Invention, Form, Narrative in Béla Bartók's Music*

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Abstract: In spite of his mistrust in giving public explanations about his compositions, Bartók worked with great care on what we may call the narrative of a piece – the *"spirit of the work"* in his phrasing (spirit in the sense of the German *Geist,* the meaning, the characteristic quality). His *"plans were concerned with the spirit of the new work and with technical problems (for instance, formal structure involved by the spirit of the work)"* (Harvard Lectures, 1943). The best source to understand the narrative of multi-movement Bartók works is a close study of the creative process, primarily the sketches and the draft. The genesis of the Violin Concerto (1937–1938) reveals that to Zoltán Székely's request in 1936 Bartók first proposed a one-movement *Konzertstück* in variation form, i.e. the second movement. In the next step a full-size sonata-form piece emerging from the *Tempo di verbunkos* opening theme (as Bartók identified its character) of the present first movement could also have been an alternative one-movement *Konzertstück* of considerable size. Thus Bartók created two independent narratives: one for a fascinating variation, another for a big sonata-form movement written in a warmly melodic style with a special strategy of variations of the themes. Finally, because his violinist was expecting a regular three-movement concerto, by the addition of a finale he fulfilled the commission.

Keywords: Béla Bartók, compositional process, narrative

Instead of applying a modern approach of style analysis, which would be so much simpler and challenging for a musicologist today, let us consider the music of Béla Bartók in a way he himself thought about his major compositions: that a new piece of music will be played and must be strong enough in public concerts shoulder to shoulder with Beethoven, Brahms, or any music of the classical repertoire. In this context stylistic integrity or the presence of a characteristic structural design is not enough. Each new work will be compared with the canon of the genre; each new composition must be strikingly original in one way or another.

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Elsewhere I discussed that Bartók did not like to speak about his concepts or explain his works in program notes.[1] According to his experiences, people either accepted a new composition because the music itself made a strong impression, or they did not. As assistance to the "content" of a work – except the explanation of the program of the *Kossuth* Symphony[2] –, an appropriate title was the most that Bartók gave, frequently in piano music, occasionally for the movements of a symphonic work,[3] and rarely in chamber music scores.[4] Titles sometimes suggest that the piece has program music connotations, the details of which, however, the composer deliberately did not elucidate.[5] More often, beyond the folk music based sets too, Bartók's titles refer to folk-music genres, characters, and instruments;[6] but also to genres that refer to the romantic repertoire;[7] or even to *clavecin* pieces in Couperin's time.[8] Because of the great variety of utmost suggestive and descriptive titles, it is easy to approach the 153 pieces of *Mikrokosmos*[9] as a guide to the semantics of Bartók's musical world, a potential key to hidden narratives. But of course modern narrat-

[1] László Somfai, *Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts, and Autograph Sources* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), 10–24.

[2] The original Hungarian and German version of Bartók's program note on *Kossuth,* and the 1904 English translation see in Denijs Dille (ed.), *Documenta Bartókiana Heft 1* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1964), 70–73, 80–89; an English translation also in Benjamin Suchoff (ed.), *Béla Bartók Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), 399–403.

[3] Beyond the famous two-movement contrasting structures ("In Full Flower" and "Village Dance" in *Two Pictures*; "One Ideal" and "One Grotesque" in *Two Portraits*), and the folk-music based titles in arrangements, in most cases conventional genre titles and perhaps more telling, but basically not quite clear titles are mixed up. As are "Giuoco delle coppie" and the much discussed "Intermezzo interroto", together with the more traditional "Introduzione," "Elegia," and "Finale" (Concerto for Orchestra); "Marcia funebre" with "Preludio," "Scherzo" and "Intermezzo" (*Four Orchestral Pieces*); "Scena della Puszta" with "Serenata," "Allegro diabolico" and "Per finire" (in the two-piano version of the Second Suite for Orchestra); "Bevezetés", "Hallgató," "Ugrós tánc," "Mélázó," "Befejező" [Introduction, *Hallgató* (= music for listening, a Hungarian popular music title from the 19th century, meaning that the tune is not for dancing), Jumping Dance, Day-Dreaming, Finale] (First Suite for Orchestra, in the manuscript only).

