Transformations of Folklorism in 20th-century Slovak Composition

Branko Ladič
Department of Musicology, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University
Jahodová 19, SK-831 01 Bratislava, Slovakia
E-mail: branko.ladic@gmail.com

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Abstract: Folkloristic musical works played an essential role in the creation of a 'Slovak idiom' in classical music of the post-war period. From the simple arrangement of folk songs to a more autonomous art music (which may have been only partly influenced by folk traditions) there existed a broad spectrum of musical practices, including also film music and music for the professional 'folk music ensembles' that appeared after 1948. By referring to specific examples from this large body of music, I will show how composers worked with harmonic and poetic elements that were particular to folk music: my discussion of examples from the breadth of this music – including music for the film *Zem spieva* ([The land sings], music by F. Škvor), the 'model' compositions for the ensemble SĽUK (A. Moyzes) and, finally, the subjective folklorism of the avant-garde in the 1960s and 1970s – shows how Slovak composers worked under changing ideological influences to bring about an 'ennobling' of folk music.

Keywords: Slovakia, folk music/folklorism, nationalism, politics

I

The aim of this article is not to offer a full review of folk song-inspired Slovak music; the extent of a sole study does not allow it, after all. Rather, it is more like an introduction to the subject and a commentary on particular examples where transformations of folklore inspirations in Slovak music can be demonstrated.

The role of folk song in the development of Slovak musical identity in the 20th century is immense, comparable to other national music cultures originating in the 19th century, or (belatedly) in the 20th century. However, the development of

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Slovak music displays several specific characteristics, resulting from social, political, cultural, and territorial conditions.

In the 19th century, the Slovak intellectual elite consisted of a small group influenced by small town conditions (a "small town" was the basic unit of the monarchy; in a state with more than 50 million inhabitants – excluding both million-resident capitals Vienna and Budapest – there were only 6 cities counting more than 100,000 inhabitants; all of them were located in the Austrian part of the empire). The works of the composers acknowledging themselves as Slovaks (Michal Laciak, Milan Lichard, Karol Ruppeldt, Štefan Fajnor) were mostly focused on folk song arrangements in Romantic style, considerably influenced by the "new-Hungarian style."[1] In the second half of the 19th century, a major composer of Slovak origin appeared on the scene: Ján Levoslav Bella (1843–1936) applied especially the stylistic elements of German Romanticism in his work. Paradoxically, we can boast about having a Romantic composer whose major part of creation in its acme does not show any signs of a "Slovak character" (the model example in this respect being his opera *Kováč Wieland* [Wieland, the smith] on Richard Wagner's libretto). Despite his reflections on Slovak music and culture in his youth,[2] Slovak music as such occupies a marginal position in his compositional output; it is represented by his variations for piano on folk songs (1860s) and two cantatas written at the end of his life: *Svadba Jánošíkova* [Jánošík's wedding], (1927) and *Divný zbojník* [A strange bandit], (1933). It was brought about by the surroundings in which he worked – Bella spent 40 years of his active carreer in the German-speaking cultural sphere of the Transylvanian town, Hermannstadt [in Hungarian: Nagyszeben; in Romanian: Sibiu), and also by the fact that he was not able to cross the compositional and stylistic outline of European (in particular: German) music, nor did he adapt folk music elements as stylistic components in his own compositional thinking.

The following generation of composers – Mikuláš Moyzes (1872–1944), Viliam Figuš-Bystrý (1875–1937), and Mikuláš Schneider-Trnavský (1881–1958) – contributed with a larger amount of pieces to the quest of "Slovak character" in music. Nevertheless, their follow-up of folk music did not go beyond Romantic starting points. Nor did this generation create a more self-contained concept of Slovak music, which was certainly also due to the underdeveloped conditions in the Slovak culture up to 1918. Typically, Schneider-Trnavský, whose creation had been moulded during his studies in Budapest, Vienna, and Prague, ran up against opposition from the domestic milieu rejecting his alleged "modernism."[3]

1. Regarding their activities in the field, see Oskár Elschek – Alica Elscheková, *Úvod do štúdia slovenskej ľudovej hudby* [Introduction to the study of the Slovak folk music], (Bratislava: Hudobné centrum, 2005), 26–32.

2. Ján Levoslav Bella, "Myšlienky o vývine národnej hudby slovenskej" [Ideas regarding the development of the Slovak national music], *Letopis Matice slovenskej* 10/2 (1873), 10–29.

3. Compare Naďa Hrčková, *Tradícia, modernosť a slovenská hudobná kultúra* [Tradition, modernism and Slovak music], (Bratislava: Litera, 1996), 24.

Various Czech influences affected in a significant way the development of Slovak music. It was the stability and strength of the Czech culture which already before World War I manifested itself in the Czech-German ambience of the Czech Kingdom countries that enabled the considerable expansion eastwards. Mutual Czech and Slovak cultural contacts had been intense since the first half of the 19th century. The Czech and Slovak ethnicities were so close to each other – "brotherly close" – that part of the Slovak intelligentsia during the 18th and 19th centuries accepted the Czech language as their own,[4] thus the so-called Czechoslovak or "Czech-Slavic" idea emerged already in the 19th century. Through concerts of folk music, exhibitions, and lectures at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Slovak folk art was promoted in Bohemia and Moravia (Dr. Alois Kolísek was its prominent promoter; between 1898 and 1919 he was a priest in Hodonín and later he lived and worked in Bratislava). Czechs got used to seeing Slovak culture mostly as a folk culture. Subsequently, the myth of an "older" and a "younger brother" started to evolve even in the time before 1918, and so did the concept of the Czechs' cultural protectorship over the Slovaks.

A certain part of the Czech cultural audience would not have been opposed if the nature of Slovak culture had been "preserved" in its prewar condition, even after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. Nevertheless, this state of affairs was not sustainable as the ambitions of Slovak artists, particularly the younger generation, were set much higher. As early as in the 1930s, a new concept of Slovak music originated in the works of young composers Alexander Moyzes, Eugen Suchoň and Ján Cikker. Its character was influenced to a great extent by the Czech teacher of all of them, Vítězslav Novák (a disciple of Dvořák who lived between 1870 and 1949), whose own work reveals a remarkable affinity to Slovak topics and, partly, also to Slovak folk music. In the mind of Moyzes's generation, folk music played a key role, and the "folkish character" became one of the most important stylistic features of Slovak music. This was not changed much by the subsequent totalitarian regimes – the epoch of the Slovak State (1939–1945) and, later, the communist dictatorship from 1948, both of them displaying a considerable amount of continuity with the interwar period in terms of the ideology of Slovak music.

II

Let us start with a phenomenon providing Suchoň's generation with a certain stamp of uniqueness: we will call it the "Slovak idiom" defining it as the most

4. The most popular author was Ján Kollár, a priest. Later, Ľudovít Štúr followed the trend in his essay "Hlas oproti Hlasom" [Voice against voices], *Orol tatránski* No. 35–36 (10 and 21 July 1846), 274–276 and 282–284 (= Supplement to *Slovenskje národňje novini* [Slovak national journal], 2/99).

successful creative method of the time, based on folk inspirations and suggesting a certain "Slovak character" in music. The definition of the "Slovak idiom" is not easy, as by particular authors and in particular compositions it implies different levels of folk inspiration and exhibits various manners of application of both traditional and contemporary Western European stylistic music elements.

When speaking about folk inspiration, apart from the use of particular tunes, we have in mind primarily the employment of the tone material, which has to be perceived inseparably from rhythm and tonality based on modes out of the major-minor system. The other important aspect affecting the creation of the "Slovak idiom" was the orientation of Slovak composers influenced by Vítězslav Novák, who inspired them to apply the devices of Impressionism. This way, a fusion of the older strata of folk music, modal in character, and the compositional tools of Impressionism took place, also including late-Romantic traces. The occurrence of the principles of traditional European musical thinking with its formal, harmonic, and expressive aspects ensured the concordance of Slovak modernism with the contemporary developments of European music.

Thus, compositions establishing a new style of "Slovak music" originated in the 1930s: Alexander Moyzes's First Symphony (1929, revised in 1936), his suite *Váh* (1935, in 1945 reworked into its final shape and entitled *Dolu Váhom* [Down the River Váh]), Suchoň's *Baladická suita* [Balladic suite] (1935), and his *Žalm zeme podkarpatskej* [Psalm of the Sub-Carpathian land] (1938), inspired to a great extent by Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus*.[5] It was namely Suchoň's way of handling the material which led to the foundation of a sophisticated system on the above-mentioned principles. In harmony, a dynamically tense conjunction of two augmented fourths – B – F and A – D♯ became its typical means. Simultaneously, he used combined modes: Aeolian-Locrian, A – B – C – D – E♭ – F – G – A and Lydian-Mixolydian, C – D – E – F♯ – G – A – B♭ – C, also called "podhalan" mode. From this modal material originated the so-called thirteenth chord, which later became the point of departure for Suchoň's system. Suchoň generated the chord by superposition of thirds, in fact from the fourth to the twelfth harmonics, omitting the eighth one: C – E – G – B♭ – D – F♯ – A. The evolution of this harmonic system culminated in the opera *Krútňava* [The whirlpool] from 1949.

Starting with the *Balladic Suite,* Suchoň simultaneously intensified the so-called "balladic mood" of his music, later considered a specifically Slovak one. It is an inseparable component of his supreme works and, as Štefková proved by her analysis of *Krútňava,* its musical basis is the preference for F, A, B, and C# tones, which maintain a permanent tension through implication of the whole-tone

5. See Peter Zagar, "Žalmové kantáty Eugena Suchoňa a Zoltána Kodálya" [Psalm cantatas by Eugen Suchoň and Zoltán Kodály], *Slovenská hudba* 24/1–2 (1998), 73–81.

scale material.[6] The notion of "balladic character" played a significant role in the reception of Suchoň's music, as well as in the whole period's concept of Slovak music and Slovak national character.[7]

III

The first work of art, on which I would like to demonstrate different ways of employment of folklore elements with the aim to produce a specifically Slovak music, was created by the Czech authors. It is the film *Zem spieva* [The earth sings], made by Karel Plicka in the 1930s, to which František Škvor wrote the film score. Karel (Karol) Plicka (1894–1987) was born in Vienna (his family came from Česká Třebová, where he spent part of his childhood), he was a member of the Wiener Sängerknaben, later of the choir of the Vienna Court Opera. Plicka called himself "a master of nine crafts"; following the will of his parents he became a teacher, but he was violinist, photographer, ethnographer, and musicologist as well. He was also interested in the new medium of the period, the film, which became his further vocation. Plicka devoted a large part of his professional career to Slovakia. In the interwar period he was the most significant Slovak folklorist. Between 1924 and 1939 he worked for the *Matica slovenská* [Slovak Society] and he collected Slovak folk songs, while using also photography and a film camera (after 1926). The invention of sound film inspired him to make a film as an artefact with Slovak ethnographic subject matter, and the result was the first Slovak full-length film *The Earth Sings*. Officially it was produced by *Matica slovenská*. Its "Slovak character" is undeniable from cultural and ideological perspectives, but the creative team was wholly Czech – Karel Plicka, Alexander Hackenschmied (responsible for editing), and František Škvor (the composer of the music). Two-thirds of production costs were covered by the Czech producer Ladislav Kolda, and the film was produced under the auspices of the president of the republic Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.[8] The production lasted from spring 1930 to summer 1933, being cut in the meantime from August 1932.

