Concerning the country’s musicology, the forty-year period of Hungarian state socialism can be justifiably described as an era of institutionalization. Without underestimating the scholarly and intellectual relevance of the pre-war musicological research, it remains doubtless that a long-standing academic infrastructure of the discipline had not been established before 1951. Significantly, the actual foundation of different musicological institutions can be attributed to sub-periods which are widely regarded as the years of tightening the political system. This connection seems by no means self-evident. In this article, I am also raising questions pertinent to the changing conceptualization of “national music history” in state socialist Hungary. I will argue that the political power’s increasing apprehensions about nationalism were accompanied by its acceptance of a greater thematic and methodological diversity in the field of musicology.

The transitory epoch between the end of the War and the open communist takeover of 1948 witnessed competing and also unfulfilled institutional initiatives articulated by such well-established scholars of the field as Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967), László Lajtha (1892–1963), Bence Szabolcsi (1899–1973), and Dénes Bartha (1908–1993). After the emigration of composer, pianist, and conductor Ernő Dohnányi (November 1944), and death of Béla Bartók in the United States (September 1945), the composer, educator, and musicologist Zoltán Kodály turned into a number-one authority of Hungarian musical life. The grand old man of Hungarian folk music research enjoyed significant prestige even outside of musical life, well indicated by the fact that he was not only the President of both the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Hungarian Council of Arts, but also a member of the National Assembly.¹ Composer and scholar of folk music László Lajtha was among the founders of the London International Folk Music Council in 1947, at the same time he was heading the music and dance division of the International Folk Art Commission (Commission Internationale des Arts [et Traditions] Populaire also known as CIAP). Between 1945 and 1948,

he had such significant positions in Hungary's musical life as director of the National Conservatory [Nemzeti Zenede], music director of the Hungarian Radio, and head of the folk music division of the National Museum, later in the Ethnographic Museum.\(^2\) Bence Szabolcsi studied composition with Zoltán Kodály at the Liszt Academy of Music (Budapest),\(^3\) and he received his doctorate in musicology from the University of Leipzig in 1923. Although many of his fundamental works on the history of Hungarian music were written during the interwar years, Szabolcsi had not been able to embark on a standard academic career until the end of World War II because of the increasingly militant and official anti-Semitism prevailing in the country, especially from 1938. The years between 1945 and 1949 brought to him recognition: he was appointed professor at the Liszt Academy of Music in 1945 and elected a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Science since 1948.\(^4\) Dénes Bartha got his doctorate in musicology in 1930 in Berlin. He was the artistic director of the Capital City Symphonic Orchestra between 1947 and 1949 and one of the editors of the Zenei Szemle [Musical Review], the single most important journal of the country’s musical life. The unique thing with Bartha is that of the four most prominent personalities of the musicological profession he was the only member of the communist party, who also actively participated in the work of the party’s Music Committee.\(^5\)

From the point of view of Marxist-Leninist class struggle, all of them were “enemies” on the front of culture. This might appear to be surprising in the case of Bartha. He was attacked primarily because of his family background (he had relatives in high positions of the interwar Horthy regime). He may have wanted to compensate for this by joining the party after the war. By 1949–50, he had been regarded to be a

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\(^3\) The institution, which was founded in 1875, has been being renamed repeatedly under the changing administrations of Hungarian higher education. Its current, official Hungarian name is Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem, whose literal translation is Ferenc Liszt University of Music. In international communication, however, the institution maintains the usage of the Liszt Academy of Music formula.

\(^4\) For Szabolcsi’s most detailed biography, see György Kroó, Szabolcsi Bence (Budapest: Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Főiskola, 1994).

“rightist” personality by the communist cultural-political administration.⁶ Bence Szabolcsi, as a historian of music, was inspired by Wilhelm Dilthey’s *Geistesgeschichte* (intellectual history) which earned him a dubious reputation in communist political circles after 1948.⁷ Szabolcsi also acted as an apostle of Kodály’s practice of and ideology on folklore-based art music.⁸ In spite of that, Szabolcsi publicly rejected the Soviet communist party’s 1948 resolution on music,⁹ and he failed to exploit the obvious overlaps between the aesthetics of Kodály and that of the Zhdanovshchina: namely, their shared preferences for the folkloristic national classicism, for the vocal genres, and for the artistic role of being an “educator of the people”.¹⁰ The communist cultural apparatus was also provoked by Szabolcsi’s protest against the critique of formalism, against the demand of “public accessibility” of art, and against the isolation from the West urged by the resolution.¹¹ A report, which was made for the Cultural Policies Department of the communist party in 1949, described Zoltán Kodály as follows: “His weakness lies in not recognising the great intensity of class struggle in Hungarian society and in not acknowledging the decisiveness of class conflict. What Kodály does is not opposing bourgeois society but, rather, expanding it in order to create the idyllic perspective of a [possible] bourgeois development for the

