

BÉLA BARTÓK AS PUBLIC FIGURE

TRACING TWO MISSING WRITINGS LINKED TO A LEAGUE OF NATIONS COMMITTEE SESSION IN GENEVA, 1931

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ABSTRACT

The present article basically traces two writings missing from the canon of Bartók's voluminous smaller texts first published and catalogued by András Szöllősy in Hungarian and compiled and edited by Benjamin Suchoff in English. Bartók was invited to join the Committee of Arts and Letters of the League of Nations in 1931 and, as is known from his letter about the meeting, he had to deliver a paper, which has appeared lost so far. This motion urging the establishment of gramophone recording collections and initiating new recordings can be found both published in the minutes of the session and among Bartók's still unpublished papers. The Appendix of the article contains the newly found French and German text versions of his proposal, as well as Bartók's other proposal, trying to find support for the defence of the freedom of art and science, a text he had originally wished to present at the meeting but was discouraged to do so because of its politically delicate nature. The surviving text, previously published in facsimile but not included in the list of Bartók's writings, clearly testifies the composer's sense of responsibility and foresight. Finally, the identification of most of the twenty-seven members of the committee shown in a photograph is also attempted.

Keywords: *Béla Bartók, Thomas Mann, Committee for Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations, Béla Bartók: "Motion regarding Gramophone Recordings", Arturo Toscanini, Béla Bartók: "Proposal for the safeguarding of the Freedom of the Arts and Sciences", politics in Europe in the 1930s.*

At the 1936 Budapest meeting of the Committee for Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations, Thomas Mann addressed his fellow members with an extempore speech in defence of humanism. The journal *Apollo* published the speech in Hungarian translation. According to this publication, Mann said among other things:

Humanism is more than just philology. Especially today, it is advisable and even necessary to define it differently. The best and easiest way to identify it is probably to call it the opposite of fanaticism.¹

Decades later Mann recalled:

In those days I was member of the *Comité Permanent des Lettres et des Arts*, which was appointed by the League of Nations . . . it happened in the Hungarian capital that I held an improvised speech at one of the public sessions to counter the murderers of liberty, and I explained the necessity of a militant democracy; this proclamation almost perceptibly violated the entirely academic and, because of the fascist members, rather disingenuous atmosphere of the discussions, but the Hungarian audience responded with several minutes of demonstrative ovation . . .²

Another member of this committee was Béla Bartók, who joined it at the same time as Mann in 1931.³ More precisely this was a committee devoted to the arts and literature belonging to the Commission of Intellectual Cooperation: *Commission internationale de coopération intellectuelle*, which was originally created as a *sous-commission* in 1922 with members such as Henri Bergson and Albert Einstein. The committee was renamed and significantly reshuffled by 1931. While preparing this reorganization in autumn 1930, Bartók as sole Hungarian representative was also invited to join the committee. The first, informal, invitation was signed by Zoltán Baranyai, diplomat in Geneva responsible for Hungarian affairs, an old acquaintance of Bartók's family.⁴ His first response was positive, yet

¹ *Thomas Mann és Magyarország* [Thomas Mann and Hungary], ed. Antal Mádl and Judit Győri, Gondolat, Budapest, 1980, p. 245. Translations in this article, if not otherwise noted, are mine.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 247-248.

³ For Bartók's international prestige at the time see the general biography by Tibor Tallián, *Béla Bartók: The Man and His Work*, trans. Gyula Gulyás, Corvina, Budapest, 1988, pp. 170-71. Details and documents of his connection to the Committee were published by Miklós Szinai, "Béla Bartók and the Permanent Committee on Literature and Art of the League of Nations," in *Bartók Studies*, ed. Todd Crow, Information Coordinators, Detroit, 1976, pp. 167-172; the article was originally published in *The New Hungarian Quarterly* V, No. 15 (Autumn 1964), pp. 143-146.

⁴ Zoltán Baranyai (1888-1948) was born in Nagyszőlős (now Vynohradiv in Ukraine), where Bartók spent two years as a child (between 1889 and 1891) with his mother and younger sister.

conditional: He initially accepted only “without obligation to work”.⁵ Characteristic of him, however, he not only regularly participated in meetings in the following years but also worked conscientiously on tasks for which he willingly volunteered. A representative photo was taken at one of the first meetings in early July in Geneva (Figure 1).⁶ One print of the picture survives with signatures of the participants on its back (Figure 2) and has been repeatedly reproduced.⁷ Thanks to this precious document and also to further documents and publications from that session to be discussed later (supplemented with the unfathomable potentials of the Google search engine) one could undertake an identification of most of the participants of the committee on the picture. This is what I have attempted in the captions.

