

Bartók's Collection of Hungarian Instrumental Folk Music and its System*

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Abstract: Béla Bartók's collection of Hungarian instrumental folk music is known only for Hungarian Bartók scholars and ethnomusicologists although Bartók's permanent interest in folk musical instruments, and instruments in general, manifesting itself in essays and compositions has always been evident. The term Bartók's instrumental collection implies the Hungarian instrumental folk music material that emerged as the outcome of his own collecting work and explicitly melodies performed on instruments. This report gives a survey of Bartók's work in the field by means of some randomly chosen phenomena.

Keywords: Béla Bartók, Hungarian instrumental folk music, folk music collection

"The sheer volume of writing on Bartók is staggering. The complete bibliography ... has grown to truly overwhelming proportions" – writes László Somfai in the introduction to his book *Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts and Autograph Sources*.¹ In the past twenty years this literature has further increased as predicted by Somfai in his *18 Bartók Studies* printed in the year of the Bartók centenary.² This said, it is hardly to be believed that a portion of Bartók's oeuvre, an important chapter of his ethnomusicological work is still missing from this tremendous literature, namely his accomplishments in the field of Hungarian instrumental folk music, above all his collection of Hungarian instrumental folk music between 1907 and 1914 and the system of instrumental melodies created

* The shorter Hungarian version of this paper was read at the third conference of the Hungarian Musicological and Music Critical Society held in honour of the 70-year-old Professor László Somfai in 2004.

¹ Somfai 1996, p. 1.

² Somfai 1981a, p. 317.

until 1940. Certain melodies of Bartók's not very numerous but many-sided collection of Hungarian instrumental folk music in respect of style, genre and function have already been printed, beside the melodies published by Bartók in his lifetime as melodic supplements to the description of Hungarian folk music instruments.³ Research has revealed the possible folk music sources of Bartók's own compositions (from the only concrete melody to "quasi-folklore" phenomena⁴); certain Hungarian instrumental tunes have also been published in works of this kind. Musicians and concert-goers are familiar with several compositions and segments of Bartók's works based on or inspired by instrumental Hungarian folk tunes, whether purely instrumental or vocal folksongs rendered on an instrument at the time of collection, ornamented in a way that is characteristic of the given instrument. Such general knowledge cannot make up, however, for the professional neglect of several decades, i.e. for the detailed description of the Hungarian instrumental collection, for the evaluation of its role in the history of research and scholarship. So far Bartók's complete Hungarian instrumental collection has not been dealt with yet.

Even in Hungary Bartók's collection of Hungarian instrumental folk music is known for the greater part by Bartók scholars and ethnomusicologists although Bartók's permanent interest in folk musical instruments, and instruments in general, manifesting itself in essays and compositions has always been evident.⁵ The 125th anniversary of Bartók's birth provides an opportunity for rendering account of the research programme aimed at elaborating and publishing the critical source edition of Bartók's collection of Hungarian instrumental music. This report gives a survey of Bartók's work in the field by means of some randomly chosen phenomena.

Bartók's instrumental collection

The term Bartók's instrumental collection implies the Hungarian instrumental folk music material that emerged as the outcome of his own collecting work and explicitly melodies performed on instruments. Not included in this category are, apart from a few exceptions, the instrumental dance tunes Bartók collected in vocal form. The number of instrumental melodies collected during fieldwork and transcribed for the greater part – mostly by Bartók – amounts to 165. Of his last Hungarian collection Bartók left untranscribed a

³ They were, in the first place, the description of the bagpipe, flute, hurdy-gurdy and shepherd's horn and the melodies attached to his essay *A hangszerez zene folklórja Magyarországon* [The folklore of instrumental music in Hungary] as well as the instrumental melodies published in *Primitív népi hangszerek Magyarországon* [Primitive folk instruments in Hungary] and *Magyar népi hangszerek* [Hungarian folk instruments]. See Bartók 1911, 1917, 1931.

⁴ See e.g. Lampert 1981, Somfai 1981a, p. 258, Sárosi 1982.

⁵ On Bartók experimenting with instruments see Ujfalussy 1965 II, pp. 243–245.

flute and a violin melody each and it is conceivable that there are additional items on phonograph cylinders (that could only be checked in part for technical reasons). Items collected in vocal form yet suggesting instrumental function complement abundantly this stock of instrumental melodies.

Bartók's "collection" comprises the group of melodies collected by himself and others that he gathered and transcribed for purposes of a later classification. This collection of instrumental melodies termed "Instrumental music supplement" can be found at the end of the so-called Bartók System,⁶ i.e. the vocal music system established and perfected by Bartók until October 1940.⁷ This supplement included the instrumental melodies collected by Bartók and his contemporaries (partly by his students) as transcribed and revised by him personally. This material comprising no more than 350 instrumental melodies – Bartók's own collection inclusive – is insignificant compared to the entire instrumental collection. Of the *támlap*⁸ of the supplement Bartók classified his own collection according to geographic regions and, within them, to instruments, the material of the others by collectors. When a phonograph recording was also made during collecting, the inner order of the *támlaps* followed the numbering of the cylinders and the sequence of recordings on the cylinders.

Between 1907 and 1914 Bartók collected Hungarian instrumental music in the following four folk music dialect regions he later defined:⁹

1907, Transdanubia (Bartók I, Sárköz)	
Tolna county: Felsőíreg	flute, bagpipe imitation (vocal)
Transylvania (Bartók IV, Székely land)	
Csik county: Gyergyóújfalu	violin, flute
1907–1908, Great Hungarian Plain (Bartók III, South)	
Csongrád county: Szentcsanak	hurdy-gurdy
1908, Transylvania (Bartók IV, Kalotaszeg)	
Kolozs county: Körösfő	flute
1910, North (Bartók II, Palócföld, Csallóköz)	
Hont county: Ipolyság and surroundings	bagpipe, swineherd's horn
Komárom county: Nagymagyar	bagpipe, swineherd's horn, flute
1912, Great Hungarian Plain (Bartók III, East)	
Bihar county: Köröstárkány	flute

⁶ See Rácz–Szalay 1981.

