twentieth century in a much more developed form, as we will see later. Before I explain how this reappearance and development happened, I must digress again.

Just now, I used the term 'bi-modality', a little-known designation. There are, however, two other, very frequently used terms, I would almost say 'slogans': *atonality* (or twelve-tone system) and *polytonality* (if only two parts are concerned: *bi-tonality*). Polytonality means the use of different diatonic keys in music of two or more parts, each part in a special key. The pioneers of polytonality used to regard their system as the opposite of atonality; the former doubling, tripling, or quadrupling tonality, the latter abolishing tonality, or purporting to do so.

We have already spoken of atonality. Real or 'perfect' atonality does not exist, even in Schoenberg's works, because of that unchangeable physical law concerning the interrelation of harmonics and, in turn, the relation of the harmonics to their fundamental tone. When we hear a single tone, we will interpret it subconsciously as a fundamental tone. When we hear a following, different tone, we will—again subconsciously—project it against the first tone, which has been felt as the fundamental, and interpret it according to its relation to the latter.

I must mention now a Viennese composer, J. Hauer, who wrote very strange music, and who claimed to be the real and only atonal composer—he, not Schoenberg. You see, there was a veritable competition in central Europe about who was the most genuine atonalist. Hauer had a certain success with his Seventh Orchestral Suite at the International Festival in Frankfurt in 1927. This suite sounded as a colourful but, in the end, more or less monotonous succession of ornamental chord patterns. By chance, I have here a short composition of his which I will play for you, that you may see how genuine atonal music sounds. In a so-called atonal work, one selects now this, now another tone as the fundamental, and projects all other happenings of the piece in relation to these selected fundamentals (Ex. 1).²

The same phenomenon appears when one deals with so-called polytonal music. Here, polytonality exists only for the eye when one looks at such music. But our mental hearing again will select one key as a fundamental key, and will project the

1. [Bartók's note reads 'examples from Bach [2], Haydn, Mozart, early Beethoven'.]

2. [The music example, found in the envelope containing Bartók's lecture notes, is from Josef Hauer's *Präludium für Celesta* (Berlin: Melos-Verlag, 1921). The natural sign in the sixth measure has been added by the editor.]

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Example 1



tones of the other keys in relation to the one selected. The parts in different keys will be interpreted as consisting of altered tones of the chosen key. I will use a simile: our two eyes cannot simultaneously perceive two totally different pictures; they have to concentrate their direction on one picture (the slight difference caused by the distance between the eyes is of no consequence). And when somebody has the misfortune to become cross-eyed or to have cockeyed eyes, then one eye will gradually and automatically discard the disturbing second picture; the person in question will use only one of his eyes. And, similarly, our hearing cannot perceive two or more different keys with two or more different fundamental tones, as such; it will simplify matters by reducing the maze of keys to one principal key.

By the way, much mischief was done in the worship of polytonality or bitonality. Some composers invented a hackneyed-sounding diatonic melody in, let us say, C, and added a very hackneyed accompaniment in F#. It sounded queer, and the misled public said, 'Oh, this is a very interesting, very modern and daring music.' Such artificial procedures have no value at all.¹ Incidentally, much of Stravinsky's music, and also of my music, looks as if it is bitonal or polytonal. Therefore, the pioneers of polytonality used to regard Stravinsky as one of their fellow polytonalists. Stravinsky,

Example 2



1. [A note here reads 'example, perhaps by Liszt, with distorted accompaniment'.]

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however, deliberately denies this circumstance, even in such exterior features as orthography (Ex. 2).¹

Now we may go back to discussion of our modes. Just as the two types of the minor scale can be used simultaneously:

Example 3



two different modes can be used at the same time as well. Let us take an example:²

Example 4



Let us more closely examine the above example. As the result of superposing a Lydian and Phrygian pentachord with a common fundamental tone, we get a diatonic pentachord filled out with all the possible flat and sharp degrees. These seemingly chromatic degrees, however, are totally different in their function from the altered chord degrees of the chromatic styles of the previous periods. A chromatically-altered note of a chord is in strict relation to its non-altered form; it is a transition leading to the respective tone of the following chord. In our polymodal chromaticism, however, the flat and sharp tones are not altered degrees at all; they are diatonic ingredients of a diatonic modal scale.

If we examine these two modes, we will see first that the upper one is a Phrygian, the lower a Lydian mode. And, secondly, we will see that the upper halves of both modes are in exactly the same relation as the upper halves of the two minor scale types. So, we can declare, our example shows an extension of the above-described methods of old composers to the lower half of the scale. It would lead too far to

1. [Bartók indicates use of an example from his *Bluebeard's Castle*. The editor has chosen a portion from the piano-vocal score, published by Universal Edition, Vienna, in 1921 (Ex.2). There is another indication to use an example from Stravinsky's *Sacre*—'The Dance of the Adolescents'.]
2. [Two other examples which Bartók notated on the blackboard have been omitted by the editor.]

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multiply examples; instead of that, I will show you a work where this principle is put into action—at least partially.¹

Example 5

The musical score for Example 5 consists of three systems. The first system shows a piano accompaniment with a bass line marked 'cresc.' and a treble line. Above the piano part, the word 'stringendo' is written. The second system continues the piano accompaniment. The third system shows a violin part with the instruction 'poco a poco riprendendo' and a dynamic marking 'f'. The score includes various time signatures and key signatures.

But not only different modes can be superposed; the same can be done with the common major and minor scale or, to be more exact, with a major and minor pentachord. As a result, we will get a triad with a doubled third: one minor, the other major. I will show you an example.²

Example 6

The musical score for Example 6 is titled 'Allegro non troppo, ♩ = 112'. It features a piano accompaniment and a violin part. The piano part has dynamic markings 'sf 4' and 'sf 2'. The violin part has dynamic markings 'f, sempre marcatissimo' and 'sempre sim.'. The score includes fingerings and accents.

1. [A note refers to 'many examples from *Mikrokosmos*, Kodály's *Háry [Janós]*, perhaps Sonata for Piano?' The editor's selection is from the third movement of Bartók's Piano Sonata, measures 127-137.]
2. [Bartók writes 'II. String Quartet, "Wrestling" from *Mikrokosmos*, something else? VI. String Quartet: 2 mvmnt.—trio theme.' The editorial choice is the *Mikrokosmos* example: Vol. IV, No. 108.]