[4] In addition to the 44 titles of the Duos for two violins, in which the majority of titles has a reference to folk-music customs and characters, see "Verbunkos", "Pihenő", "Sebes" [Recruiting Dance, Relaxation, Fast Dance] in *Contrasts.*

[5] "Elle est morte (Lento funebre)" and "Valse: ma mie qui danse" in *Fourteen Bagatelles*; "Portrait of a Girl" and "See-Saw, Dickory Daw" in *Seven Sketches*; "Quarrel" and "A Bit Drunk" in *Three Burlesques,* etc.

[6] "In Wallachian Style" in *Seven Sketches,* but mostly in *Mikrokosmos.*

[7] *Quatre nénies*; "Barcarolla" and "The Chase" in *Out Doors*, etc.

[8] "With Drums and Pipes" and "Musettes" in *Out Doors*; "Menuetto", "Air", "Marcia delle bestie", Tambourine" in *Nine Little Piano Pieces,* etc.

[9] There is a problematic but important source, which gives insight into the proper meaning of the titles, and Bartók's musical and pedagogical intentions in *Mikrokosmos*. In 1944 an American piano teacher, Ann Chenée noted down Bartók's commentaries to the individual pieces (published in Benjamin Suchoff's *Guide to Bartók's Mikrokosmos*, 1957). Some of her notes prove that she misunderstood Bartók here and there, nevertheless, we read quite detailed Bartók comments on the folk-music background (e.g. no. 113: "the theme is Hungarian and the rhythm is Bulgarian"; no. 40: "imitation of Yugoslav bagpipes"; the end of no. 138: "as the air is going out of a bagpipe"; no. 146: the 2nd page of *Ostinato* "suggests Bulgarian pipes"); ample explanation of rhythmic styles, of keys and modes, of the pentatonic scale, of what Bartók meant by genuine polytonality; statements on programmatic issues (e.g. the story of no. 142 *From the Diary of a Fly*).

ology is focusing not on short character pieces but primarily on complex works.[10]

In spite of his mistrust in giving public explanations, Bartók worked with great care on what we call the narrative of a piece – the *"spirit of the work"* in Bartók's English phrasing; "spirit" apparently in the sense of the German *Geist,* the meaning, the characteristic quality. In the Harvard Lectures (1943), the only occasion that Bartók went into significant technical details of his style, he made a statement, with a somewhat cryptic reference to the spirit of the individual works:

> I never created new theories in advance, I hated such ideas. … This attitude does not mean that I composed without prealably [preliminary] set plans and without sufficient control. The plans were concerned with the spirit of the new work and with technical problems (for instance, formal structure involved by the spirit of the work), all more or less instinctively felt …[11]

If Bartók did not expose the spirit of his major instrumental compositions, our best source to understand the narrative (the plot or the secret plan) of a multi-movement work is a close study of the creative process, primarily the sketches and the draft, with special care for substantial corrections or alternative routes in the course of the composition. This branch of scholarship on Bartók is relatively young. As a result of the unnatural development of Bartók studies (up to the late 1980s the sources were split between two archives, one in New York, the other in Budapest, without civilized communication), the major part of the analyses were written without access to his sketches and drafts.[12]

Based on my recent studies of the manuscript source material of the complete oeuvre – since the 1996 book *Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts, and*

Furthermore references to composers and their techniques (nos. 15, 17, 91: references to Bach; no. 80: "atmosphere like Schumann's music"; no. 83: "similar to theme in *Petrouchka*"; no. 97: "reminiscent of Chopin or Scriabin"; no. 102: Schoenberg's, Cowell's use of harmonics on piano; no. 117: Couperin; no. 151: "very much in the style of Gershwin"), etc. As to the titles in *Mikrokosmos,* Bartók's vocabulary and imagination is indeed inexhaustible. In addition to titles defining piano techniques, species of counterpoint, featuring tonal or modal characteristics or simply intervals, pointing towards national styles or geographic locations, genres and dance types of Western music, the instruments and genres of folk music, there are hommage pieces, children's game and literary titles, "visual" titles (e.g. *Stumbling Wrestling*), "graphic" titles (e.g. *Line and Point Sub ect and Reflection*), etc.

