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The Hungarian Rhapsodies and the 15 Hungarian Peasant Songs: Historical and ideological parallels between Liszt and Bartók

David B. Hill
James Madison University

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*The Hungarian Rhapsodies and the 15 Hungarian Peasant Songs: Historical and
Ideological Parallels Between Liszt and Bartók*
David Hill

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JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

While Liszt has been recognized as central to Hungary's place in Western music, Bartók has been credited with composing Hungary's authentic nationalistic music. Liszt's role in Hungarian nationalistic music and his influence on Bartók have only recently been given serious attention. Musicologists are beginning to concede that Liszt's 'nationalistic' source—though a hybrid of styles—constituted a legitimate nationalistic style worthy of research. The author examines two transitional piano pieces composed by the respective composers: Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* and Bartók's *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs*. He draws attention to similarities in the genesis of the works, in the role each work played in the respective composers' compositional development, and in compositional elements of each work. He shows through correspondence, anecdotal accounts, and the implication of various biographical facts how each of the two composers was at least partially motivated by personal patriotism. He also notes the equally strong characteristic of musical progressiveness in evidence in the works of both composers. Finally, the author compares the two piano works, referencing examples of tonal, rhythmic, and idiomatic progressiveness in each.

INTRODUCTION

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) and Béla Bartók (1881-1945) are inextricably linked by nationality and heritage. They also represent conflicting ideas of nationalistic music—what musicologist Shay Loya refers to as a “culture war constructed of opposites.”¹ Liszt synthesized his own cosmopolitan style into the gypsy-band tunes ubiquitous to nineteenth-century Germany and Austria. For his Hungarian music, Bartók combined unprecedented research (accomplished alongside fellow composer Zoltán Kodály) together with musical innovations that would help change the course of Western art music. Twentieth-century scholarship—beginning with Bartók’s own essays on Hungarian music—focused on the differences between the Hungarian sources of the two composers. The overwhelming conclusion was that Bartók, not Liszt, was the true father of Hungarian nationalistic music. Liszt’s role became relegated to that of an important Hungarian composer, as opposed to a composer of important Hungarian works (a position which Bartók came to posthumously occupy, especially with his *Improvisations*, Op. 20 and the Hungarian works in the *Mikrokosmos*, BB 105).

In his article, “Liszt and the Twentieth Century”, musicologist James Deaville captures the complex relationship of Bartók’s heritage to that of his predecessor. Deaville writes that Bartók “had difficulties with the unauthenticity [sic] of the Hungarian elements in Liszt’s music”² but further notes that, “Bartók disseminated Liszt’s legacy as performer and writer... [and] also passed on Liszt’s compositional legacy in his own

¹ Shay Loya, *Liszt’s Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 125.

² James Deaville, “Liszt and the Twentieth century” in *The Cambridge Companion to Liszt* edited by Kenneth Hamilton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 40.

works.”³ The relationship between the two composers’ Hungarian oeuvre is simultaneously that of juxtaposition and of a logical progression from predecessor to successor.

Though Liszt’s Hungarian works enjoyed popularity in their day, during the course of the twentieth-century they fell from favor. Bartók, while defending other aspects of Liszt’s heritage, dismissed Liszt’s Hungarian works, calling his Rhapsodies, for instance, “his least successful works.”⁴ Modern research, however, is reevaluating Bartók’s assertions regarding his predecessor.

David E. Schneider, in his recent book *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition: Case Studies in the Intersection of Modernity and Nationality*, has reassessed Bartók’s compositions in light of his polemics against Liszt’s music. Schneider notes that Bartók drew inspiration from the works of Liszt and Erckel as well as Hungarian composers of his own generation, including Ernő Dohnányi. Schneider traces what Bartók retained of the past and what he abandoned as he built a career intended to rival Liszt’s.⁵ Schneider’s observations are important in that they show traces of nineteenth-century influences (including those of Liszt and the *verbunkos* idiom) throughout his compositional career. This calls into question Bartók’s self-proclaimed purity in his Hungarian works.

Lynn Hooker notes in *Redefining Hungarian Music from Liszt to Bartók* that—while Liszt’s nationalist reputation was suffering as a result of his cosmopolitan

³ Ibid.

⁴ Béla Bartók, “Liszt’s Music and Today’s Public” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 452-453.

⁵ David E. Schneider, *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition: Case Studies in the Intersection of Modernity and Nationality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 34.

existence, his outdated virtuosity, and the unpopularity of his position on the Gypsies—Bartók and others were proving eager to “transcend” Liszt’s legacy.⁶ In the process, Bartók and Kodály created a “legend” in which they were the true origin of Hungarian nationalistic music.⁷ Hooker’s research examines the ways in which both composers and the Hungarian culture at large sought to define the Hungarian idiom.

