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Richárd Erdős and his Bartók-recording from 1908

„Elindultam szép hazámból... és Átalmennék [sic] én a Tiszán ladikon... Énekli Erdős Richárd, a magy. kir. Opera tagja, Budapest.” Gramophone Concert Record 2-102832. matrix number: 4271r.¹

In the present study I will discuss a recording of Richárd Erdős, which is the very first recording of a piece by Béla Bartók, and I will try to identify the unknown pianist who accompanied Erdős on the recording session. In order to understand the topics about which I write, I have to make some detours – about versions of the pieces and about the terms – but I am sure that it will be interesting for the friends of the black discs as well. Even more so as these musicological detours contain important information about, for example, the Hungarian history of the phonograph, about confusing terms on disc labels, about frequent gramophone artists, and about Hungarian recording history.²

The first discography of the recordings of the works by Béla Bartók was published eight years after the death of the composer, in 1953, by Halsey Stevens.³ The earliest recording in this remarkable but incomplete list is the recording of the Second String Quartet, played by the Amar-Hindemith Quartet, from 1925.⁴ This recording was analysed by a Hungarian musicologist, János Breuer in the *Hindemith-Jahrbuch* in 1976.⁵ In his volume of studies he discusses this recording again but added that in 1981 – the centenary of Bartók’s birth – a Hungarian playwright, Endre Illés (1902–1986) claimed that when he was a child his father bought a gramophone recording of two folksong-arrangements by Bartók, performed by

¹ The text of the label of the disc preserved in the Pécs Sound Archives (Marton-Bajnai Collection).

² I have to offer my thanks to Ágnes Lux for her help in the English text.

³ Halsey Stevens: *The Life and Music of Béla Bartók*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 335–343.

⁴ Stevens, *ibid.*, 338.

⁵ János Breuer: „Die erste Bartók-Schallplatte. Das II. Streichquartett op. 17 in der Einspielung des Amar-Hindemith-Quartetts” Sonderdruck aus *Hindemith-Jahrbuch Annales Hindemith* 1976/V. 123–145.

Richárd Erdős and Béla Venczell in thirds (!).⁶ This recording had to be recorded before 1912 because of Erdős' early death. Even though I could not find this recording in my previous research, the possibility such a recording cannot be precluded; Erdős and Venczell made a lot of recordings together, mainly from Hungarian songs. According to a Hungarian collector, another recording of those two folksong-arrangements exists on the Favorite label, although that recording is also in hiding.

I know of two copies of the Gramophone Co. recording quoted above, one in the Pécs Sound Archives (Marton-Bajnai Collection) and another in the Music Collection of the Hungarian National Library (from the disc collection of József Kovács, shelf number: HN 37.136). On the label and in the recording ledgers you can only read the name of the singer and the titles of the two songs.⁷ The recording was made in the first months of 1908, so according to the current data that is the first recording of a piece by Béla Bartók (the earliest wax cylinder recordings by Bartók himself were made in 1910)⁸ – although Bartók's name is not there either on the label, or in the recording ledgers. This recording has not been discussed previously in the Bartók bibliography, and it is possible that Bartók did not know about it, although – according to the dates of his letters – he spent the first weeks of 1908 in Budapest,⁹ as the recently appointed piano teacher of the Music Academy. At the end of January he travelled to Vienna to try to prepare the performance of his orchestral Suite no. 2,¹⁰ and arrived back in Budapest on 10 February.¹¹ The end of his relationship with Stefi Geyer¹² can be dated some days thereafter.¹³ He travelled on 1 March to Kolozs county (now part of Romania) to continue his folk music research.¹⁴

The date of the recording is specifiable on the basis of the discography by Alan Kelly. The sound engineer of that recording, Max Hampe made recordings at the end of 1907 in Germany, and his 33 undated recordings from Hannover (matr. 3980r–3012r) were made at

⁶ János Breuer: „Egy korai Bartók-lemezöl” [About an early Bartók-disc] in: János Breuer: Kodály és kora. [Kodály and his time] (Kecskemét: Kodály Intézet, 2002): 120–133. 120.

⁷ I discuss the recordings of The Gramophone Company on the basis of the discography compiled by Alan Kelly, see: Alan Kelly: The Gramophone Company Catalogue. 1898–1954. ([s. l.]: private publication on CD-ROM, 2002).

⁸ Bartók's home recordings were published on LP: László Somfai – János Sebestyén – Zoltán Kocsis (ed.): Bartók Record Archives. Bartók Plays and Talks. 1912–1944. Private and family recordings, Fragments. Hungaroton LPX 12334–12338. On CD: Hungaroton HCD 12334–12337

⁹ See the letters of Bartók to Etelka Freund (8 January 1908) and to Volkmar Andreae (12 January 1908): János Demény (ed.): Bartók Béla levelei. [The letters of Béla Bartók] (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1976), 133. (hereinafter referred to as “Demény, letters”)

¹⁰ See the letter of Bartók to Etelka Freund on 31 January 1908. Demény, letters, 134.