10 In several of my earlier studies I detected and described what we would call the narrative of a piece today, see e.g. the analysis of "The Night's Music," "The Chase," and "Musettes" from *Out Doors* in Somfai, "Analytical Notes on Bartók's Piano Year if 1926," *Studia Musicologica* 1984, 5–17, 25–30; about Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 2, and Movement III of the Piano Sonata in Somfai, "Einfall, Konzept, Komposition und Revision bei Béla Bartók" in: Hermann Danuser, G nter Katzenberger (eds), *om Einfall zum Kunstwerk: Der Kompositionsproze in der Musik des 2 . ahr hunderts* (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1993), 191–197, 203–209.

11 *Béla Bartók Essays,* 376. The word "prealably," anglicized from the French *préalable* [preliminary], clearly written in Bartók's autograph draft of the text of the Harvard Lectures, is omitted in the Essays volume.

12 See Somfai, *Béla Bartók: Composition,* 1–6.

Autograph Sources I work intensively on the thematic catalogue and on volumes of the forthcoming *Béla Bartók Complete Critical Edition* –, this study will discuss the birth of Bartók's ideas and the revision of his plans in a broader context. The Violin Concerto (1937–1938) will serve as an example, but the aim of the argumentation is to show that just as the birth and crystallization of the most-analyzed emblematic symmetrical structure (the five-movement or five-part arch form or bridge form) in the middle period, getting rid of these strict symmetrical outlines were also unavoidable for Bartók.

The basic features of his so-called "Second" Violin Concerto[13] can be summarized as follows (see *Figure 1*). In contrast to the slow–fast two-movement early violin concerto dedicated to Stefi Geyer, which is rather two portraits (the portrait of the young girl and the violinist), this is a genuine three-movement concerto; perhaps retrograde in his oeuvre in one way because its first and last movement are built on the same themes just as it was typical for the majority of Bartók's multi-movement instrumental works between 1926 and 1934; but exceptional in another way because the second movement is a theme and variations, a rare form in Bartók's large-scale original compositions. And exceptional in yet another way: this "warmly melodic style"[14] was unknown in Bartók's music for a long period, no wonder that it did not seem to fit into the picture of the progressive Bartók (Pierre Boulez have not even mentioned the existence of the Violin Concerto in his infamous 1958 review of Bartók's music).[15] The birth of this melodic style has long been connected with the inspiration of the violin on the one hand, and with Bartók's new approach toward a less dissonant style on the other,[16] also embodied in the Divertimento and the Sixth String Quartet, both written immediately after the Violin Concerto.

The genesis of the composition reveals significant bits of information about the intended structure, and indirectly about the narrative, of the forth-

[13] Since the two-movement early concerto, written for Stefi Geyer in 1907/8, was not published in the composer's lifetime and in fact the compilation of *Two Portraits* (1911) so-to-speak terminated it by using the first movement as the first portrait (and leaving the second movement among the juvenile or not-to-be-published compositions), Bartók justly called the 1937/8 work as Violin Concerto, without number. With the posthumous 1959 publication of the early concerto the publisher arbitrarily numbered them as No. 1 and No. 2.

[14] Bence Szabolcsi's expression in *Bartók Béla élete* (1955), English translation in Ferenc Bónis (ed.), *Béla Bartók: His Life in Pictures,* 2nd edn (Budapest: Corvina, 1964), 62; see also Péter Laki, "Violin works and the Viola Concerto" in: Amanda Bayley (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bartók* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 145–148.

[15] Cf. the "Bartók" entry in the *Encyclopédie de la musique,* Tom I (Paris: Fasquelle, 1957); rev. German version in Boulez, *Anhaltspunkte. Essays* (Stuttgart: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1975).

[16] Perhaps the most erudite description of the style of the Violin Concerto is given in György Kroó, *A Guide to Bartók* (Budapest: Corvina, 1974), 201–207.