In his book, *Liszt’s Transcultural Modernization and the Gypsy-Hungarian Tradition*, Shay Loya focuses on the ways in which Liszt’s effort to establish the Hungarian idiom served to modernize music in general (A perspective which has long been reserved exclusively for the Hungarian works of Bartók.). Loya argues that Liszt used his cosmopolitan compositional approach together with the Hungarian gypsy idiom as a means of modernizing western music. Loya’s claim is directly contrary to Bartók’s own assertions that Liszt’s Hungarian music was rooted in shallow exoticism and was inconsequential to the development of western music.⁸

What seems to be lacking, in the midst of this changing narrative of two of Hungary’s most important composers, is a summary of the similarities, and not just the differences represented by these two composers. In this thesis, I will take one genre—the piano transcription of Hungarian music—as a point of departure to put to test the theories of Schneider, Loya, and Hooker. The first half of the thesis will focus on similarities in motivation and in work (both written prose and musical compositions). I will provide a background to the Liszt/Bartók dichotomy and discuss coincidental parallels as well as

⁶ Lynn Hooker, *Redefining Hungarian Music from Liszt to Bartók* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9.

⁷ *Ibid*, 96.

⁸ Béla Bartók, “Gypsy music or Hungarian music?” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 241.

those intentionally cultivated by Bartók. The second part of the thesis will be composed of a comparison of some of Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies S.244* (the original fifteen Rhapsodies [1851-53] which had been revised from his *Magyar Dalok* and grouped into what Alan Walker referred to as a "single, epic work"⁹) and Bartók's *Hungarian Peasant Songs*, BB 79. In the course of this thesis, I will present how Liszt and Bartók each synthesized nationalistic and western art music and revolutionized harmony, rhythm, and form through their respective Hungarian influences.

PART I

A. ORIGINS

Tracing the Hungarian music of each composer from its origin is important to understanding Liszt's and Bartók's respective roles in Hungarian music history. According to musicologist Bence Szabolcsi (1899-1973) (student of Bartók and late professor at the Liszt Academy), the oldest form of Hungarian music (hereafter referred to as "Hungarian folk") originated in the east (Turkey, Mongolia) and traveled west with the tribal ancestors of the Hungarians in roughly the fourth century.¹⁰ Szabolcsi explains that the isolated nature of the peasant class from urban music preserved Hungarian folk music and kept it free from Western influence.¹¹ This music was preserved solely by oral transmission until Béla Vikár began cataloging it in 1898 and was famously followed by Bartók and Kodaly from 1905-1918.¹² Bartók wrote, "...peasant music of this kind [a

⁹ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years 1811-1847* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 337.

¹⁰ Bence Szabolcsi, *A Concise History of Hungarian Music* (Boston: Crescendo Publishing, 1964), 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹² Béla Bartók, "Hungarian Peasant Music" in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 84.

homogeneous style, superior to ‘popular art music’] actually is nothing but the outcome of changes wrought by a natural force whose operation is unconscious in men who are not influenced by urban culture.”¹³ In his book, *Les Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*, (1859) Liszt dismissed Hungarian folk music, “those Hungarian folk songs and melodies that one can find in the villages” as “too simple and imperfect to make an [sic.] great impression...”¹⁴ One can assume from this statement that Liszt intentionally rejected Hungarian peasant music rather than was ignorant of its existence. This point is important as it relates to Bartók’s insinuations that Liszt would have used the purer form of folk music, had he been aware of its existence.

Verbunkos—the newer form of Hungarian music that had become accepted as nationalistic by Liszt’s day—emerged from 16th-century Hungarian folk dances as an instrumental ensemble in the 18th century. This music was popularized and disseminated by Gypsies (although, importantly, did not originate with them, as Liszt would later claim in his unpopular book.¹⁵) The name *verbunkos* is a Hungarian perversion of the German *Werbung* “recruitment.” This term was used in reference to the Austrian troops’ practice of luring Hungarian men for recruitment into their military beginning around 1715. (Ironically, Hungarians would later use this style as a means of stirring up patriotism against the Austrians.)

Jonathan Bellman explained the role of the *verbunkos* by the Austrian military in

¹³ Béla Bartók, “What is Folk Music” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 6.

¹⁴ Béla Bartók, “Liszt Problems” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 506.