6. See Markéta Štefková, "Podstata hudobnej reči Suchoňovej 'Krútňavy'" [The essence of the musical language of Suchoň's "The whirlpool"], in *Tvorivý odkaz Eugena Suchoňa v kontexte miesta, doby, vývoja a diela vrstovníkov; Zborník z konferencie konanej v rámci BHS 2008* [Eugen Suchoň's creative legacy in the context of the place, era, development and work of his contemporaries; Anthology from the conference in the frame of BMF 2008], ed. Ľubomír Chalupka (Bratislava: Katedra hudobnej vedy Filozofickej fakulty Univerzity Komenského, 2009), 241–264.

7. See Vladimír Zvara, "Realismus und nationale Mythen. Eugen Suchoňs Oper *Krútňava* im Wandel des nationalen Selbsverständnisses der Slowaken," in *Politische Mythen und nationale Identitäten im (Musik-) Theater. Vorträge und Gespräche des Salzburger Symposions 2001,* eds Péter Csobádi, Gernot Gruber, Jürgen Kühnel, Ulrich Müller, Oswald Panagl, and Franz Viktor Spechtler (Salzburg: Anif, 2003) Vol. II, 766–780.

8. Compare Juraj Lexmann, *Slovenská filmová hudba 1896–1996* [Slovak film music 1896–1996], (Bratislava: Ústav hudobnej vedy SAV – ASCO Art&Science, 1996) 40.

The aim of the film-makers was to present images from the Slovak countryside from spring to autumn. The view of Prague, as the capital of the country, followed by a journey with train to Slovakia gave the prologue of the film. It was probably in 1939, after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, that these film shots were replaced by a montage from Bratislava street life. Then the main part of the film follows: scenes presenting the life of the common people, which dominate the film and offer the opportunity to present folklore (ceremonies, dances, children's games, and, of course, music). Plicka regarded music as exceptionally important in the film. His initial intention was to add original folklore sung and played directly by the film's protagonists, but that turned out to be technically impossible as Plicka was recording the film in difficult conditions – unbelievably difficult, in fact, from today's perspective – for he was shooting on locations on his own, with no crew. In the end it was necessary to write an original film score and he chose František Škvor, the composer and conductor of the National Theatre in Prague (1923–1960), to fulfil the task.

Plicka shared with Škvor a common interest in Eastern Slovak folk song. This became an important inspirational component, influencing the entire tone of Škvor's composition, in spite of the fact that the majority of the film scenes were shot in Central Slovakia. This apparent contradiction yielded to artistic stylization accomplished by Plicka thanks to his thorough knowledge of Slovak folk song (in concordance with the period's research). The use of Eastern Slovak folk song – which according to both Plicka and Škvor was closest to Ukrainian and Russian folk music – also involved an ideological dimension; they strived to demonstrate the Old-Slavonic, "Pan-Slavic" basis of the Slovak folklore. Geographically, this appears to be a well-grounded opinion, even if the actual relations used to be much more complicated. Plicka and Škvor considered the descending fourth-leaps at the end of the songs, derived from the so-called hypo-tonality,[9] as being in an obvious relation to Russian folk songs, where such intervalic leaps are characteristic, too (though, as far as we know, they occur in a different tonal context there).

Even today we cannot refute completely the idea that Slavic music shares a common basis and its residues are present in various Slavic folk cultures.[10] On the other hand, the totally different cultural development as well as the trivial contact with Russian ambience, during the major part of the development, resulted in extensive differences between both folk cultures in terms of melody structure and tonality. Since the development of the new-style Hungarian folk song in the 19th century, it was namely the territory of the present Eastern Slovakia which had

9. Elschek, *Úvod,* 155.

10. Cf. Jozef Kresánek, *Slovenská ľudová pieseň so stanoviska hudobného* [Slovak folk song from the musical standpoint], (Bratislava: Slovenská akadémia vied a umení, 1951), 188–194.

been exposed to the influence of this "music revolution" as Bartók called it.[11] This influence had of course its cultural and social reasons (therefore it is the folklore from Central Slovakia, i.e. the region where most scenes were shot for the film, which used to be designated as more original and typical). It is remarkable though that the (Eastern) Slovak folk song, as such, displays a high degree of affinity with the (Western) Ukrainian, or Ruthenian folk song (the latter term does not appear in the older literature due to ideological reasons). Bartók's opinion is interesting here as well: he considered the Ukrainian (or Ruthenian) "kolomyjka" as one of the basic inspirational sources for the New-Hungarian song.[12] The endeavour to point to the "Pan-Slavic" character of the Slovak folk music represented something additional to Plicka and Škvor as they both came from the 19th-century anti-Habsburg Russophile tradition of many Czech intellectuals. This tradition and the idea of Slavic solidarity did not cease to exist after the establishment of Czechoslovakia. Although the new political and social conditions in the ČSR and Soviet Union were totally different, and the bilateral relations were not trouble-free – because of political and ideological reasons, cf. the activity of the Czechoslovak Leagues during the Russian revolution, among others – the "Pan-Slavic" position was still alive, especially through the endeavour of self-delimitation from the strong German and – in Slovak relations – from the Hungarian element in the republic. The effort to approach the Russian folklore domain is obvious also in the film segments having religious themes – there is a Greek Catholic ritual of blessing the food and an Orthodox procession. (Both confessions intermingle and blend into the film a certain artificial "Eastern ritual," so to speak.) For these film segments, Škvor found an extremely apt "Russian" expression; Plicka himself spoke about the relation of these musical segments with Musorgsky's opera, *Boris Godunov*.[13] In Škvor's composition, the way of handling the folk material is obviously similar to that of the Mighty Handful, as Russian composers in the 1860s had already created the way of embedding the modal melody into the harmonic frame. As far as orchestration is concerned, Škvor uses devices resembling the music of Rimsky-Korsakov, mainly in the sections where he arranges the specific folk material, or in the music of religious character (e.g. the above-mentioned connections to the score of *Boris Godunov*).

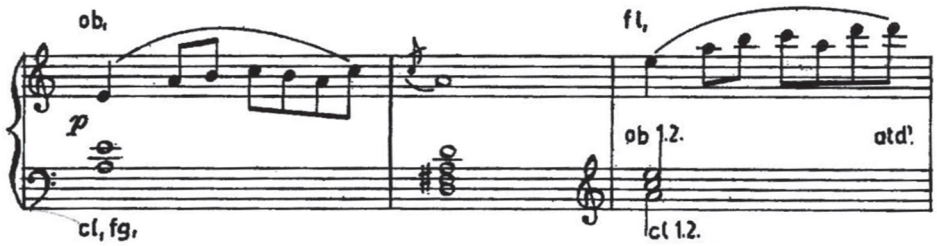
11. Literally: "music revolution of Hungarian village"; see Kresánek, *Slovenská ľudová pieseň,* 238; Hana Urbancová, "Novouhorský štýl v slovenskej hudobnej kultúre a procesy sebaidentifikácie" [New Hungarian style in Slovak music and the processes of self-identification], in *Hľadanie novej podoby strednej Európy (fenomén integrácie a dezintegrácie od osvietenstva po 1. svetovú vojnu)* [The quest for a new semblance of Central Europe (The phenomenon of integration and disintegration from the Enlightenment till WW I)] (= Historické korene integrácie strednej Európy II.) [Historical roots of Central Europe's integration II], eds Kamil Sládek and Dušan Škvarna (Bratislava, Prešov: Centrum pre európsku politiku, Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2005), 221–231.

12. Kresánek, *Slovenská ľudová pieseň,* 239.

13. Juraj Lexmann, "Hudobné ozvučenie Plickovho filmu Zem spieva" [Adding music to Plicka's movie "The earth sings"], in *Slovenské divadlo,* 27/2 (1979), 199–239, here 229.

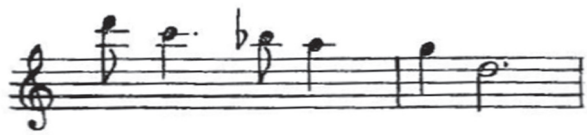
The folklore material consists of 28 folk songs, two of which are (or Plicka considered them as) Hutsul, i.e. Ruthenian (tunes Nos 6 and 7). Particular tunes are used in a quite different way throughout the film, spanning from harmonization and orchestration of songs to the composition of original music inspired by a folk melody. The tune No. 8 may serve as an example as its task is to characterize "old" Slovakia *(Example 1)*. Very probably this tune is a variation of the song *Ej zalužicki poľo*, although Plicka claims it is a song from the village Košecké Rovné.[14]

Example 1 František Škvor (1898–1970), *Zem spieva* [The earth sings], film music (1932–1933), tune No. 8



Even the motif at the beginning of the film is original (Journey through Slovakia); as it appears several times during the film, it becomes a leitmotif. To add "Slovak character" of the tune, Škvor employs a descending melody with a descending fourth leap at the end of the motif (see *Example 2*). The "Pan-Slavic" character of this interval structure has been already mentioned above.

Example 2 František Škvor, *Zem spieva*, leitmotif



The film *The Earth Sings* earned success at the premiere both at home and abroad (it won a prize at the Venice Biennale). Apart from Czechoslovakia, it was shown in Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, France, Sweden, the U.S.A., and Canada. Its qualities secured its place in universal cinematography, and Škvor's music substantially contributed to its success. According to Plicka, Škvor's music influenced also the creation of the emerging generation of Slovak composers.

14. Ibid., 206.

However, it is difficult to agree with this opinion as the overall sound of music refers mostly to models of the Russian Romantic tradition, distinctly differring from what we have called above "Slovak idiom."

Influences of Škvor's film score from 1932–1933 can be detected in the creation of folklore ensembles after 1948. Meanwhile a significant chapter of Slovak music history set out: Alexander Moyzes (whose First Symphony in its original version was written as early as 1929) and Eugen Suchoň entered the scene. Both entrenched the style and the composition of the new Slovak music, which both the critics and the public received well and for a long time became the official, *de facto* doctrine of Slovak music. In this sense, Škvor's music to Plicka's film is a significant, albeit singular example of a concentrated attempt to create "Slovak" music possessing specific stylistic and idiomatic characteristics.