¹¹ Béla Bartók jun.: Apám életének krónikája. [The chronicle of the life of my father]. Assistant editor: Adrienne Gombocz. (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1981) (= Napról napra... Nagy muzsikuskok életének krónikája 16), 97.

¹² Stefi Geyer (1888–1956) was a famous hungarian violinist, pupil of Jenő Hubay.

¹³ Tibor Tallián: Bartók Béla. (Budapest: Gondolat, 1981) (= Szentől szemben), 77.

¹⁴ Béla Bartók jun., *ibid.*, 97.

the turn of 1907 and 1908. The series in Budapest began after that, dated to 1908 (matr. 4013r–4284r). After the recordings in Budapest Hampe made 100 recordings in Zagreb (matr. 4286r–4385r), and the next Bosnian recordings were made in April 1908. We can assume that the Budapest recordings were made in the first weeks of 1908. Richárd Erdős sang several times on record that time, first operatic arias (4037r–4038r and 4105r–4108r), then at the end of the Budapest recording session Hungarian songs (4266r–4268r), a Hungarian song from the *kuruc* era (4269r) and finally the two folksong-arrangements by Bartók (4270r) with piano accompaniment. This recording was the last recording with piano accompaniment in Budapest in that session, the recordings of Teréz Krammer and Mihály Takáts made after Erdős were accompanied by an orchestra.

At that time Richárd Erdős was already a recognized opera singer. He was born in 1881 in Budapest, grew up in a Jewish orphanage, and sang in the choir of the synagogue already as a child. In 1903 he was engaged by the choir of the Royal Hungarian Opera House. His star was rising very fast: from 1904 he was a scholarship member of the Opera House; he studied singing – probably in Budapest – with Charles William Graeff. His successful debut at the Royal Hungarian Opera House was on 14 June 1904 in the role of Sarastro.¹⁵ After his scholarship years he was a member of the Opera House from 1906 to 1910 but at important holidays he continued to sing as a cantor in the synagogue in the Dohány Street as well.¹⁶ During his short membership at the Royal Hungarian Opera House he sang at some important Hungarian premières (as Colline in *La Bohème* by Puccini and as Antigonus in *Wintermärchen* by Goldmark) and played the role of a hermit at the world première of *Eliana* by Ödön Mihalovich. His most successful roles were Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* by Mozart, Marcel in *Les Huguenots* by Meyerbeer, Cardinal Brogni in *La Juive* by Halévy, Falstaff in *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor* by Nicolai and Mephisto in *Faust* by Gounod. In 1910 he broke his contract and accepted an engagement to Frankfurt am Main, where he became a member of the Opera House. He sang there at the world première of *Oberst Chabert* by Hermann Wolfgang von Wallershausen.¹⁷ In May and June 1911 he sang as a guest again in the Royal Hungarian Opera House to pay off the fine resulting from his breach of contract. In spring 1912 he sang as a guest at the Wagner cycle of the Népopera [Folk Opera House, today the Erkel Theatre] in Budapest. On 19 May 1912 he sang there the role of Daland in *Der*

¹⁵ According to the *Großes Sängerlexikon* by Kutsch and Riemens, Erdős sang first as Fasolt at the Royal Hungarian Opera House, but it is incorrect. K. J. Kutsch – Leo Riemens: *Großes Sängerlexikon*. 3. erweiterte Auflage. Bd. 2. (Bern und München: K. G. Saur, 1997): p. 1043.

¹⁶ Rezső Seltmann Dr.: „Erdős Richárd”, in: Péter Ujvári (Ed.): *Magyar Zsidó Lexikon* [Hungarian Hebrew Lexicon] (Budapest: Pallas, 1929), p. 237.

