

Benjamin Rajeczky and Polish Musicology

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Abstract: Benjamin Rajeczky very much influenced the Hungarian school of ethnomusicology. He was very successful in organizing international studies of European folk traditions, too. In Poland he was especially interested in laments (from 1962). He took part in the field work. Some examples of Polish laments were published in 1971 (Bielawski). Rajeczky took part in the International Congress “Musica Antiqua Europae Orientalis” in Bydgoszcz (1966). The musicological themes of the Hungarian school are also continued in Poland. International relations become so frequent that the ideas could freely cross national borders.

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Benjamin Rajeczky was an outstanding figure of Hungarian music history, ethnomusicology and music education. He was also very successful in organizing international studies of European folk traditions, and – what we very much appreciated – he often expressed the friendship between Hungary and Poland.

Through in his multi-faceted activities he showed the different sides of his rich individuality. As a catholic priest and monk, he remained faithful to Christian values in the unfriendly totalitarian system which changed only in the year of his death. When trips from Warsaw to the splendid and friendly Budapest became possible and fashionable, then we toured the churches alone, and we were driven by the priest Rajeczky to the Mátyás Pince for Hungarian wine and Gipsy music, before the time when Bálint Sárosi managed to convince the Hungarians that Gipsy music belongs to their authentic cultural tradition.

Benjamin Rajeczky very much influenced the famous Hungarian school of ethnomusicology which was dominated by two powerful personalities: Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. He enriched this school with historical depth and a broader anthropological perspective. But he mostly acquired fame as the creator of the Hungarian historical school of medieval music, which in an original manner synthesized the experiences of music history and ethnomusicology. Also – what we often forget – he was also a significant figure in Hungarian

musical education. Before the war Rajeczky already became a legendary music teacher. Though removed from the educational system by the communists, he remained a teacher throughout his life, and as such he is recorded in our memory. He did not create a professor's distance, he felt comfortable with us younger ones as we did with him. He was an active man, dynamic, and able to stimulate others to different activities. Officially he was not a teacher. As a professor at the Liszt Ferenc Music Academy in Budapest he was first nominated when already a pensioner, but unofficially he had many students, not only in Hungary. Rajeczky was in a sense a precursor of the successes of the Hungarian school of music pedagogy, which from the sixties became famous in the world as the Kodály method. The International Kodály Society was established in 1975 with participation of Polish members. In the year of Kodály's centenary birthday the Polish Kodály Section of ISME in Warsaw was founded under the leadership of Wojciech Jankowski, who was later honored with "Pro Cultura Hungarica". The Polish adaptation of the Kodály method was published by Katarzyna J. Dadak-Kozicka as *"Sing for me as you can"*. *Music-making in the school according to Kodály's ideas* (1992). In the preface she expressed her thanks to Ida Erdei, Mihály Ittész and Klára Nemes. Real success in general musical education are rare in Poland and we can only admire the Hungarians and envy their results.

From the beginning of his professional career Rajeczky was active as a collector of folk songs and melodies, working in the old way, that is, writing down mostly from hearing. Soon he became a high class expert in the transcription of recordings on an international scale. Doris Stockmann from Berlin, well-known for this activity, is proud to have belonged to his school. Lujza Tari qualifies Bartók's method as prescriptive, Kodály's method as descriptive, and Rajeczky's method as uniting fire with water, synthesizing the prescriptive and descriptive methods. In Poland Łucjan Kamieński (1936) before world war II was an extreme descriptivist, while most of his successors preferred rather Bartók's prescriptive method. Thanks to the availability of sound recordings, the importance of transcription has declined in our times.

The main area of Rajeczky's activity, which made his name in Europe, is the history of Gregorian chant and Hungarian folk music, and what is especially characteristic, the mutual connections of these spheres. We did not have a Rajeczky in Poland. We would have to combine two people together, and still it might not be enough to create one Rajeczky. Hieronim Feicht (1894–1967), seven years older than Rajeczky, was the historian of Polish music in the middle ages. In his memorial book Rajeczky wrote an article. In contrast to Rajeczky, the priest Feicht even in the worst times of communist pressure was a university lecturer. In Warsaw and Lublin he educated a generation of spe-

cialists in the history of medieval music, but most of them are not interested in the connection between Gregorian chant and folk traditions. Bolesław Bartkowski, who organized the campaign to collect religious folk songs in living tradition, was an exception. Rajeczky and his successors: Zoltán Falvy, Janka Szendrei, László Doboszay, have not only been quoted but also printed in Poland. Recently an article by Janka Szendrei became an ornament of the splendid volume *Notae Musicae Artis. Musical Notation in Polish Sources from XI–XVI centuries* (1999) edited by Elżbieta Zaremba-Witkowska.