⁷ Kovács–Sebő 1993. Its review: Tari 1995.

⁸ *Támlap* = sheet music made for purposes of classification, including the melodies transcribed, their essential data and eventually remarks.

⁹ The dialect regions in Bartók's division are: I. Transdanubia, II. Upper Hungary, north of the rivers Danube and Tisza, III. Great Hungarian Plain, IV. Transylvania. See Bartók 1924 in Szöllősy 1966, p. 105. For a survey of the dialect regions see Olsvai–Bajcsay Rudas–Németh 1998.

1914, Transylvania (Bartók IV, Székelyföld)

Maros-Torda county	
Nyárádremete	flute, clarinet, violin
Nyárádköszvényes	flute
Ehed	flute
Székelyhodos	flute, violin, humming
Székelyvaja	flute, humming
Jobbágytelke	swineherd's horn.

The aim of field trips was not to collect instrumental folk music but to examine the music and to a certain extent the anthropological situation of a given village or a larger area.¹⁰ In the collections vocal folk music always received a greater emphasis, being the case that it reflected the knowledge of a wider community. Until 1910 Bartók had only four collecting trips during which he also found instrumental musicians in the village. It proves his interest that in the course of one of his first collecting trips (1906) he already entered the name of an itinerant bagpiper in Tura: "Itinerant musician of Vágás (bagpiper)".¹¹ After the First World War, following the Treaty of Trianon, Transylvania and the eastern part of the Great Hungarian Plain were ceded to Romania while the northern dialect region concerned became part of Slovakia.

Consequently, Bartók has merely two instrumental collections from the present-day territory of Hungary: from Felsőíreg (Transdanubia) and Szentes (Plain). Apart from these two collections of his very first period comprising some flute melodies of Felsőíreg and some hurdy-gurdy melodies of Szentes, all other collections of Hungarian instrumental music by Bartók originate in territories beyond the boundaries of Hungary set by the Treaty of Trianon (1920). This material is therefore particularly important for the whole Hungarian folk music since the first collections perpetuated at the same time a final stage never existing identically again. The collections up to 1914 show a relatively intact cultural milieu: the peasant culture had developed spontaneously in the natural sphere of its earlier environment and became as it was at the moment of collecting. After the Treaty of Trianon the collecting work carried out by Bartók (Zoltán Kodály as well as by Antal Molnár¹² and László Lajtha¹³ who were active as folk music collectors by then) could be relegated to minority research shortly after or almost from the moment of collecting on.

¹⁰ Exceptions are the shepherd's horn and bagpipe competition organized in Ipolyság in 1910.

¹¹ See Bartók's collecting copybook pp. 95–96, no. 1, Bartók Archives, Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

¹² For Antal Molnár's folk music collecting work see Tari 2005.

¹³ For Lajtha's folk music collecting work see Berlász 1984, pp. 107–127, for his collection of instrumental music see Tari 1992a–b, 1993, 2001.

For political reasons Hungarian scholars had practically no chance to collect among the Hungarians, by then minority, population of the annexed territories until well after the Second World War, which meant a grievous loss. In Bartók's case it is particularly regrettable that his work of collecting Hungarian instrumental music was disrupted, all the more so as the seven years between 1907 and 1914 bear evidence of his mature collecting experiences, his in-depth occupation with Hungarian instrumental music and the entailing change of attitude. This can be seen particularly well on his collections of 1912 and 1914, but also on details of his later scholarly works referring back to these collections.¹⁴ Hardly had he got acquainted with the melodic material so far unknown to him that he discovered in the minor Hungarian ethnographic regions of geographical areas he was unfamiliar with, than the area of collecting was beyond his reach. This fact, the concomitant of a grave historic situation, must not be forgotten when the question of the quantity of Bartók's Hungarian instrumental collection is raised. After 1914 Bartók could only meet Transylvanian performers from time to time when they were brought to Budapest to make sound recordings with them. For example, in 1935 he listened to a clarinetist of Udvarhely county; furthermore, he took an active part in the work of recording instrumental music for the "Pátria" series¹⁵ meeting thereby musicians from the reannexed territories. Nevertheless, his scanty instrumental collections are not insignificant, indeed. In Felsőireg¹⁶ he recorded with the phonograph such tunes played on the flute as *Házasodik a tücsök* (MH 917/c, BR 13.002¹⁷) later widely known through his collection and arrangement as *Űrögi kanásztánc* [Swineherd's dance from Űrög]¹⁸ (*Example 1*). It was only after the extensive folk music collecting of the 1950s that this type of melody and the related melodies (e.g. *Béres legény* MH 977/b,

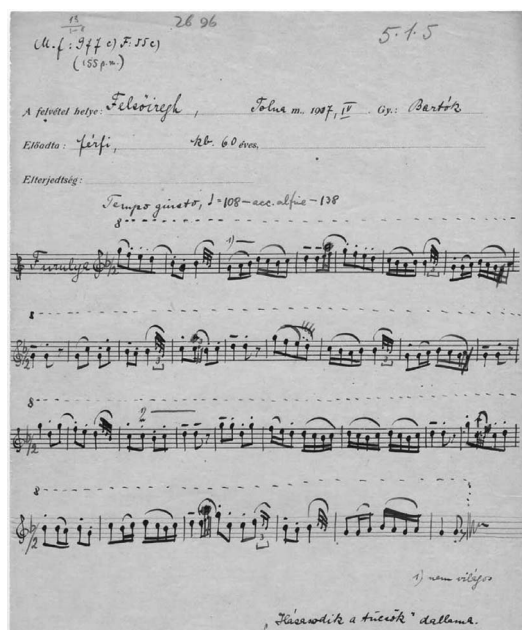
¹⁴ An example from his writing *Magyar népi hangszerek* published in 1931, in which he also mentioned the terminology used by the flutists along Nyárad: Bartók 1931b, see *BÖI* 1966, p. 361.