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⁸ As an early example of his views, see Bence Szabolcsi, “Kodály és Európa,” [Kodály and Europe, 1925] in *Szabolcsi Bence válogatott írásai* [Selected Writings of Bence Szabolcsi], ed. András Wilhelm (Budapest: Typotex, 2003), 50–53.


Hungarian peasantry.” The fact that László Lajtha followed French ideals when it comes to style of composition and that he and his family spent a year in London in 1947–48 made him suspiciously “pro-Western” in the eyes of the emerging new cultural political regime. His reputation in official eyes was further undermined by his going public with expressing his solidarity with the Catholic Church, an early target of communist repression, even though he himself was a Protestant from a Jewish family background.

The class-struggle perspective asserting itself in the country’s cultural management (including the management of musical life) affected our scholars in different manners and to different extents. Dénes Bartha was eventually excluded from the party. Kodály lost all his prominent positions. A concert guide, edited and partly written by Bence Szabolcsi in 1949, was confiscated and pulped. Finally, László Lajtha had been without a job and income by 1950.

The Ministry of Culture had plans to launch a division of musicology at the Liszt Academy of Music. Its task would have been to promote the spread of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics and to fight against “the remnants of reactionary pedagogies”, thus providing artistic practices with politically correct spiritual content. János Maróthy (1925–2001), then a 25-year old scholar of aesthetics and a committed supporter of the developing state socialist system, was thought of as a possible leader. As early as in 1950, however, the communists’ transformative drive started losing momentum. It seems the communist regime was simply not in a position to fully enforce the “Sovietization” of the field of

17 Breuer, Fejezetek Lajtha Lászlóról, 190.
18 The minutes of the meetings of the Collegium of the Ministry, 7 February, and 5 September 1950. National Archives of Hungary, Records of the Ministry of Culture (MNL OL, XIX-I-3-n/1 and 2).
musicology. They were lacking both ideas to inform the agenda of transformation and the cadres necessary for carrying out such a transformation. Communist cultural policy makers had to realise that, under the given circumstances, it was impossible to marginalise such towering personalities of the field as Szabolcsi and Kodály. The high status and prestige they enjoyed in the country’s musical community would not allow it. Their informal reputation and power was further enhanced by their central positions in the informal networks, often patron-client relations, of Hungarian musical life. Starting in 1907 several generations of composers and musicians were brought up by Kodály at the Liszt Academy of Music. Szabolcsi’s so-called Bartók-seminar was a point of reference for many young composers, music teachers, and other intellectuals during the post-war years. It was feared, therefore, that these two distinguished personalities would be able to exert more influence even upon communist musicians than the Party itself.

Following the old political recipe “If you cannot beat them, befriend them!,” in 1951 the political leaders of cultural life resorted to new tactics: their aim now was to win Szabolcsi and Kodály over by making a common cause with them. They looked upon the latter more and more as fellow travellers rather than enemies. In 1951, Szabolcsi took the position of president of the Association of Hungarian Musicians, a new Soviet-type organization established in 1949. Kodály remained the honorary president of the same organization. As president of the Musicians’ Association, Szabolcsi could not prevent that his writings were read with reference to the contemporary political context. Indeed, both Kodály and Szabolcsi had by then for a long time preached for the unity of Hungarian composition based on a common goal and on the folkloristic and national traditions. Their informal networking power over the country’s musical community as well as their vision of a “Hungarian School of Composition” made their elevation into top position appear as a plausible and effective way towards the centralization of the country’s musical life in the hands of the communist cultural political management. It is important to see that the emerging cooperation-oriented relationship