Probably the first emissary of Hungarian ethnomusicology in Poland was Bálint Sárosi. He quickly learned Polish and became an ambassador for Polish ethnomusicology in Budapest and everywhere. I do not remember exactly when I heard the name of Rajeczky for the first time. He was one of the authors and editors of the *Studia Memoriae Belae Bartók Sacra* (1956) which soon became available in our Institute. Walter Wiora, when we visited him in Freiburg 1957, spoke of Rajeczky as one of the leading music ethnographers in eastern Europe. I remember Rajeczky's visit in 1962 to Poland. He wanted to take part in our field work. We chose the Kurpie Region with lively traditions, 100 km north-east of Warsaw. Rajeczky was especially interested in laments. We stopped the car when we saw two women working in the field. We introduced our guest from Hungary and translated his question whether in this region funeral laments were known. It was a surprise for us when without many requests they began to wail, first the older woman, then the younger. We had a lot of experience in field work, but nobody among us in Poland had asked for laments, Rajeczky was the first to do so. Frankly speaking, what we had recorded was not singing, but a tearful recitation of improvised words. A real musical form of laments had not been met. In the Polish literature melodious lamentations were noted by Oskar Kolberg only by the Ukrainian peasants in 19th century. Later I could personally experience that even in regions as Karelia (Finland), where melodious laments survive to this day, sometimes the performers only recite them, at least in the artificial situation of ethnographic interview. I have published some examples of Polish laments in my doctoral thesis about *The Rhythm of Polish Folk Songs* (1971). Later Alicja Trojanowicz studied this problem in detail and presented the results in her monograph *Laments, Rhymes and Calls in Polish Folklore* (1989), referring in the introduction to Kiss–Rajeczky's *Laments (Corpus Musicae Popularis Hungaricae V, 1966)* as one of the greatest post-war achievements of European ethnomusicology. This large volume, translated in English, has changed the image of the Hungarian school of ethnomusicology, associated hitherto mostly with analysis and systematization of melodies, with a review of their stylistic prop-

erties in their geographical and historical perspective. The versatile Rajeczky's introduction enriched Hungarian ethnomusicology with new dimensions, like cultural context, customs, performing situations, mode of transmission and symbolic content. The publication popularized this new image in the world. And let us remember that it appeared only two years after Alan Merriam's *The Anthropology of Music* (1964), before John Blacking's *How Musical is Man?* (1973), ten years before my *Zonal Theory of Time and its significance for Musical Anthropology* (1976) and almost twenty years before Wolfgang Suppan's *Der musizierende Mensch. Eine Anthropologie der Musik* (1984). As regards the range and elaboration of sources of musical folklore, the only Polish publication that can be compared to Hungarian *Laments* is *Kaszuby* (Cassubia) from the series *Polish folk songs and music – sources and materials*, finished at the beginning of the eighties and published first in 1997–98, but unfortunately, it is not translated in English.

Thanks to the encouragement and help of Rajeczky in 1964 I could take part for the first time in the congress of International Folk Music Council in Budapest. Greeting us at the entrance of the congress-hall Rajeczky said: to contact foreigners you need only a few words and then remember to smile. Rajeczky always smiled, though he spoke perfectly many languages. I published a detailed report on this congress and today I feel shocked to see that the name of Rajeczky does not appear in it. Why? One should remember that in 1964 Kodály was at the top of his fame, honored in two international congresses in Budapest. The first glorified in the world Hungarian music pedagogy, and the second – Hungarian ethnomusicology. The second congress was dominated by two themes. Regarding the first, devoted to the relation of folk music to the history of music, the Hungarian lecturer Bence Szabolcsi (1899–1973), a professor at the Liszt Ferenc Music Academy, did not even mention the problem of Gregorian chant in which Rajeczky was a specialist. The second theme, concerning the methods of classification of folk melodies, was presented by Pál Járdányi, the main Hungarian expert of those days who synthesized the findings of Bartók and Kodály. It was only after this congress that the main successes of Rajeczky and the close Hungarian–Polish cooperation began. In 1966 the above mentioned volume of Hungarian laments appeared, and Rajeczky took part in the International Congress “Musica Antiqua Europae Orientalis” in Bydgoszcz (Poland), where problems of Gregorian chant have always been present. In 1967 an epoch in Hungarian and Polish folklore research at choral music was finished. Kodály died, and Rajeczky took over its management. In Poland Hieronim Feicht died and also Marian Sobieski, the organizer of ethnomusicological research in the post-war period.