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It is very interesting to note that we can observe the simultaneous use of major and minor thirds even in instrumental folk music. Folk music is generally music in unison; there are areas, however, where two violins are used to perform dance music: one plays the melody and the other plays accompanying chords. And rather

Example 7

The musical score for Example 7 is written for two staves, likely representing two violins. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 92. The score consists of six systems of music. The upper staff contains the melody, which features several triplet figures and slurs. The lower staff contains accompanying chords, with some triplets and slurs. A dynamic marking of *smile* is present in the second system. The notation includes various ornaments and articulations such as accents and slurs.

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queer-sounding chords may appear in these pieces, as you will see in the following example (Ex. 7).¹

We may say that music based on such principles can be labelled with a third 'slogan': bimodality, or polymodality. This statement must be taken '*cum grano salis*'. In our works, as well as in other contemporary works, various methods and principles cross each other. For instance, you cannot expect to find among our works one in which the upper part continuously uses a certain mode and the lower part continuously uses another mode. So if we say our art music is polymodal, this only means that polymodality or bimodality appears in longer or shorter portions of our work, sometimes only in single bars. So, changes may succeed from bar to bar, or even from beat to beat in a bar. I will show you an example in which each tone of the theme is treated separately.²

Example 8

To point out the essential difference between atonality, polytonality, and polymodality, in a final word on this subject, we may say that atonal music offers no fundamental tone at all, polytonality offers—or is supposed to offer—several of them, and polymodality offers a single one. Therefore our music, I mean the new

1. [Bartók writes 'Look for an example.' The editor's selection is a portion of a *Dance with Sticks*, played by two gipsies from the village of Voiniceni in the Transylvanian county of Mureş, which was recorded by Bartók on the spot in April, 1912. The complete melody (No. 425) is in Vol. 1 (Instrumental Melodies) of Bartók's five-volume work *Rumanian Folk Music* (ed. Benjamin Suchoff. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967, 1975). Bartók's transcription of this tune for piano solo can be seen in No. 1 from *Rumanian Folk Dances* (Universal-Edition, 1918).]
2. [Bartók merely notes '7. Bagatelle' (from *Fourteen Bagatelles for Piano*, Op. 6). The editor has extracted M. 24-29.]

Hungarian art music, is always based on a single fundamental tone, in its sections as well as in its whole. And the same is the case with Stravinsky's music. He lays stress on this circumstance even in the titles of some of his works. He says, for instance, 'Concerto in *A*'. The designation 'major' or 'minor', however, is omitted; for the quality of the third degree is not fixed.

Polymodality is to be found especially in my works, and less in Kodály's. He was more impressed by the aforementioned pentatonic system whose archaic spirit lent very peculiar features to his whole melodic system (see Ex. 9).¹

I must again emphasize that this 'Old' Hungarian pentatonic system does not consist only of the use of a certain pentatonic scale, but also of a certain form-giving structure and other peculiarities. The total sum of all these special features will clearly differentiate it from any other pentatonic system in the world. Other territories, other peoples, for instance some Indian tribes of North America and Negro tribes of Africa, may also have a pentatonic system which is, however, totally different in the structure of the melodies, in their rhythm, and in many other characteristics. The total of the characteristics is the deciding factor for the discrimination of the various styles, and not a single characteristic isolated from the totality. So if you listen to the 'Old' Hungarian type of pentatonic music and make the statement that it is similar or identical to this or that kind of Indian, Negro, or Scotch music, you will be wrong; for you will have made your judgment based on a single, isolated feature. By the way, the 'Old' Hungarian pentatonic music is a branch of the great Central-Asiatic Turkish, Mongolian and Chinese pentatonic centre.

We were very much attracted by the archaic features of this style, and when we yielded to its influence, we went as far back as the sixth or seventh century, instead of going back only to Bach and Handel—as the most frequently and rather wrongly formulated slogan ran, twenty years ago. It could be proved that this old rural style is at least fifteen hundred years old. In one of my lectures I will talk about this fact and go into every detail of the question.

The pentatonic scale, besides melodic impulses, gave us harmonic suggestions. The tonic-dominant relations, very conspicuous in the common major and minor scales, already are less distinct or are blurred in the modes. But in the pentatonic scale they simply disappear, because there is no dominant at all in the commonly-accepted harmonic sense of the word. Four of the five degrees, that is, the fundamental tone, third, fifth, and seventh are almost equal in their weight. The fourth degree

1. [Bartók lists the following works as examples: '[Kodály] Cello-sonata; *Psalmus* main theme. [Bartók] *Evening in the Country*; *Bluebeard* 1. theme, in three forms.' The editor's selection is from Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus*, Op. 13 (Universal-Edition, 1924).]

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Example 9

lunga 40 **Molto moderato** ($\text{♩} = 84$)

pp

S. *lunga* *pp* These words King Da - vid wrote in his Psal - ter,
So sagt's die Bi - bel, so schrieb es Da - vid,

A. *lunga* *pp*

T. *lunga* *pp*

B. *lunga* *pp* These words King Da - vid wrote in his Psal - ter,
So sagt's die Bi - bel, so schrieb es Da - vid,

ORCH. *lunga* 40 **Molto moderato** ($\text{♩} = 84$)
pp

Fif - ty and five of prayers and of prais - es,
So steht's im fünf - und - fünf - zig - sten Psal - me,

cresc. *f espress.*

And for the faith - ful, bit - ter - ly
Dar - aus ein From - mer trau - rig im

Fif - ty and five of prayers and of prais - es,
So steht's im fünf - und - fünf - zig - sten Psal - me,

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generally appears as a passing tone, and the seventh assumes the character of a consonance. Pentatonic melodies are very well imaginable with a most simple harmonization, that is, with a single chord as a harmonic background.¹

Example 10

Allegro (♩ = 132) *f* *giocoso*

Ha ki - me gyek arr' a ma - gos
If I climb the rock - y mountains
Wollt ich in die blau - en - Ber - ge

f *pesante* *p* *leggiero*

(20)

gliss.

te tő - re, Ta - lá - lok én sze - re - tő - re
all day through, Sure I'll find a sweetheart - waiting,
su - chen gehn, Fänd ich si - cher ein - zwei Schätzlein

ket - tő - re. Ej, baj, baj, baj, de nagy baj,
may - be two. Ah me, love's free, will not stray,
für mich stehn. Ei, hei, ei, wenn ich nur wüsste,

poco cresc.