¹⁷ Kutsch – Riemens, *ibid.*

fliegende Holländer with Anton van Rooy as Holländer and Eva von der Osten as Senta. He became ill after the performance because of a serious heart disease and died some days later, on 9 June 1912 at the age of 31.¹⁸

The first recordings of Erdős were made in 1905, when he was a member of the Opera with a scholarship. These recordings are operatic arias and some Hungarian songs on Pathé cylinders (moulded cylinder), later published on discs as well.¹⁹ In the Pathé book of Girard and Barnes these recordings are dated to 1903,²⁰ but according to Christian Zwarg, there was not a Hungarian Pathé catalogue before December 1904. Furthermore, among these recordings you can find the famous aria of Colline from *La Bohème* by Giacomo Puccini. Since the Hungarian première of *La Bohème* was only in April 1905 with Erdős in the role of Colline, there is little reason to suppose – but we cannot exclude – that he learned the aria earlier. Also in 1905 Erdős recorded some titles for Lyrophon, with piano accompaniment by Emil Lichtenberg. From 1906 onwards, as a member of the Opera House, he recorded regularly for Favorite and for The Gramophone Company as well. After 1908 he recorded mainly for Első Magyar Hanglemezgyár and Beka. His Beka-recordings are available on Diadal Record, Scala Record and Rena Record as well. His last recordings were made in Berlin by Odeon International Talking Machine Company, at the time when he was a member of the Stadttheater Frankfurt a. M. He sings on those Odeon recordings in German.

His recorded repertoire has a very wide spectrum: he recorded operatic arias, art songs by Schubert and Schumann, Hungarian songs (*magyarnóta*), Hebrew songs and even a cabaret scene as well. It is remarkable that his first recordings for a company – except Beka – were usually operatic arias; only after those did he also record Hungarian songs. He recorded Hebrew songs for The Gramophone Company, Favorite and Első Magyar Hanglemezgyár. The speciality of Erdős was the *magyarnóta* sung in duet with Béla Venczell, another bass of the Royal Hungarian Opera House. They regularly recorded Hungarian songs together from 1907 onwards on several labels.

Erdős had a warm, heavy bass voice, and he was a great actor as well. For example, the Beka recording from the wine song of Falstaff (“Als Büblein klein...”, matr. 47408) testifies about his performer skills: at the beginning of the aria you can hear in his voice that he is smiling. As he sings the low notes you can imagine his Ochs in *Rosenkavalier* as well. In the

¹⁸ Erdős's son, Richard Erdoes was born some weeks after the death of the singer; he became later a famous writer. He died in 2008 in Santa Fé.

¹⁹ I have to offer my thanks to Christian Zwarg for his help to compile the discography of Erdős.

²⁰ Girard, Victor – Barnes, Harold M.: Vertical-cut Cylinders and Discs. A catalogue of all „Hill-&Dale” recordings of serious worth made and issued between 1897–1932 circa”. (London: British Institute of Recorded Sound, 1964): p. 52.

arias of Marcel (“Pif, paf, puf”) and Mefistofeles (“Le veau d’or”) he combines finely the singing and a speech-like voice. He can shout without making his voice ugly. His voice was able to show timbres through the funnel as well: on the Favorite recording of the aria of Marcel (matr. 4036-o) you can hear the change of the timbre when he becomes cruel. His Gramophone recording of *Die beiden Grenadiere* by Schumann (matr. 3720L) shows a noble bass voice, he sings that song almost as a dramatic scene.

Erdős recorded a lot of Hungarian songs (*magyarnóta*). In the slower, sorrowful songs you can hear his great voice, good sound-formation and natural singing. The interpretation of faster and merry Hungarian songs is different: he sings pertly and merrily, and often adds shouts (“Hej” or “Hej de” etc.) to the score.

There is a frequent confusion regarding the terms of the Hungarian songs that causes misunderstandings on gramophone discs as well.²¹ At the beginning of the twentieth century the term “népdal” (folksong) did not have an exact meaning. It meant mostly the folk inspired Hungarian art song – or Hungarian song –, the so called “magyarnóta”. That was the most popular genre at the turn of the century, it was sung by operatic and operetta singers and specialized *magyarnóta* singers (for example Loránd Fráter, who was also a *magyarnóta* composer), accompanied on recordings mainly by gypsy orchestras but also by the piano. It was called folksong as well, because of the folksy inspiration of the songs. In the first two decades of the twentieth century numerous recordings were made from such folk-inspired Hungarian songs (*magyarnóta*) – often with the subtitle “népdal” or “magyar népdal”. You can hear that on the early spoken announcements of the recordings as well, for example on the Lyrophon recording of Richárd Erdős and Emil Lichtenberg from a *magyarnóta* composed by Pista Dankó (Lyrophon No. 6291, matr. 6291): “Eltörött a hegedűm. Magyar népdal. Énekli Erdős Richárd.” [Eltörött a hegedűm. Hungarian folksong. Sung by Richárd Erdős.]²²

The main differences between *népdal* (folksong) and *magyarnóta* (folk inspired art song) are that in most cases we know the composer of the *magyarnóta*, while the folksongs do not have a definitive notated version, they spread through oral tradition. The *magyarnóta* is a genre of the cities, not of the village or the countryside. The scientific research of the real Hungarian folksongs began in the last decade of the nineteenth century, when a Hungarian ethnologist, Béla Vikár began to record authentic folksongs in Hungarian villages with a

²¹ For further discussion about the Hungarian folksongs see: László Dobszay: „Folksong Classification in Hungary. Some Methodological Conclusions” in: *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* T. 30, Fasc. 1/4 (1988), pp. 235–280, about the Hungarian folk inspired art songs see: György Kerényi (ed.): *Volkstümliche Lieder*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1964). (= Zoltán Kodály (ed.): *Volksmusikbibliothek* 3).