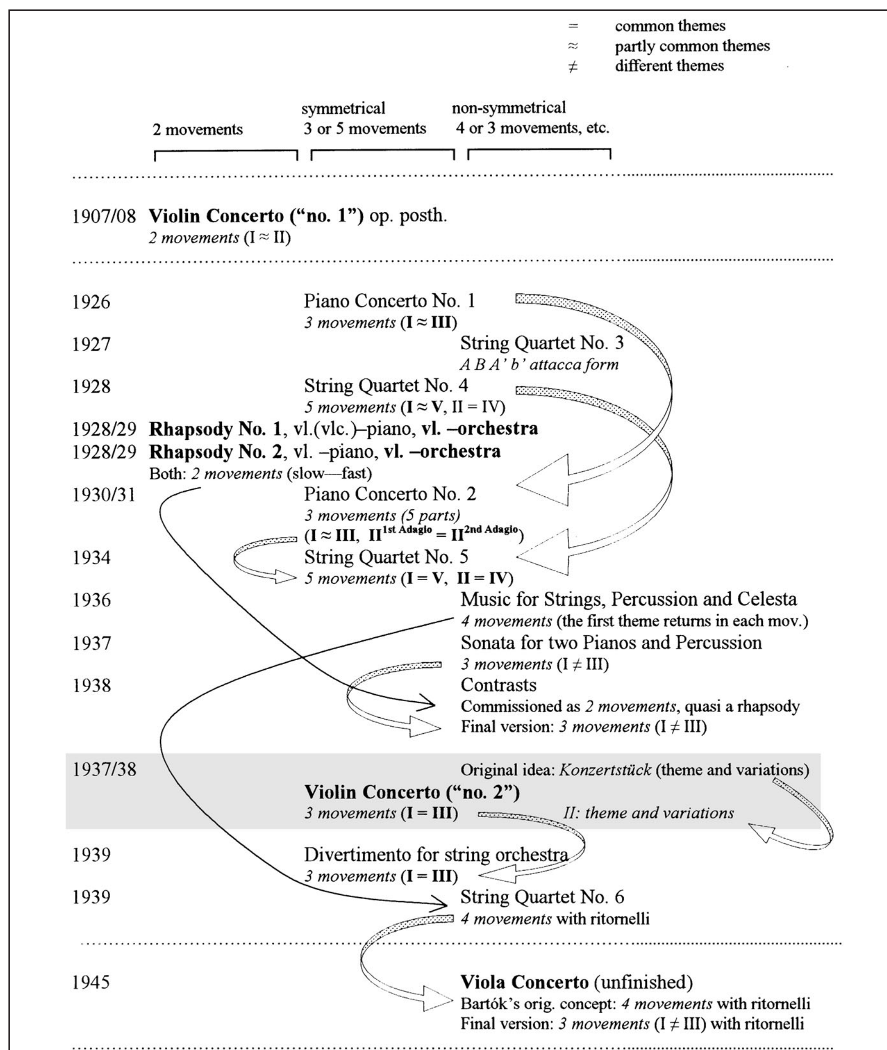


Figure 1: Context of the genre and structure

coming piece (see the chronology, *Figure 2*). To Zoltán Székely's[17] polite request whether his friend would write a violin concerto for him, Bartók proposed a one-movement *Konzertstück* in variation form. Incidentally,

[17] Zoltán Székely (1903–2001), Hungarian violinist (also active composer in the 1920s), in the 1930s resident in the Netherlands. He transcribed Bartók's *Rumanian Folk Dances* for violin and piano (1926), was the dedicatee of the Second Violin Rhapsody (1928), a friend of the composer in the 1930s. About their connection and further details of the composition of the Violin Concerto cf. Claude Kenneson, *Székely and Bartók: The Story of a Friendship* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1994).

1936 Aug. 10: Zoltán Székely in a letter to Bartók, who then works on *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta,* inquires whether the composer would write a violin concerto for him.

1936 Sept.: For Bartók's request Universal Edition Vienna sends the printed music of the violin concertos of Berg, Szymanowski, and Weill.