1. [In accordance with Bartók's indication to use the fifth song from Eight Hungarian Folk Songs for Voice and Piano (Universal-Edition, 1922) as an example, the editor has selected the first eight measures from that work. Another pertinent example that Bartók may have had in mind (there is an additional notation that reads 'and for 2 pianos also') is his transcription for two pianos of 'New Hungarian Folk Song' (Seven Pieces from *Mikrokosmos*: No. 5, Boosey & Hawkes Ltd., 1947).]

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Such kinds of harmonization, reduced to the extreme limit of simplification, should be used only exceptionally, in well-chosen, appropriate portions of a work, or else its exaggerated use would lead us to a monotonous oversimplification which I just reproved in my first conference. Melodies in such an archaic style can very well be provided also with the most daring harmonies. It is an amazing phenomenon that just the archaic features will admit of a much wider range of possibilities in harmonizing and treating melodies or themes of the pentatonic kind, than would be the case with the common major or minor scale melodies. The tonic and dominant degrees lurking in the latter, implying tonic triads and dominant chords, mean—in a certain way—a handicap for our action. Although this handicap can be easily circumvented, it nevertheless exists. So-called narrow range melodies with not more than three or four degrees, very common in Serbo-Croatian and Arab rural music, offer the same liberty for us, just because of the absence of the other four or three degrees.¹

Example 11



F.A.117a), El-kantara, a man, VI, 1913.

A slight digression must be made again. There is an old-fashioned maxim, or axiom, or rule, or whatever it may be called, prevailing among folk music collectors and editors, and propagated by them, that it is against the style of folk melodies to write unusual and individual accompaniments to them. Because of the simple structure of these melodies, the aforementioned people would permit only the most common, that is, the most dull and hackneyed chord successions for folk music. They would not permit the use of altered degrees if the melody in question did not contain them, and so on. We find such deplorable accompaniments especially in collections edited *en gros*—containing hundreds of folk melodies. These dull chords don't enhance at all the special qualities of the melodies; on the contrary, they tend to hide the original beauty. Such additions to published folk melodies are absolutely useless; to do such things is a waste of energy, money, time, and material. It would be preferable

1. [Bartók lists as examples 'one Slovak, one Arab'. The editor's selection is melody No. 16 from Bartók's article 'Die Volksmusik der Araber von Biskra und Umgebung' (*Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, [Leipzig] June, 1920).]

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to have the melodies published just as they are, without marring them with such monstrosities. People who do such things are not composers, they are better or worse—mostly worse—handicraftsmen. Composers of a certain level, however, look at these matters from a totally different angle. For them, the well-chosen melody is a kind of motto which they treat just as if it were an original theme invented by themselves. They surround these motifs with the results of their working, their creative imagination, and thus create in each case, so to speak, an original and individual work on the basis of the chosen motto. We have exquisite examples of such a kind of creative work in the German folk songs of Brahms, and in Ravel's Five Greek Folk Songs—all masterpieces in this field. More complicated but equally masterpieces are Kodály's transcriptions of more than one hundred folk melodies which, unfortunately, are not very well known abroad and not even available for the time being. I myself have tried various procedures in the transcription of folk music, ranging from the most simple to rather complicated procedures. In my Eight Improvisations for Piano I reached, I believe, the extreme limit in adding most daring accompaniments to simple folk tunes.¹

Example 12

The musical score for Example 12 is divided into three systems, each representing a different tempo and mood:

- System 1:** Marked *Allegro* (♩ = 120), *ff*, and *strepitoso*. It features a treble clef melody with a triplet of eighth notes and a bass clef accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern.
- System 2:** Marked *largamente* (♩ = 108), *ff*, and *Pia*. It features a treble clef melody with a fermata over a half note and a bass clef accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern.
- System 3:** Marked *vivo* (♩ = 120), *p con grazia*, and *ff*. It features a treble clef melody with a fermata over a half note and a bass clef accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern.

1. [This work was designated Op. 20 by the composer (Universal-Edition, 1922).]

III

Our next subject is the description of a new chromaticism. Before I go into details, I must recapitulate in regard to what results the superposing of the various modes led us to. (First, a kind of restricted bi-modality or polymodality. Second, bi-modality led toward the use of diatonic scales or scale portions filled out with chromaticized degrees which have a totally new function.) They are not altered degrees of a certain chord leading to a degree of a following chord. They can only be interpreted as the ingredients of the various modes used simultaneously and at a given time, a certain number of the seemingly chromaticized degrees belonging to one mode, other degrees to another mode. These degrees have absolutely no chordal function; on the contrary, they have a diatonic-melodic function. (This circumstance is clearly shown if the degrees are picked out and grouped into the modes to which they belong.

This modal chromaticism (as we will call this phenomenon henceforward, to discriminate it from the chordal chromaticism of the nineteenth century) is a main characteristic of the new Hungarian art music. Another and different characteristic, as you will probably remember, is the appearance of pentatonic melody structures in our work, as a contrast—so to speak—to the modal chromaticism, although both may be combined.

Now, the frequent use of modal chromaticism quite gradually gave me the idea to try a kind of melodic new chromaticism, developed quite subconsciously and instinctively. By the way, the working-out of bi-modality and modal chromaticism happened subconsciously and instinctively, as well. I never created new theories in advance, I hated such ideas. I had, of course, a very definite feeling about certain directions to take, but at the time of the work I did not care about the designations which would apply to those directions or to their sources. This attitude does not mean that I composed without . . . set plans and without sufficient control. The plans were concerned with the spirit of the new work and with technical problems (for instance, formal structure involved by the spirit of the work), all more or less instinctively felt, but I never was concerned with general theories to be applied to the works I was going to write. Now that the greatest part of my work has already been written, certain general tendencies appear—general formulas from which theories can be deduced. But even now I would prefer to try new ways and means instead of deducing theories.