Rajeczky with a group of his colleagues attended the seminar of the Study Group on Folk Music Systematization (IFMC) in Radziejowice, the first one organized in Poland. The same year, together with Walter Wiora and Wolfgang Suppan, he initiated in Freiburg (Germany) a cycle of seminars of the Study Group on Historical Folk Music Sources (IFMC). In both of these groups Rajeczky was very active and patronized the younger generation of researchers. International relations become so frequent that the ideas could freely cross national borders. The classical themes of the Hungarian school are also continued in Poland.

The Hungarian school was dominated by the idea of constructing one classification system for the whole repertoire of Hungarian folk melodies. In Poland the publications traditionally referred to particular regions only. But it is worth noticing that in Rajeczky's work the regional perspective also plays a significant role. Regional arrangement of the material can be seen in the Hungarian *Laments* (*Corpus Musicae Popularis Hungaricae V*). Rajeczky also published folk songs and tunes from selected regions.

It was already Bartók who distinguished the main styles of Hungarian folk music. According to these, and not to performing styles, Rajeczky even organized selections of recordings of Hungarian music. The most important differentiating feature of these styles, namely the place of melodic culmination at the beginning, in the center or at the end of the melody, was used by Zbigniew Przerembski in the statistical analysis of Polish material from different regions (1994). Using selected examples, Przerembski showed also the regular differentiation of Europe in this respect (1995). It would be worth examining how this problem appears in the singing repertoires of different periods of the European history, beginning with Gregorian chant.

Rajeczky and his school (Falvy, Dobszay, Szendrei) caused the greatest revolution in the systematization of Hungarian melodies. The three styles were replaced by a dozen or so melodic types. I still do not know to what extent the distinguished types are specific to Hungarian folk music, and to what extent they are spread in European culture and history.

The success of Hungarian comparative studies is based on the complete systematization of Hungarian folk melodies, created by several generations of research. This systematization was also the starting point for comparative studies of Gregorian chant and Hungarian religious songs from different times. We do not have such a complex base of folk melodies in Poland. Our well ordered material refers only to selected regions. The collecting of religious folk songs from living tradition was started in the seventies at Lublin Catholic University. The most important scientific result is a synthesis of styles and forms of songs by Bolesław Bartkowski (1987). Before his sudden

death he published an important paper on *Gregorian Chant and its Relation to Folk Music and Religious Song in Poland* (1995).

In the past decade in Poland the idea of creating electronic databases of melodies has been revived. Already in 1964 at the congress of IFMC in Budapest the possibilities of such a method were demonstrated using sample of 1000 folk melodies put into the memory of a large computer in the computational center may be of the finance ministry. In the era of personal computers the idea was undertaken again by Helmut Schaffrath in Essen (Germany). After his death his database was transferred to the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, and is being continued by Ewa Dahlig. It includes over 20000 European melodies, mostly German. The Polish material consists of some 5000 items. A similar database has been created in the Institute of Musicology of the Jagellonian University in Kraków, containing Polish religious songs from historic sources. For comparative purposes this collection has been enlarged by melodies from the main Czech and German sources. This shows that there are good conditions for the developing of comparative studies directly linked to the results of the Hungarian school of Rajeczky.

To finish let me mention a new study by a young Polish musicologist, Paweł Gancarczyk: *Musica scripto. Mensural Codices in Eastern Latin Europe in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century* (2001), taking into account also Hungary and Poland. The author unconsciously continues Rajeczky's ideas, but Rajeczky himself is for him almost a mythical figure from the distant past. The cover of this Polish study is decorated by a beautiful Hungarian miniature from the Graduale of king Matthias Corvinus from about 1488. With this symbolic accent I end my statements.

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