

**BÉLA BARTÓK AND THE ROMANIAN MUSICAL CULTURE:
INTERCULTURAL AND INTRA-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract: Béla Bartók was one of the most important precursors of the open spirit of contemporary Europe. Besides a major role in the 20th century music, this controversial personality is seen today as an important forerunner of the modern European cultural mentality. He redefined the notion of cultural frontier and had a major contribution to the forthcoming socio-cultural approaches that led to the nowadays concept of multi-culturalism. Bartók's researches on Eastern European folklore established the basis of the modern Ethno-musicology, passing over numerous contestations issued from the contradiction between the intellectuals' need to reform the European cultural paradigm and the nationalist tendencies that marked the first half of the last century. Bartók might be seen also as a precursor of the contemporary cognitive approach trying to harmonize in a different pattern the long lasting conflict in the history of art between logical structure and sensorial experience. He struggled to find in the core of the traditional music a universal structure meant to confer to the art work a cosmic logic, reiterated and reflected in each microstructure. The relationship between Bartók and the Romanian culture, largely surpassing the musical domain could be deemed highly significant for the Modern times intercultural communication.

Keywords: culture-cultures, modernity, cultural (national) encounter, tradition, art reforms

Béla Bartók's personality grew in the effervescent and contradictory atmosphere of the *fin-du-siècle*. The European modernity brought major changes and a rupture in the previous cultural evolution and conveyed contrasting tendencies as well in the political as in culture. The awakening of the national consciousness especially in the Southern and Eastern part of the continent was also confronted to unprecedented openings for universal communication. The reformation of the cultural paradigm brought consistent revolutions in all art fields, together with important mutations in mentalities and inter-cultural communication. The development of an integrative scientific thinking and the enlargement of the cultural horizon (calling for high specialization and thorough education) occur together with a progressive stream of democratization, which added to the cultural sphere accessibility and commercial criteria¹. This provided a subsequent specific gap between the intellectual elites and the consuming mass which is lasting till the present day. Always and everywhere what we are calling "cultural products" were separated between elites and popular consumers. A major difference created in the Modern Europe was that, this time about the same cultural products were shared and assessed from both perspectives. Thus, besides an obvious inter-cultural opening, Modernity brought at least two new elements in the history of culture: the mass control on cultural products (or events), which gave rise to intellectuals' discontent and the imperative of novelty, enthusiastically embraced by most of the artists. The cultural ideal and the axiological references ceased to be turned toward tradition and to require confirmation from the past. The rejection of tradition became the mark of the "true artist". Moreover, in the avant-garde circles could be found a rather common perception that considered the traditional European art form as expression of vulgarization. Such an equalization was nourished by the

¹ Bernard Miège: *The Society conquered by Communication*, Ed. Polirom Iași, 2000, p. 20

quasi general resistance of the average public against the revolutionary forms of art. Soon, not just the popular level was despised by the avant-gardists, but any work issued from the European tradition. Franz Marc, one of the promoters of the “Blaue Reiter” stream wrote in 1911: „We have to be daring and to leave behind all that was considered as valuable and essential by the “good Europeans”. Our ideas and ideals must be wrapped in fur coats, nourished with grasshoppers and wild honey and not with history if we ever want to escape from this exhausted European bad taste”².

Nevertheless, this peculiar and unique self-denial was dominant especially in the Western Europe, while the Eastern newcomers were rather unselectively absorbing the classical European tradition. In our opinion, the most radical rejection of tradition occurred in the Visual Arts field. Revolutions or any radical change in this field were rejecting the recent past to recover older roots. The first attempts denied the ongoing century while promoting the Medieval and Renaissance art. The themes issued from the European recent past were replaced by primitive, exotic or naive models. Afterwards, the most drastic streams attacked by words and work the whole traditional European legacy³. Instead, in Music and Literature, beside stylistic and formal revolutions, there were also compensatory trends meant to harmonize both spheres of cultural interest: tradition and renewal. And, specifically for Music, the revolutionary transformations in language and forms largely co-existed with the “Neo” streams (Neo-Baroque, Neo-Romantic). A specific stream favoured numerous multi-cultural interventions as, for instance, various forms of folk insertion. The beginning of the musical 20th century was also providing several significant attempts to create original counterweights to the rejected tradition searching to re-create a similar coherence and organic structure.