1937 Jan.: Composer and violinist meet; Bartók tells Székely that he will write a **one-movement *Konzertstück*,** variations. Székely asks him to make it a genuine **three-movement concerto**, which Bartók finally accepts. But, when the score is practically finished, Bartók makes a remark smilingly, that the variation principle is still present in the concerto, because Movements I and III are built on the same themes [*"úgy hogy sikerült kifognom rajtad, mégis variációkat írtam"* (Sept. 14, 1938)]. Mov. II of the concerto is theme and variations, a rare form in Bartók's mature work in large-scale original compositions.

Preliminary sketches for the Violin Concerto exist on two pages: the theme of Mov. II on a scrap paper (undated, probably 1936); furthermore two entries on another page (undated, in all probability 1937): the opening theme and the gradual formation of the 12-tone theme of Mov. I (on the back of the page: sketches for Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion 1937). The sketches are published in facsimile and in diplomatic transcription in *Documenta Bartókiana* 6, 1981, 247–255.

1937.aug.–1938.dec.31.: Date of the composition of the Violin Concerto as given in the score.

1937 Sept. 20: Székely visits Bartók in Budapest. For this occasion Bartók copies the solo violin part of the first 83 measures of Movement I from his short-score-form draft for a test performance, with tempo marking *Tempo di verbunkos*. NB: Due to the *Anschluss* of Austria (March 1938), the intensive composition is interrupted, Bartók returns to work only late 1938. The orchestration is finished in January 1939.

1939 March 4–7: Prior to the premiere, Székely and Bartók meet for rehearsals in Paris. Bartók changes notes, adds bars, finalizes the tempo, metronome markings, and duration. They agree on the articulation of the solo part.

1939 March 23, Amsterdam, premiere: Székely (vl.), Concertgebouw Orchestra, cond. by Willem Mengelberg. On Bartók's suggestion the percussions are placed inside the orchestra near the soloist. The premiere is recorded (first issued 1971 by Hungaroton LPX 11573).

1939 May: Boosey & Hawkes works on the engraving of the violin and piano reduction (house editor: Erwin Stein; printed 1940).

1944 Dec.: After successful performances in the USA, England, and Hungary (Tossy Spivakovsky, Yehudi Menuhin, Péter Szervánszky), playing from the lithographed copy of the manuscript, Boosey & Hawkes prepares the engraving of the full score. Bartók corrects it in July 1945 – the last existing proofs read by the composer. Full score and pocket score appear after Bartók's death, in 1946.

Figure 2: Violin Concerto 1937/38 – Chronology

Székely's letter reached Bartók in the middle of the composition of *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta,* the cornerstone of his revolt against his own much-favored symmetrical form. Thus Bartók's creative mind was fully occupied with new ideas about variation; about a central theme that re-emerges in each movement in different shape and function; about applying anything but three- or five-movement dramaturgy. Also in summer 1936, as a less rigorous structure, he planned to write an *"Orchesterstück ... eine Reihe kürzere*

Stücke," the concept of which then amalgamated into the present second movement of the Violin Concerto.[18] Bartók made the *Konzertstück* suggestion after he not only refreshed his memories about the classical masterworks of the genre (the violin concertos of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Brahms) but had a look at new scores too, including Alban Berg's concerto. Clearly his original intention was not writing a full-size traditional concerto but something modest in scope (the second movement, the realization of the initial plan, is about ten minutes), yet fascinating in style. Based on a beautiful tune in G (his own melody), it is a tour de force of what only the violin is capable to produce in eloquent singing, in declamation and meditation, in embellishing and passagework – this time, surprisingly, without significant folk-music allusions.