Before describing the new chromaticism, we must put an important question: does chromaticism exist in folk music or is its existence altogether inconceivable there? Let us make the statement that chordal chromaticism in folk music is absolutely inconceivable; first, because folk music, apart from some exceptional areas, is monophonic music—music in unison, all over the world; and secondly, because it

represents even in the Western European art music a more or less—if I may say so—artificial development, standing on a ‘higher’ level, a level which cannot be expected in rural music. Nor is modal chromaticism possible in folk music because this style again would presuppose a polyphonic structure of two or more parts, which does not exist in rural music.

There are, however, very rare exceptions: there are very few areas where melodies or even a melodic style exist which look as if they are based on a genuine chromatic system. Then what kind of chromatic system can it be? The single degrees generally are at a half-tone distance from each other; thus, they cannot be regarded as ingredients of various modes. As a matter of fact, they are as much independent tones as are the single degrees of the diatonic scale, and they have no interrelation except their relation to the fundamental tone. For all these chromatic scales have a fixed fundamental tone. In any case, their chromaticism very much resembles that of the new chromaticism which I am going to explain to you. Such a chromatic style exists in Arab areas of Northern Algeria and in Dalmatia (a district of Yugoslavia, on the Adriatic coast). Let us hear first an Arab melody of this kind:¹

Example 13



F.A. 35b), Biskra, Lachdar bân Milud (30), VI, 1913.

As I have known such Arabic melodies since 1913, it is quite imaginable that they may have influenced my works (following that year) with their chromaticism. With Dalmatia, however, the case is quite different. The Dalmatian chromatic style was completely unknown to me until 1940, when I came over to the United States; it was only here that I had the occasion to listen to records of such music and to transcribe some of them. This Dalmatian style is by far more important than the previously heard Arab style because of its unity, higher development, and unusual effect on listeners. This extraordinary effect is enhanced further by the fact that the Dalmatians

1. [This example, notated by the editor from Bartók's Arab MS, appears as melody No. 17 in 'Die Volksmusik der Araber von Biskra und Umgebung' (*op. cit.*) and represents the editor's choice, for the author's note reads 'Here the (to be found) Arabic examples!' (See also the music example on p. 63 of Bartók and Lord, *Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs*, Columbia University Press [New York], 1951.)]

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perform such melodies in two parts. The two parts generally go in parallel, but the distance between them is approximately a major second. The examples you are

Example 14

$\text{♩} = 92$
 $\text{♩} = 76$

1. Še - ta - la se Je - li - ca i Ji - ve, O - - ja
 ro - li - ce mo - ja. Še - ta - la se Je - li - ca i
 Ji - ve, i jo - li - ce mo ja - - j.

Var.: 1) 2)

Z 2104, Z 2041-2042a (a), Dalmatia.

going to hear are performed as follows: first, the two singers play the melody on woodwind instruments which sound like rather rough oboes; then, they sing the melody—one or perhaps several stanzas. The two parts are inverted in the instrumental prelude, which means that the distance of a minor seventh appears between the instrumental parts instead of a major second (see Ex. 14).¹

A few weeks ago I played some of these records for a well-known musician. He was really amazed, and he said, 'How extraordinary it is that this music reminds one of certain Stravinsky pieces, especially *L'Histoire du soldat*.' And this is exactly my feeling. Stravinsky, however, could not have known these Dalmatian melodies: the records in question were issued about six or seven years ago. And I don't know anything about Stravinsky's having gone to Dalmatia in order to explore rural music on the spot. So, the resemblance is the result of a pure coincidence.

My first 'chromatic' melody I invented in 1923; I used it as the first theme of my Dance Suite. This music has some resemblance to the Arab melody you just heard.²

Example 15

Moderato (♩ = 92)

PIANO

8 *gliss.*
pp *p*

mf martellato *dim.*

1. [This example was notated by the editor from Bartók's Dalmatian MS. (The author's instruction reads 'Here the 2 Dalmatian examples.') Another example and a discussion of Dalmatian chromatic style appear in *Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs* (*op. cit.*), pp. 63, 64-65 resp.]
2. [The reader is reminded that the editor was unable to determine which Arab melody Bartók used as an example (see the marginal note on p. 377).]

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This kind of melodic invention was only an incidental digression on my part and had no special consequences. My second attempt was made in 1926; on that occasion I did not try to imitate anything known from folk music.¹

Example 16

The musical score for Example 16 consists of four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The music is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/8 time. The Violin 1 part features a highly chromatic and melodic line with many accidentals. The other instruments provide harmonic support with more rhythmic and melodic patterns. A box containing the number '60' is placed above the second staff in the third measure of the second system.

I cannot remember having met this kind of melodic chromaticism deliberately developed to such a degree in any other contemporary music.

1. [Here Bartók enumerates the following works:

1. 'Musiques Nocturnes' (from *Out of Doors* for Piano, Universal-Edition, 1927).
2. String Quartet No. 4: Second Movement (U.-E., 1929).
3. Piano Concerto No. 2: Second Movement (U.-E., 1932).
4. *Cantata Profana*: fugue theme (U.-E., 1934).
5. Music for String Instruments, Percussion and Celesta (U.-E., 1937).
6. Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion (Boosey & Hawkes, 1942).
7. Violin Concerto [No. 2]: First Movement, contrasting theme (Boosey & Hawkes, 1946).
8. Divertimento for String Orchestra: Second Movement (Boosey & Hawkes, 1940).
9. String Quartet No. 6 (Boosey & Hawkes, 1941).

Another note reads 'Isn't there something similar in *Mikrokosmos*?' The editorial selection is from the second movement of String Quartet No. 4.]

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As to the general characteristics, exactly the same can be said about my melodies as what I said already concerning the chromatic folk melodies. That is, the single tones of these melodies are independent tones having no interrelation between each other. There is in each specimen, however, a decidedly fixed fundamental tone to which the other tones resolve in the end. The main difference between the chromatic folk melodies and my own chromatic melodies is to be found in their range. The former consist exclusively of five, six, or at most seven half-tones, which corresponds to a range of about a fourth. My own melodies generally have at least eight half-tones and cover, in some cases, the distance of an octave or more.