Béla Bartók’s creation and personal destiny might illustrate in a significant way the epoch’s looking-for. He was born in the former Kingdom of Hungary, in Nagyszentmiklós (today Sânnicolau Mare, Romania) and formed as musician in Nagyszőlös (today Vinogradiv, Ukraine) and Pozsony (today Bratislava, Slovakia). None of these locations, essential of his early life belonged anymore to his homeland after 1920. Young Bartók found himself in the middle of this modern whirl of political, social and cultural changes that affected the individual identity and put under question the belonging to a stable value system. In a way, his personal life and creation have mirrored the general tendencies of his time. In his struggle to find a human and artistic identity, he experienced several transformations and adaptations.

Béla Bartók was a noteworthy pianist and professor in the Music Academy of Budapest. Regarding his second hypostasis, his career was not exempt of conflicts; the least one can say might be that he was not particularly popular... Though, among his students there were noteworthy musicians as Sir Georg Solti, György Sándor, Ernő Balogh⁴, or Lili Kraus. Another side of his musical personality, not enough highlighted refers to a major contribution to the modern piano pedagogy. He wrote a lot of pieces covering all the levels, to mention just the 153 piano pieces gathered in the six volumes of *Mikrokosmos* (1926-1939). Bartók’s contribution to young pianists’ apprenticeship is more than a mere enrichment of repertoire; it

² Robert Goldwater: *Primitivism in Modern Art*, Ed. Meridiane, 1974, p. 87

³ *Idem* p. 186

⁴ This student facilitated the first tour of Bartók in America (1929) and tried hard to help the master after his emigration in USA (1939)

refers to the enlargement of the musical stylistic horizon and also it stimulates the sense of musical forms, articulation and dynamics. Nevertheless his undisputable major role in the history of music is due mainly to his musical creations and to his role in ethno-musicology. He was one of the first and most important specialists in this later field.

Bartók's early music got several influences, resuming the time tendencies: from a Neo-romantic language under the influence of the Music Academy in Budapest, passing through Expressionism and shortly through Impressionism, until he finally, found a personal manner to valorise the folklore. Bartók made an essential difference compared with his contemporaries as well in folklore processing as in the building of a strong and durable musical system. Another mark of his time was Bartók's interest for older styles, prior than the Classic-Romantic ones, which was illustrated not just in the structure of many of his works but also in his pianistic repertoire.

Even if, since the 20th century, one could anymore use the classical tonal system, Bartók had early the revelation that the atonal experiences could have limits and be less promising for a large palette of expression. Starting from the epoch's trend: "The exaggerations of the Post-Romantic epoch begin unbearable" and "There is no other way but to have a firm position against the 19th century"⁵ he looked for another way than the mere rejection of the tonal system. For the Hungarian composer the solution could not be a scheme, however ingenious could it be. His artistic nature could not stay away from the emotional communication with the audience for the sake of an abstract construction. The composer's ambition aimed also to find a systematic coherence as ground for the richness and vivacity of his creation. He found "the Solution" in the world of the peasants' music.

A first revelation occurs in 1904⁶ when he heard a lullaby sang by a nurse from Kibéd (Chibed), Transylvania. Even the insertion of folk themes was already used by the Romantic composers, not to mention but Franz Liszt, Bartók had the revelation that all that was considered by then as "Hungarian music" had very little to do with the real folk music still present in some remote villages. Actually what was considered by then "Hungarian music", spread by the Gypsies fiddlers was an urban hybrid melting Hungarian, Gypsy or even German music. This first meeting with the old Hungarian tunes triggered a long-life endeavour to study and collect authentic folk music. That music also became an important inspiration for personal works. A second impulse was given by his encounter with the composer Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) who had a decisive influence on Bartók's ethno-musicological researches. In 1908, they travelled along and across the country to discover the Hungarian old folklore. Bartók repeated this research voyage several times in Transylvania and later he visited also Serbia, Bulgaria, Algeria and Turkey.