¹⁵ See Tari 2002.

¹⁶ In this village he collected vocal music as early as 1906. This and the 1907 collecting yielded altogether 307 melodies, see Ujfalussy 1965 I, p. 97.

¹⁷ BR= Bartók System, the musical system established by Bartók at the Folk Music Department of the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

¹⁸ The phonograph recording is published in Sárosi 1981 I, 2b, as well as in Olsvai-Bajcsay Rudas-Németh 1998, I, p. 12. Even Bartók's transcriptions characterized by meticulous care and the work of Márta Ziegler, his first wife and excellent copyist contained errors. On Ziegler's copy of the transcription made from phonograph recording Bartók's corrections in green ink can be seen well. Thus e.g. he later provided with a key signature the alternation of the third of the la pentatonic scale but did not notice that the sharp for raising the seventh at the beginning of the staff was missing. The music example attached to the record made from Bartók's phonograph recordings was taken over thus by Bálint Sárosi (music example 3) as well as by Vera Lampert, see Lampert 1980, music example 70 and Lampert 2005, music example 70. One can hear on the phonograph recording that the flutist was playing a major seventh. Bartók's arrangement shows that the tune remained with major seventh in his ear as well which is identical with the version on the phonograph cylinder (*For Children* II, p. 42).



Example 1

BR 13.000) turned out to be “folksong hits” of southern Transdanubia from an ethnomusicological point of view and, at the same time, the most typical dance tunes in swineherd-rhythm of the area.¹⁹

Melodies collected by other researchers

Prior to discussing Bartók’s collections, let us deal with the material by other collectors in the Bartók System. Vilmos Seemayer collected, among others, flute melodies in Somogy county (southern Transdanubia). Though not an expert, Seemayer followed in the footsteps of his father, the ethnographer Vilibald Seemayer when he carried out collecting work effectively. Of the instrumentalists he went to see the product of the excellent long flute player János Káplár (Bander) was recorded on the phonograph on November 17, 1935 who both sang the folksong *Szerelem, szerelem* [Love, love, cursed distress] (BR 12.790) and played it on the flute. The five-holed long flute with the fundamental *e*’ is a peculiarity of the region and was preserved by the shepherds’ tradition in southern Transdanubia. The performer’s playing and singing were recorded for the series of records of Pátria in September 1936.²⁰ Bartók directed the re-

¹⁹ *Béres legény...*, *CMPH VI*, no. 349 (in type III). Vocal variant from Bartók’s collection of Felsőirek.

²⁰ *Pátria* 1937, 7, Gr 59Aa (flute), 1937, 8, Gr 59/Ab (singing). New edition: Sebő 2001.

cording and selected the performers and the melodies. The first four sample records of the series were released in December 1936; the above-mentioned long flute player's performance can also be heard on it.²¹

Benjamin Rajeczky characterized the folksong Káplár played, the long flute and its manner of performance as follows:

Old-style lyrical song ... The Transdanubian *hosszi furugla* "long flute" is a typical Hungarian variant of flute; it is of about 90 cm length and has 5 holes. Its fundamental is roughly about f, starting from there, a scale of f, g, a, b flat, b, c can be sounded by means of the natural stops, so that the seven-grade diatonic scale can only be produced by a combination of the first and second sets of overtones. Here ... the player will accompany the tune of the flute by his murmuring sounds in order to support his instrumental performance.²²

Imre Olsvai wrote that this old-style tune survived in a single village, the flutist's place of residence (Berzence). Olsvai described the playing manner:

While playing, the main tones constituting the basis of the melody are growed (with a guttural sound) into the instrument as an accompaniment. Sometimes the original tones, when they cannot be intoned on the flute, are substituted by their fifth grade, but are always hummed at the right pitch, so introducing a fifth parallelism, that is, a pseudo-two-voice phenomenon.²³

Bartók's transcription made of the first, 1935 recording shows well this phenomenon of fifth parallelism (the remarks written at the bottom of the score refer to neutral thirds) (*Example 2*).

Of the other collectors' instrumental material the items collected by Antal Molnár, László Lajtha and Béla Vikár are quantitatively remarkable. Except for six phonograph recordings, Kodály transcribed Vikár's entire instrumental collection.²⁴ A melody played on the flute and recorded on phonograph in eastern Transylvania (Oroszhegy, the one-time Udvarhely county) is from the very first period of Béla Vikár's collecting²⁵ (BR 12.956, *Example 3*). In the "instrumental music supplement" only a few items of Zoltán Kodály's instrumental collection can be found since he kept the transcriptions of his own collection by himself and corrected them from time to time.²⁶

Collections by Sándor Veress, the composer also excelling in folk music collecting, by Gábor Veress,²⁷ a music teacher of Nagyenyed, the music teacher

²¹ Bartók 1936 2Ba *Szerelem, szerelem*, see Somfai 1981b, accompanying booklet, 7.

²² Rajeczky 1969 accompanying booklet 33. For making a more modern 33 rpm-LP edition the 1936 edition of 78 rpm was recorded.

²³ Olsvai-Bajcsay Rudas-Németh 1998 accompanying booklet 23 (melody I, 16). The first release of the melody on a record of 33 rpm: Rajeczky 1969 I, III/A, 6b.

²⁴ Tari 2001, pp. 321–346.

²⁵ The number and shelf-mark of the phonograph recording is: MH 273/c. Commissioned by the Hungarian Ethnographic Society, Vikár started collecting in 1896.

²⁶ See in detail Tari 2001, p. 14.

²⁷ He is enumerated thus among the members of the journal *Ethnographia*: 21 (1910), pp. 397 and 967.