The working with these chromatic degrees gave me another idea which led to the use of a new device. This consists of the change of the chromatic degrees into diatonic degrees. In other words, the succession of chromatic degrees is extended by levelling them over a diatonic terrain.

You know very well the extension of themes in their value called augmentation, and their compression in value called diminution. These devices are very well known, especially from the art music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Now, this new device could be called 'extension in range' of a theme. For the extension we have the liberty to choose any diatonic scale or mode. We will choose one of them which will best suit our actual purposes. As you will see, such an extension will considerably change the character of the melody, sometimes to such a degree that its relation to the original, non-extended form will be scarcely recognizable. We will have mostly the impression that we are dealing with an entirely new melody. And this circumstance is very good indeed, because we will get variety on the one hand, but the unity will remain undestroyed because of the hidden relation between the two forms.¹ If, perhaps, you will object that this new device is somehow artificial my only answer will be that it is absolutely no more artificial than those old devices of augmentation, diminution, inversion, and cancrizans of themes; in fact, cancrizans seem to be even much more artificial.

1. [Bartók lists his String Quartet No. 4 and Music for String Instruments as examples of 'extension in range'. From the latter work the editor has extracted as the first example M. 12-15 of the first movement and M. 1-8 of the second to show Bartók's procedure in expanding a chromatic into a diatonic tonality. The second example is in illustration of 'chromatic compression', and, in accordance with Bartók's note to use as an example one of the pieces 'in front of the *Mikrokosmos*', the editor has extracted the first four measures from the *a* and *b* parts of 'Line and Point' (*Mikrokosmos* Vol. II, No. 64). Another example listed by Bartók, '*Szeretnék szántani*' ('I would like to plough') is 'Variations on a Folk Tune' (*Mikrokosmos* Vol. IV, No. 112); the chromatic compression takes place in M. 32-44. For other Bartók comments on this subject, see the editor's book *Guide to the MIKROKOSMOS of Béla Bartók* (revised ed. London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1970).]

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Example 17

Example 18

A rather surprising circumstance has been discovered in connection with the compression of diatonic into chromatic melodies. I discovered it only six months ago when studying the Dalmatian chromatic style. It appears that this style is not an independent style, consisting of independent chromatic melodies which have no variants elsewhere. The chromatic melodies of this style are, as a matter of fact, nothing else than diatonic melodies of the neighbouring areas, compressed into a chromatic level. There are several irrefutable proofs for this theory which, however, I will not enumerate now but in one of my later lectures. This theory offers a very easy explanation of the queer major second distance between the two parts. The compression simply works in two directions: in horizontal direction for the melody, and in vertical direction for the intervals or distance between the two parts. Evidently, the

major or minor third distance usually met with in two-part singing is compressed into the unusual major second distance.

When I first used the device of extending chromatic melodies into a diatonic form, or vice versa, I thought I invented something absolutely new, which never yet existed. And now I see that an absolutely identical principle exists in Dalmatia since Heaven knows how long a time, maybe for many centuries. This again proves that nothing absolutely new in the world can be invented; the most unusual-looking ideas have or must have had their predecessors.

IV

All that has been said until now about the Hungarian art music was connected with tonality or modality, and with melodic formation. In the following discussion, I will try to give an account of rhythm formations.

Here again we must turn our attention first to the Eastern European rural music. First of all, there are no upbeats; it is a music rhythmically based on starts with an *arsis*, as a contrast to Western European, Russian, modern Greek, and Arab music—all based rhythmically on starts with a *thesis* (but, of course, with numerous exceptions). And when we say that our art music is mainly based on a similar *arsis* principle, then this statement must be taken again *cum grano salis*! It does not mean that we never use upbeats; on the contrary, we rather frequently use them. It means only a general outlook, a general point of view, a general spirit concerning rhythm.

Three kinds of rhythm prevail in Eastern European rural music. First is the *parlando-rubato*, that is, free, declamatory rhythm without regular bars or regular time signatures. Its nearest equivalent in Western European art music may be found in recitative music; Gregorian music probably had a similar rhythm. Second is the more or less rigid rhythm, with regularly set bars, generally in 2/4 time. In certain types, change of measure may occur—which leads in some cases to seemingly complicated rhythms.¹

Example 19



1. [Bartók's examples are 'Brahms var., and trio also: Rumanian *Colinde*, perhaps to be noted down also.' Brahms's Variations on a Hungarian Song, Op. 21, No. 2 (M. 1-4) is the editorial selection.]

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The third kind of rhythm is the so-called 'dotted' rhythm especially characteristic for certain types of Hungarian rural music. Our dotted rhythm is a combination of the following three rhythmic patterns: $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$, $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$, and $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$. Among these, the first one, with an accentuated short value and a non-accentuated long value, is the most important. It is this rhythmic pattern which gives that well-known rugged rhythm to many Hungarian pieces. Incidentally, it seems to be used also in Scotch folk melodies, although it is less frequently used there than in Hungarian folk music. Several combinations of the above-mentioned three patterns are possible and are in use.¹

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| 1. $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$ | 2. $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$ | 3. $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$ | 4. $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$ |
| 5. $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$ | 6. $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$ | 7. $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$ | 8. $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$ |

And, in addition, the very frequent and very well-known phrase-terminating formula $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$. The combination $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$, however, occurs very rarely in genuine Hungarian folk music; I would call this combination an 'anti-Hungarian' pattern.²

Example 20



This statement, again, does not mean that we never use such a pattern in our original works. (I must lay stress on the fact that these 'dotted' rhythm patterns originate in the metrical peculiarities and the accentuation of the Hungarian language. You must excuse me for the following linguistic digression, but I am compelled to do so in order to explain this extremely characteristic feature of the Hungarian rhythm. —As for the accentuation, this is very simple: each word has its accent on the first vowel. From the metrical point of view, the vowels of our language divide into two groups: short vowels and long vowels. The discrimination in the pronunciation of the two kinds is very marked, very distinct, especially in emphatic speech; the long vowels have approximately double the length of the short ones. Blurred, mute