In order to provide scientific accuracy and to fulfil the desideratum to initiate studies of comparative folklore, Bartók used the phonograph and looked for the most isolated locations to find the less altered musical traditions. He was one of the first to approach a research study from a multi-disciplinarian perspective. Thus, his researches were not limited just to music, but he took account of social framing, language, dialectal characteristics until

⁵ Béla Bartók: *Notes on the Folk Songs* (Romanian translation), Ed. de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, p. 54

⁶ Octavian Lazăr Cosma: *Chronic of the Romanian Music*, Vol. VI, p. 447

temporal or communicational circumstances⁷. He exerted a capital role for the ethno-musicology in Hungary, Romania, and their closer or more distant neighbours. As for the Romanian music, “Bartók is the originator, inspiratory and major reference point for all the ethno-musicological contributions in Romania between 1910 and 1930”⁸. In Bartók’s writings we can find detailed description of the collection of folklore, and numerous advices regarding a proper recording or a proper selection of sources. He preferred women to be “the song-tree”⁹ because their sedentary status, which was less exposed to contaminations.

After 1918, his research-travels came to an end, because the new geo-political status of the East-European territories. He deplored the isolation of the ethno-musicologists (acting independently in Romania, Ukraine etc.): “the links between the folk music of the Easter Europe could be beneficially continued, only if the collections or editions would employ unitary standpoints and methods accordingly”¹⁰. He hardly tried to unify the work of the ethno-musicologists acting separately in areas that have more than one feature in common¹¹.

One of the most important discoveries of Béla Bartók are concerning the dynamic and spreading of influence areas in the folk music. For instance, he revealed that an old musical stratum, which was considered “exclusively Hungarian”,¹² had actually Asian particularities (e.g. pentatonic scale)¹³. This old musical stratum was not expanded westwards, but exerted some influence on the Romanian territories: in Maramureş and Bistriţa. A newer Hungarian musical layer act conversely: it influenced Slovakian and even German music, but not the Romanian’s. Bartók has signalled also a third category, rather awkward to be systematized, included those Hungarian tunes that got neighbourhood influence, especially coming from Romanians. A particular statement coming from these observations, that we assume to be of greatest importance, refers to the fact that the musical kinships do not always take account of geographical or linguistic vicinities. Paradoxical links between songs are unifying remote lands. “We found a particular Romanian song presenting similarities with a tune in Algeria. [...] A same melodic type can be found in Ukraine, Persia, Iraq and in Romanian Principalities”¹⁴.

It is hard to delimitate Bartók – the ethno-musicologist from Bartók – the composer. His works were a synthesis of folk music and modernism. According to the composer, some particular elements, typical for Bartók’s language, as octatonic scale, equal tempered twelve tones aggregate, seven-tones scales, quarts and seventh chords etc. are exclusively issued from folklore. The EasternEuropean musical thesaurus was not only a subject for anthropological insights, but also a reservoir of inspiration for the composer. The characteristic folk inflexions led to new ideas for harmony. “What can be more natural than to

⁷ Béla Bartók: *Notes ...* p. 72-73

⁸ Marin Marian: “A forgotten Centenary: the Birth Certificate of the Romanian Ethno-musicology” in *Muzica* No. 1, 2014, p. 107

⁹ Béla Bartók: *Notes ...* p. 43

¹⁰ *Idem*: p. 46

¹¹ He expressed several times such request in writings, public conferences or personal correspondence, especially with the Romanians D.G. Kiriac and Constantin Brăiloiu (see Béla Bartók: *Letters*, FerencLászló (ed.) Kriterion 1976)

¹² Béla Bartók: *Notes ...* p. 70

¹³ The Asian origin of the Hungarian culture is, for that matter, also confirmed by the Ural-Altai linguistic structure.

¹⁴ *Idem* p. 37

put vertically, in chords a melodic structure”¹⁵? “We may, for instance, take over a peasant melody unchanged or only slightly varied and write an accompaniment. [...] Another method [...] is the following: the composer does not make use of a real peasant melody but invents his own imitation of such melodies. [...] There is yet a third way [...] neither peasant melodies nor imitations of peasant melodies can be found in his music, but it is pervaded by the atmosphere of peasant music. In this case we may say, he has completely absorbed the idiom of peasant music which has become his musical mother tongue”¹⁶.