Example 2

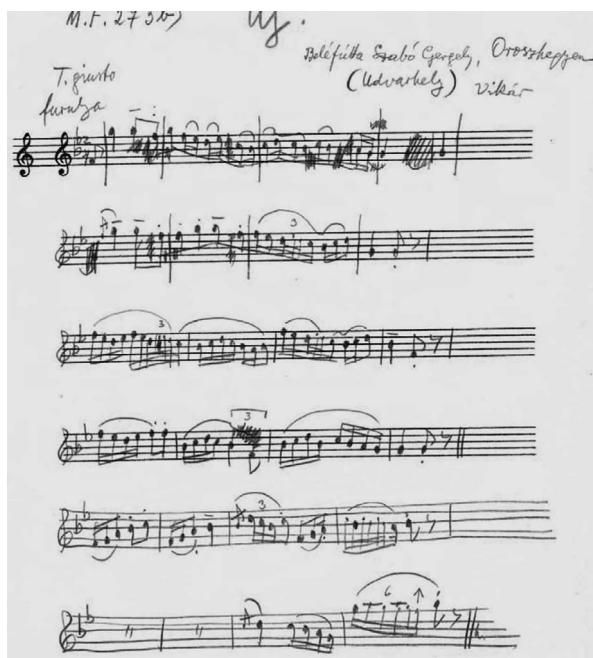
János Csíky,²⁸ the violin teacher Péter Balla²⁹ and Imre Balabán, Bartók's pianist pupil from Kolozsvár (Cluj) are important for different reasons. In 1930 Sándor Veress collected among the Csángó Hungarians of Moldova who had been little-known in respect of folk music before and also brought some flute melodies from there.³⁰ Of his instrumental music collecting only a vocal bagpipe imitation collected in Szany (southern Transdanubia) in June 1935 came to be incorporated into Bartók's collection. The long bagpipe imitation comprising several melodies (BR 13.148–150) shows well the rich bagpipe tradition of the area.³¹ From the one-time Brassó county (after 1918: Romania) Gábor Veress's instrumental collection was the only one for about 50 years (the

²⁸ János Csíky (Kolozsvár 1873–1917 Újpest), composer, writer on music, teacher. He studied at the Academy of Music Budapest, then began his career by writing articles about the history of Hungarian music and reviews. He was teaching in Budapest and Kolozsvár and published several volumes of songs.

²⁹ As a research student of the Ethnographic Museum he collected folk music in Bukovina and Moldova between 1932 and 1938.

³⁰ Veress 1989, 135, scores I–IV.

³¹ The performer was Nagy Istvánné née Julianna Kovács (41 years old); her similar bagpipe imitation pieces and other songs were also included in the Pátria series: see Transdanubia, Szany (Sopron county), e.g. Gr. 221 Bb.



Example 3

transcriptions of his recordings of a three-member band are kept under: BR 13.112–114, 13.118³²). His recording of the playing of the bandleader of Marosvásárhely (one-time Maros-Torda county, Romania) is a good example of the meeting of village and urban folklore (BR 13.098–13.111). Among the items he collected in the villages of Udvarhely county (BR 13.115–135) we find flute melodies and recordings made with a village Gypsy band. These collections brought the first news of the instrumental music of certain villages, their typical instruments or characteristic types of melody. János Csíky's collection of clarinet music from Marostere is ranged among the important ones for exactly this reason.³³ The nine clarinet transcriptions (BR 13.089–97) are in György Kerényi's hand corrected by Bartók in green and black pencils. Judged

³² Bartók corrected in red pencil the music copied by György Kerényi. In connection with the orchestral performance he wrote the following remark to the conserved sheet music: “*on the phonograph the accompaniment cannot be discerned”.

³³ In 1911 Bartók wrote in the article on Hungarian instrumental music folklore: “according to some ethnographers zithers of their own making are also used in several regions; in Marosszék János Csíky transcribed dance melodies performed on the violin, cimbalom and the clarinet which are, however, unknown to us”. Bartók 1911, 60. It follows from it that Csíky's undated phonograph collection in the Museum of Ethnography is either of later origin or the cylinders were transferred subsequently to the Museum.

by the subtlety of the transcriptions and the layout of the *támlap*, Kerényi must have copied the score, the work of transcription was probably carried out by Bartók (or János Csíky under his guidance). The name of the performer of the dance tunes played on the clarinet is unknown; the tuning of the instrument is specified on the *támlap* thus: “clarinet (probably³⁴ Mi b)”, followed by a hint at what the proper metronome marking should be if it is a clarinet in E b. In the collection there is a tune, which is one of the most typical “one-nucleus” fifth-shifting melodies in the oldest layer of Hungarian folk music (the so-called “Peacock type”³⁵). The dance tune is termed *Sebes forгатós* or *Marosszéki* (BR 13.091) in the collection. Another of its tunes affected 20th-century Hungarian art music tremendously: Leó Weiner drew on it in the second movement of his *Suite* (op. 18).³⁶

Imre Balabán’s 1912 collection of Gypsy orchestral music in Méra (once Kolozs county, now Romania) consists of 32 melodies (BR 10.748, 12.945–50, 13.021–22, 13.151–173). Under more favourable circumstances this stock would have been of similar significance as e.g. the discovery of Szék was in 1941,³⁷ almost 30 years later.³⁸ The melodies performed by 3 three-member Gypsy bands and recorded on phonograph cylinders for the Pátria records in 1943 were transcribed by Jenő Deutsch, one of Bartók’s transcribers and music copyists. György Kerényi transcribed the other tunes but it is also possible that he merely copied Bartók’s (perhaps Balabán’s) music. Bartók’s corrections appear on all transcriptions and Csíky’s above-mentioned clarinet collection as well. Let us take an example from Balabán’s collection where the 7/16 asymmetries of the so-called *Ritka legényes* men’s dance can be observed (BR 12.947). At the bottom of the music surviving in the copyist’s hand Bartók wrote the following remark in pencil: “*apart from the notes indicated, there are additional, not well discernible sounds in the accompaniment” (*Example 4*).

Bartók must have been concerned with *aksak* rhythm in his capacity as an ethnomusicologist in the early 1930s and it kept occupying him as a composer as well. He started revising the rhythm of his Romanian collection in those days in order to identify micro rhythms similar to the Bulgarian ones.³⁹

³⁴ Probably – that is on the basis of the sound recordings it was impossible to find out whether the performer was playing on clarinet in E b or eventually in D.