First of all, Bartók himself, sitting in the farthest corner from the viewer, is seated near the English scholar Gilbert Murray (to his left) and one of the official directors of the committee, Belgian politician Jules Destrée. On Bartók’s right the Czech writer Karel Čapek can be seen. Next to Čapek Thomas Mann is seated and opposite him on the other side of the table but turning his back towards him because of the photographing, is the poet Paul Valéry. There are many other figures in this assembly who might be familiar, literary scholars, art historians, architects, writers, poets and diplomats mainly from European countries including Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Germany, France, Italy, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden and Switzerland. The hall and the participants of the sessions are vividly described in Bartók’s letter to his mother written a week later:

On Monday the first thing I did was to go to the Hungarian Legation. B[aranyai]. was away on holiday, so I spoke to his chief, the Minister P[ellényi]. . . . Then we went together to the building of the League of Nations where he personally wanted to introduce me to some important people. This took place in one of the Council Chambers where everyone’s place at the big table was already indicated On my right the famous Čapek took his place, on the left, Gilbert Murray, English university professor. What a lot of faces—until I got to know whom they belonged to, I always asked Čapek to tell me who was

⁵ See Szinai, “Bartók and the Permanent Committee”, p. 167.

⁶ The picture has been reproduced in Werner Fuchss, *Béla Bartók und die Schweiz*, Hallwag AG, Bern, 1973, p. 59. See also Ferenc Bónis’s summarizing iconographical book, *Béla Bartók: Pictures of a Life*, Balassi, Budapest, 2016, p. 316. The photo is only available in the form of reproduction photograph in the Bartók Archives; the current location of the actual photo is unknown to me. The reproduction photo was, however, taken from the print once in Bartók’s own possession since the place and date — “Genève, 1931” — appears in his hand and his signature is quite naturally missing.

⁷ This back side of the picture is also reproduced in both Fuchss and Bónis. The identification of the persons present (and their signatures) is highly selective in both publications.

speaking. The translators sat in the middle of the room, and along the 4 walls there were various League of nations officials and other employees, journalists, and later on even some guests. Mr. Murray opened the meeting in English. He had hardly finished speaking, when the interpreter for the English speeches jumped up and virtually raced through an improvised translation. The interpreters amazed me more than anything. They take down the speeches in shorthand, so that they are able to give an immediate translation, almost without stopping for breath. And some, for instance, the German interpreter, spoke and gesticulated with such “deep conviction” that he might have been giving voice to his own most sacred beliefs; sometimes he was so carried away that he did not even look at his notes. This aping of the orators was really comical, especially when in one of his “speeches” he contradicted his “previous speech,” the first having been made by one speaker, and the second, by the opposing speaker.⁸

It has been known that Bartók submitted a motion at one of the sessions of this meeting.⁹ The text was, however, considered missing and even the exact subject matter of this proposal was identified with some uncertainty. In the notes in his monumental edition of Bartók’s writings, András Szöllősy gave the following remark about this piece:

In the minutes there is no trace of Bartók’s motion, regarding gramophone recordings, submitted at the Geneva meeting of the League of Nations between 6 and 9 July 1931. . . ; the minutes only record that “M. Béla Bartok professeur au Conservatoire de Budapest, compositeur et chef d’orchestre (Hongrois)” took part in the session of the Commission permanente des Lettres et des Arts.¹⁰

For the subject matter, Szöllősy’s source was Bartók’s letter, partially quoted above, in which Bartók indeed makes mention of this motion.

I forgot to say that the President gave an account of the dissolved *sous-commission*, the forerunner of the *comité*, and told us what it had

⁸ Bartók to his mother, 13 July 1931, *Béla Bartók Letters*, ed. János Demény, trans. Péter Balabán and István Farkas, Corvina, Budapest, 1971, p. 212.

⁹ To trace this text was prompted by work on a complete online database of Bartók writings, <https://bartok-irasai.zti.hu/> and in English <https://bartok-irasai.zti.hu/en/introduction/>, which I initiated but which was mainly and very effectively created and edited by Viola Biró, my colleague at the Bartók Archives, in 2021.

¹⁰ *Bartók Béla Összegyűjtött Írásai* [Béla Bartók Collected Writings], ed. András Szöllősy, Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1967, p. 925. The motion is not mentioned at all in other listings of Bartók’s writings, see, e.g., the entries for 1931 in the detailed bibliography at the back of *Bartók Essays*, pp. 440-443.

achieved A number of decisions has been reached on the subject of folk art and the question of artistic translations . . . but with regard to music, they had nothing to show for their work; so now they are awaiting from me—as the only musician member—proposals of any kind, only let me propose, and they will accept.