The music theorist Ernő Lendvai, in a research-study started from 1950, discovered in many of Bartók’s pieces underground mathematical liaisons and structural symmetries as Fibonacci series, symmetrical axes, and *sectio aurea* (golden ratio). These mathematical patterns, which can be found everywhere in Bartók’s music, in forms, climaxes, phrasing, tonalities successions, modes, intervals, rhythmical canvas etc. increased the public image of a cerebral composer. It seems hard to believe that such numerous numeric analogies are just results of chance, or they are issued from the natural inner structure of the folk music. Nevertheless, Bartók never confessed about a mathematical-mystical skeleton of his works and never left behind the slightest trace of the preliminary phases of his creation process. The composer claimed repeatedly that the only inspirational source is the folklore. For instance, the above-mentioned fourth chords, to which Lendvai will find a symmetrical correspondent grill („the axis system”) were actually inspired by the typical fourth leaps in the Hungarian old tunes. Lendvai’s theories, even if they appear as rewarding have yet a lot of mismatches and more than a single enforcement of conclusions. Such inadvertencies were speculated by the adepts of an opposite standpoint. The Bartók exegete, László Somfai sustained that Bartók actually had no preconceived musical theories. In his opinion, Bartók was not an analytical composer but a musical creator, for whom intuition played a central role, bringing as argument, among others, the fact that he often began to compose by improvising at the piano. Somfai is strengthening his assertion also with Bartók’s refusal to teach composition, considering that the new musical languages of the 20th century would be too recent and, subsequently, far from being stable or systematized. It is interesting that as well Lendvai and Somfai are both invoking the well-known Bartók’s passion for nature in order to draw arguments for their opposite conclusions...

In the way to build his own style, Bartók hesitated a lot before deciding which work could be seen as representative and revised three times his creation before settling “a true” opus 1. The “final” opus 1 was ultimately the *Piano Rhapsody*, wrote in several arrangements (piano solo, piano duo, concerto etc.) He ended this notation style at the opus 21 (the first *Violin and Piano Sonata* wrote in 1921). The rest of his creation has never got an opus number. After his death, three attempts—two full and one partial—have been made at cataloguing. The first, and still most widely used, was András Szöllősy’s chronological Sz. numbers, from 1 to 121. A second cataloguing, thematically arranged, was created by Denijs Dille (DD numbers 1 to 77). The most recent catalogue is a synthesis between these two, made by László Somfai between 1993 and 1994.

¹⁵*Idemp.* 58

¹⁶*Idemp.* 60

Bartók's personal life and his religious convictions also suffered fluctuations and resetting. He was born in a Catholic family, but after an atheistic period, he was publicly converted to Unitarianism and even became president of the Hungarian Unitarian Church. Even if he was a convinced nationalist, he tried hard to know and to understand the cultural specificity of the entire mosaic of nations composing the Central-Eastern Europe. Bartók had a difficult communication with his contemporaries. There are testimonies that, as professor at the Music Academy in Budapest (1906-1934) he aroused several disputes with colleagues, staff and students. Though he never met barriers in the communication with the peasants, be they even foreigners, during the ticklish task to gather information about music and customs. During his collection work, Bartók met just a few reluctances from his Romanian informers; they were caused by the ritual framing of the traditional musical performance; namely the difficulty to convince a peasant to sing mourning songs or carols out of their season or concrete occasion. Besides, it is hard to state his misanthropy, when the same man was also able to tie lifetime friends as, for instance Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), but also foreign friends as the Romanian musicologists D.G. Kiriac, Constantin Brăiloiu and more other.