²² The recording is available in the Pécs Sound Archives (Marton-Bajnai Collection).

phonograph at Christmas 1896.²³ That was perhaps the first use of the phonograph in scientific research in Europe. One decade later Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály continued that work, and in 1906 – when they published the volume of *Magyar népdalok* (Hungarian Folksongs, a volume of 20 folksong-arrangements, ten by Bartók and ten by Kodály, the first two folksong-arrangements can be heard on the recording of Erdős) – Bartók and Kodály already had a decided program with that publication: to acquaint the Hungarian people with the real Hungarian folksongs (as Bartók said: “peasant songs”). They recorded folksongs and folk dances with a phonograph in Hungarian villages; some of these phonograph recordings were published in the middle of the twentieth century. The first authentic folksong recordings on Hungarian gramophone discs were made in 1914 in Budapest for the Museum of Ethnography, but these were not published. In 1928 the Ministry for Religion and Education ordered His Master’s Voice discs to popularize the Hungarian music. That series did not contain authentic folksong recordings, only folksong arrangements by Bartók, Kodály and László Lajtha. Only from 1937 onwards was there authentic Hungarian folk music published on commercial recordings, on the Hungarian Patria label; that was the so-called Patria series. That was already a scientifically controlled series of recordings in the Hungarian Radio, directed by Béla Bartók and László Lajtha.²⁴

In order for us to understand all the further discussion, I have to add some information about these first folksong-arrangements made by Bartók and Kodály. The main subject of the present study, the first two folksong-arrangements (“Elindultam szép hazámból...” and “Általmennék én a Tiszán ladikon...”) exist at least in three different authorized versions,²⁵ but in all of the versions these two folksongs are next to each other. The published version (BB 42) had two later editions in Bartók’s lifetime: a re-printing in 1933/34 and a revised edition in 1938.²⁶ Four folksong-arrangements (without BB number), including “Elindultam szép hazámból...” and “Általmennék én a Tiszán...”, have another version as well, which was

²³ About Béla Vikár’s phonograph recordings see: Ferenc Sebő: Vikár Béla népzenei gyűjteménye. [The Folk Music Collection of Béla Vikár]. (Budapest: Hagyományok Háza, Néprajzi Múzeum, 2006).

²⁴ About the Patria series see: Ferenc Sebő (ed.): Patria. Magyar népzenei felvételek. 1936–1963. [Patria. Hungarian Folk Music Recordings. 1936–1963.] (Budapest: Hagyományok Háza, 2010).

²⁵ The three different versions of the Hungarian Folksongs were discussed by László Somfai on 15 July 2007 in Zürich, at the Congress of the International Musicological Society: „Changing Concepts of Folkmusic Arrangement in Bartók’s Œuvre”.

²⁶ Vera Lampert revealed the different later re-printing of the published version, see Vera Lampert: „A Bartók-Kodály Magyar népdalok második kiadása” [The second edition of the Magyar Népdalok by Bartók and Kodály] in: Zenetudományi dolgozatok 2003. II. kötet. [Musicological Studies 2003, Vol. 2] (Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet, 2003), 375–384. The 1938 third edition was discussed by Denijs Dille: Bartók Béla – Kodály Zoltán: Hungarian Folksongs for Song with Piano. Reprint of the original manuscript with commentaries by Denijs Dille (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1970). The BB numbers refer to the Béla Bartók Thematic Catalogue number, see László Somfai: Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts, and Autograph Sources. (Berkeley etc.: University of California Press, 1996). http://www.zti.hu/bartok/ba_en_06_m.htm?0101

performed first in Berlin in 1906 by Valerie and István Thomán. The pianist István Thomán – Ferenc Liszt’s pupil – was Bartók’s teacher at the Music Academy in Budapest, and he performed with his wife six Hungarian folksong-arrangements from manuscript – among them four by Bartók – in Berlin, but these arrangements are not identical with the published versions.²⁷ The third version (BB 97) has a special link to the gramophone history: when Bartók recorded some of his Hungarian folksong-arrangements in 1928 with Vilma Medgyaszay for the HMV series mentioned above, he played a new accompaniment.²⁸ That version was published in 1970 on the basis of some sketches by Bartók and his recordings.²⁹

	BB42	BB97
1906		[Thomán]
1906	1st ed.	
1928		HMV
1933/34	2nd ed.	
1938	3rd ed.	