IV

The new situation after 1945, or 1948 (the communist *coup* took place in 1948, but actually it had been imminent since the end of the war), radically changed the social reality in Czechoslovakia and influenced also the music culture to a certain extent. However, the demands on the creation of the Slovak composers did not change radically. The collective opinion constantly preferred the works inspired by folk music to the music approaching the European avant-garde. The imported communist dictatorship required comprehensibility and "folkish character", and proclaimed the poetics of "socialist realism" as the sole permitted way of artistic expression. In his 1948 essay *On Problems of Soviet Music,* main ideologist Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov proposed not only a sharp criticism of "formalism" and the emulation of Western music models, but he also demanded the influence of the works of Classics[15] and a "folkish character."[16] We know that these theses expressed a certain amount of helplessness: it was not long before when – in 1913 – Lenin designated national music and culture as a "bourgeois deceit" and urged the creation of an international culture.[17] Stalin tried to formally reconcile the old and new doctrines:

15. After the revolution, the ideologists of Soviet music had a reserved attitude to the Classics' legacy, considered part of the bourgeois culture. Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky is credited with the acceptation, usage, and even salvation of this legacy. See Anatoly Lunacharsky, *On Literature and Art* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965).

16. See Zhdanov's speech "On problems of Soviet music" [1948], in Andrej Alexandrovič Ždanov, *O umění* [About art], (Praha: Orbis, 1949), 53–85. Compare also: Леонид Валентинович Максименков, *Сумбур вместо музыки: Сталинская культурная революция 1936–1938 гг*. [Confusion instead of music: Stalin's cultural revolution 1936–1938] (Москва: Юридическая книга, 1997).

17. "Our slogan is international culture of democracy and world working-class movement." Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Vladimir Iľjič Lenin, *O kultuře a umění* [On culture and art] (Praha: Svoboda, 1977) 349.

> The development of the cultures national in form and socialistic in content is important from the point of view of their final fusion into one common culture, which will be socialistic in both form and content, and expressed in one common language.[18]

Thus, in Slovakia, too, "socialist realism" became the only basis for the development of "national" music. This lasted till the emergence of the young generation of composers in the 1960s, which would bring the fusion of folklore and Western avant-garde elements.

The period after World War II brought some innovations, e.g. a new genre: the orchestral suites for the newly established professional folklore ensembles, namely *Lúčnica* and *Slovenský ľudový umelecký kolektív* [Slovak Folk Art Collective, further referred to as SĽUK].[19] The character of these suites for orchestra allowed performances on concert stages, too. The utilitarian character of these compositions clearly determined their shape – thematic material was created mostly by direct quotations of folk songs, clearly and transparently harmonized, with the overall appearance enhanced by brilliant orchestration. The form design gradually evolved from song form to applications of the principles of the so-called higher forms, as Alexander Moyzes stated in the preface to his score of *Tance z Pohronia* [Dances from Pohronie].[20] The development of the genre was crucially influenced by the involvement of Moyzes in it, as he was the most significant Slovak symphonist (he composed 12 symphonies in all). In addition to his compositional, teaching and organizational activity, he was also the artistic leader of SĽUK between 1952 and 1954 (after 1953 its director) and he composed the music for the first programme of SĽUK, premiered on 29 August 1949, the 5th anniversary of the Slovak antifascist uprising. Moyzes later included two of the music-dance images – *Zbojnícky tanec* [Highwayman's dance] and *Tanečné hry dievčat* [Dancing games of maidens] – into the suite *Tance z Pohronia,* Op. 43. He added to them the newly-composed *Drevorubačský tanec* [Dance of woodcutters] and an image of a folk jamboree. The orchestral suite in this shape was premiered by the *Slovenská filharmónia* on 24 May 1950 in Bratislava.

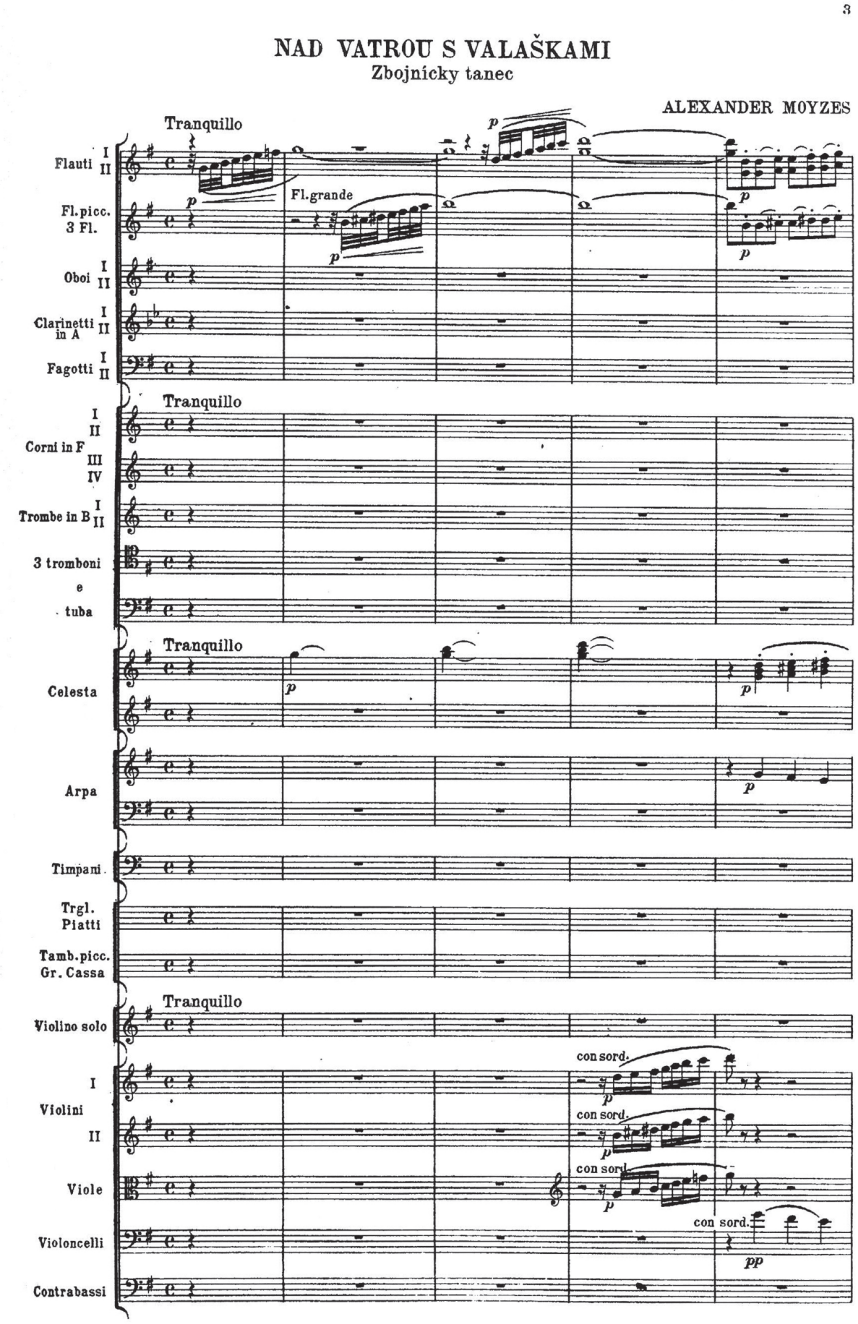
The composer's points of departure can be clearly demonstrated in the opening bars of the introduction to the first movement *Nad vatrou s valaškami / Zbojnícky tanec* [Over the campfire / Highwayman's dance] *(Example 3).* Three flutes introduce one after another three octave passages, a third apart each (starting from

18. Melita Milin, "Socialist Realism as an Enforced Renewal of Musical Nationalism," in *Socialist Realism in Music, Colloquium Musicologum Brunense 36, 2001,* eds Mikuláš Bek, Geoffrey Chew, and Petr Macek (Praha: KLP, 2004) 39–43.

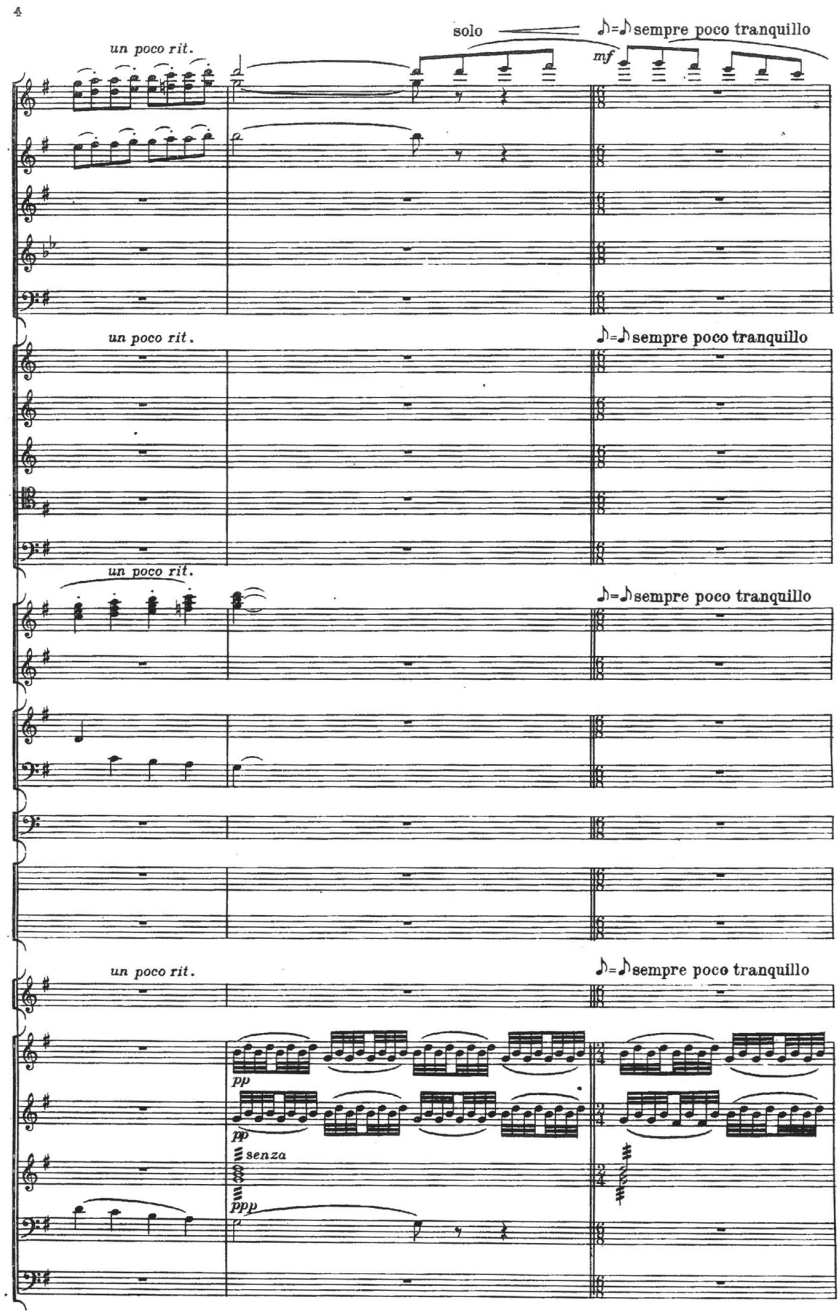
19. Lúčnica was established in 1948, SĽUK in 1949.