The reception of Bartók's music either inspired by folklore or not was rather difficult. He encountered as well the general audience's reluctance against the new modernist style, as the disdain against "peasants' music", which still persisted. Bartók had to deal with opinions claiming that "the reason to pick-up folk songs cannot be but a sign of spiritual laziness"¹⁷. In the same time, his ethno-musicological theories regarding the ratio originality-influence, or regarding the paradoxical kinships between what he called "musical dialects" brought him grievance and reprisals as well from the Hungarian side as from the Romanian. The awakening of the Hungarian nationalism, increasingly gave rise to persecutions and public disapproval. The fact that Bartók never concealed his anti-Nazi feelings only made things worse. He was constrained to leave his beloved country to emigrate in America (1939), where he did not succeed to really impose himself, even if he got support from friends or former students. In spite of his European celebrity, it was little American interest in his music during his final years. Bartók struggled hard to find survival means and professional affirmation. He resumed his pianistic activity (together with his wife), got a research fellowship at Columbia University to study a collection of Serbian and Croatian folk songs, translated some old Hungarian textbooks into English, or wrote some articles for Columbia University musical dictionaries. In 1945, a fatal disease, leukaemia was diagnosed. During his last year, he still found the force to fulfil a number of his composition projects, leaving a series of masterpieces. Before the death (September 26, 1945) he said to his doctor: "What a pity! I leave with full luggage".

Bartók's relationship with Romania was extended on decades and brought about significant results for the Romanian ethno-musicology and for Bartók a significant musical material and a number of faithful friends and admirers. The Romanian folklore provided the second number of musical material. Bartók asserted in 1928 that, between 1909 and 1918 he collected about 8000 Hungarian tunes, 3500 Romanian, 1500 Slovakian and 150 from other ethnic groups (Gypsies, Serbians, Bulgarians, or Ruthenians). The recordings' amount was:

¹⁷*Idemp.* 24

1132 Hungarian phonograms, 794 Romanian, 161 Slovakian etc.¹⁸ He starts to collect Romanian music since 1907 when he extended the research area in other regions under the Austrian-Hungarian rule. In Transylvania and Banat, he discovered, together with Hungarian music, also the music of the inhabiting nations. The approach was highly professional; not only had he studied variants, spreading areas, resemblances but also he analysed each tune in its social, temporal and ritual context. He stated that “among all the nations dwelling in old Hungary, the Romanians have best preserved the musical tradition”¹⁹.

The analysis inside the habits which are surrounding music was completing with inter-cultural and inter-ethnic perspectives; such twofold approach was opening not just an accurate classification system, but also a complex understanding of the cultural phenomenon in its complexity and dynamics. The Romanian music in Transylvania and Banat was divided in three important groups, called by Bartók “musical dialects”. Another classification was regarding the major groups of repertoire: 1. Carols, 2. Wedding songs, 3. Mourning songs, 4. Dances, 5. Doina. The analyses took into account a multitude of details, starting from the ratio of variation until the links with the verbal behaviour within the music performance. For instance, a peculiarity in the relationship verse-melody in the Romanian folklore is the prolongation of the verse by adding syllables (“u”, “ă”, “le”, “măi” etc.) or by repeating a same verse until the end of the melody²⁰. Another classification was related to the musical modes. What was essentially changing the ethno-musicological studies is to consider the musical culture as a living organism, in permanent change and to point out the structure and the direction of these mutations. He admitted that even the mixtures could be sometimes rewarding, contributing to human communication and enriching the musical genres. In several articles Bartók argued that “If we consider the linguistic combinations to be a natural process, we should admit that there are no reasons to exclude musical contaminations or creation of new styles”²¹. Bartók also observed that the Romanians in Transylvania are less influenced by Gypsy music or by urban folklore than other ethnic groups in the area, including Hungarians. He was often deploring the impossibility to compare such peculiarities with the folklore beyond the Carpathians bow, in Walachia and Moldavia. After the 1st World War the ways to access the Transylvanian music became inaccessible too.

The Romanian music became also a notable source of inspiration for his personal creation. We mention the *Two Romanian Dances* op. 8a, *Six Romanian Folk Dances* Sz. 56, *20 Romanian Christmas Carols* Sz. 57 and many Romanian themes, melodic shapes or rhythmical canvas inserted in other works. The Romanian folklore was presented in several studies as “Cântece populare românești din Comitatul Bihor” (“Romanian Folk Songs from Bihar County”) in 1913, “Dialectul muzical al romanilor din Hunedoara” (“The Musical Dialect of Romanian in Hunedoara”) in 1914, “Cântece populare din Maramureș” (“Folk Songs from Maramureș”) in 1923, “Muzică populară maghiară și cea românească” (“Romanian and Hungarian Folk Music”) in 1934, “Melodien der Rumenischen Colinde” (“Tunes of the Romanian Carols”) in 1935.