23 Anna Dalos, “It is not a Kodály School, but it is Hungarian,” Hungarian Quarterly 48/186 (2007): 146–159.
between these top personalities of Hungarian musicology and the communist cultural-political management was built upon an emphasis on overlapping components of their respective aesthetic and intellectual agendas. Similarly, differences of views tended to be oppressed and kept beneath the surface.\textsuperscript{24}

It seems a particular kind of deal had been struck between Kodály and Szabolcsi on the one hand and the communist leaders of the country’s cultural life on the other. In exchange for their active presence in public (cultural) life, which legitimized the Stalinist cultural-political regime in Hungary, these two leading professionals of musical life received the licence to be leaders of and dispose of the infrastructure in a field that was regarded to be of relatively little consequence and significance, namely the field of musicology. In the environment of an academia reorganized in Soviet fashion, the foundation of the Committee of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was an act of recognition of musicology as a field of knowledge and as a field of scholarly research.\textsuperscript{25} The first and only institutional representation of the discipline in Hungarian higher education, the Department of Musicology was also founded in 1951 at the Liszt Academy of Music. In 1953 the Hungarian Academy of Sciences set up the Folk Music Research Group.

In these emerging new institutions Szabolcsi and Kodály did not only assume leadership but also gain a relatively autonomous space for their professional and organizational activities. The Folk Music Research Group secured for Kodály officially sanctioned institutional frameworks to take care of a group of scholars that had been active for years but worked, from the point of view of the prevalent labour legislation, like outlaws. The focus of their work, just like in previous years, had been editing a complete critical edition, the Collection of Hungarian Folk Music.\textsuperscript{26}


\textsuperscript{25} “Az MTA Zenetudományi Szakbizottsága alakuló ülésének jegyzőkönyve,” [The minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Committee of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences] 4 May 1951. Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Bequest of Bence Szabolcsi (MTA KKT: Ms 5637).

Zoltán Kodály integrated his research on folk music into a broader construction of national music history. During the interwar period, he defined the actual subject of the history of Hungarian music in collaboration with Bence Szabolcsi. According to Kodály and Szabolcsi, the main topics of Hungarian music history were vocal music with Hungarian words on the one hand, and the instrumental music of Hungarian composers inasmuch as it showed national specificities, on the other. Kodály and Szabolcsi regarded folk music that is an orally transmitted musical tradition maintained by the peasantry as an organic part of the historical process.\textsuperscript{27} They supposed that folk music, which had been properly collected, recorded, systematized and researched since the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, incorporated historical phenomena from which Hungarian musical cultural practices of the earlier centuries can be reconstructed. As Kodály put it, with a certain amount of pathos, in 1925: “The more valuable part of the Hungarian ‘Monumenta Musicae’ does not appear from the dust of archives, but from a living source, the memory of the people. We do not know yet, how far this memory extends to. But it is certain that it does much farther than the 16\textsuperscript{th} century. \textit{This} is the Hungarian music history, one only has to learn to read it.”\textsuperscript{28} During their search for the specifically Hungarian music, Kodály and Szabolcsi also took into account the local popular idiom of the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and the 19\textsuperscript{th} century which had been regarded as the \textit{style hongrois}, by European middle classes.

The two scholars, however, identified differences of degree between the phenomena they regarded as Hungarian – they distinguished between “the more” and “the less Hungarian”\textsuperscript{29}. As is well known, the tribes who spoke one of the Finno-Ugric languages, namely Hungarian, appeared in the Carpathian basin with a late wave of the Migration Period, in the 9\textsuperscript{th} century – the process is referred as conquest in Hungarian historiography.\textsuperscript{30} Kodály assumed that the song repertory of the Hungarian peasantry preserved melodies whose origins can be traced back to the oldest times of the pre-conquest period, and which, therefore, represents the state of affairs of the Hungarian musical culture before its interactions with Western culture. As a broad framework of his project of systematization, Béla Bartók distinguished an old, and a new style of

Hungarian folk music.³¹ Kodály assumed, that one of the old-style melodic types, namely, the pentatonic, descending, fifth-shifting formula is the most archaic historical layer of Hungarian folk music.³² Kodály regarded these songs as the purest manifestations of “musical Hungarianness”, or, to quote his openly ideological formulation of 1939, the unchanged fundament of Hungarian soul.³³ Kodály wished to verify his premise with linking the scientific results of ethnogenesis, historical linguistics and folk music research. He hoped that the examination of the folk music of Mari people of the Volga region would lead to the discovery of parallels with some elements of the Hungarian musical tradition, and, consequently, would confirm the Finno-Ugric origins of the latter.³⁴