¹⁵ *Oxford Music Online*, s.v. “Hungary”

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13562> (accessed August 17, 2014).

greater detail:

About a dozen hussars (members of the Hungarian light cavalry), led by their sergeant, would be involved: first, the sergeant would dance slow and dignified figures, then the subordinate officers would join in and the music and dancing became increasingly energetic, until finally the youngest soldiers engaged in virtuosic leaps and spur-clicking. The accompanying music was usually played by Gypsy musicians.”¹⁶

Due to the transient nature of gypsies, along with their habit of incorporating local music wherever they travelled, this music was a hodgepodge of styles. In further contrast to the orally transmitted Hungarian folk music, this style, though improvisational, was increasingly transcribed and adapted by Western European and dilettante Hungarian composers.

The musical form of *verbunkos* was characterized by the alterations between slow sections (*lassú* or *lassán*) and fast ones (*friss* or *friska*). Phrases were often rounded off with a signature melodic cadential figure known as *bakázó*, a figure inspired by the click of heels in the recruitment dance (see example 1).

Example 1. *Bakázó*—the cadential figure seminal to the *verbunkos* idiom.



The melodic figure of the *bakázó* generally begins on the second scale degree, descends to the tonic, and dips down to the leading tone on the penultimate note (see measures 5 and 6 of the *Lassú* of Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsody no. 2).

¹⁶ *Oxford Music Online*, s.v. “*Verbunkos*”

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29184> (accessed April 13, 2013).

Example 2. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 2, measures 1-6.



Two other components were elemental to the *verbunkos* style: the “Gypsy scale” and characteristic rhythms. The “Gypsy scale,” consists of the upper half of two harmonic minor scales superimposed [C, D, E \flat , F \sharp] [G, A \flat , B, C]. Running fast notes (eighths or sixteenths) throughout the *friska* section were one sign of *verbunkos* rhythm. Another consisted of persistent dotted rhythms (*long, short*). Bartók specifically condemned this rhythm as “in absolute contradiction to the spirit of Hungarian music”¹⁷ and denoted it as the “anti-Hungarian pattern”¹⁸ (see example 3—the dotted rhythm is represented in the top note of the treble clef).

Example 3. Brahms's Hungarian Dance in G-Minor WoO 1, no. 1. Measures 1-4.



¹⁷ Béla Bartók, “Hungarian Folk Music” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 77.

¹⁸ Béla Bartók, “Harvard Lectures” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 384.

Bartók categorized the two types of Hungarian indigenous music mentioned above as: “*popular art music*, in other words *urban folk music*, [and] *rural folk music*, that is, *peasant music*...”¹⁹ Though Bartók propagated this view, it is too simplistic to think of *verbunkos* as exclusively urban music and Hungarian folk as exclusively rural music. According to Sárosi, *verbunkos* itself was not a strictly urban music, but was played by gypsy bands in cities and in villages. As was the custom with gypsy bands, each adapted to their surroundings. The urban bands more westernized, while the village bands contained more folk elements.²⁰

German composers in the eighteenth century began to draw upon the music of the Hungarian gypsies, the *verbunkos* style. By the late nineteenth century, this fascination had grown to the point that the style was ubiquitous in Western art music. Composers who drew on the style (but adapted it to their personal western tastes) include Mozart, (*Finale* of the Violin Concerto K. 219) Haydn, (*Rondo all’ongarese* from the Piano Trio Hob. XV:25) and Schubert (*Finale* of the String Quartet D 956). By the Romantic period, Hungarian works occupied a significant place in composers’ *oeuvre*, such as Liszt’s *19 Hungarian Rhapsodies S.244*, and Brahms’s *21 Hungarian Dances WoO 1*, two works which drew Bartók’s public criticism.

This abbreviated history accounts for the discrepancies between the Hungarian compositions of Liszt and Bartók. Liszt’s Hungarian music was actually music in the *verbunkos* style (a style with roots in the folk style, but adapted and performed by

¹⁹ Béla Bartók, “What is Folk Music” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976): 5.

²⁰ Bálint Sárosi, “Gypsy Musicians and Hungarian Peasant Music,” *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council, Vol. 2* (1970): 26-27.

the gypsies predominantly). Bartók's Hungarian music (following his earlier *verbunkos*-inspired compositions) was based upon the folk style preserved through generations by isolation from western musical influences. These essential differences are important to understand the Liszt/Bartók dichotomy, but only in the sense that they provide a foundation. Later discussions of motivations, writings, and shared musical elements will highlight important connections that were ignored or underplayed in the later writings of Bartók.