³⁵ Olsvai–Bajcsay Rudas–Németh 1998, I/8. For the type and its fundamental melody see *CMPH VI*, Type IX, no. 414.

³⁶ See Tari 1989, 71 (MH 660/b).

³⁷ See Lajtha 1954. Szék in western Transylvania was also ceded to Romania, then reannexed to Hungary for four years so it was possible to collect there in 1943. The musical material of Szék was released on a series of records called Pátria which contained authentic folk music. New edition Sebő 2001.

³⁸ The folk music traditions of the village could be studied when it was reannexed to Hungary pursuant to the so-called Vienna Awards. After 1945 was ceded to Romania again.

³⁹ Somfai 1981a, p. 23.



Example 4

In the orally handed down music of various peoples Bartók had already got acquainted with rhythmic freedom and when describing the rich and many-sided folk music treasury he wrote about it in 1931 as follows: "And it is paired with the freest rhythm possible: not the trite repetitions of the same metre but a rubato recitation with the strangest coloraturas; sometimes four or five changes of time within a short melody."⁴⁰ He must also have experienced it in the Hungarian material earlier, although the transcriptions suggest that at the beginning he thought the specific rhythm was accidental. Later, in the knowledge of regional peculiarities, he changed the music of the melodies with steady quaver motion according to the asymmetric differences. Such a rhythm revision can be observed not only in the instrumental but also in certain Hungarian, Transylvanian vocal melodies, for example in the dance tunes sung into the phonograph by two girls in Jobbágytelke (the one-time Maros-Torda county, Romania) in April 1914⁴¹ (BR 10.707). The vocal form of the melody had been collected by János Seprődi and Béla Vikár (from the one-time Udvarhely and Maros-Torda counties) in several versions before

⁴⁰ Bartók 1931, see *BÖI* 1966, p. 354.

⁴¹ On the *támlap* only a 17-year-old girl called Teréz Balog is indicated by name; on the phonograph recording, however, (MH 1303 a) the singing of two girls can be heard.

Bartók, moreover, Bartók himself found two versions in Csík county in 1907.⁴² The number of these songs increased with the findings of Antal Molnár in Gyergyó in 1911 and of László Lajtha from Csík county in 1912. Bartók indicated on the *támlap* that “It is generally known; in many places even young people are familiar with it. They also call it dance song”⁴³ (Example 5). The instrumental performance of the dance tune was first recorded by the musicians of Kőrispatak in 1944.⁴⁴ The tune still survives in the dance music practice of our days as a dance in pairs called *Fordulós*, mostly with a rhythm corrected by Bartók.

Bartók transcribed both his own material and that of others with meticulous care, which can be seen, among others, on the professional Gypsy violinists’ material collected by Antal Molnár and himself. It is very fatiguing to listen to playing in a high register and the resulting, sometimes almost hurtfully shrill sounds, to certain melodic turns time and again and it must have been par-

8, 5(4), 2, 5
1-4
F: 1303 a)

20346 M. P. 258. 4.5-1

A felvétel helye: Jóbbégyedre, karantorda m. 1914, IV. Gy.: Bartók

Előadta: Balog Feri, 17 éves, b) növ. 20

Elterjedtség: általában nőknél, sok helyen még a fiatalok is tudják. Tánctáncok is mondják.

Tempo: moderato, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, 19-20, 21-22, 23-24, 25-26, 27-28, 29-30, 31-32, 33-34, 35-36, 37-38, 39-40, 41-42, 43-44, 45-46, 47-48, 49-50, 51-52, 53-54, 55-56, 57-58, 59-60, 61-62, 63-64, 65-66, 67-68, 69-70, 71-72, 73-74, 75-76, 77-78, 79-80, 81-82, 83-84, 85-86, 87-88, 89-90, 91-92, 93-94, 95-96, 97-98, 99-100, 101-102, 103-104, 105-106, 107-108, 109-110, 111-112, 113-114, 115-116, 117-118, 119-120, 121-122, 123-124, 125-126, 127-128, 129-130, 131-132, 133-134, 135-136, 137-138, 139-140, 141-142, 143-144, 145-146, 147-148, 149-150, 151-152, 153-154, 155-156, 157-158, 159-160, 161-162, 163-164, 165-166, 167-168, 169-170, 171-172, 173-174, 175-176, 177-178, 179-180, 181-182, 183-184, 185-186, 187-188, 189-190, 191-192, 193-194, 195-196, 197-198, 199-200, 201-202, 203-204, 205-206, 207-208, 209-210, 211-212, 213-214, 215-216, 217-218, 219-220, 221-222, 223-224, 225-226, 227-228, 229-230, 231-232, 233-234, 235-236, 237-238, 239-240, 241-242, 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2199-2200, 2201-2202, 2203-2204, 2205-2206, 2207-2208, 2209-2210, 2211-2212, 2213-2214, 2215-2216, 2217-2218, 2219-2220, 2221-2222, 2223-2224, 2225-2226, 2227-2228, 2229-2230, 2231-2232, 2233-2234, 2235-2236, 2237-2238, 2239-2240, 2241-2242, 2243-2244, 2245-2246, 2247-2248, 2249-2250, 2251-2252, 2253-2254, 2255-2256, 2257-2258, 2259-2260, 2261-2262, 2263-2264, 2265-2266, 2267-2268, 2269-2270, 2271-2272, 2273-2274, 2275-2276, 2277-2278, 2279-2280, 2281-2282, 2283-2284, 2285-2286, 2287-2288, 2289-2290, 2291-2292, 2293-2294, 2295-2296, 2297-2298, 2299-2300, 2301-2302, 2303-2304, 2305-2306, 2307-2308, 2309-2310, 2311-2312, 2313-2314, 2315-2316, 2317-2318, 2319-2320, 2321-2322, 2323-23

hint towards the proper solution. His well-grounded objections show, however, that his intention was not to question Lajtha's suitability but to find the most perfect solution possible. He applied the same high standard to Lajtha as to himself. He tried to rouse in him the desire for perfection from the first moment on and to unfold his collecting and transcribing abilities to the maximum.⁴⁶

To mention only one example: Lajtha wrote the following remark to the end of the transcription of a *Botoló* dance tune played on the violin: “*violin tuned deeply in fifths”; the notation is in the copyist's hand. Bartók added in red: “but how deep?” Lajtha's answer in his own hands reads: “violino discordato” – and wrote out the appropriate notes (BR 13.040, *Example 7*).