I explained that I could only propose things that would cost a lot of money; they answered that it did not matter. So far so good; so I went ahead and that evening drafted something (about gramophone records), which I read out the next day—in German. Čapek had also had similar ideas, so we discussed them together. A subcommittee was formed, we drafted a resolution, which was of course far different from the original and of no practical use, but it needed no money. I will give you the details when I get home.¹¹

In fact, the whole material of the July 1931 meeting was published in a brochure and a copy of it in French survives in Ditta Pásztor Bartók's estate, now in the Budapest Bartók Archives.¹² Apart from written proposals, this publication also contains detailed minutes of the verbal discussions as well. The title page even shows the list of all twenty-seven members. The text of Bartók's motion is exactly rendered in the form of minutes. (See the complete French text in the Appendix to this article.) It is noteworthy that this time Bartók did not deal with recordings of folk music, which he discussed at many other occasions,¹³ but rather two different topics, the need for gramophone recordings of the most important contemporary compositions and those of masterpieces of music history. His proposal was quite detailed and practical, involving safeguards for objective and impartial selection of works and performers. Thus he suggested that an international board of experts should be formed whose members should be musicologists and music historians rather than performers or composers. The proposal, which could have contributed to the creation of public gramophone record collections, could also have provided music pedagogy with available

¹¹ Bartók to his mother, 13 July 1931, *Bartók Letters*, pp. 213-214.

¹² See the publication with the title page: *Première session du Comité permanent des Lettres et des Arts. Les arts et les lettres à la Société des Nations. Propositions de MM. Paul Valéry et Henry Focillon, Débats et Discussions par Bela Bartok, Karel Capek . . . Supplément au n° 7-8 du Bulletin de la Coopération Intellectuelle. Institut Internationale du Coopération Intellectuel . . .*, Budapest Bartók Archives, BA-N : 2737. It is quite possible that this brochure was also published in German but so far I have not been able to trace it among the apparently enormous number of publications by the League of Nations.

¹³ This was quite understandably supposed by Bartók's son, Béla Bartók, Jr. and stated in his generally very precise documentation, see *Apám életének krónikája* [Chronicle of My Father's Life], Helikon, Budapest, 2006, p. 316, entry for 6 July 1931. See the new English translation: Béla Bartók, Jr., *Chronicles of Béla Bartók's Life*, trans. Márta Rubin, Magyarországtudató Intézet, Budapest, 2021, p. 327.

recordings of the most important works of both music history and contemporary composition. Although, as Bartók himself predicted, the proposal might not have been put into effect, it was clearly seriously treated and pursued in the following years as documents in the League of Nations Archives now available online show.¹⁴

The trustworthiness of the minutes is obliquely corroborated by Bartók's well-known later lecture "Mechanical Music" held on 13 January 1937 and also published as a long article in the literary journal *Szép Szó* [Beautiful Word], edited by the poet Attila József. Although the main tenet of the later and quite substantial article is different, it similarly emphasizes the advantages of modern recording technology. Compare the following two sections. This is what Bartók said according to the French minutes at the beginning of the motion:

Mr. Béla Bartók does not see a danger for the art in the mechanization of music, for which at the present state of affairs it can do more good than evil. . . . it is common knowledge that musical notation only approximatively records the composer's ideas and it is only through mechanical means that his intentions can be made known for posterity with almost perfect precision.

And this is what he wrote in one of the final paragraphs of his later article about the advantages of mechanical recording of music:

It is a well-known fact that our notation records on music paper, more or less inadequately, the idea of the composer; hence the existence of contrivances with which one can record precisely every intention and idea of the composer is indeed of great importance.¹⁵

Also Bartók's detailed critique of the economic policies of gramophone companies in both the 1931 minutes and in his much more detailed later article is formulated along very similar lines.

A more important evidence is, however, the surviving and thus far unpublished German draft of Bartók's speech, which can be found among his papers kept separately in folders with other material related to his participation in the League of Nations committee. The German text (which is

¹⁴ A special research in the vast number of documents emerging from the archives of the League of Nations could follow the complex history of this proposal. Just a perusal of some of the documents shows that the proposal was not ignored and was further developed. See the internet archives and research possibilities in the digitized documents at <https://archives.ungeneva.org/lontad>.

¹⁵ *Bartók Essays*, p. 298.

also printed in the Appendix), is obviously what Bartók read out and what was then translated by an interpreter into French and later included in the minutes of the session.¹⁶ The identification of this previously unknown and certainly interesting text by Bartók and its main surviving sources is hopefully a useful addition to Bartók's portrait as a public figure starting to work in the most prestigious international organization for the good of music and music education. What makes the case even more interesting is, however, that something quite different was also happening behind the scenes, something that should have a significantly greater bearing on our understanding of Bartók's persona and personality.