The recording of Erdős is based on the first edition (1906), but differs from that to a certain degree. There are some bigger and a few smaller differences between the printed score and the recording. It is not a new, authorized version, only a good example of the interpretation of Bartók’s time and the „re-creation” of the interpreters. The most striking difference is that the piano accompanist played an introduction to both of the folksongs and a brief coda at the end of the recording.

²⁷ The manuscripts were preserved in the collection of the grandchild of István Thomán in Paris. About this version see: Klaus L. Neumann: „Ein neu aufgefundenes Autograph Bela Bartoks mit unbekanntem Volkslied-Bearbeitungen” in: Klaus Hortschansky – Axel Beer – Laurenz Lütteken (ed.): Festschrift Klaus Hortschansky zum 60. Geburtstag (Tutzing: Schneider, 1995), 505–515.

²⁸ His Master’s Voice 273070 and 273073, matr. BW2052-II and BW2053-I

²⁹ Béla Bartók: Five Hungarian Folksongs, for voice and piano (1928) recomposed from BB 42. Edited by Denijs Dille. Editio Musica Budapest, 1970.

Musical score for Example 1: Introduction to „Elindultam szép hazámból”. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It features a vocal line with rests and a piano accompaniment with chords and triplets in both hands.

Example 1: Introduction to „Elindultam szép hazámból” on the recording

Musical score for Example 2: Introduction to „Általmennék én a Tiszán...”. The score is in 4/8 time with a key signature of two flats. It features a vocal line with rests and a piano accompaniment with eighth-note patterns and triplets.

Example 2: Introduction to „Általmennék én a Tiszán...” on the recording

Musical score for Example 3: the short Coda on the recording. The score is in 4/8 time with a key signature of two flats. It features a vocal line with rests and a piano accompaniment with eighth-note patterns and a final chord.

Example 3: the short Coda on the recording

There are some other differences as well. The deviations in the first folksong can derive from the accompanying style of the *magyarnóta*: the chords are richer and arpeggiated, and there are some extra chords at places where Bartók wrote held chords.

Example 4: „Elindultam szép hazámból”, measures 5–8 in the score

Example 5: „Elindultam szép hazámból”, measures 5–8 on the recording

The chords in the left hand of the piano accompaniment of the second folksong are sometimes in different rhythm and position.

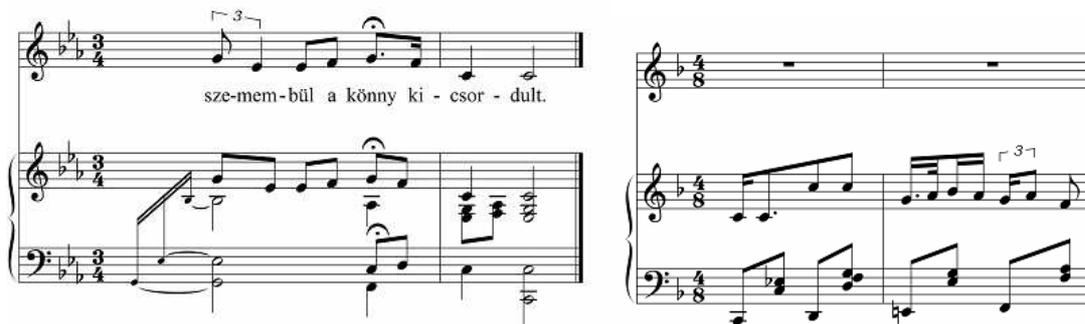
Example 6: „Általmennék én a Tiszán”, at the text „Ott lakik a városban” in the score

Example 7: „Általmennék én a Tiszán”, at the text „Ott lakik a városban” on the recording at the repetition

Despite the C major chord by Bartók, the pianist played a c minor chord at the beginning of the second folksong. It can be a mistake as well as a conscious linking of the two folksongs, since the pianist played c minor – instead of Bartók’s C major – at the end of the first folksong as well.



Example 8: The last two measures of „Elindultam szép hazámból” in the score



Example 9: ending of „Elindultam szép hazámból” and beginning of the piano introduction of „Általmennék én a Tiszán” on the recording

I assume that there is a real mistake at the repeated first measures of the second folksong: the pianist played three C major chords successively without any reason. Perhaps the E bass note – instead of the D – caused that problem, which was solved inconspicuously by the pianist.

Tánc lépés.