The Zhdanovian doctrine privileged musical composition based on folkloristic and national traditions, which, in turn, propelled research into national and ethnic specificities during the period of 1948--1956. Though heated debates took place over the question of whether the old or the new style of folk songs, or the 19-century national popular style was the most compatible with socialist realist art, the acknowledgement of the unity of the folk-national tradition provided the debating partners with a common ground.³⁵ It was even possible, that in 1950, in a meeting of the Hungarian Musicians’ Association, which was held to evaluate the new Hungarian mass songs propagating communist agendas, the composer and folk music researcher Pál Járdányi (1920–1966), a former student of Kodály, evaluated the works according to their degree of musical “Hungarianness”. Discussing a piece by István Sárközi, entitled Song of Peace (Dal a békéről), Járdányi argued as follows: „This is a healthy melody and more or less Hungarian, but it is also a remarkable example of something that is not felt pentatonic, although its first half is actually purely pentatonic.”³⁶

³² Kodály, “Magyarság a zenében,” 243 – 244.
³³ Kodály, “Mi a magyar a zenében?,” 76.
The Committee of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, under the presidency of Kodály and with Szabolcsi as its secretary, had the mandates of a consultative body but it could not provide permanent positions for scholars. On the other hand, it disposed of a certain annual budget on the basis of which it could decide about the publication of books and/or lent ad hoc support to research projects. Old time „bourgeois” or even „religious-reactionary” (and, therefore, politically highly exposed) representatives of the musicological profession were quite strongly represented in the Committee’s activities.³⁷ Besides Dénes Bartha and László Lajtha, we should mention here Benjamin Rajeczky (1901–1989), who had been the Prior of the Cistercian Order until it was, together with other religious orders, liquidated. The presence of Rajeczky deserves attention not only because his view upon the world was so different from the Communist ideology but also because his scholarship kept a significant distance to Kodály’s paradigm too. He studied theology and history of music in Innsbruck in the 1920s, and was a visiting student of Kodály’s courses in Budapest, in the 1930s. His research focused primarily upon the plainchant and its traditions in Hungary, on the culture of early polyphony in Hungary, and on folk music. These three major avenues of enquiry resulted in the complex study of musical culture in medieval Hungary, consistently seen and shown within its European context.³⁸

One of the important preconditions of asserting professional autonomy had been the emergence of an informal regime of hierarchical patron-client relations. Instead of leaving them to his ministerial apparatus, József Révai, the nr. 1 cultural-political authority of the Stalinist regime, had a direct, personal relationship to the privileged representatives of musicology: Szabolcsi and Kodály. Révai was the patron, he represented the top of the three-level hierarchy: if the need arose, he protected Szabolcsi and Kodály when facing recurring urges in his apparatus to replace cultural elites. While Szabolcsi and Kodály were clients of Révai, they also acted as patrons in relation to their musicologist

³⁷ “Az MTA Zenetudományi Szakbizottsága alakuló ülésének jegyzőkönyve,” [The minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Committee of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences] 4 May 1951. Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Bequest of Bence Szabolcsi (MTA KKT, Ms 5637).
colleagues regarded as „reactionaries” by the commissars of the cultural sphere. The former were no doubt dependent upon the protection, the work opportunities, and the publicity secured for them by Szabolcsi and Kodály.  

Nevertheless, László Lajtha, whose existential situation had been rapidly approaching disaster by 1950, was saved by another patron: the young musicologist József Ujfalussy (1920 –2010), chief of the Division of Music in the Ministry of Culture. In 1951, Lajtha received a high decoration of the People’s Republic (1. osztályú Kossuth-díj) for his work as a student of folk music. The decoration brought with it a prize of a considerable sum, and Lajtha also received the support from the Ministry to establish what in actual fact amounted to a private research group. Even though the academic prestige and economic support enjoyed by this latter was much more modest than that of Kodály’s research group, it still secured for Lajtha complete independence in terms of personal and research strategic decisions. Lajtha tended to devote much greater attention to instrumental folk music and folk dance music as well as to church-related folk songs than Kodály who concentrated upon folk songs.