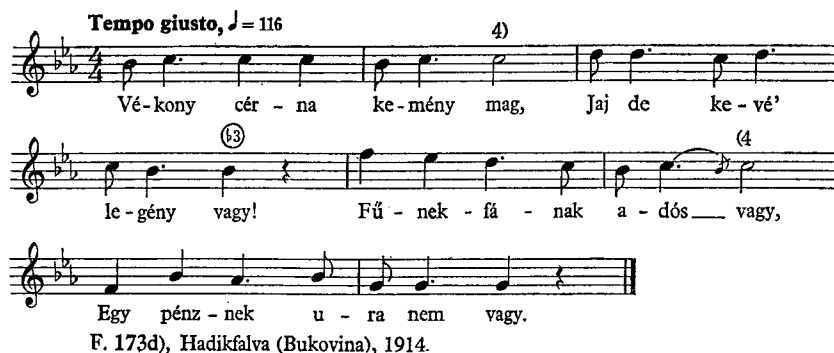
1. [The author indicates that pattern-combinations are to be put on the blackboard. The editor, therefore, has selected from Bartók's *Hungarian Folk Music* (*op. cit.*, p. 29) eight forms, of which Nos. 6–8 are cited by Bartók as occurring with the most frequency.]
2. [A parenthetical note refers to 'one of the Brahms Hungarian Dances'. Although the editor has chosen the first four measures from No. 1 as an example, certain portions of Nos. 5, 8, 15, 16, or 17 would serve equally well.]

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vowels, however, do not exist; this circumstance is an intrinsic difference between the vowel sound system of the English, French, and German languages, and the Hungarian and some other Eastern European languages. The discrimination between short and long vowels is perhaps less perceptible when the words are spoken at normal speed. In slower and more emphatic pronunciation, however, it immediately appears and creates that peculiar 'dotted' rhythm, even in common speech.¹

Example 21

Tempo giusto, ♩ = 116 4)



Vé-kony cér - na ke-mény mag, Jaj de ke - vé

le - gény vagy! Fű - nek - fá - nak a - dós - - vagy,

Egy pénz - nek u - ra nem vagy.

F. 173d), Hadikfalva (Bukovina), 1914.

And the discrimination will be still more perceptible in the highest degree of emphatic pronunciation, that is, when words are sung in a certain, not-too-slow tempo.

So, we had three sources of rhythm to draw from. First, the *parlando-rubato* rhythm; second, the normal rigid rhythm with occasional changes of measure; and third, the 'dotted' rhythm.

Example 22

55 JUDIT *mf*



A - rany-pé - nyz és drá - ga gyé - mánt, Bé - la - gyöng - gyel

fé - nyes ék - szer, Ko-ro-nák és dús - - pa - lás - - tok!

1. [Here Bartók writes the following text-line:

Felhők gyűlnek az égen, [Clouds are gath'ring in the sky,
Nemsokára vihar lesz. Ere long there will be a storm.]

It is not known whether Bartók recited the Hungarian text, notated it (and/or the melody) on the blackboard, or perhaps played a recording of the folk tune. In our example (Bartók's music notation could not be located), No. 320 from the author's *Hungarian Folk Music* (*op. cit.*), it will be observed that the dotted quarters in M. 1, 5 and the quarter note in M. 3 are sung in conjunction with elongated vowels.]

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As for the *parlando-rubato* rhythm, it could mostly be used in vocal-solo works.¹

This kind of musical recitation is in a certain relation to that created by Debussy in his *Pelléas et Mélisande* and in some of his songs which were based on the old French *recitativo*. This recitation is in the sharpest possible contrast to the Schoenbergian treatment of vocal parts in which the most exaggerated jumps, leaps, and restlessness appear.

What mostly interested us in the rigid rhythm kind were the changes of measure. I had fully exploited these possibilities already in my earliest works, and later perhaps even with some exaggeration.²

Example 23

Più tranquillo (♩ = 142)

But composers of other countries also used the same device, though in a different manner. It seems that the trend toward frequent changes of measure is one of the internationally-characteristic features of the twentieth century. Conductors and orchestras of forty and thirty years ago did not very much like the idea. Now, however, they are already accustomed to it, and even such extremely difficult pieces as the last part of *Sacre* do not give them too much trouble. Now, it is just this work by Stravinsky where you find plenty of the most characteristic changes of measure. As

1. [Bartók indicates an example from *Bluebeard's Castle*. The editorial selection (Ex. 22) was extracted from the piano-vocal score of that work (Universal-Edition, 1921).]
2. [Here Bartók asks, 'What examples? I. Suite? II. Suite? Later works? Dance Suite? String Instruments first movement?' We have chosen the Dance Suite for Piano Solo, IV. Movement., M. 13-15. In Bartók's Suite I. for Orchestra (Op. 3, composed in 1905), 3/4 and 2/4 metres alternate during a considerable portion of the last (fifth) movement.]

probably all of you know this work very well, it is obviously superfluous to show you examples from it on the piano. Some characteristic rhythmic patterns appear of the rigid rhythm kind. These patterns are the three combinations of ♪♪♪ , ♪♪♪ , or ♪♪♪ which can be brought into relation with some of the 'dotted' rhythm patterns.¹ Here again, the fourth possibility ♪♪♪♪ is discarded from the genuine Hungarian rural melodies. It is just as 'anti-Hungarian' as the above-mentioned ♪.♪.♪ combination, but it is frequently used in urban melodies. One of these is a very well-known melody which—if I am right—Hubay used in one of his *Scènes de la Csárda*.² The other, more genuine patterns occur in rural melodies and can be discovered even in the *Rákóczi March*.³

Example 24

I invented for one of my early works the following theme:⁴

1. [Bartók lists the following rhythm patterns in the left margin of p. iv: 5 of his lecture notes:
 ♪♪♪♪♪ , ♪♪♪♪♪ , ♪♪♪♪♪ , ♪♪♪♪♪ , ♪♪♪♪♪ | ♪♪♪♪ | ♪♪♪♪ :]
2. [Bartók's parenthetical note here reads 'Hullámsó Balaton' ('The Billowy [Lake] Balaton', one of the pieces from the quoted Hubay violin work).]
3. [This arrangement of the *Rákóczi Induló* (M. 14-24) was edited by Poor Vilmos and published by Rózsavölgyi és Társa (Budapest).]
4. [The example represents M. 3-5 of the first movement ('Kossuth') from Bartók's symphonic poem *Kossuth*.]