Ál - tal - men - nék én a Ti - szán la - di - kon, la - di - kon, de la - di - kon,
Ott la - kik a, ott la - kik a ga - lam - bom, ott la - kik a ga - lam - bom.

p grazioso

Example 10: The first four measures of „Általmennék én a Tiszán”

Ott la - kik a, ott la - kik a ga - lam - bom, ott la - kik a ga - lam - bom.

Example 11: The first four measures of „Általmennék én a Tiszán” at the repetition on the recording

The „csárdás” style of the second folksong and the so-called „bokázós” element was entirely an invention of the pianist, based on the tradition of the nineteenth century Hungarian art songs. The lengthening (fermata) of some notes in the repetition of the second folksong was a common habit of Erdős, he sang such lengthening in tempo giusto art songs (*magyarnóta*) as well.

Musical score for the song "Általmennék én a Tiszán". The score is in 4/4 time and features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics are: "Ott la - kik a vá - ros - ban, a har - ma - dik ut - cá - ban,". The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands.

Example 12: Part of „Általmennék én a Tiszán” on the recording

Musical score for the song "Csinom Jankó, csinom Palkó". The score is in 4/4 time and features two vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "No - sza raj - ta jó ka - to - nák,". The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands.

Example 13: Part of „Csinom Jankó, csinom Palkó”, sung by Richárd Erdős, Béla Venczell and Gyula Revere. Első Magyar Hanglemezgyár 2124.

Despite the differences, the recording is obviously based on the arrangement of Bartók. There are some characteristic chords which cannot be independent ideas of two Hungarian musicians in the same years for the same Hungarian folksongs.

As I wrote above, the score was published in 1906 and the recording was made in 1908. How might such a new piece be recorded, if it was not a *magyarnóta*, couplet or a hit from an operetta? I suppose that there were three ways through which Erdős could have learnt of the

two brand new folksong-arrangements, and which eventually led to the recording. First of all, the score was published, so anybody could buy them, even Richárd Erdős. Bartók and Kodály promoted the publication of Magyar népdalok in several cities of Hungary; they gathered subscribers for the score, because the first edition was paid for by the two composers. They sent out special lists that people could sign up to if they wished to receive the score,³⁰ so we cannot rule out that Erdős have bought the score – however, we also cannot verify that.

On the other hand, we know that Erzsí Sándor,³¹ a member of the Royal Hungarian Opera House knew the folksong-arrangements of Bartók. She had a concert with Bartók in Pozsony (now: Bratislava, Slovakia) on 4 November 1906, where – according to the *Pressburger Tagblatt* – the fourth title of the original program would have been “Altungarische Volkslieder” (Old Hungarian Folksongs), but it was cancelled; in fact they performed an aria by Mozart and a Hungarian song by Ödön Farkas – Erzsí Sándor’s former teacher – in the end.³² Erzsí Sándor and Richárd Erdős obviously knew each other, they sang together on performances of *Hunyadi László* by Ferenc Erkel, *Les Huguenots* by Giacomo Meyerbeer and *Wintermärchen* by Károly Goldmark as well.³³ However, we do not know which version of the folksong-arrangements Erzsí Sándor knew. Bartók wrote to István Thomán on 13 November 1906 that Erzsí Sándor had four arrangements which she should send to Thomán, but Bartók did not mention the titles.³⁴ Thomán answered to Bartók a few days later saying that he got the scores from Erzsí Sándor.³⁵ We can only assume that Erzsí Sándor had some titles from the version performed by Thomán and his wife in Berlin, not from the published version.

The third possibility is the person of the pianist – all the more so seeing how Erdős sang only the two folksongs, and it is in fact the accompaniment which makes that recording a piece by Bartók. Unfortunately, The Gramophone Company never named the accompanist of Erdős on the labels of his recordings. According to our most current data, we know of six musicians who ever accompanied Erdős on recordings: Albert Hetényi-Heidelberg (1875–

³⁰ See the letters of Bartók to Péter König (14 March 1906), to Etelka Freund (14 March 1906) and to István Thomán (19 November 1906) in Demény, letters, pp. 103–104 and 113.

³¹ Erzsí Sándor (1885–1962), Hungarian soprano, the first Hungarian K. u. k. Kammersänger. She was a member of the Royal Hungarian Opera House from 1905 to 1930.

³² János Demény: „Bartók Béla művészi kibontakozásának éve (1906–1914)” [The years of the artistic unfolding of Béla Bartók] in: Bence Szabolcsi – Dénes Bartha (eds.): *Zenatudományi tanulmányok III. Liszt Ferenc és Bartók Béla emlékére*. [Musicological Studies III. To the memory of Ferenc Liszt and Béla Bartók] (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1955), pp 286–460. 311.

³³ [Alfréd Jónás]: [Az] Operaház szereptörténeti adattára [1884–1948]. [The database of the role-history of the Royal Hungarian Opera House]. (Budapest, c1950. Manuscript, National Széchényi Library).