It is also known but rarely adequately discussed that Bartók in fact arrived at Geneva with a proposal of his own, yet another little known text that has not found its proper way into the canon of Bartók's writings. He originally wished to give a speech or, perhaps rather, circulate a written statement, offering a text for a resolution to accept by the committee about something quite different than recordings. This is how he mentions this other, original, proposal in his letter to his mother:

I spoke to . . . Minister P[ellényi]. (his title is rather that of *chargé d'affaires*). I asked what he thought about the Toscanini application. He would have shaken his head vigorously, had he not been a diplomat, but, as it was, he only advised me politely not to hand it in for the time being and to get to know a little more from the members of the committee first.¹⁷

The subject matter of the "Toscanini application" is well known since the publication of a previously unpublished autograph manuscript by Bartók in *Uj Zenei Szemle* [New Music Review] in 1955.¹⁸ It was subsequently included in editions of Bartók's letters.¹⁹ The Hungarian title of the text was "Határozati javaslat" and is generally known by the English title, "Draft Resolution." It was worded by Bartók on behalf of the Uj Magyar Zene-Egyesület (UMZE, i.e., New Hungarian Music Society), and its main aim was to propose the text for acceptance by the International Society for Contemporary Music of which UMZE was its Hungarian member organisation. Arturo Toscanini was insulted by Italian fascists on 15 May

¹⁶ Since Bartók's draft of this motion is headed with his name "M. Bela Bartok" in an alien hand, it is likely that the edited draft was submitted for copying and then returned to Bartók.

¹⁷ *Bartók Letters*, p. 212.

¹⁸ *Uj Zenei Szemle* VI, No. 9 (September 1955), pp. 5-6. The journal is available online at the website of the Archive and Research Group for 20th and 21st-Century Hungarian Music at the Institute for Musicology: http://db.zti.hu/mza_folyoirat/.

¹⁹ See *Bartók Letters*, pp. 207-208.

1931 because of his refusal to perform the “Giovinezza,” the fascist hymn, at concert.²⁰ Among other things Bartók also wrote in this text:

The U.M.Z.E. [New Hungarian Music Society] views with concern the interference with artistic life by factors outside the arts, factors which do not even respect the worldwide prestige of a Toscanini.²¹

It is not surprising that the same “Draft Resolution” also survives in Bartók’s League of Nations folders, which, in addition, also includes another, somewhat similar text, worded, however, in more general terms and entitled “Vorschlag für die Sicherung der Freiheit der Kunst und der Wissenschaften” [Proposal for the Safeguarding of the Freedom of Art and Science]. This document is, in fact, not completely unknown; it was already published in facsimile in the different language variants of Werner Fuchss’s book on Bartók and Switzerland.²² Despite the relatively early publication of this document, it has generally been ignored as belonging to the series of Bartók’s important short “writings.” So far it was only published as a “text” *per se* in a collection of writings by the composer edited in French.²³

Proposal for the safeguarding of the Freedom of the Arts and Sciences

The *Comité Permanent des Lettres et des Arts* sees with regret that followers of certain one-sided and extremist political movements want to influence artists and scientists in the way they are practicing their art and science using compulsion. If an artist or scientist presents in his work, based on purely artistic conviction, ideas that are alien to them, they strive to ruin him both morally and materially.

Because of this, the *Comité permanent des Lettres et des Arts* considers it to be high time to denounce any mingling of party politics with art wherever it might happen and from whomever it might come. It protests against this all the more since certain signs show that this type of coarsening in the general perception is growing. This can only lead to the ever larger separation of peoples.

²⁰ See József Ujfalussy’s explanation in a footnote in *Bartók-breviárium: Levelek – írások – dokumentumok* [Bartók Reader: Letters, Writings and Documents], ed. József Ujfalussy with Vera Lampert, Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1980, p. 348.

²¹ *Bartók Essays*, p. 498.

²² *Bartók und die Schweiz*, p. 63.

²³ Béla Bartók, *Écrits*, trans. Peter Szendy, ed. Philippe Albèra et Peter Szendy, Éditions Contrechamps, Geneva, 2006, p. 157. Cf. also János Kárpáti’s review, *Studia Musicologica* 48, No. 3-4 (September 2007), pp. 459-465.

In the name of the freedom of art and sciences, the *Cominté permanent des Lettres et des Arts* declares that it stands with its moral weight entirely beside every artist and scientist who becomes subject to such persecution.

The danger of the “separation of peoples” was, of course, not accidentally emphasized in a text intended to be presented before members of the *Commission de la Coopération Intellectuel* of the most international organization of the period. Bartók repeatedly referred to this ideal function of the committee in his letters.