20. Alexander Moyzes, *Tance z Pohronia* [Dances from Pohronie], Op. 43 (Bratislava: Slovenské hudobné vydavateľstvo, 1954).

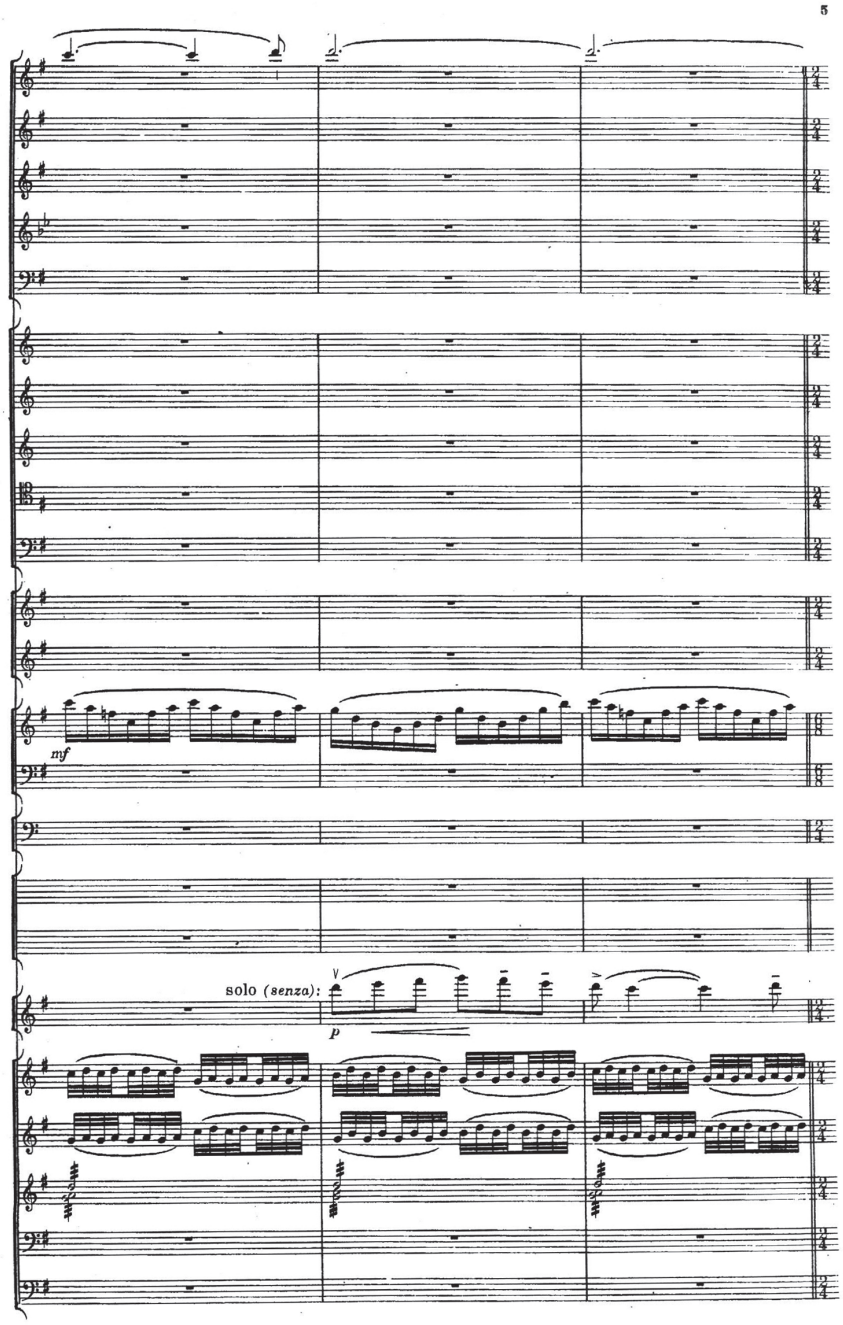
EXAMPLE 3 Alexander Moyzes (1906–1984), *Tance z Pohronia* [Dances from Pohronie], suite for orchestra; bars 1–11 from the first movement, *Nad vatrou s valaškami* / *Zbojnícky tanec* [Over the campfire / Highwayman's dance]



EXAMPLE 3 continuation



EXAMPLE 3 continuation



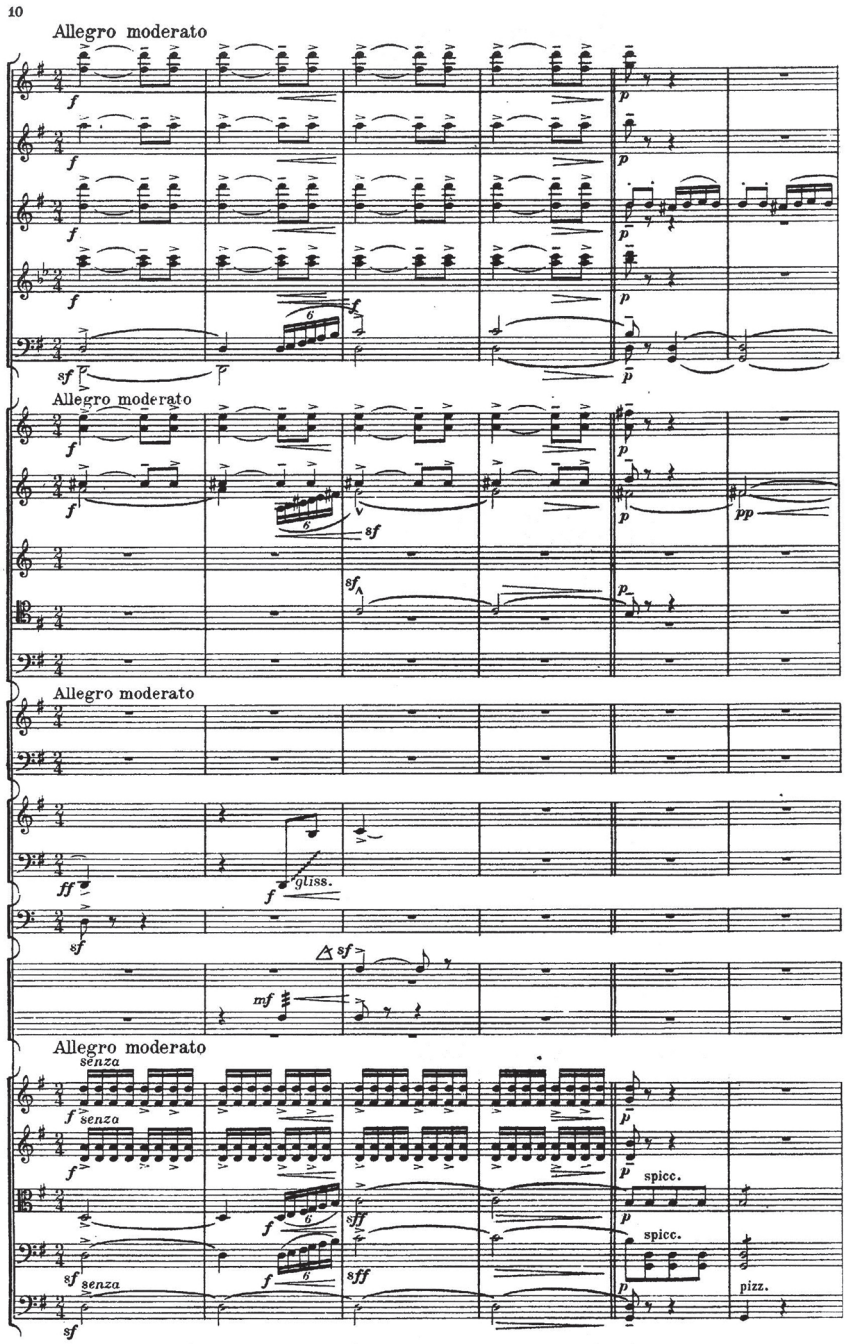
g^1, b^1, and d^2, respectively) using the tone material of the Mixolydian scale. This material is reiterated simultaneously by the first and second violins and violas in parallel triads. Subsequently, this scale is again taken over by flutes – now in augmentation (movement in eighths) with the countermovement of the cellos joined by harp. It is hardly possible to find a more demonstrative example for the fusion of a "folk" element, in this case Mixolydian scale material, with parallel motions alluding to the impressionist writing. The orchestration also refers to French paragons, as devices are used economically; the solo instruments are accompanied by the celesta and harp adding a certain airiness and easiness to the segment. These also dominate the immediately following section – the theme is exposed first by the solo flute, then by the solo violin accompanied by the first and second violins in demisemiquavers, viola tremolo, and harp figuration.

To offer a more accurate image, let us have a look at the *Allegro moderato* passage beginning about one minute later in which an obvious folk tune, now in Lydian mode, is rendered by a solo oboe *(Example 4)*. The accompaniment is provided by low strings (the stylization of accompanying voices of folk ensembles) and bassoons with French horns joined by violas suggesting a counter-theme. The harp-arpeggio cleverly copies the periodic structure of the melodic material. The consistent periodicity of the material (we are speaking about dance music, after all) and the very lucid and unconflicting modal harmonization serve the function and designation of this kind of composition, and at the same time they perfectly correspond to the aesthetic demands of the time.