Here I will not discuss the sophisticated plan of the eight-part *attacca* structure of the second movement (see *Figure 3*). In a longer study[19] I already analyzed how Bartók, beyond the careful plan of keys and pitch collection, meter and rhythm, designed the sound (register, density, scoring), and how he created a form with historic references, starting with a quasi "Air & Double" (the theme and the first variation), also a "Scherzo & Double" before the Recapitulation, two nocturnal variations, *rubato* solos of two kinds, contrapuntal sections and alike. But it must be emphasized that this was his favorite concept of a *concertante* violin piece in 1936. Everything what happened after Székely quite understandably argued that he wanted to perform a genuine violin concerto, was a second thought only and involved problems. Problems in terms of

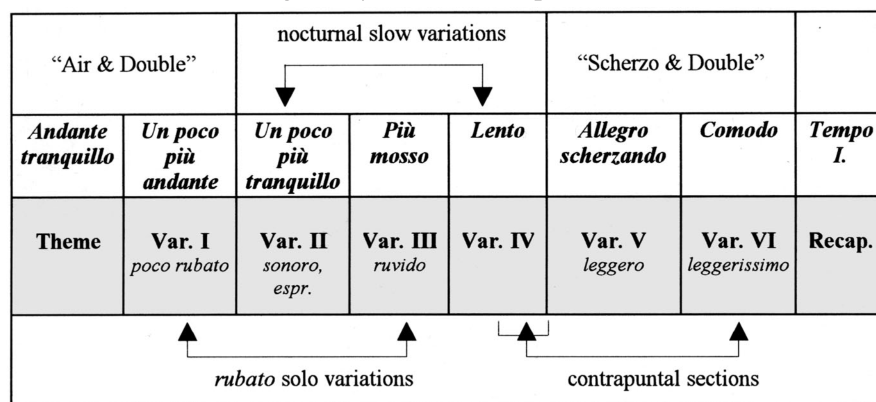


Figure 3: Movement II
The design of the form, planned as a one-movement *Konzertstück*

[18] 24 June 1936 letter to Universal Edition, cf. Somfai, "Strategics of Variation in the Second Movement of Bartók's Violin Concerto 1937–1938," *Studia Musicologica* 1977, 162.
[19] Idem, 161–202.

Proportions:
110 + 83 + 109 + 87 = 389 measures
Exp. Dev. Rec. Cadenza & Coda

EXPOSITION (110) themes in *original* form	RECAPITULATION (109) themes in *inversion* plus in *original* form
1– **1st theme**	194– **1st theme, *inversion* (beginning only)**
22– **transitory theme**	213– **1st theme, *original* (beginning only)**
43– (from 1st theme, orchestra)	220– **transitory theme, *original***
51– (from 1st theme, solo)	228– (from 1st theme, brass)
55– **2nd theme: Risoluto**	248– **2nd theme** and **3rd theme**, **Risoluto** and **Calmo** alternate; both in ***inversion*** plus ***original***
73– **3rd theme: Calmo**	
92– **4th theme: Vivace**	280– **4th theme: Vivace, *inversion*** plus ***original***

DEVELOPMENT (83)	CADENZA AND CODA (87)
111– (bridge)	303– *CADENZA* (41)
115– *piano*	344– *Vivace*
127– *espressivo*	364– **1st theme (the end), *original***
141– *semplice*	364– **transitory theme** and **CODA**
160– *Vivace*	–389

Figure 4: First movement – sonata-form strategies

the size of the work (the violin concerto, with a slower current of events, is considerably longer than Bartók's three-movement piano concertos); problems in the coherence of the concept (the first and third movements switch back to the already abandoned symmetrical form, with a structurally alien piece in between); but first and foremost problems in the style, because, in contrast to the sublime tone of the slow movement, the warmly melodic style of the opening theme speaks another language in Bartók's realm. This theme embodies an overtly Hungarian idiom; folk-music-inspired, in its embellishments related to the popular *verbunkos* [recruiting dance] and a Hungarian romantic mode. Undoubtedly such "problems" do not at all affect the high quality and recognition of the work as a whole. The violin concerto of Bartók belongs to the canon; violinists welcome the opportunity to present their

whole arsenal of *cantabile* styles and technique in an attractive big concert piece. Nevertheless, the stylistic and structural conflict exists.