The scientific infrastructure as it had developed by 1953, was still incomplete – there was no institution to cater to the needs of research in the history, theory, sociology, and aesthetics of music. The task, due to the nature of state-socialist higher education, could not be undertaken by the department of musicology at the Liszt Academy. Even though there was talk about establishing an Institute of Musicology under the leadership of Szabolcsi as early as in 1951, the launching of Kodály’s research group enjoyed priority. Furthermore, as part of the political changes following upon Stalin’s death, Révai was removed from the Political Bureau of the communist party and from his position as the Minister of Culture. Bence Szabolcsi could no longer hope for Révai’s support as an effective patron. As years passed by, the urgency of the issue only grew if not for other reason than for the fact of inaccessibility of an academic career for young professionals graduating in musicology.

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39 For documents of the interpersonal relations, see József Révai’s letter to Bence Szabolcsi, 10 July 1952.; and musicologist Antal Molnár’s letter to Bence Szabolcsi, 4 August 1960. Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Bequest of Bence Szabolcsi (MTA KKT: Ms. 5641/137, and Ms. 5640/372).
from the Academy of Music. Kodály led the Folk Music Research Group until his death in 1967. Under his leadership, the Group employed 25 scholars for longer or shorter periods. Only three of them attended musicological education.\(^{42}\)

This makes it understandable why Bence Szabolcsi and other historians of music had grown by the end of the 1950s impatient and no longer avoided open conflict with Kodály who earlier was considered to stand above all critique. In 1959 the work of the Folk Music Research Group was assessed at the Academy of Sciences. In the process, serious doubts were articulated whether, focusing on the “collection” and “systematization” of folk music, the Group was in a position to generate scholarly results that were relevant and were talking to such related fields as history, ethnography, and musicology.\(^{43}\) As an answer to this criticism, Benjamin Rajeczky was appointed deputy director of the Folk Music Research Group by Kodály, who was emphatically advised by Szabolcsi and other scholars to do so.\(^{44}\)

Concurrently with the criticism from professional corners, Kodály’s Group was also exposed to attacks of a political nature. After the repression of the anti-Stalinist revolution of 1956 whose representatives often applied the rhetoric of national independence, the re-established state socialist cultural administration turned more cautious about references to ‘national’ values and traditions. The so-called ‘revolutionary’ or ‘progressive’ nationalism encouraged by high Stalinism was no longer in demand as was clearly shown in the 1959 theses of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party titled “On bourgeois nationalism and socialist patriotism”. Around 1960, on a number of occasions, the Folk Music Research Group became the target of the new cultural-political management for its ‘reactionary nationalism’.\(^ {45}\) At the same time, Kodály’s personal reputation in official circles was also undermined by the fact that significant groups active in the revolutionary events of late 1956 wished him to become the head of state, even though Kodály himself did not participate in the revolution.\(^ {46}\)

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\(^{42}\) Cf. Olga Szalay, *Kodály, a népzenekutató és tudományos műhelye* [Kodály, the researcher of folk music, and his scholarly workshop] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2004), 304–305.

\(^{43}\) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee of Musicology, 15 April 1959. Archives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Records of the Section of Linguistics and Literary Scholarship (MTA KLT: I. osztály iratai V/23).

\(^{44}\) The minutes of the meeting of the leadership of the Section of Linguistics and Literary Scholarship, 14 December 1959. Archives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Records of the Section of Linguistics and Literary Scholarship (MTA KLT: I. osztály iratai 1/4).


In 1962, an article was published under the title of “The nationalism and the Hungarian music history”, in the journal of the Hungarian Musicians’ Association. Its author, János Maróthy intended to apply the nationalism theses to the field of music. Maróthy was a controversial figure of Hungarian musicology. He had been, on the one hand, a young pioneer of the communist takeover of the music field in 1949 and stayed an important adviser to the cultural political administration on musical and musicological matters throughout the ongoing decades. Therefore he exerted great influence upon the destiny of musicological institutions, projects and researchers. However, in the post-1956 era he assumed a “new leftist” position, from where even the pragmatism of the post-Stalinist cultural policies was exposed to critique. But, unlike some other Marxist intellectuals, Maróthy never transgressed the limits of politically accepted public discourse. Consequently, he was able to secure his privileged position in the state socialist academic establishment. It should also be noted that Maróthy, a former pupil of philosopher György Lukács, was not a simpleton Marxist-Leninist, but a scholar of critical and reflective mind and suggestive argument.