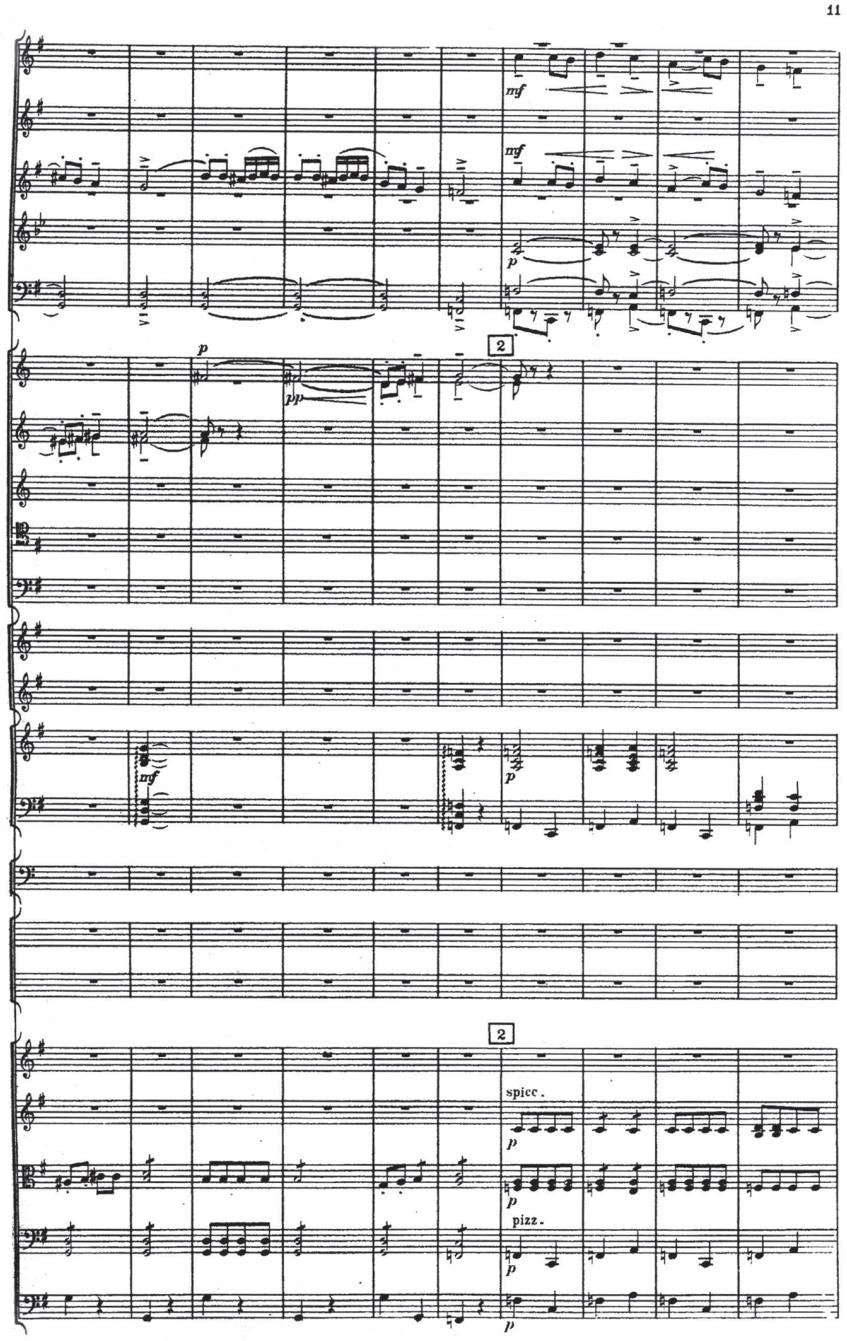
Moyzes strived to compose his piece not as a series of dances, but in a cyclic form, therefore he added two other dances. In this respect, the *Tance z Pohronia* – under which title the suite was performed in the Slovak Philharmonic in 1950 – is a suite in four movements. In its course we can find the application of the sonata principle, the rondo character, or the developing variation technique. The fourth dance, *Po robote pri muzike* / *Ľudová veselica* [Music after work / Folk jamboree] acts as a finale for the whole piece. As a composition, it is an excellently balanced whole with its form reflecting the rondo and sonata principles. Contrary to Suchoň's concept, we can see in this suite an example of "explicit" folklorism, accessible and comprehensible for a wider public; and as far as its function is concerned, it is perfectly embeddable into the frame of socialist realism.

This "folklorist" concept exhibited a much stronger affinity to academicism and schematism as it was based on the conservation of particular devices and stylistic elements, thus only having a limited possibility to evolve. Despite that, the concept persisted up until the fall of the totalitarian regime in 1989. Due to its communicativeness it permeated various genres (music theatre, film) and thanks to its preference by the authorities it enjoyed dominance not only on the concert stage, but also in the mass media.

Example 4 Alexander Moyzes, *Tance z Pohronia*, fragment from the *Allegro moderato* of the first movement, *Nad vatrou s valaškami* / *Zbojnícky tanec*



EXAMPLE 4 continuation



The operas of Tibor Andrašovan (1917–2001) may serve as an example of an inappropriate usage of these principles, colliding with the boundaries of their possibilities. Paradoxically, Andrašovan attracted criticism from the ideologists of the socialist regime for his excessive simplicity in the concept and technical aspect of his compositions, in particular the opera *Figliar Geľo* [Prankster Geľo] from 1957 after a libretto by Jela Krčméry-Vrteľová.[21] However, the composer did not abandon his earlier stylistic paradigm, as proven by his opera *Hájnikova žena* [The woodsman's wife] from 1974. The composer himself accommodated the libretto after the lyric-epic poem by Pavol Országh Hviezdoslav from 1884–1886. Carrying out the uneasy task of adjustment of the model, the composer used the conventional, we may say, purely Romantic dramaturgical devices, accentuating strongly the opportunities for the usage of huge folklore dance or ceremonial scenes, often without genuine dramatic justification (following Wagner's motto "Wirkung ohne Ursache"). The major part of the first act consists of such scenes: the first scene beginning with the pantomimic depiction of old Čajka's death, then the funeral ceremony in the following scene (the original lacks this scene altogether), the third scene depicts the wedding of Michal and Hanka. In the second act the author did not refrain from the scene *Na stráni* [On the hillside, 5th image], which cannot deny the inspiration by meadow songs in the beginning and is closed by the two-choir chant of woodcutters and maidens picking up raspberries. The opera is closed by the magnificent *Pozdrav horám* [Salutation to woods] for solo voice (Michal) and choir, in which Andrašovan sets Hviezdoslav's preface to the whole composition to music ("Pozdravujem vás, hory, lesy" [Salutations to you, hills and woods]). Indeed, in it we can find an almost grand-opera manner. The relations to the finale of Suchoň's *Svätopluk* (1960) are present in it beyond doubt, too. These scenes could have also become independent folk dance images, a genre with which Andrašovan had considerable experience: the arrangement of particular folk materials was obviously his natural way of expression.

V

The 1960s in Czechoslovakia were passed under the aegis of the movement of the whole society to the so-called "Prague Spring." The continuous thaw (so infamously stopped by the occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in August 1968) manifested in culture as a greater openness towards new Western ideas and emulation of the most progressive artistic trends. In music, the revue *Sloven-*

21. See the report of Dezider Kardoš, "We are still developing the brotherly collaboration with our Czech comrades," given at the 2nd congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers (25–28 February 1959 in Prague), in *II. sjezd Svazu československých skladatelů. Materiály a dokumenty* [The Second Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers. Materials and documents], *Knižnice Hudobních rozhledů,* 5/11–13 (1959), 124. For a description of Andrašovan's operas, see Igor Vajda, *Slovenská opera* [Slovak opera] (Bratislava: Opus, 1990) 155–159.

ská Hudba [Slovak music] led by the progressive editor in chief Oskár Elschek (since 1964) offered the platform for the process, as well as the Smolenice Seminars for Contemporary Music organized after the model of Darmstadt in 1968–1970, which were visited among others by Stockhausen, Ligeti, and Dahlhaus.[22]

These changes coincided with the emergence of a generation of young composers. The situation as regards the relationship with the preceding – and no less distinctive – generation was by no means problem-free. The young composers were interested in dodecaphony and serial techniques; these were still refused by the ideologists as well as by their older colleagues – "the national artists" – as formalist techniques. The young did not share their predecessors' focus on folklore inspirations. Although folk elements had found their way into their music, too, still more intensely in the time of "normalization" in the 1970s, however, they used folk elements on a totally different level.

In 1965 the young Ladislav Burlas commented on the situation claiming that "a certain national style in our music became gradually automated and, compared to European and universal music, the contemporary Slovak music is still conservative and unilateral."[23] This comment aroused a stormy reaction from both officials and older composers, as the substance of our "national" music itself had been reputedly questioned in it. Dezider Kardoš in his speech given at the 2nd Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers (February 1959), which aimed to summarize the development of music in Slovakia in the preceding decade, did not refrain from the criticism of the young generation ("The time has come when some of our composers – I am speaking here especially about some of the newly graduated younger ones – have to stop admiring many undesirable Western trends and courses"), nor from personal attacks ("It is impossible to agree with such compositions as for example *Caricatures* and Second Piano Quintet by Ilja Zeljenka.")[24]

One of the consequences of this unsurmountable generational and ideological conflict became the fate of Tadeáš Salva (1937–1995), one of the most distinct young composers of the period. He started to study composition at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava (1958–1960), but his teacher, Alexander Moyzes was not disposed to tolerate the innovative approach of his obviously gifted student. Salva decided to solve the problem with his teacher indeed in an original way – he sent his compositions to Paul Hindemith, Igor Stravinsky, Bohuslav Martinů, and Witold Lutosławski. He was encouraged by their praises and, at the same time, he was invited to the Warsaw Autumn Festival, where Lutosławski recommended that he enrol at the State Higher Music School in Katowice.

22. See Ľubomír Chalupka, *Slovenská hudobná avantgarda* [Slovak avant-garde music], (Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského, 2011) 65–110.

23. Cf. "20 rokov slovenskej hudobnej tvorby v diskusii" [20 years of Slovak music in discussion], *Slovenská hudba,* 9/9 (1965), 422–432.

24. Kardoš, "We are still developing the brotherly collaboration," 129.

There he studied composition with Bolesław Szabelski (1962–1965), also visiting Lutosławski for consultations.