To be fair, the sixteen-measure-long beautiful melody in B, the kernel of the opening movement, as it came to Bartók's mind when he started to think about a new concept of a violin concerto (the first notation see *Example 1*), was no less challenging than the slow variation theme. A full-size sonata-form piece emerging from this *Tempo di verbunkos* theme (as Bartók identified its character for Székely for a test performance)[20] could also have been an alternative one-movement *Konzertstück* of considerable size (according to Bartók's timing: 12' 16" music) – but his violinist was expecting a regular three-movement concerto.

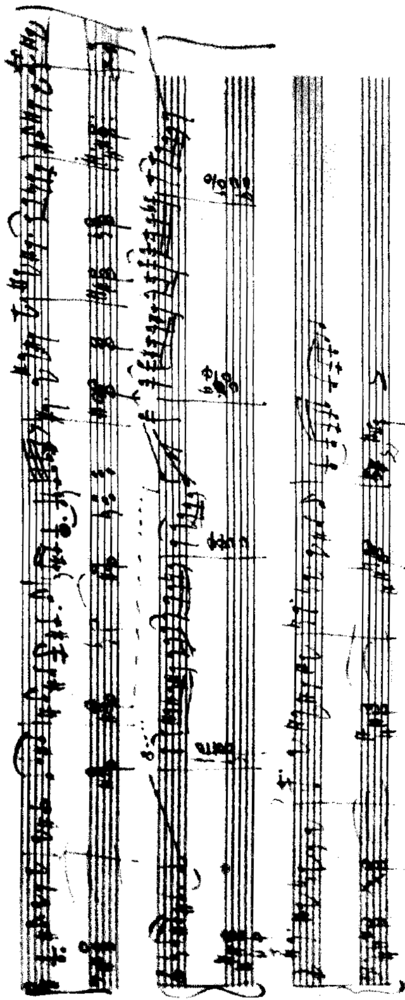
On the basis of the study of all existing sketches and drafts of Bartók I am convinced that the creation of this superb opening theme had to be an isolated act, without foreseeing the narrative. Bartók, so typical of him, was waiting for the inspiration: improvised at the piano, chiseled the first rough ideas. Only when he was satisfied with the launching point that embodied the "spirit of the new work," began Bartók to think about the "formal structure involved by the spirit of the work." Let us try to reconstruct the basic steps that followed from the potentials of this theme – and in doing so allow me to use a language that may be bizarre, because in it terms borrowed from the classification of folk songs are mixed up with compositional rationality and aesthetic categories; but this was the way how Bartók himself was thinking.

It is a fact that the opening theme (cf. *Example 3a*) is very much like "invented peasant music." Its form is a four-line stanza with A A^5 B C thematic content, typical for the "new-style" Hungarian folk songs (using Bartók's classification). In spite of the polymodal chromatic passages, it is emphatically tonal (mixolydian). As to the genre of the theme in terms of folk music: a peasant fiddler's ornamented performance of a vocal song as it were. From the structural point of view this is a well-shaped but much too long and hazardously closed arch-form melody; from the aesthetic point of view an idyllic scene that Bartók would not recapitulate in full length in unchanged form – the lost paradise that never again can be entered only dreamed of.

Bartók's well-established strategy for a sonata form, according to which themes come back in inversion in the recapitulation,[21] here presents an interesting situation. This is not a robust theme like e.g. the beginning of the Fifth

[20] The autograph sample page (test copy) of the violin part, the first 83 mm. of Movement I, titled *Tempo di verbunkos,* was found among Bartók's *Különféle* [Miscellaneous] papers left in Budapest (Bartók Archives of the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, BBA BH46/14).

[21] My interpretation of the step by step development of the symmetrical sonata-form head movements, with special regard to recapitulation strategies, see Somfai, *Béla Bartók: Composition,* 163–167.