The draft of his new motion regarding the significantly less urgent question of gramophone recordings for the Geneva session was actually started on a sheet, which already had contained two versions of the text of his pre-prepared proposal. It immediately shows the close historic connection between the two very different texts. It also, symbolically, shows the silencing of the more pressing issue. Despite the fact that either of the two different proposed “resolutions” on the freedom of art and science, the one for the International Society of Contemporary Music and the other for the League of Nations committee remained without any resonance at the time, the composer seems to have continued trying to raise awareness of the dangers ahead in the following years, too. At least one further crucial text, another prophetic warning, was published by Tibor Tallián from Bartók’s League of Nations folders, “Staat und Kunst” [State and Art], probably intended for another session of the *Comité Permanent des Lettres et des Arts* in 1934; it may have been a direct reaction to news of the first book burning in Germany in 1933.²⁴ His important article “Folk Song Research and Nationalism” published in Hungarian and in Czech, French and German translation in 1937 and 1938, respectively, also belongs to the series of writings of forewarning.²⁵

In his letter to his mother in 1931, Bartók already mentioned that “Thomas Mann spoke several times, always in German: his speeches were shrewd and very interesting.” In fact, Mann also spoke in a “shrewd and interesting” way in 1936 in Budapest. Still, it seems that of the two it was Bartók who reacted more quickly and more sensitively to the perilous direction in European public and political life. In his modest ways, he made considerable efforts already in 1931 to raise the imminent issue of the problem of defence against “the murderers of liberty.”

²⁴ See Bartók, “Staat und Kunst”, in *Arion 13: Almanach International de Poésie*, ed. György Somlyó, Corvina, Budapest, 1981, pp. 104-106. Cf. Tibor Tallián, “Bartók and Words”, in *ibid.*, pp. 78-83.

²⁵ See *Bartók Essays*, pp. 25-28.



Figure 1. Left wing of the table, from left to right, behind the table: Gonzague de Reynold (Swiss writer, 1880–1940), beside him, only partially seen, perhaps Henri Focillon (French art historian, 1881–1943), Thomas Mann (1875–1955), Karel Čapek (Czech writer, 1890–1938). On the side of the table closer to the viewer, again from left to right: Josef Strzygowski (Polish art historian, 1862–1941), Paul Valéry (1871–1945) and Hélène Vacaresco (Elena Văcărescu, Romanian poetess, 1864–1947). Opposite, along the middle section of the table, behind the table, from left to right: on Bartók’s side Gilbert Murray (Australian-born British classical scholar, 1866–1957), in the middle Jules Destrée (Walloon lawyer and politician, 1863–1936), chair of the session, and, perhaps, Jean-Daniel de Montenach (Swiss diplomat, 1892–1958), who officially corresponded with Bartók in connection with the organization of meetings, and, perhaps, Julien Luchaire (French writer and former director of the League of Nations, 1876–1962). Finally, the right wing of the table, inner side, from left to right: Ragnar Östberg (Swedish architect, 1866–1945), probably Nini Roll-Anker (Norwegian writer, 1873–1942) and, perhaps, Adolfo Costa du Rels (Bolivian writer, 1891–1980). On the outer side of the right wing of the table, from left to right: Georges Opresco (George Oprescu, Romanian art historian, 1881–1969), Roberto Paribeni (Italian archeologist, 1876–1956), Ugo Ojetti (Italian writer, 1871–1946), and, perhaps, John Masefield (English poet, 1878–1967), and further two persons who cannot be seen enough to identify.