³⁴ See the letter of Bartók to István Thomán on 13 November 1906. Demény, letters, 113.

³⁵ See the letter of Thomán to Bartók on 18 November 1906 in: Denijs Dille (ed.): *Documenta Bartókiana 3* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1968), p. 45.

1951), Károly [Karl] Noseda (1863–1944), Emil Lichtenberg (1874–1944), Gyula Revere (1883–1945), Viola Szinegh (Kende Frigyesné) and Zsigmond Vincze (1874–1935). Of these, the most frequent accompanist of Erdős – on different labels – was Gyula Revere.

As a student at the Music Academy, Gyula Revere could have met Bartók. He began his studies as a harpist in the 1894–1895 school year at the Music Academy, in the preliminary class of the newly launched harp class.³⁶ He studied as a pianist only one school year, as a pupil of Árpád Szendy.³⁷ On 21 October 1901, both Revere and Bartók appeared at the memorial concert organized traditionally on the eve of Liszt's birthday, Revere as a harpist, Bartók as a pianist.³⁸ That year Revere repeated voluntarily the third year of the harp class, but his name appears among the students of the composer class as well, where he was a pupil of Hans Koessler (1853–1926).³⁹ That year Kodály was also in the second, while Bartók was in the fourth year of the same class. When Revere began the next school year he was still a composer student, but during the year he ceased those studies. This acquaintance does not mean that Revere had the scores of Bartók, furthermore, at that time Albert Hetényi-Heidelberg was also a student of the composer class at the Music Academy.

The gramophone repertoire of Gyula Revere shows us a musical activity of a very wide spectrum: there are recordings with Revere as a harpist, as a leader of an orchestra and as a pianist. There are mostly Hungarian songs (*magyarnóta*) on his recordings, but he accompanied arias from many operas and some operettas as well. He might have been a sort of omnivorous, casual recording artist, who accompanied Slovakian (*tót*) folksongs as a partner of Lóránd Zolnay,⁴⁰ Hebrew songs and operatic arias with Richárd Erdős and couplets as an accompanist of Mihály Kovács.⁴¹ As I wrote above, after 1907 Richárd Erdős recorded many Hungarian songs in duet with Béla Venczell, on these recordings usually Gyula Revere played the piano accompaniment.

If we try to identify the accompanist of the above mentioned recording of Erdős, we have to analyse some recordings of several Hungarian songs (*magyarnóta*); the solo piano excerpts

³⁶ József Harrach Dr. (ed.): Az Országos Magyar Királyi Zene-Akadémia Évkönyve az 1894/5-iki Tanévről. [Yearbook of the Royal Hungarian Music Academy. 1894/95.] (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1895), p. 88.

³⁷ József Harrach Dr. (ed.): Az Országos M. Kir. Zene-Akadémia Évkönyve az 1897/98-iki tanévről. [Yearbook of the Royal Hungarian Music Academy, 1897/98.] (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1898), p. 94. Árpád Szendy was a pupil of Liszt, famous Hungarian piano teacher. See: Gábor Szirányi: Szendy Árpád avagy a magyar zongoraiskola. [Árpád Szendy or the Hungarian Piano School]. (Budapest: Neuma, [2011]).

³⁸ Géza Moravcsik (ed.): Az Országos M. Kir. Zene-Akadémia Évkönyve az 1901/1902-iki tanévről. [Yearbook of the Royal Hungarian Music Academy, 1901/02.] (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1902), p. 72.

³⁹ Moravcsik, *ibid.* composer class: p. 90, harp class: p. 110.

⁴⁰ Pathé 39541–39550. Lóránd Zolnay was a member of the choir of the Royal Hungarian Opera House.

⁴¹ Odeon Record (International Talking Machine Company), No. 35313 and No. 35314. Mihály Kovács (1862–1911) was a popular artist of the Népszínház [Folk Theatre] in Budapest; he made numerous recordings on several labels (The Gramophone Company, Lyrophon, Favorite, Odeon ITM etc.).

– introductions, interludes and codas – reveal important information about the pianists. We have to disregard the recordings of Károly Nosedá, because his known recordings are operatic excerpts. Emil Lichtenberg– on the basis of his known recordings – rarely undertook to accompany couplets or Hungarian songs (*magyarnóta*). He was not an initiative pianist; he usually effaced himself at the piano. His interpretation shows a preference for very long final notes, see for example the couplet called “Kutya passzió”, performed by Mihály Kovács (Favorite Record 1-27544, matr. 2756-f).