Example 1: Movement I: sketch for the violin theme of the opening movement

Example 2: First page of the draft; under the violin theme side sketch for the theme of the finale ("old style" variant of the opening theme, in 3/4)

Example 3a: The stanza-like first theme of Movement I, *forte*. A A^5 B C form (4+4+4+4 measures)

Example 3b: Movement I, 194ff: recapitulation in inversion, *piano*, from the first two sections only

Example 3c: Movement I, 213ff: in original form, *piano*, from the first section only

Example 3d: Movement I, 364ff: after the cadenza, in original form, *fortissimo*, the third and fourth sections

Quartet governed by the stone-hard rhythmic profile, which in original form as well as in inversion has a very similar effect. This ascending arched melody cannot be turned into a descending arch, because for Bartók musical taste it would be unnatural. Unnatural, because no such thing exists in the folk music, and this theme was modeled on a composite of different folk-music phenomena. One may of course say that this argument is preposterous; here we are dealing with modern music from the 1930s and not with a folk-music essay. But in Bartók's inmost world modern music and folk music inspiration cannot be divided. A further point of conflict: in Hungarian folk music a gradually descending melodic contour characterizes the "old-style" which cannot be mixed with the "new style" ascending arch. As a matter of fact in the Violin Concerto Bartók had plans for using this quasi "old style" version too. Already in the draft short score, under the opening theme (see *Example 2*), disregarding the first four notes, he sketched the quasi "old-style" descending variant of his melody in 3/4 that became the first theme of the finale.

Returning to the first movement, in view of the indisputable fact that the inversion of the sixteen-measure-long full form of the opening theme would be "unnatural," from its four phrases Bartók recapitulates only the first two, in a dreamlike *piano*. By the way he put the second phrase, instead of a fifth down, a fourth up, thus even in inversion the themes seems to draw an ascending arch contour (*Example 3b*). Yet after a fragmentation Bartók returns to the original form of the beginning of the melody in ethereal height (*Example 3c*). From this point on, the other themes of the exposition (the *risoluto,* the *calmo* twelve-tone melody, and the closing *vivace* theme)[22] also return in a way combining inversion and original form (in case of the twelve-tone theme, which already in the exposition included the O and I forms, R, RI, I and O return).[23] It is worth mentioning that while in the draft Bartók rewrote substantial sections in the bridge passage and the secondary theme area of the recapitulation, there was no hesitation about the destiny of the opening theme. The key moments of the narrative were carefully planned in advance. These included the role of the second half of the opening theme, left out from the recapitulation because in inversion it would have been absolutely nonsensical. Bartók releases this part of the opening theme after the cadenza as a homecoming, the Hungarian emotional climax of the whole movement (*Example 3d*).[24]

22 The *risoluto* theme: 56 and 248, resp.; the *calmo* theme: 73 and 255, resp.; the *vivace* theme: 92 and 280, resp.

23 A detailed description cf. Somfai, *Béla Bartók: Composition,* 158–163. In addition to the inversions, the phrases of the *risoluto* and the *calmo* sections are mixed up in a montage-like form, a favorite recapitulation strategy of Bartók.

24 Together with the third and fourth phrase of the theme played by the soloist, the first phrase also appears on the horn and then on woodwinds, legato and *espressivo*.

The narrative of the first movement is not at all alien to the *Cantata profana* plot[25] and forecasts the emotional implications of Bartók's emigration to America: the sweet home that you leave and cannot enter again only thirst for it.

It would lead us astray searching for the impact of this impressive narrative of the opening movement to the form of the three-movement composition as a whole. From the structural point of view the concerto has a rational finale, a typical Bartókian one: the themes are variants of the themes of the opening movement; besides the third movement offers a plum part for the protagonist, the violinist. The truth, however, is that – in spite of the already mentioned meaningful link, the first theme of the finale presenting the "old-style" version of the "new-style" opening theme of the first movement – there is no ongoing narrative for three movements. Bartók created two independent narratives, one for a fascinating variation, another for a big sonata-form movement written in a warmly melodic style, and then by the addition of a finale he fulfilled the commission for a regular concerto. By which it may not become a composition of perfect organic unity, nevertheless became a significant 20th-century representative of the canon of the violin concerto genre.

[25] From the wide-ranging *Cantata profana* literature see György Kroó's interpretation in Malcolm Gillies (ed.), *The Bartók Companion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), 424–437, and Tibor Tallián's glosses, *Béla Bartók: The Man and His Work* (Budapest: Corvina, 1981), 161–167.