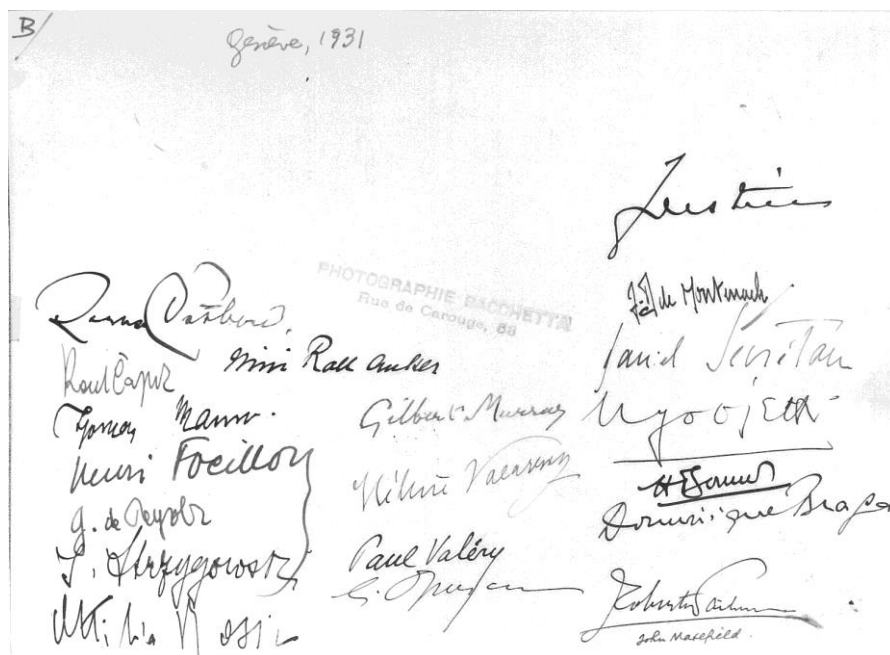


Figure 2. The following names can be identified with certainty: To the left, from top to bottom: Ragnar Östberg, Karel Čapek, Thomas Mann, Henri Focillon, G. de Reynold, J. Strzygowski; the lowest signature unknown. In the middle, from top to bottom: Nini Roll Anker, Gilbert Muray, Hélène Vacaresco, Paul Valéry, G. Oprescu. To the right, from top to bottom: probably Destrées, J. D de Montnach, an unidentified name, Ugo Ojetti, further unidentified name, then, perhaps, Madariaga, and finally Roberto Parinbeni and John Masefield.

Appendix

1. Bartók's Motion regarding Gramophone Recordings as printed in the minutes of the July 1931 session of the *Comité permanent des Arts et des Lettres*

Musique et Film

M. Béla Bartók ne voit pas dans la mécanisation de la musique un danger pour l'art, à qui, en l'état actuel des choses, elle peut faire plus de bien que de mal. Malheureusement les compagnies éditrices de disques qui sont maîtresses de tout ce qui se fait en matière d'enregistrement ne sont guidées que par des motifs d'intérêt commercial, de sorte qu'une bonne partie des ressources que la mécanisation représente pour l'art restent inutilisées. L'on sait que la notation musicale ne fixe qu'approximativement la pensée du compositeur ; ce n'est que par les procédés mécaniques qu'il est possible de faire connaître avec une exactitude presque parfaite ses intentions à la postérité. L'on sait également que les compagnies gramophoniques n'enregistrent que celles des œuvres des grands compositeurs qui leur paraissent pouvoir être écoulées dans le public ; il s'ensuit qu'un grand nombre d'œuvres contemporaines importantes ne sont pas enregistrées et ne le seront pas tant que subsistera certaine atmosphère défavorable à celles-ci. Il y aurait donc le plus grand intérêt à enregistrer dès maintenant des œuvres de maîtres contemporains exécutées par eux-mêmes ou réalisées sous leur surveillance. Il serait presque aussi important de perpétuer les exécutions données par les grands artistes d'œuvres des époques antérieures. Les moyens de le faire existent ; il serait donc impardonnable de n'en pas profiter. A défaut des compagnies éditrices, il faudrait qu'une autorité internationale, comme la Société des Nations, le tentât et c'est pourquoi M. Béla Bartók propose ce qui suit :

La Commission des lettres et des arts devrait examiner la possibilité de constituer une collection de disques et de films sonores qui serait placée sous l'égide de la Société des Nations. Cette collection devrait comprendre :

- 1) Des enregistrements des œuvres les plus importantes de la musique contemporaine effectués sous la surveillance du compositeur.
- 2) Des enregistrements des œuvres les plus importantes des époques antérieures effectués sous la direction de spécialistes d'une compétence reconnue.
- 3) Les enregistrements prévus dans la proposition de M. Capek.

La liste des œuvres à enregistrer devrait être dressée par des spécialistes impartiaux (historiens de la musique, musicologues, à l'exclusion des compositeurs et des exécutants). A cet effet, M. Béla Bartók propose que les quatre pays les plus importants à l'heure actuelle au point de vue musical, à savoir l'Italie, la France, l'Allemagne et l'Angleterre désignent chacun deux spécialistes. Ceux-ci seraient chargés de dresser chacun deux listes. Dans la première, figureraient les œuvres contemporaines de tous les pays considérées par eux comme les plus importantes et dans la deuxième, les

œuvres les plus importantes des temps passés, en remontant jusqu'à l'apparition de la musique, en tant qu'art, en Europe. Ils indiqueraient également sur cette dernière liste les artistes exécutants qu'ils estiment les plus qualifiés pour diriger chacune des œuvres. Ce sont les œuvres apparaissant le plus souvent sur ces huit listes qu'il conviendrait d'enregistrer les premières.

En ce qui concerne l'acquisition des disques, l'on pourrait procéder ainsi qu'il suit :

- 1) On demanderait aux compagnies éditrices de remettre, à titre gratuit, un nombre d'exemplaires suffisant des disques de valeur déjà existants.
- 2) Quant aux œuvres non encore enregistrées, on ferait appel à l'esprit de désintéressement des diverses compagnies pour qu'elles en donnent une édition gramophonique. Ou bien on pourrait essayer de trouver les fonds nécessaires à ce genre d'entreprise afin qu'on puisse faire face aux frais d'enregistrement.