His essay on nationalism discussed the phenomenon in the fields of musical composition as well as musicology. A remarkable feature of his argument is that he depicted the Stalinist era as a period of the historical development of Hungarian musical nationalism. He distinguished three epochs of the story: those were the Romantic nationalism of the 19th century; the folksy nationalism of the first half of the 20th century; and the “decadent” nationalism which appeared after 1948. He examined the “nationalistic tendencies” characterizing musicological research in detail, advancing credible argument against the essentialism of the view that underlied the search for ethno-national specificities. He emphasized that the musical cultural phenomena of historical Hungary, a multi-ethnic country in the middle of Europe with a complex and changing social hierarchy, cannot be understood in terms of such simplifying dichotomies as ‘West or East’, ‘Master or Peasant’, ‘Hungarian or Foreign’. Maróthy underlined the importance of the research on the musical life of 18--19-century towns, and their urban middle classes. As to the problems of the prehistory of Hungarian music, Maróthy questioned the concept which developed from seeking parallels with the music of peoples who speak cognate languages of Hungarian. Referring to recent musicological studies by Benjamin Rajeczky and Lajos Vargyas (1914--

2007), Maróthy turned the attention of his readers to Western- and South-European connections of Hungarian folk music. He also urged a comparative study of Hungarian folk music, with the music of the neighbouring Slavonic and Romanian peoples, emphasising Béla Bartók’s legacy in this respect.\(^{50}\) In the three-member editorial board of the journal publishing Maróthy’s article, Bence Szabolcsi had a chair, too. The fact that he gave his name to the publication of this text seems to suggest that his academic alliance with Kodály at least weakened by the beginning of the 1960s.

The shift in politics also favoured some other projects in musicology emphatic about the embeddedness of Hungarian history and culture in the European or, even, Western European tradition and context. In 1960, János Maróthy and Bence Szabolcsi elaborated a midterm plan of musicological research, in which they proposed the commencement of comparative research of European folklore, “the exploration of the sources of the works of foreign 18th-century composers in Hungary”, the “examination of the international aspects of the musical sources of Hungary”, and the continuation of the research on Haydn.\(^{51}\)

Hungarian scholarship on Joseph Haydn had its beginnings in the second half of the 1950s. As is well known, Haydn served one of the richest Hungarian aristocratic families, the Esterházys for three decades. In the wake of World War II, a considerable part of the private collection of the Esterházys, including numerous manuscripts and other documents from Haydn, got into the possession of Hungarian public repositories. Following some pioneering projects by librarians and archivists, this extremely rich documentation began to be processed on behalf of the musicological profession by Dénes Bartha and his young disciple László Somfai. Already in September 1959, Hungarian Haydn scholarship got a splendid opportunity to present its results internationally: at the international Haydn conference in Budapest. The week-long event, attended by some of the greatest international names of the profession, provided forum for scholars coming from socialist as well as capitalist countries.\(^{52}\) It signalled unequivocally the changing priorities of the state-socialist regime post-1956.

\(^{50}\) Maróthy, “A nacionalizmus és a magyar zenetörénet,” 31.

\(^{51}\) 5-year plan for research advancement by János Maróthy and Bence Szabolcsi, 25 May 1960. Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Bequest of Bence Szabolcsi (MTA KKT: Ms 5637/123.)

In its early years, János Kádár’s regime badly needed all kinds of international recognition. Not only because Hungarian diplomacy was determined to follow the Khrushchevian initiative of peaceful coexistence, but also and even more because of the country’s international isolation resulting from the crushed revolution and the brutal and bloody terror following thereafter. Indeed, Hungary’s mandate in the United Nations, suspended in 1957, had not been restored until the beginning of 1963.