Example 7

Instrumental melodies collected by Bartók

Bartók, who made various statements about town Gypsy music, had already met the country Gypsy musicians' different repertory and style as a transcriber, in Béla Vikár's collection (he transcribed personally: BR 12.828 and BR 12.957 – the latter is the “Lament of Árvátfalva”).⁴⁷ He also transcribed an instrumental melody collected from a Gypsy fiddler in Gyergyóújfalu in 1907 (BR 12.917, *Example 8*). He was well aware of the fact that

⁴⁶ Tari 1992, 143, Richter 2005, p. 148.

⁴⁷ See Somfai 1981c.



Example 8

Originally the Gypsies had only entertained country noblemen and may have mixed with peasants later who were readily surrendering themselves to the attractions of the gentlemen's customs.⁴⁸

Originally village musicians were always peasants in Hungary...⁴⁹

Kodály's collection of instrumental music in 1910, 1912 and 1914 as well as Antal Molnár's instrumental collection of his 1911 trip to Székely land bear also evidence of this by no means new surrender. In 1914 Bartók also collected music from a 22-year-old Gypsy musician called László Muszka in Nyárad-remete who performed altogether six melodies. The title of one of the recordings (MH 1284 a) is *Sima sebes* or *forgató*s (BR 13.114). When correcting the transcription, he wrote to the beginning: "It sounds a whole +1/4 tone higher" and indicated the tuning of the violin (*Example 9*).

Some of the Hungarian instrumental tunes collected by Bartók and his fellow collectors passed for rarity, antiquity, moreover, for the last vestige of their own time. Bartók was well aware of this fact when he decided to collect instruments representing the early instrumental practice (above all bagpipe, flute, swineherd's horn, hurdy-gurdy, etc.) and melodies played on them. Of the aforementioned instruments "in Bartók's poetic world the peasant bagpipe belonged to the privileged sphere of fundamental ethnomusicological

⁴⁸ Bartók 1924, see *BÖI* 1966, p. 100.

⁴⁹ Bartók 1924, see *BÖI* 1966, p. 99.



Example 9

discoveries that kept inspiring him to the end of his life” wrote Somfai. Reading Bartók’s essays on folk music in the chronology of their emergence we have the impression that apart from the vocal melodic treasure he only thought the bagpipe to be genuinely authentic on Hungarian, Romanian and Slovak territories.⁵⁰

Within bagpipe music Bartók paid particular attention to the short motif-repeating “*aprózt*” (“*aprája*”, correctly *apraja*) bagpipe elements as possible absolute music (BR 13.009, *Example 10*).⁵¹ His transcription in green ink below made during revision shows the importance Bartók attributed to the motif repeating “*apraja*” section (BR 12.900) (*Example 11*).

Not only did Bartók’s ear as a transcriber become more and more exquisite and his writing manner differentiated, the instrument researcher’s outlook changed as well, thus his concept of the use of the clarinet in folk music became differentiated. In his essay *A hangszeres zene folklórja* [The folklore of instrumental music] he did not range the clarinet among folk instruments yet:

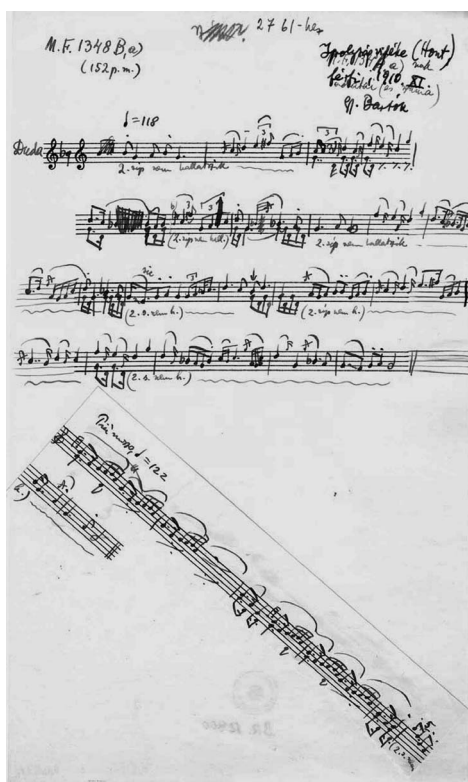
Our interest, of course, is only in music performed on folk instruments, as originating from peasant hands. ... when a peasant becomes civilized to the extent that he turns to the clarinet instead of the peasant flute, he is lost to folklore; he wants to play in a gentlemanly way on professional musical instruments – for example, in imitation of Gypsy performance, etc.⁵²

⁵⁰ Somfai 1981a, p. 167.

⁵¹ Bartók 1911, see *BÖI* 1966, p. 65.

⁵² Bartók 1911a, see *BÖI* 1966, p. 60.