¹⁸ *Idemp.* 69

¹⁹ *Idemp.* 143

²⁰ See „The musical dialect of the Romanians in Hunedoara” wrote in 1914 cf. Bartók: *Notes ...* pp. 143-159

²¹ See „Studies on Folk Songs and Nationalism” (1934) and „Music and racial purity” (1944)

If the relationship between Bartók and the Romanian music was rewarding, the relationship with the Romanians was not always smooth. The researches themselves, but also Bartók's preoccupation to share and to compare the findings brought him solid friendship and rewarding collaboration with musicians, ethnologists etc. in Romania. His first folklore collection was concerning the Romanians' folklore and was published in Romania. The musicologist D.G. Kiriac was advocating the publishing of the "Collection of Romanian Folk Tunes from Bihar" in 1913, under the auspices of the Romanian Academy in the Collection "From the Romanian people's life". It was the first serious ethno-musicological collection in Romania²². Nevertheless, this work raised critics too; Bartók's work was not well seen by everyone. The mixture of ignorance and exacerbate nationalism had enough representativeness at the level of Romanian authorities and press. He endured a lot of attacks and even menaces as well from Romania as from Hungary. In Romania, the reproach referred to some musical insights as the noting style, which was in contradiction with the whole musical European school, but also to the symbolic compound of any subject having to deal with the national ideas. In a séance at the Romanian Academy, the writer Duiliu Zamfirescu expressed his doubt: "A foreigner can neither understand the Romanian folklore, nor to accurately collect it"²³. Oscar Prusch (a provincial band-master) was the most vehement detractor; he ends an article in 1914 with the regret that the Romanian Academy did not find a Romanian musician because: "Mr. Bartók's collection has no relevancy and we cannot draw any benefit for our national music from"²⁴. Such allegations raised the indignation of the Romanian musicians, especially the ethno-musicologists' who have had connection with the Bartokian thinking and work.

The collection had critics from the Hungarian side too, not to mention but Janos Seprödi (Cluj) who attacked also the scientific character of the work, but moreover, he complained the fact that Bartók wrote in the first place about other nation than Hungarians. This nationalist standpoint having nothing to do with an ethno-musicological study was continuing for years, while Bartók continued to study, collect and present the Romanian music. Another study "The Musical Dialect from Hunedoara" (1914) aroused hostility too. In 1920, Jenő Hubay, the director of the Music Academy, even if he recognized Bartók's talent has qualified this study as "Ill-fated and inopportune", because "the national energy was wasted for a research on a foreign music"²⁵. The symbolic and/or political standpoints referring to national has proving to be more important than any scientific approach for most of the reactions in Hungary. We can imagine the storm released (in Romania), when Bartók presented similarities between the Romanian "Doina" and some Algerian tunes or (in Hungary) when he found comparable variants of some old Hungarian songs at the Yürük population in Turkey.

²² Marin Marian: "A forgotten Centenary ..." p. 103

²³ O.L. Cosma: *Hronicul Muzicii Române Şi (Chronicle of the Romanian Music)* Vol. VI, pp. 454-455

²⁴ *Idem* p. 461

²⁵ *Idem* p. 466. A same quotation is related to Bartók's collection from Bihar (1913) in a conference published in 2014: Otilia Constantiniu: *The Collections of Romanian Musical Folklore as Knowledge and National Legitimation in Transylvania at the Beginning of the Last Century in Summer Conferences of Telciu*, Vol. II *Book-Knowledge-Identity; Cultural Studies*, Eikon Cluj, p. 70