It has been the achievement of Bence Szabolcsi that the issue got revitalized thanks to the settlement achieved in 1958 concerning the bequest of Béla Bartók. According to the settlement arrived at between the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Béla Bartók, Junior, Bartók’s papers in Hungary got permanently deposited with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The arrangement wouldn’t necessarily bring with it any immediate impact upon Hungarian musicological scholarship. Indeed, the bequest got stored, to being with, in a room belonging to the Folk Music Research Group, out of everybody’s way, and it could have remained there lying idle for a very long time. The Estate of Béla Bartók in New York, however, was very active at the time. Skillfully using the Krushchevian discourse of “dognaty i peregnaty” („catch up with and outrun” the West), Bence Szabolcsi, the leading protagonist of an expansion of the infrastructure of musicological research, managed effectively to argue for the establishment of a Bartók Archives in Budapest.\(^{53}\) Eventually, the Archives was launched in September 1961 with Szabolcsi as its Director. Szabolcsi then saw to it that the Bartók Archives gradually metamorphosed into a veritable, many-sided centre for musicological research. This was officially registered and recognized eventually in 1969 when the Archives became the Institute of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Following the death of Zoltán Kodály in 1967, Benjamin Rajeczky succeeded him as director of the Folk Music Research Group. His appointment approved by the leadership of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and it was also supported by the cultural political administration, in spite of Rajeczky’s ‘clerical’ background.\(^{54}\) Within the Folk Music Group, however, there was a growing resistance to him and to his younger disciples, László Dobszay and Janka Szendrei, and also to their shared interest in plainchant, and in their specific scholarly

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\(^{53}\) Letter from László Szcsősdi to Bence Szabolcsi, 25 July 1960. Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Bequest of Bence Szabolcsi (MTA KKT: Ms 5638/185).

approach to the folk music. In 1969, some members of their ‘opposition’ requested the intervention of the Scientific, Cultural and Educational Department of the Central Committee of the communist party in order to force Rajeczky to retire.55 This initiative resulted in a thorough investigation of the Folk Music Research Group.56 One of the minor findings seems to be telling in terms of the attitudes of those in conflict with Rajeczky. In informal talks, they labelled themselves as “kuruc”, and named the circle of Rajeczky “labanc”.57 These terms referred, respectively, to the anti-Habsburg insurrectionists, and the pro-Habsburg forces of Hungary in the 17th and 18th century. The symbolic usage of these terms in the given context expressed the feeling that the research undertaken by Rajeczky touched a sensitive point of national identity building. In some of his publications of the 1960s he presented his discoveries of the similarities between the oldest historical layers of the Hungarian folk song repertoire and some melodic ideas of the early-middle-ages Mediterranean region and Western Europe.58 Regardless of the matters of origins and genealogy, these similarities in themselves questioned the existence of a specific difference which would have sharply distinguished the Hungarian tradition from the monophonic musical culture of Europe. Furthermore, Rajeczky’s writings gradually redefined the subject of Hungarian music history. For him, the “Hungrianness” of a musical phenomenon was not a specific essence or quality – he regarded it as a historically changing context of cultural products of various origins and spread. A context, which is never exclusive but possesses the strength of shaping.

To sum up and conclude: In interwar Hungary, both politicians and the elite of human sciences were hesitant to accept the scholarly study of music as a dignified academic enterprise. After the communist takeover of 1948–49, the Soviet model asserted itself which brought with it that, similarly to the Soviet academic regime, musicology became a recognized academic discipline. We have also seen that various

representatives of Hungarian musicology could successfully exploit, to the benefit of their own scholarly endeavours, changes arising in the political-ideological preferences of the state-socialist cultural order. While the Hungarian reception of Zhdanovschina skilfully promoted the institutionalization of the study of folk music and research in the „national musical traditions”, by around 1960, Krushchev’s „New Course” and modernization drive created an opportunity to promote the cultivation of general musicological themes, the emergence and consolidation of Bartók- and Haydn-scholarship, and the development of a broader understanding of historical Hungary’s musical culture set in its regional and European contexts. It was, however, a rather unfortunate circumstance that some significant questions of historiography were discussed in the shadow of the anti-nationalist campaign of the political power. Relevant, and academically articulated critical arguments against the essentialist view of the history of Hungarian music were easily (even if silently) dismissed as political attacks by those whose ideas were criticised. Ironically, the “victimization” suffered even led some to seek the assistance of the same political power in order to “resolve” what actually was a genuine scholarly conflict.
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<td>Name</td>
<td>Periods/Institutions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **RAJECZYK, Benjamin** (1901–1989).  
| **SOMFAI, László** (1934).  
| **SZABOLCSI, Bence** (1899–1973).  
| **UJFALUSSY, József** (1920–2010).  