2687
 (M. f. 734) F. 192a), "Kunkosnaki jöl ven dolga"
 (Kunkosnaki jöl ven dolga)
 (Kunkosnaki jöl ven dolga)
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 Elterjedés: Kb. 8-10 éves
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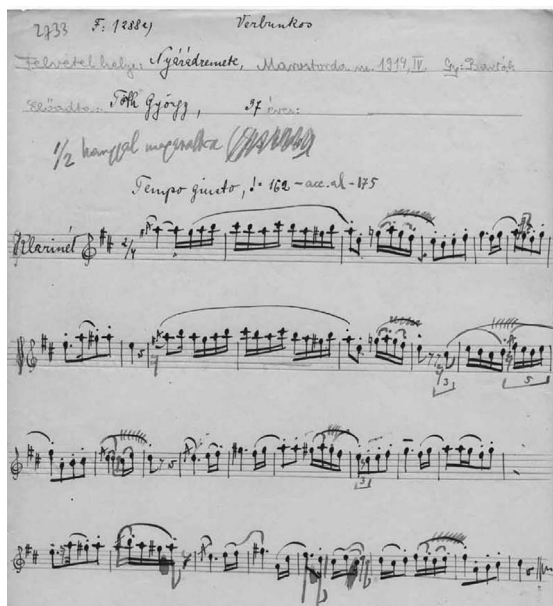


Example 11

Bartók dealt with bagpipe at such length as nobody else in Hungary (moreover, in Europe) at the time. To illustrate it, he added drawings and photos to his article *Hungarian folk instruments*.⁵⁴ He was the first to describe at length the type, components, the function and tuning of the various reeds as well as the performing manner of the bagpipe. He showed its repertory with particular emphasis on the motif-repeating sections. By pointing out the role it played in the peasants' life, he also called attention to the fact that the bagpipe was practically no longer used in Hungary at the beginning of the 20th century. "It is not worth playing the bagpipe – they say – there is nobody to listen to it", Bartók quoted the remark he had often heard from bagpipers during his collecting trips. In his 1911 article he remarked that the bagpipe tradition of Nagymegyer in Csallóköz (now Slovak Republic) was "related in character to that of Nyitravidék".⁵⁵ We now see this connection clearly but in those days

⁵⁴ See *BÖI* 363, bagpipe drawing, p. 365.

⁵⁵ Bartók 1911a, see *BÖI*, p. 61.



Example 12

there was only one bagpipe collection from the area, Kodály's collection from Zsére dating from 1911 (and containing 13 recordings with one bagpiper) which was of a year later than Bartók's. Besides, Bartók sensed the bagpipers' professionalism, that is their surplus instrumental skills that had distinguished them from the amateur village musicians for centuries.

The collection of Felsőire (1907, Tolna county) has a bagpipe tune recording (*Bunda, bunda*), which is unique in the entire Hungarian folk music material for several reasons. First, because it preserves the performance of a group in 1907 when for technical reasons only soloists could be recorded. Second, because it is the exception proving the rule known in respect of Hungarian folk polyphony so far (namely that Hungarian folk music is monophonic). Third, because it is a sung bagpipe imitation. Bartók himself must have found the example so strange that he recorded it twice after each other. Its transcription is, however, missing. At the end of the unclassified group anywhere there is a *támlap* of Nagymegyer, a close variant of this example: (group of men and women) MH 984/a (*Example 13*).

Apart from laments and other vocal melodies, Bartók collected instrumental dance tunes on the flute called *Régi lassú forgató*, *Sebes forgató*, *Sebes forduló*, *Forgató*, *Verbunk* in 1914. A vocal folksong performed hummed (sung with la-la) was included among the items of the instrumental system (BR 12.918).

M.F. 1325c) F. 176c) 1840
 8.8. 818. (152 p.m.)
 A felvétel helye: Nagymegyer, Remésem m. 1910. ST. Gy.: Bartók
 Előadta: János Pál, ének,
 Elterjedtség: T.f.: 1840
 Tempo giusto, 1/4 = 100 (acc. al 103)
 E-lő-há-tu' min-cen kerk-nya, Ri-dí-dí-ró-dít a pin-na Ra-ék-ül-é, Ra-ék-ny
 J-las, R-las A ha-tya-gi lá-tya-gi R-las Tyuk-kib, R-las kib, 'jó te-le-kib-kib /
 Ha-j rin-tya-gi rin-tya-gi, é-ha-j rin-tya-gi
 A-ta-megyer helység

Example 13

The title of the summed variant: *Régi forgató* reveals that it is a dance tune. Nevertheless, it is certainly not the only reason why Bartók ranged it among the instrumental melodies because his vocal system also abounds in dance tunes. The explanation is that phonograph cylinders preserve its two flute and one violin variants. Bartók did not transcribe the violin version but made the flute transcription (BR 12.842). The vocal version must have been included in the collection for purposes of a later revision or linking of melodies. In connection with the rhythm of the old dance tunes Bartók wrote namely that it was very difficult to decide which of them was a dance tune and which was not, particularly in the case of *tempo giusto* songs.⁵⁶ It is one of Bartók's observations who published in *The Hungarian folksong*⁵⁷ several dance tunes both in instrumental and sung variants, among them the *Duda-polka* of Nagymegyer (No. 180).⁵⁸ The remark made about the pentatonic fifth-shifting vocal folksong *Szőlőhegyen keresztül* is again an example of his splendid intuition. He writes about the folksong published under no. 244: "It may have been a dance tune." Folk music collections after 1924, particularly after the Second World War, have revealed this typical, 6-line pentatonic fifth-shifting folksong

⁵⁶ Bartók 1924, see *BÖI*, p. 115.

⁵⁷ Bartók 1924.

⁵⁸ Bartók 1924, see the note to no. 180, *BÖI*, p. 276.

richly documented, one of the main *Ugrós* melodies of the region between the Danube and the Tisza, of Somogy and elsewhere in Southern Transdanubia.

In recent years folk music performers committed to folklorism but inexperienced in research and unfamiliar with Bartók's ethnomusicological work have claimed that Bartók did little (and Kodály even less) for the research of Hungarian folk instruments. Anybody who measures Bartók's Hungarian collection in numbers and finds it insufficient should consider whether it is not too much required. Let us enumerate in chronological order some examples taken at random.