M. Béla Bartók met ensuite en parallèle sa proposition et celle de M. Capek. Après avoir montré que la catégorie indiquée par celui-ci rentre dans les classes qu'il a lui-même établies, il signale le danger d'accueillir comme musique authentique des airs, chansons, etc... composés à l'intention des Européens et répandus sur le continent par des chanteurs ou exécutants arabes, japonais, etc... Il conviendra de faire là œuvre scientifique et de se méfier du pseudo-exotisme.

Enfin, l'on devrait inciter les gouvernements à constituer dans les conservatoires nationaux des discothèques destinées, entre autres, à des buts pédagogiques.

2. Bartók's German draft of his motion read at the Geneva session, Budapest Bartók Archives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Musicology, Research Centre for the Humanities, BA-N: 3874, final form of text without marking of corrections and revisions or early versions

Vorschlag für die Einrichtung
einer internationalen Sammlung von Musikaufnahmen.

In der sog. Mechanisierung der Musik erblicke ich vorderhand keine Gefahr für die Kunst; denn zur Zeit überwiegt der Nutzen, den die Kunst daraus ziehen könnte bei weitem, den Schaden, den sie eventuell hie und da verursacht. Leider sind die Gesellschaften welche die Herstellung mechanischer Music als allgewaltige Herrscher dirigieren, ausschliesslich von gewinnsüchtigen Motiven besessen, so dass einer der Hauptnutzen, die die Kunst aus der mechanischen Reproduktionsmöglichkeiten ziehen könnte, fast vollkommen unausgenützt bleibt. — Es ist bekannt, dass unsere Notenschrift Musikwerke nur unvollkommen,

eigentlich nur approximativ fixiert. Die einzige Möglichkeit Musikwerke fast genau nach den Intentionen des Komponisten für die Nachwelt zu fixieren, ist die Aufnahme desselben durch irgendeine der mechanischen Prozeduren. Nun ist aber bekannt, dass unsere grossen Gramophon-truste hauptsächlich diejenigen Werke der ernsten Musik aufnehmen, welche sie als eine gangbare Ware betrachten. Infolgedessen werden viele bedeutenden Werke der zeitgenössischen Musik überhaupt nicht aufgenommen und haben, solange diese misslichen Verhältnisse unverändert bleiben, nicht die geringste Aussicht, aufgenommen zu werden.

Es hat jedoch eine ungeheure Bedeutung, alle hervorragenden Werke der Gegenwart den Intentionen des Komponisten gemäss zu verewigen, entweder durch seine aktive Teilnahme an der Aufnahme, oder durch Aufnahmen, die unter seiner Kontrolle hergestellt werden. Fast ebensolche Wichtigkeit besitzt die Verewigung der Leistung grosser ausübender Künstler hinsichtlich älterer Musik.

Da wir schon die technischen Mittel hiezu besitzen, so ist es ein unverzeihliches Versäumnis, wenn wir nicht alle Möglichkeiten versuchen, um dieses zu verwirklichen. Da wir von den Gramophongesellschaften dies nicht erhoffen können, müsste eine internationale Autorität es versuchen, dieses, so weit es eben geht, zu ermöglichen. So eine Autorität wäre eben der Völkerbund. Ebendeshalb schlage ich folgendes vor:

Das Comité des L. e[t] des Art sollte in Erwägung ziehen, ob nicht die Aufstellung einer musikhistorische Platten- und Tonfilmsammlung unter dem Ägis des Völkerbundes möglich wäre.

Diese Sammlung sollte bestehen:

1. Aus den authentischen Aufnahmen der bedeutendsten zeitgenössischen Musikwerken, die unter Kontrolle der betreffenden Komponisten aufgenommen worden sind.

2. Aus den Aufnahmen der bedeutenden Werken vorhergehender Perioden, die unter Leitung anerkannter Autoritäten zustande gekommen sind.

3. Aus Aufnahmen, die in Herrn Čapek's Vorschlag beschrieben sind.

Um die Liste der Werke zu erhalten, sollten wir uns an möglichst neutrale Sachverständige (also Musikhistoriker, Musikschriftsteller, und nicht etwa an Komponisten oder ausübende Künstler) wenden. Diesbezüglich schlage ich vor in den 4 grossen Ländern, die zur Zeit für die Musikpflege am wichtigsten sind, Italien, Frankreich, Deutschland und England, je zwei solche Sachverständige auszuwählen. Dieselben sollten ersucht werden 2 Listen anzugeben. Die 1. Liste diejenigen zeitgenössischen Werke aller Länder enthalten, die ihrer Meinung nach am wichtigsten sind um in dieser Sammlung einverleibt zu werden, die 2. Liste die bedeutendsten Werke vorhergehender Perioden, zurückgehend bis zu den Anfängen der europäischen Kunstmusik, zugleich mit Bezeichnung der Ausführenden, die sie für die anerkanntesten auf den einzelnen Gebieten halten. Vorderhand soll sich diese Liste auf Werke beschränken, die sich zur Zeit im Repertoire jener anerkannter Ausübenden Künstler sich befindet.