Zsigmond Vincze, Viola Szinegh and Albert Hetényi-Heidelberg played very often improvised virtuoso passages in their *magyarnóta* accompaniments, to imitate the *cimbalom* (Gypsy and Hungarian folk instrument) player of a gypsy orchestra. They used that figuration in slow and fast *magyarnóta* as well. The accompanist of the Bartók-recording of Erdős did not adhere to the score either, but changed the accompaniment in another way. Moreover, Zsigmond Vincze used the sustaining pedal more than the pianist of the discussed recording. Albert Hetényi-Heidelberg usually played at the end of his accompaniments a short, snappish chord, which is a typical ending of couplets (for example, on the recording of “Elmegyek a templom mellett”, sung by Lajos Rózsa S., Polyphon Record 844). It is obviously a personal peculiarity of Hetényi, who was a composer of popular couplets. He played such final chords on his couplet recordings as well as in slow or fast *magyarnóta* accompaniments.

The characteristic features – interpretation marks – mentioned above did not appear on the recording of Richárd Erdős. On the other hand, on the *magyarnóta* accompaniments of Gyula Revere there are some peculiarities which can be heard on the Erdős-recording as well. He plays arpeggio on important beats of some measures (for example: “Nagypénteken mossa holló a fiát”, Favorite Record 1-29574) as well as on the discussed recording. The double dotted rhythms of the tempo giusto interlude of “Csinom Jankó, Csinom Palkó” (Első Magyar Hanglemezgyár 2124) are similar to the introduction of the second folksong “Általmennék én a Tiszán...”. The so called “bokázós” element of that introduction appears in the introduction of another *magyarnóta* accompaniment of Gyula Revere (“Esik eső, nő a petrezselyem”, Favorite 1-29604).



Example 14: „Csinom Jankó csinom Palkó”. Piano introduction by Gyula Revere (Első Magyar Hanglemezgyár 2124)

Example 15: Introduction of „Általmennék én a Tiszán...”

On the basis of all this we can state that to all probability Gyula Revere was the accompanist of Erdős during the recording of the folksong-arrangements by Bartók.

This recording was not only the last recording of Erdős for The Gramophone Company but also the last recording with piano accompaniment of that recording session. They used odd matrixes for the recordings of Erdős, so there was one more recording than was needed for a two-sided disc. From the coupling numbers of the later pressings we can assume that the separated recording was the matrix number 4269r (“Rákóczi stafétája”, 2-72068), published later twice, on V*4-102583 and on AK562 coupled with a recording of three shorter *magyarnóta* sung by Lajos Rózsa S. (“Nem loptam én életemben...”; “Nincsen pénzem, van erszényem...”; “Volt nekem egy szép szeretőm...”, matr. 5848r, 2-72135, V*4-102584 and AK562).

However, 4269r was not the last recording of Richárd Erdős from 1908 and if we presume that Erdős knew the extraordinary value of the folksong-arrangements, it is possible that the last matrix was the one plus recording. It is possible that for some reason, one matrix remained unused before the matrixes kept for the orchestral recordings and Erdős, the last

piano accompanied singer of the session, choose these well-known folksongs and the pianist – who knew the arrangements by Bartók – played that accompaniment to them. Or another idea: Erdős would have liked to sing a Hungarian song (whether *magyarnóta* or folksong, it did not matter in that case) and the pianist drew forth that score from his bag. Since Erdős sang only the folksongs, we cannot presume that he was fully aware of the value of these arrangements; it might be that he did not know at all who had written the strange chords of the accompaniment. Unfortunately, as I wrote above about the diffusion between folksong and *magyarnóta*, it is possible that for Erdős there was not any difference between the real folksong and the popular *magyarnóta*, or as Bartók and Kodály wrote in the preface to the score of Hungarian Folksongs (BB 42): between “Ityóka-pityóka” and “»other sort of« Hungarian folksong”.

We cannot know what Bartók and Kodály would think about the special elements added by the pianist to the accompaniment. They wrote in the preface that they “put clothes” on the folksongs when they wrote a piano accompaniment – we can say that the pianist of that recording changed those clothes to a Hungarian four-lined coat. This recording is a sounding witness of how those folksong-arrangements and the efforts of Bartók were received at the time by the trained musicians of Budapest. However, the goal of Bartók, to find a place for the folksongs in the Hungarian musical life and to bring the audience nearer to the real Hungarian folksongs could be realized. The Hungarian folksongs appeared on concert programs⁴² and on gramophone discs as well.

⁴² Some pieces from the Hungarian Folksongs were performed in Szeged (South of Hungary), see the letter of Bartók to Mrs. Baranyai from 1906/1907 (Demény, letters, 115.) According to our recent data Erdős never sang those folksong-arrangements on concert but the concert life of Budapest is scarcely documented.