1907: in addition to Transylvania, he collected hurdy-gurdy melodies in Szentes, flute melodies, moreover bagpipe in traces (something we have not known so far) in Felsőireg; 1910: flute, swineherd's horn, and bagpipe collecting in Csallóköz. In the same year Sándor Solymossy, secretary of the Ethnographic Society wrote in his report to the general assembly:

The content analysis of the next volume of our journal must not be without the varied column of collections and folkloristic data. Of the articles given there Zoltán Kodály's melody and text collection of Zoborvidék is particularly noteworthy; with it the series of publications by this excellent contributor of ours nears completion. This material and Béla Bartók's collection in the previous years will soon be published by the Society separately, as number 1 of *Népzenei Füzetek*.⁵⁹

In 1911 a bagpipe and horn competition was organized in Ipolyság. It was an event described in detail by Bartók and mentioned by Kodály and contemporary press reports.⁶⁰ In the words of István Györffy, ethnographer at the Hungarian National Museum, the Museum wanted to "save the ancient music of the herdsmen of the Palóc, notably of swineherds". Bartók was asked

to record on the phonograph what was worth preserving ... and a well-known civil servant of the county administration, a fervent supporter of culture, offered a prize for the best horn player and bagpiper. The prizewinners were the swineherds of Hont and Ipolypásztó, the first excelling in horn, the second in bagpipe.⁶¹

In his scholarly report Bartók described the competition at great length.

What a sight when they march up with all their swineherd's equipment: the embroidered felt coat over their shoulders, the splendid bagpipe under their arms, the horn and the masterly studded swineherd's whip in their hands!⁶²

⁵⁹ Solymossy 1910, p. 184.

⁶⁰ Bartók 1911a, see *BÖI* 1966, p. 65, Kodály 3a 1960, p. 60. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries it was also a custom in Hungary to organize bagpipe competitions. In 1900 a competition was held, e.g. in Szeged for the bagpiper of the Great Hungarian Plain. See Hankóczy 2005, pp. 59–60.

⁶¹ Ujfalussy 1958, 109 takes it from the 11 December 1910 issue of the *Vasárnapi Újság* 1958, p. 109.

⁶² Bartók 1911a, see *BÖI* 1966, p. 65.

1912: collecting flutes in Köröstárkány as a by-product of his Romanian folk music collection;⁶³ 1914: swineherd's horn recordings from Maros-Torda county, in addition to the ones mentioned above.

Between 1910 and 1914 Bartók dealt intensively with Romanian folk music; the volume of Bihar came out in 1913. In 1913 he visited North Africa for collecting purposes and attended the congress in Cairo. In the meantime he and Kodály were already working on systematizing the so far collected Hungarian folk music material of several thousand items. In 1913 they submitted to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences their well-defined project comprising instrumental folk music as well. It was at that time that Bartók wrote his studies on Hungarian folk instruments (1911), which were practically identical in text but contained different music examples. He also started working on the committee of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society, an occupation little mentioned in the Bartók literature.⁶⁴

He described the most important instruments and the prevailing conditions as early as in 1911. For lack of adequate knowledge in the field he refrained from writing another one as he disapproved of forming a rash opinion:

in the course of nature practice comes before theory. In the matter of Hungarian national music we see a reverse order; scholarly works discussing the peculiarities of Hungarian music were already published some years ago; they wanted to define something which was not existing in traces in those days.⁶⁵

To sum up: Bartók's collection of Hungarian instrumental folk music is interesting from several respects. Some of the melodies already passed for rarities in their own time because he aimed at collecting instruments representing early instrumental practice (bagpipe, flute, swineherd's horn, hurdy-gurdy, etc.) as well as tunes performed on them and representing on the whole the early instrumental musical tradition. Performers familiar with the one-time tradition and the melodies rendered by them were often that last messengers and vestiges of the earlier instrumental musical tradition of a region. The collection often introduces a melody alone, which is, at the same time, owing to the historical situation, the last vestige of the instrumental music practice of a region. In other cases it is the first and for a long time the only melody because of the forced interruption of collecting, due to the First and Second World Wars. Variants of several melodies only emerged after 1960, throwing light on the

⁶³ Bartók's collection may have called the ethnographers' attention to this area, see Györfi 1914. For the description of the work see: *Ethnographia* 29 (new 14) (1918), p. 165.

⁶⁴ Bartók and Kodály among the elected committee members: *Ethnographia* 22 (1911), 191. The minutes of the meeting on pp. 190–192 reveal that committee members were selected in turns of one to three years by drawing lots. Both Bartók and Kodály were in the third turn (p. 192). In the same year Bartók's name appears at the end of the sixth volume: Béla Bartók, member of committee (p. 388).

⁶⁵ Bartók 1911b, see *BÖI* 1966, pp. 99–100.

extent to which a certain type of instrumental melody is characteristic of the given geographic area. Consequently, Bartók's recordings and transcriptions give the first authentic picture, even though on a small scale, of the specific melodic range and the special performing style of the instrumental music of a given geographic region and of the given instrument. (Let me remind you of the tunes played by the two Gypsy violinists and the peasant clarinetist of Székely land.) Bartók's legendary manner of transcribing deserves, if nothing else, being shown. The specific instrumental qualities lend his transcriptions additional significance. The instrumental tunes he collected, the instrumental formulae and other elements worked their way into his compositorial oeuvre as well. It is of vital importance that Bartók wrote several essays on Hungarian folk instruments with illustrations from his own collection. Finally, it is high time we elaborated Bartók's instrumental music collection who first published detailed essays on Hungarian folk instruments written with a scholar's precision and unmitigated force. Bartók's collecting work and his collection of instruments are important both with regard to types of melody, the archaic manner of performance and their distribution among the various geographic regions. They represent a many-sided and indispensable basic material of Hungarian instrumental folk music collection. Although his accomplishments in the field of instrumental research method and his radically new approach to instrument typology have not received sufficient notoriety abroad and for a while they were not given enough emphasis in Hungary either, they are indispensable for instrument research.



Photograph 1: János Vékony bagpiper with Gyula Ortutay, an unknown person, László Lajtha and Béla Bartók in the studio of the Hungarian Radio (1938)

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