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Example 25

Allegro moderato
(Hn. 1, Bsn.)

This rhythmic pattern gives a kind of heroic character to the melodies. Another, 'softer' pattern appears in the following beautifully simple folk melody:¹

Example 26

Tempo giusto, ♩ = 98

Vi - rá-gos ken-dé - rēm Ki - á - zott a tó - ba, —

Ha ha-rag - szol ba - bām, Ne jőjj a — fő - nó - ba.

M.F.1037 d), Gyergyóújfalu (Csik), 1907.

All these described patterns are not exactly Hungarian specialities; they appear as well in Slovakian folk melodies, for instance, in the following Slovak folk melody which became the Czechoslovakian national anthem after 1919.²

Example 27a

Azt mond-ják. nem ad - nak en - gem ga - lam - bom - nak,

Azt mond-ják nem ad - nak en - gem ga - lam - bom - nak.

Ha - nem tán más - nak an - nak. a hat ök - rös.

fe - ke - te gu - bás - nak.

1. [The example, titled *Virágos kendőrem* ('My flowering hemp'), was extracted from Bartók's book *Hungarian Folk Music* (*op. cit.*), ex. 35.]
2. [The first example is the folk song quoted by the author, *Azt mondják: nem adnak* ('They say: they don't give'), as it appears in the collection titled *100 Magyar népdal* (rev. ed., Pest, 1853) by Ignác Bognár. The second example is the same tune, transcribed for piano by the author, as it appears in *Ten Easy Piano Pieces* (No. 8, published by Rozsnyai, Budapest, 1908).]

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Example 27b

Poco andante (♩ = 69)
espress.

But it seems that Hungarian composers were much more impressed by them and used them more frequently than Czech composers.

Our third and perhaps most important rhythmic source is the 'dotted' rhythm. This rhythm, although of vocal origin, can be transferred into purely instrumental music, and it is amply used there by us.¹

Example 28

A softer variety of it is the following rhythm: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ or ♩ ♩ : ♩ ♩ : ♩ ♩ |. I used this rhythm, for instance, in my sixth string quartet.²

1. [Bartók's note reads 'Wooden Prince: "Forest Dance". What else? *Evening in the Country*, 2nd theme.' The editorial selection is the latter work, No. 5 from Ten Easy Piano Pieces (*op. cit.*), M. 13-18.]
2. [In accordance with Bartók's note two examples are given: the first is the second theme from the first movement, the second is from the trio (*Burletta*) of the third movement. (This quartet is published by Boosey & Hawkes Ltd., London, 1941.)]

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Example 29

- *tornando* - - - - - *al* - - -

99 *Vivacissimo, agitato* (♩ = 160)

Example 30

78

Somewhere above I said that 2/4 time is prevalent in the rural rigid rhythm. There are exceptions, however, where 3/4 time occurs. Not that 3/4 time would be used throughout a melody, as you might perhaps think, not this! It is only used alter-

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nately with $2/4$ time. And if you nevertheless find now and then a melody exclusively in $3/4$ time, it will irrefutably be of Western European origin. Instead of that, we may have—though not frequently— $5/8$ time or $7/8$ time in our melody. The difference between them and the regular $2/4$ is not essential; it is rather a derivative difference. In fact, $5/8$ can be explained as a doubling of one of the eighths in a $2/4$

Example 31

Alla bulgarese (vivace $\text{♩} = 46$)

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

pizz.

p

5

arco

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measure, and $7/8$ as a doubling of one of the eighths in a $3/4$ measure.¹ These strange measures attracted me to a high degree, and their influence can be discovered in many places in my original works. As for the strangeness of these measures, it is as nothing, however, in comparison with the rhythm patterns I am going to describe to you in the following. They belong to the group which we call 'Bulgarian' rhythm formations (Ex. 31).²

1. [Bartók indicates $7/8$ as a trebling of one of the eighths in a $4/4$ measure. See, however, his discussion on Bulgarian rhythm in Essay No. 9 (p. 41).]
2. [The lecture ends here. The example, an editorial addition, represents the opening measures of the third movement of Bartók's String Quartet No. 5 (Universal-Edition, 1936).]

Hungarian Music

[1944]

It is almost a truism that contemporary higher art music in Hungary has Eastern European folk music as its basis. However, there is much misunderstanding and misinterpretation with reference to the relation between our higher art music and our rural music. Some people believe the development of the former to be a phenomenon similar to that observed in the output of the 'nationalistic' composers of the past—as for instance, Grieg, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky. They do not realize the essential difference between these movements, the older and the newer.

In the past, those composers who were (consciously or subconsciously) to create nationalistic musical styles, sought inspiration from the rural or semi-rural musical products of their own countries. Occasionally they took parts of these elements—rhythms, motives, certain characteristics of the melodic line, even whole melodies—and embedded them with more or less success into their own personal style. This, of course, gave to a composer's work some rather unique features which sounded exotic to Western European ears. It represented a decided gain in the evolution and colouring of the higher art music, but on the whole it did not affect too much the general characteristics of an individual style, say the Schumannesque features of Grieg or the Brahmsian qualities of Dvořák. Perhaps, among the older groups, it was Tchaikovsky who came nearest to the goal in mirroring the entire musical spirit of his country in his works.

With us modern Hungarians, the case is a different one. We felt the mighty artistic power of the rural music in its most undisturbed forms—a power from which to start, from which to develop a musical style imbued even to the slightest details with the emanations from this virgin source. This was, as I would put it, a totally new musical outlook—or, to use the German technical term; it was a new *Weltanschauung*. Our reverence for the Eastern strictly rural music was, so to speak, a new musico-religious faith. We felt that this rural music, in those pieces which are intact, attained an unsurpassable degree of musical perfection and beauty, to be found nowhere else except in the great works of the classics. Incidentally, our adoration was not limited to rural music alone. It encompassed, as well, rural poetry and rural

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decorative art—or, as I would put it in a single phrase, it extended to rural life as a whole, unspoiled by urban civilization. This extension shows itself, for instance, in our vocal works. In these we have a predilection for folk poems to set to music.