Die Aufnahme derjenigen Werke, bzw. Ausführenden, die die meisten Stimmen in diesen je 8 Listen erhalten, sollten in erster Linie beschafft werden.

Was nun die Beschaffung der Aufnahmen anbelangt, so könnte Folgendes getan werden:

1. Platten derjenigen Werke, die bereits von Gramophongesellschaften in der gewünschten Weise hergestellt worden sind, sollten als Geschenk von der betreffenden Gram. gesellsch. erbeten werden.

2. Schwieriger ist die Frage, wie man die noch nicht aufgenommenen Werke zur Aufnahme bringen könnte. Eigentlich sind da nur zwei Möglichkeiten: entweder die Gramophon-gesellschaften zu bewegen, allmöglich in altruistischer Weise diese Aufnahmen herzustellen, oder aber: irgendwie Geld dafür beschaffen und die Unkosten der Aufnahmen selber tragen.

— . —

Was nun jene Aufnahmen anbelangt, über die Herr Čapek in seinem Vorschlag spricht, ist die Lage teilweise günstiger, teilweise schwieriger. Günstiger ist sie, weil ja nur bereits vorhandenen Aufnahmen in Betracht kommen; schwieriger ist jedoch die Auswahl des Materials.

Herr Čapek teilt das Material in 3 Abteilungen:

unter a) sagt er: - - -

Diese ist nun ungefähr in den Werken, von welchen mein Vorschlag spricht inbegriffen.

unter b) sagt er - - - - -

Hiezu möchte ich bemerken, dass bei orientalischen Völker diese a) und b) Kategorie eigentlich ein und dasselbe sind.

Unter c) sagt er - - -

Dieses wiederum gehört eigentlich in das Gebiet der Volkskunst, worüber die Commission intern. de Coop. intellect. in früheren Jahren bereits ihre Beschlüsse gefasst hat.

Es bliebe also die Auswahl jener europäischen und orientalischen bzw. exotischen Aufnahmen, die Herr Č. unter b) bezeichnet.

Mit der Auswahl müssten 1–2 Sachverständige (namentlich Musikfolkloristen) betraut werden; ohne sorgsamer Auswahl würde man leicht lauter Zwitterbildungen wie z.B. von Araber, Japaner vorgetragene europäische Gassenhauer bekommen.

Die Gramophongesellschaften müssten ersucht werden, alle Ihre derartigen Aufnahmen mit möglichst genauen wissenschaftlichen Angaben versehen, jene Sachverständigen zur Verfügung zu stellen; das von ihnen ausgewählte Material wiederum der zu errichtenden Sammlung zu schenken.

3. Bartók's Proposal planned to be presented at the Geneva session, according to the text in a final copy

Vorschlag für die Sicherung der Freiheit der Kunst und der Wissenschaften.

Das Comité Permanent des Lettres et des Arts nimmt mit Bedauern wa[h]r, dass Anhänger gewisser einseitigen und outrierten politischen Bewegungen die

Künstler und Wissenschaftler in der Ausübung ihrer Kunst und Wissenschaft gewaltsam beeinflussen wollen. Offenbart ein Künstler oder Wissenschaftler in einem Werk aus reinster künstlerischer Überzeugung Ansichten, die ihnen nicht behagen, so trachten sie denselben moralisch und materiell zu Grunde zu richten.

Infolgedessen findet das Com. perm. des L. et d. A. es zeitgemäss jede grobe und gewaltsame Vermischung der Partei-Politik mit der Kunst zu verurteilen, woimmer sie auch stattfinden und von wemimmer sie auch kommen mag. Es protestiert dagegen umsomehr, als gewisse Zeichen dafür sprechen, dass eine derartige Vergröberung der Allgemeingesinnung im Zunehmen begriffen sind. Dies führt indessen zur immer grösseren Separierung der Völker.

Das Com. p. d. L. et d. A. erklärt im Namen der Freiheit der Kunst und der Wissenschaften, einem jeden Künstler und Wissenschaftler, der solchen Verfolgungen ausgesetzt ist, in vollständigster Weise moralisch beizusteh[e]n.

Béla Bartók

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