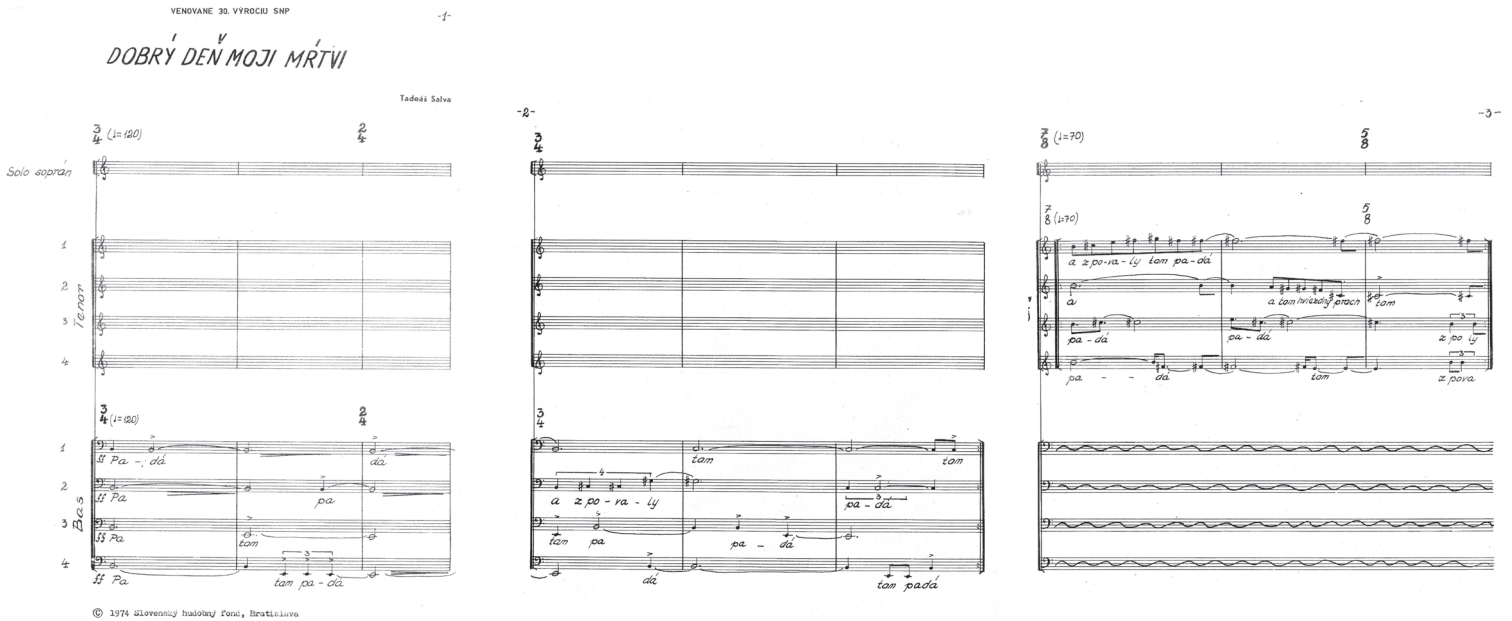
Salva's work offers many examples of "new folklorism" in the Slovak music. Born in the village Lúčky of Central Slovakia, Salva had during his childhood personal experiences with rural folklore, in its actual state, that contributed to the shaping of his musical world. An "archetypal" tetrachordal folklore layer (well preserved in the north of Central Slovakia) together with church music inspiration (Gregorian chant and responsorial singing) reveal themselves in Salva's work primarily in the vocal expression. They are combined with progressive tendencies of the avant-garde, the achievements of the Polish school, and serial technique.

It was also Salva's personal and nonconformist folklore experience which was unacceptable for Moyzes – as Moyzes's teaching (and composing as well) was based precisely on the conventional form and harmony and on traditional instrumentation. For Salva's melody two principles are typical: 1) he uses units of a confined ambit (reflecting models from ancient folklore layers) with typical repetitiveness derived from declamatory recitative; among larger intervals the fourth prevails (revealing the similarity to tetrachordal organization of the folk model), and 2) larger intervals (seventh, octave in both directions), which carry the exclamatory expressiveness.

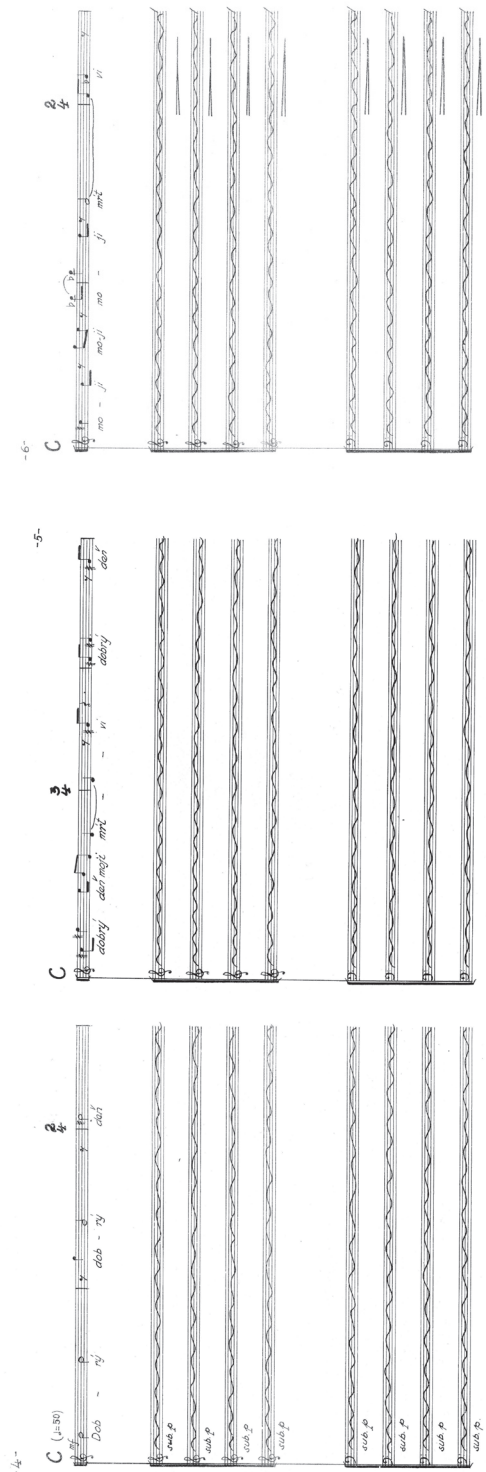
His composition *Dobrý deň, moji mŕtvi* [Good day, my dead ones] from 1973 for Soprano solo and men's chorus is designated for two "choirs" – each with a tenor and bass section divided into further four parts as well as solo soprano *(Example 5)*. Both groups subsequently expose their material (first, the basses in bars 1–6, tenors join in from bar 7), and the composer uses this material as a model for aleatoric elaboration. Melodic lines of particular voices are thoroughly structured on the basis of the above-mentioned principles – in the segment after the tenors enter we can see an almost pentatonic tune in the first voice. For the second voice the descending melody is typical – after the B' follows the run in seconds in the range of the fourth, and a fourth leap in the end (we have already pointed to the archetypal character of a similar end in the "global" Slavic space). The third voice is based on the alternation of the intervals of second and third in the range of the fourth (the reference to the tetrachordal organization), the fourth one has a descending fourth leap, followed by major second. The rhythmical and metrical organization of particular voices within the aleatorically elaborated segments results in an original texture, later forming the basis for an expressive entrance of the solo voice.

In the soprano entrance, the melodic units are concentrated into interval jumps – at first minor sixth, then octave and augmented fourth ("Good Day"). Then the following measure brings a melodic ripple based on the fourth and fifth leaps followed by the second (the change of a register as a contrasting device). Successive seconds reinforced by repetition (G♯ – F♯– F♯ – G♯) are his characteristic device in the space of a confined ambit. Then a sharp rise follows (in the range of one

EXAMPLE 5 Tadeáš Salva (1937–1995), *Dobrý deň moji mŕtvi*
[Good day, my dead ones (1973)] (1974)



EXAMPLE 5 continuation



bar till the tone B♭[2]) and the finishing of the whole phrase by the sixth leap and a closing, typical for the composer, with a rising minor second (F – G♭).

The last example for the use of folklore material in Slovak music comes from the First Symphony of Jozef Podprocký (born in 1944). Growing up in the village of Žakarovce in Eastern Slovakia, Podprocký studied with Ján Cikker and Alexander Moyzes at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava (1965–1970), and then he returned to Košice where he still lives and works. In his compositional starting points we can find several parallels with Tadeáš Salva. Podprocký was also influenced by the folklore of his surroundings and the Eastern Slovak song became his inspiration for his whole life, and a somewhat private mental treasure. Religiosity formed his development in his childhood, too: as a youngster he was an organ player in his native village[25] (since he was 12, similarly to Salva). He founded his new approach to handling folklore material in the tradition of the Slovak compositional school, on Bartók's system (inspiration by Bartók is typical for him), and on the achievements of the dodecaphonic technique. With the symbiosis of all these influences, the composer tries to achieve a homogeneous whole on the basis of traditional formal models.

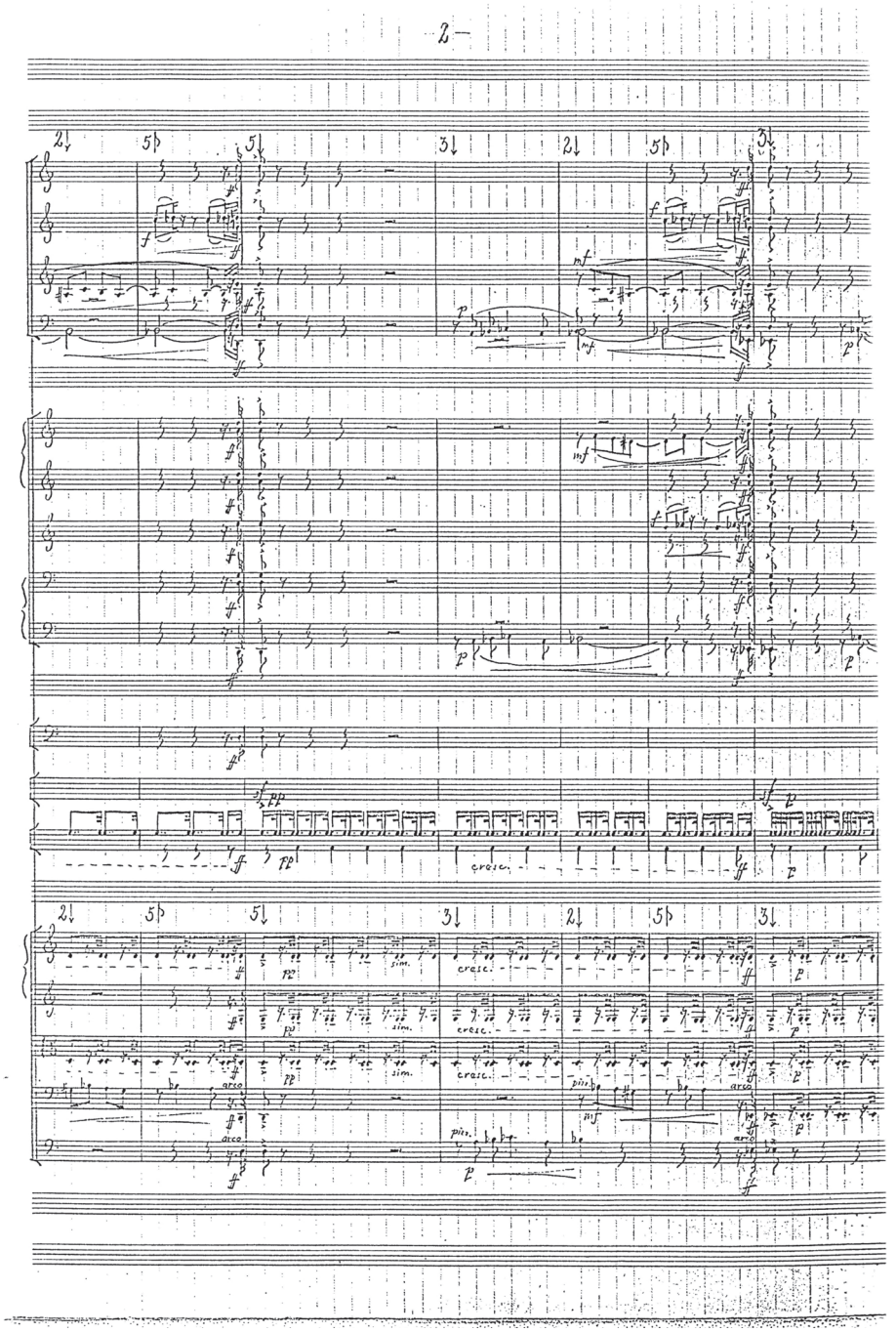
His First Symphony (or *Symphony in Two Movements*) was written in 1987 and the composer dedicated it to the memory of his parents. The first movement – *Nénie (žalospev)* [Threnodies (the lament)] – is composed in repetitive form (A–B–A') with the first two parts (A and B) beginning with the material of the introduction. The thematic material consists of folk songs, which are elaborated in an original way using dodecaphony: *Šubina, dolina* [The valley Šubina] transformed into the theme of the mother and *Moja žena* [My wife] into the theme of the father (these were the favourite songs of the composer's parents). *Metamorphoses*, the second movement of the symphony, consists of variations of already exposed thematic material on the basis of dodecaphonic principles and Bartók's axis system. The composer also recurs to a thoroughly applied sonata form.