In order to prevent misunderstandings, it must be pointed out that the above-mentioned discrimination between past and present is not a qualitative one. In making this discrimination it is not by any means intended to imply that results of the present procedure in making use of rural musical products are of a greater value than results achieved in the past. The discrimination is made merely to lay stress upon the difference between the outlook upon folk music as shown in the past and in the present.

How did it come about that this new trend made its appearance just in that corner of Eastern Europe which is called Hungary? The first condition of all is that here were composers endowed with more or less creative power. This is a *conditio sine qua non*. If it is missing, then a country may welter in the greatest wealth of rural music and yet no gain from it would be possible for the enrichment of higher art music. In addition to this, Hungary is in an especially fortunate situation with reference to rural music. (Alas! In a very unfortunate one indeed in every other respect.) It is on the crossroads of the most varied styles of folk music.

In Eastern Europe there are several peoples, each comprising about ten million souls, living beside each other in a comparatively small territory. In some places, several different nationalities are mixed up within the boundaries of one small country. The reciprocal influence of their folk music has resulted in an incredible variety of rural musical styles—without, however, destroying the individuality of each people's folk music. We find here the most heterogeneous forms of musical expression existing side by side. There are old pentatonic melodies of Asiatic origin. There are modal melodies, partly transformations of the former. There are primitive-looking, more or less short motives, touching only three or four degrees. There are melodies of rather complicated structure and wide range. Even a very peculiar 'chromatic' two-part style, restricted to a small area of Dalmatia, a unique phenomenon among known folk music documents. Probably nowhere else—excepting perhaps in the still unknown Far Orient—can such a variety of rural musical styles be found compressed into so small an area as in Eastern Europe. And Hungary is (if not geographically, then spiritually) the centre of this area.

There are two of Hungary's contemporary composers who have gained an international reputation—Zoltán Kodály and myself. Although we have a common outlook upon rural music and its part in the development of higher art music, there is a very marked difference in our works. Each of us has developed his own individual style, despite the common sources which were used. And this is very fortunate indeed, because it shows that rural folk music as a source provides various possibilities for

the creation of higher art music and that the use of it as a basis does not necessarily render the results uniform.

It would be going too far to give here a detailed description of the differences between Kodály's works and mine. I will mention only one essential difference—a difference in procedure which may account (at least partly) for the differences in style. Kodály studied, and uses as source, Hungarian rural music almost exclusively, whereas I extended my interest and love also to the folk music of the neighbouring Eastern European peoples and ventured even into Arabic and Turkish territories for research work. In my works, therefore, appear impressions derived from the most varied sources, melted—as I hope—into unity. These various sources, however, have a common denominator, that is, the characteristics common to rural folk music in its purest sense. One of these characteristics is the complete absence of any sentimentality or exaggeration of expression. It is this which gives to rural music a certain simplicity, austerity, sincerity of feeling, even grandeur—qualities in which the works of the lesser composers became more and more deficient during the Romantic period of the nineteenth century. Apart from the great lessons we acquired from the classics, we learned most from those uneducated, illiterate peasants who faithfully kept their great musical inheritance and even created, in a so-to-speak mysterious way, new styles.

The above-mentioned qualities apply to all musical performances of unspoiled rural people, whether vocal or instrumental. Even the greatest performing artists could draw inspiration from them concerning methods of expression as well as technical devices. As the French say, *Les extrêmes se touchent*. The highest degree of perfection is to be found, on the one hand, in the achievement of a great artistic genius, and on the other hand, in the creations of the illiterate peasant, as yet untouched by urban civilization.

But personal contact is necessary for the composer who would profit most from this rich source of inspiration. A published collection of folk music is dead material. Descriptions do little to enliven it. More help is derived from phonograph records. These, however, are seldom available because they are scattered all over the globe, stored away in museums, and most of them now probably shattered to pieces by bombs. What chiefly matters is human relationship with the peasants—staying in the villages, living with them, observing their life, experiencing their art and their music on the spot as they are recreated day by day. This Kodály and I could do. For myself I consider the unforgettable hours spent with those people the happiest ones of my life.

With both of us our works fall into two categories—(1) those in which folk tunes are used altogether or predominantly as thematic material, and (2) those with original themes. In the first category belong, among others, the pieces written with

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pedagogical purposes—my piano pieces *For Children*, my Duos for Two Violins, and most of Kodály's children's choruses, and so forth. The most outstanding works in this classification are *Spinning Room* and *Háry János*. Both by Kodály, and both stage works, they are veritable apotheoses of the Hungarian rural music of all ages, just as Stravinsky's *Sacre du printemps* and *Les Noces* are a glorification of Russian folk music.

In addition to these works, Kodály has many folk tune transcriptions for one voice with piano accompaniment. He composed about one hundred such transcriptions, veritable gems in this field, showing an incredible variety in the handling of the melodies. I have only about thirty pieces of this kind. However, two purely instrumental works of mine—the two rhapsodies for violin and orchestra—also belong to the first category. The part such transcriptions play in the whole output of our works is faintly reminiscent of the part played by the chorale melody transcriptions in J. S. Bach's works.

In the second category—comprising such works as Kodály's famous *Psalmus Hungaricus*, known and played all over the world—our compositions do not use specific folk melodies, yet they nevertheless mirror in their minutest details the spirit of rural music. Sometimes this is achieved by inventing and using themes which imitate certain features of that music. My Dance Suite for Orchestra is an example. The first and fourth dances reflect certain characteristics of Arabic music; the second and third, and the *Ritornelle* are Hungarian in spirit; the fifth has a peculiarly primitive Rumanian quality. The finale is a synthesis of all these characteristics.

Even the most abstract works, as for instance my string quartets, where no such imitations appear, reveal a certain indescribable, unexplainable spirit—a certain *je ne sais pas quoi*—which will give to anyone who listens, and who knows the rural backgrounds, the feeling: 'This could not have been written by any but an Eastern European musician.'