In Romania during the 3rd decade of the last century Bartók was respected and his work was highly appreciated, with the few exceptions above-mentioned. In 1924, he was decorated by the King Ferdinand I of Romania with the order „*Bene merenti*” 1st class. George Enescu valued at highest level the composer and more than once expressed his admiration for the ethnographical work of the Hungarian musician. In the autumn of 1924, Bartók came in Bucharest, invited and greeted by Enescu himself to play a piano recital and to present his Violin Sonata Sz.76 performed by himself and Enescu. During the same visit, he became member of the Society of Romanian Composers and was invited to chair the Enescu awards ceremony. The presence of Bartók in the core of the musical life in Bucharest was seen as “a moment of historical signification for the musical life in the 20th century, because the reunion of two of the most important musicians of the century”. In an interview for the revue *Rampa* (IoanMassof, 7 Nov.1924) George Enescu states that Bartók “is one of the greatest of our century” and “by the gathering of a large number of Romanian folk songs, Bartók brings a huge benefit for our country”²⁶. Most of the Romanian musicians generously received Bartók, his music and his folklore collections. The celebration of Bartók in Bucharest in 1924 could be seen as well a triumph of a new musical language as an intellectual counterweight for the huge misunderstandings between the two neighbour countries.

The fourth decade brought a sensible worsening in the relation Bartók – Romania. That was mostly due to some public affirmations of Bartók who tried to amend his reputation of “enemy of the Hungarian culture” made by the Hungarian nationalists²⁷. In the article “Our Folklore and Our Neighbours’ Folklore” (1934) Bartók affirmed the influence of the Hungarian Music on the Romanians’ and the “superiority of the Hungarian musical culture”, which raised the dissatisfaction of the Romanian musicologists with few exceptions²⁸. Other assertions as “Who has the slightest idea about folklore understands that the fact that the Romanians kept the less modified musical tradition is a sign of a lower degree of culture” did not repair the relationship. The consequences of such allegations added to the above-mentioned article were public protests, especially coming from the folklorist TiberiuBrediceanu, but also from a number of his former admirers²⁹ and cancelations of some conferences and homage meetings in Romania. This article, even if it furnished arguments for the Romanian detractors did not succeed to improve the relationship between Bartók and the authorities in his own country. Besides, his theories supposing a common pattern for several folklores touched the nationalist ideal for uniqueness. He aimed to develop a scientific research and a subsequent collaboration in a temporal and geographical context dominated by the national sensibility. In his 1937 article “Study of the folk song and Nationalism” Bartók is affirming the necessity of an international collaboration in the Ethnology fields and deplores the exacerbation of the nationalism in value judgements. In the same article he anticipated the ethno-musicology’s direction of development toward the finding of the basic patterns

²⁶*George Enescu Monograph* (M. Voicana Ed), Volume I, Chapter VII *Clarifications* p. 530

²⁷ See the article “Bartók Béla – Servant of the Wallachian Culture” by Sereghy Elmer. For the same article, the source is *Zeitschrift for musikwissenschaft* Berlin, according to Octavian Lazăr Cosma and *Nemzeti Ujsag*, according to László Ferenc. Otilia Constantiniu: *The Collections of Romanian Musical Folklore...* p. 71.

²⁸Constantin Brăiloiu, Mihail Jora, Ion Nonna-Otescu among other few

²⁹Octavian Lazăr Cosma: *The Chronic...* pp. 468-469

valuable for any folk music. A decade later, in a different context and comparing folk songs from all over the world, not just from a single region, Constantin Brăiloiu succeed to demonstrate that all these musical forms, no matter their diversity are based on a specific set of building components, scalar, rhythmical or structural principles to eventually set up a system³⁰.

Bartók came in and leaved this world too early. We might suppose that in his “full luggage” there were also ideas and research directions for the folk music, including ours. His relationship with our musical culture is not yet exempt of questions. For instance, was he sincere when trying to bind up the Hungarian nationalists’ wounded pride, or when he confessed in a private letter in 1917 “I really do miss a Romanian song”? The warm friendship of George Enescu did really get a similar answer from Bartók? Today, the Romanian musical life is highly appreciating Bartók’s work, especially as composition and children’ pedagogy are concerned. His ethno-musicological researches ended to efface somehow the controversial relation with the Romanian culture. As a tardive reward he was elected in the Romanian Academy in 1991. In the spotlighted circle of history it remains just the essence of his work, the collections, the studies and the valuable ideas that opened rewarding ways for the Romanian musical culture.

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