In the first movement (see *Example 6*) the series used is a construction of interval relations (5-8-10-9-2-4-7-6-1-3-1-1), coded the birthdates of both parents, among others. In the introduction we can find the tones as follows: D (the whole movement is centralized around D), G (second violin in bar 6), E♭ (celli and double basses in bar 10), C♯ (oboes and trumpets in bar 13), B♭ (flutes, oboes, and clarinets in bar 15), C (tutti, disruption of the series and preparation of the section A in bar 16). The exposition of the theme of the mother follows: a dodecaphonic elaboration of the song material of *Šubina, dolina*, shown in *Example 7.*

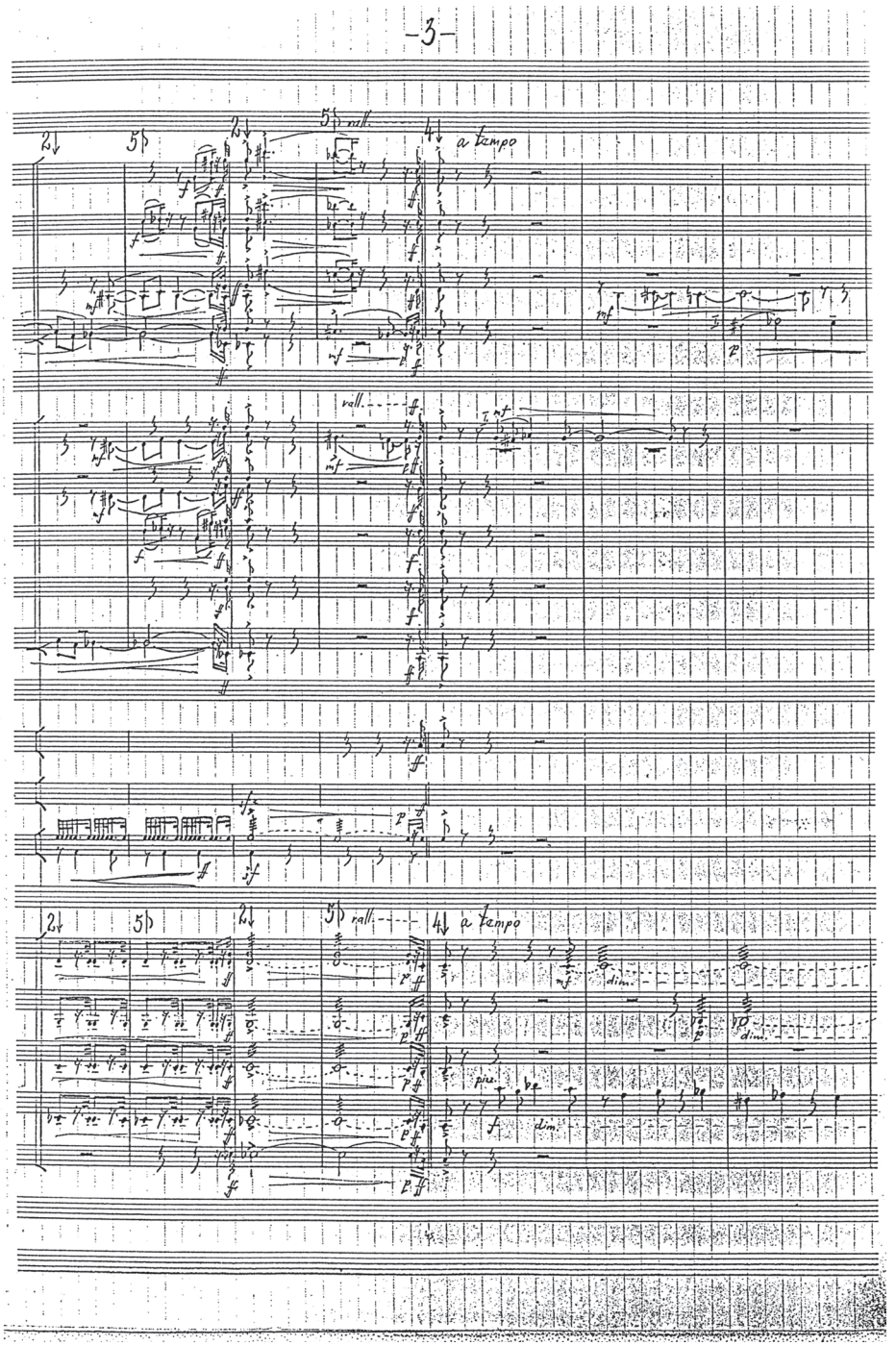
This whole section is segmented according to a traditional song form: *a – b – a'*, where *a'* is the apodosis of the original section *a*. The following *Tempo I* in bar

25. Personal interview with the composer; cf., Diana Cibuľová, *Jozef Podprocký. Symfónie* [thesis], (Košice: Konzervatórium, 2002), 7.

EXAMPLE 6 Jozef Podprocký (1944–), First Symphony (1987), bars 5–23



EXAMPLE 6 continuation



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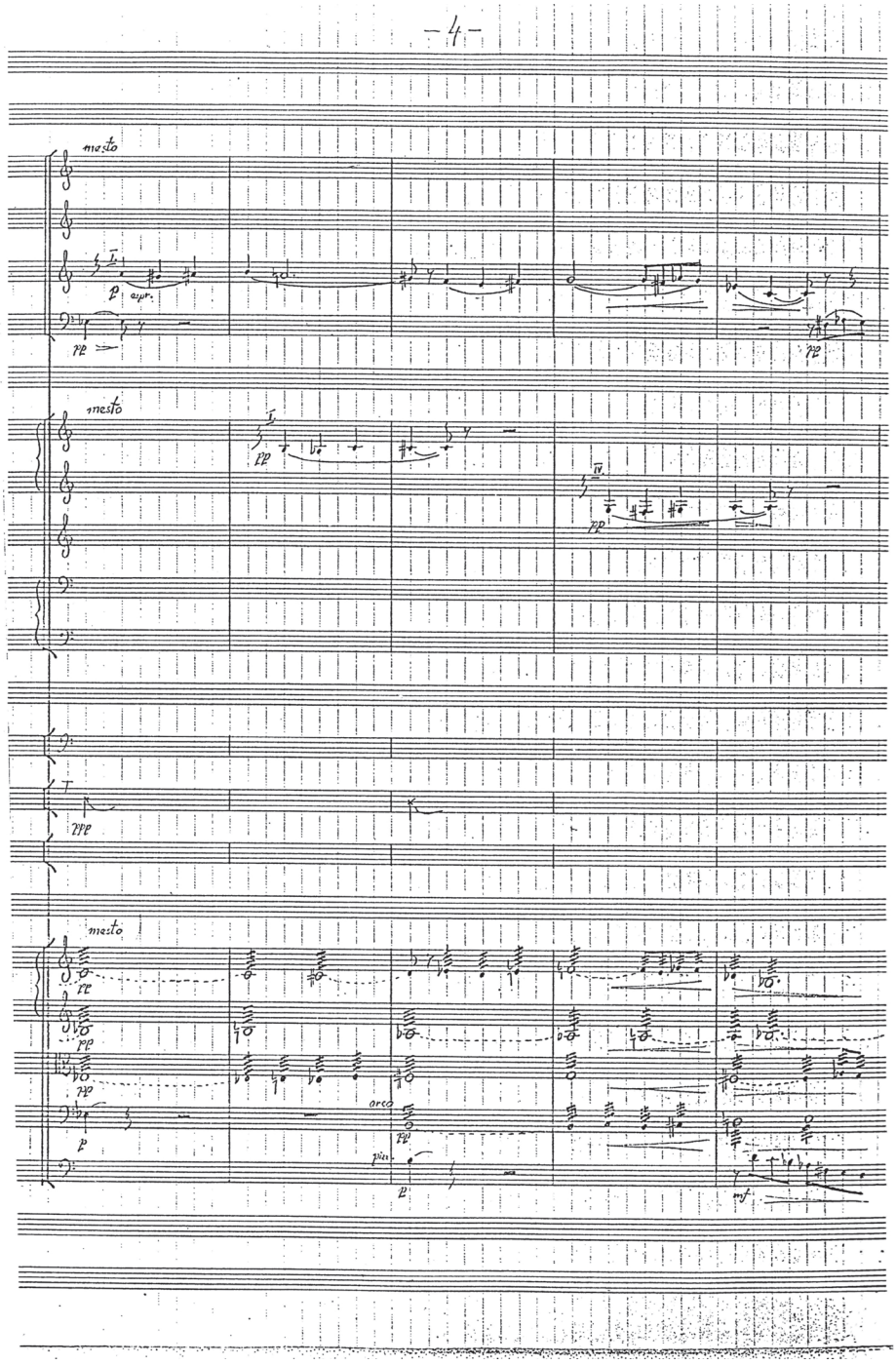
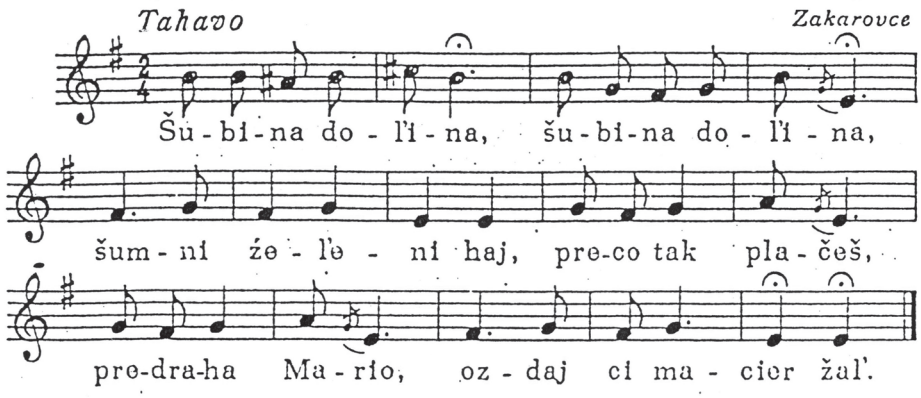
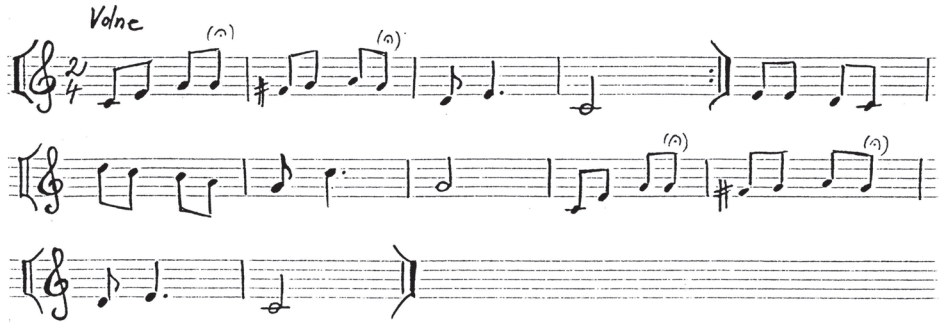


EXAMPLE 7 Folk song *Šubina, dolina* [The valley Šubina]

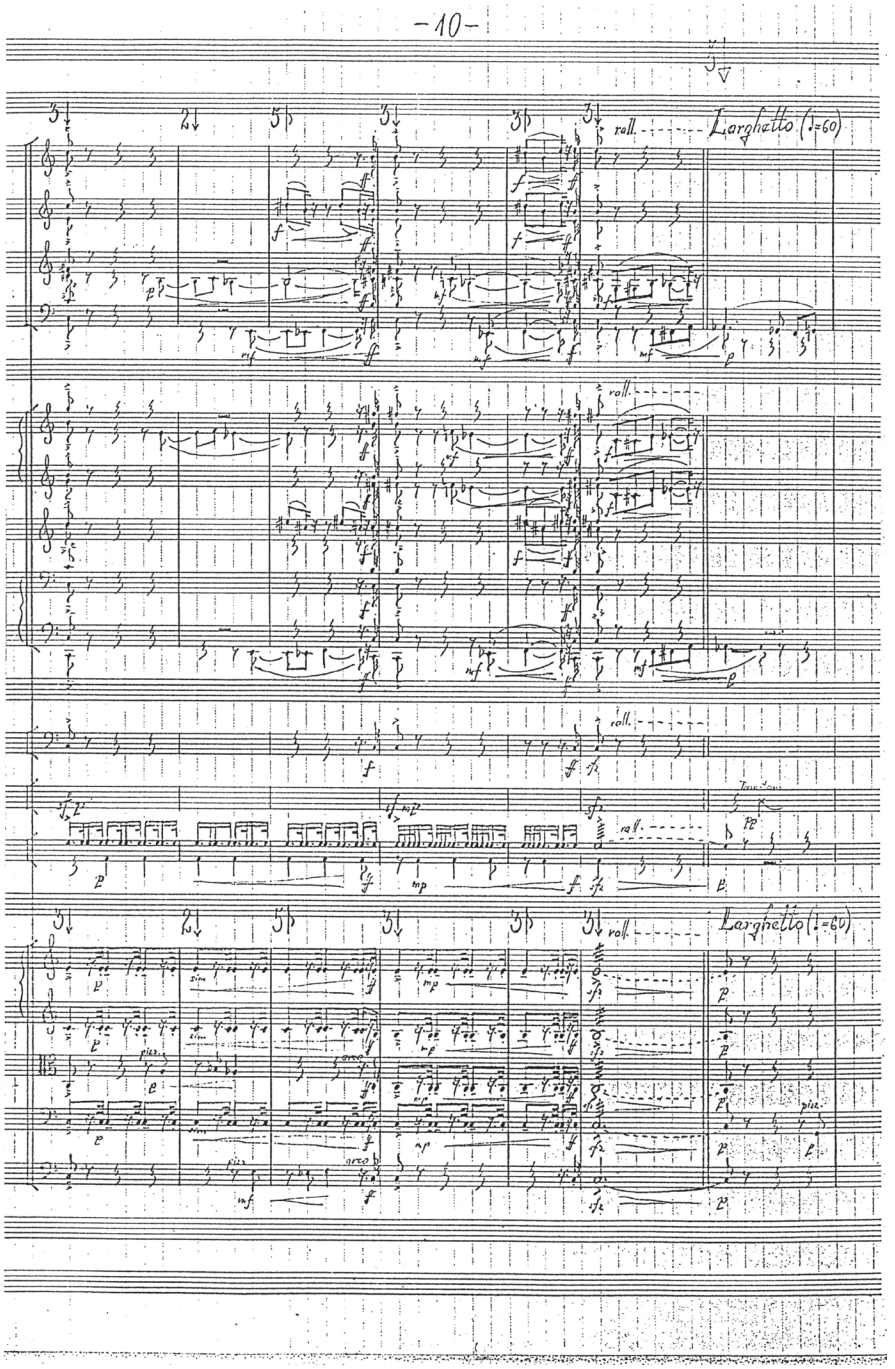


51 brings the material of the introduction and continues to expose the remaining six tones of the series (C – E – B – F – F♯ – A♭ – A) and separates the section B at the same time, in which the composer elaborates the material of the song *Moja žena* (Larghetto) in the bassoon in a dodecaphonic way (see *Examples 8* and *9*). The subject is exposed here a total of four times, always with a different descant on the principle of contrapuntal variations or passacaglia.

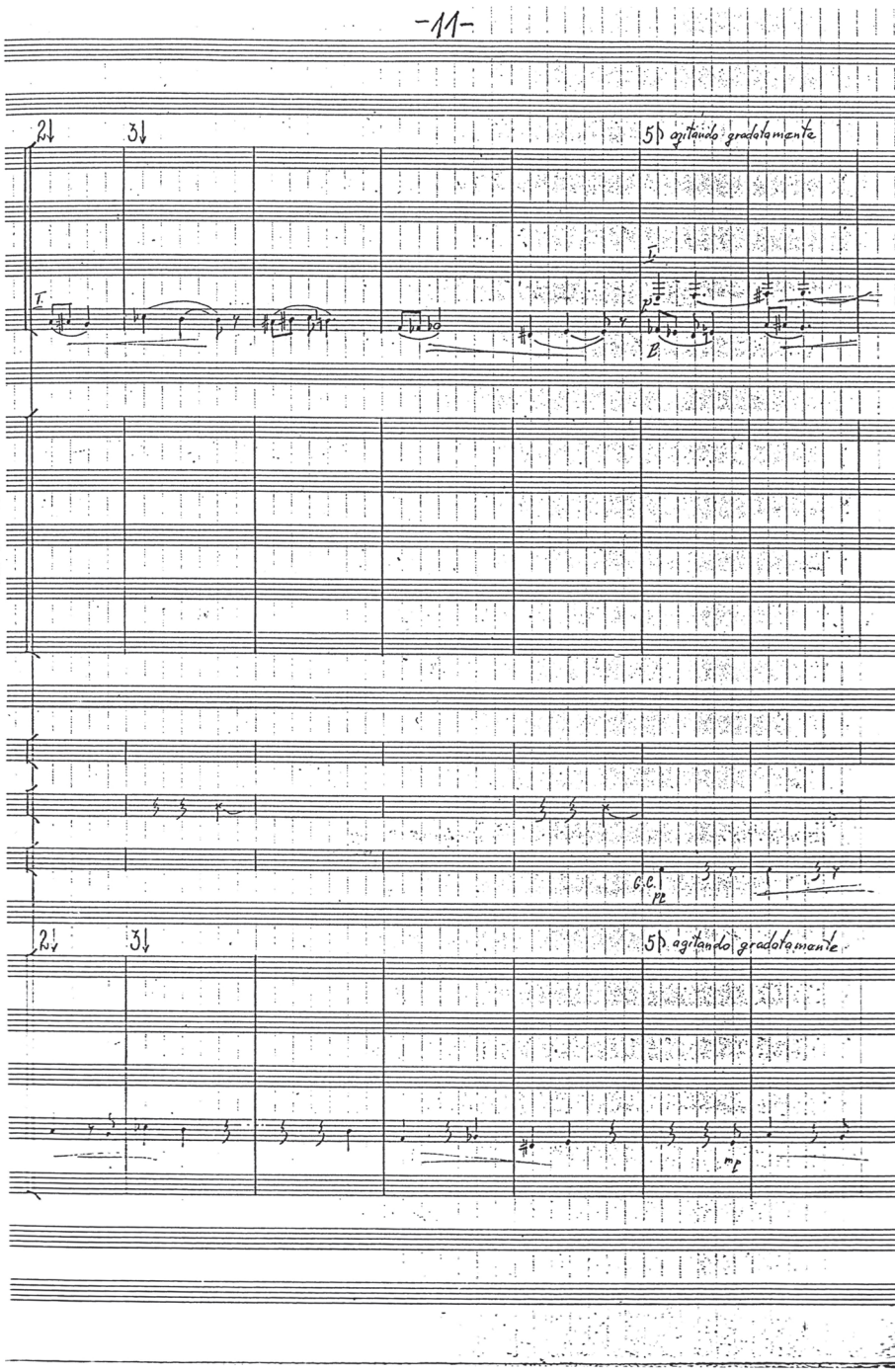
EXAMPLE 8 Folk song *Moja žena* [My wife]



Example 9 Jozef Podprocký, First Symphony (1987), bars 55–68



EXAMPLE 9 continuation



Podprocký's Symphony No. 1 represents in itself an original combination of folk inspiration and dodecaphony – for the ideologists of socialist realism as well as for the advocates of naive folklorism, two incompatible opposites. His music reveals a brilliant handling of traditional compositional devices and forms beginning with a song to sonata form, which labels him as a traditional composer, distinguishing Podprocký radically from Salva, despite the fact that the traditionalism he used is totally different from that of Moyzes's.

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The goal of this study was to present various examples for the application of folklore elements in Slovak music from a developmental viewpoint as well as to highlight the ideological and social aspects of the phenomenon. The selected samples represent extreme poles of folklorism in 20th-century Slovak music. Between them the wide scale of the solutions to the issue of "Slovak character" in music spreads, embodied in a number of compositions of high as well as of lower artistic quality.

In any case, folklore inspiration was undoubtably the strongest impulse for the formation of Slovak national music; we could say it made an essential contribution to its very creation in the first half of the 20th century. Therefore it is understandable that the encounter with this phenomenon is present in the whole development of Slovak music and extends to the present day.