B. TIES TO HUNGARY

A detailed examination of Liszt's and Bartok's private and public lives reveals a shared sense of deep patriotism. Though the bulk of his career was spent in absentia from his homeland, (and though he never learned the Hungarian language) Franz Liszt consistently identified himself as Hungarian. Alan Walker referred to Liszt's identification with Hungary as a "*Lietmotif*" throughout his early concert career in Europe.²¹ The country certainly returned his affection. During his lifetime, the Hungarian government showered many honors upon him, including the presentation of a "Sword of Honor" in 1840, when he was only twenty-nine. A famous poet penned an "Ode to Franz Liszt" that is still taught in Hungarian schools.²² In 1875, Liszt was named President of Hungary's highest conservatory: the newly formed Academy of Music—a position for which he rejected a salary.²³ Not only was the conservatory renamed the "Liszt

²¹ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years 1811-1847* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 79.

²² *Ibid*, 332.

²³ Katalin Avar, Miklós Török, Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum and Research Centre, <http://www.lisztmuseum.hu/en/aboutus/> (accessed August 17, 2014).

Academy” in his honor in 1925, but is in operation to this day. Such celebrated Hungarian musicians as Ernő Dohnányi, Zoltán Kodály, and Béla Bartók would graduate from the Liszt Academy. Béla Bartók, indeed, would later teach at the Liszt Academy.

The national conservatory—a means of fostering great Hungarian music in Hungary—played a central part in the lives of both composers. Like Liszt’s sacrificial devotion to the Academy spoke to his patriotism²⁴, Bartók’s decision to attend the Academy, similarly, seems to be entirely motivated by his devotion to Hungary. Offered a scholarship to attend the Vienna *Hochschule der Musik*, Bartók refused in favor of the Budapest Academy of Music.²⁵ Just prior his discovery of Hungarian folk music (to be discussed in more detail later) he wrote in a letter to his mother:

Everyone, on reaching maturity, has to set himself a goal and must direct all his work and actions toward this. For my own part, all my life, in every sphere, always and in every way, I shall have one objective: the good of Hungary and the Hungarian nation. (8 September, 1903.)²⁶

However youthful this vow seems, Bartók would fulfill it in a variety of ways. In World War I he and Kodály served, not in the army, but by continuing to collect folk songs—this time from the soldiers. The same year that the war broke out (1914) he began work on his 15 Hungarian Peasant Songs, BB 79, as well as *Three Hungarian Folk Tunes* BB

²⁴ During Liszt’s “*vie trifonquée*”, or “three-fold life”, 1869-76, he divided his time equally between Weimar (where he primarily taught piano), Rome, and Budapest, where he served in setting up the Academy—along with Erkel, choosing the faculty and writing curriculum.

²⁵ Lynn Hooker, “The Political and cultural climate in Hungary” in *The Cambridge Companion to Bartók*. Edited by Amanda Bayley. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 17.

²⁶ David E. Scheider, *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition: Case Studies in the Intersection of Modernity and Nationality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 33.

80b. Additionally, Bartók would serve as a professor at the Academy from 1906-1934.

Bartók's fervent declaration parallels Liszt's own words, at the farewell concert in 1823 preceding his study in Vienna. For that concert, Liszt wore a traditional Hungarian costume and had placards made that proclaimed:

I am Hungarian, and I do not know a greater happiness than to introduce to my beloved country the first fruits of my education and studies—as the first expression of my gratitude. What is missing yet of my maturity I intend to acquire with lasting diligence, and perhaps then I will have the good fortune to become a small branch of my country's glory."²⁷

His concert included *verbunkos* music and the famous *Rákóczi March* inspired by the Rákóczi War of Independence (1703–11). He would reaffirm his loyalty on his triumphant return as Hungary's most prestigious artist in 1839.²⁸ When he was awarded the Sword of Honour, Liszt again performed the Rákóczi March, (this time in defiance of the decree by the Austrian authorities) again wearing traditional costume.

That 1839 homecoming, for Liszt, planted the seed that would become his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. While in Hungary, Liszt visited a gypsy encampment and heard bands playing as he had in his childhood. Inspired, Liszt wrote what he called "*Magyar dalok*" ("Hungarian National Melodies") which, approximately a decade later, in 1850-51, he revised into the *15 Hungarian Rhapsodies* (He would write four more later in life, making a total of nineteen.) Liszt soon grew to view the *Rhapsodies* as more than individual pieces. He saw them as a unit—a musical "epic." He wrote during his 1850 revisions:

After I had submitted a fair number of these pieces to the process of transcription it began to dawn on me that I should never finish. ...A

²⁷ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years 1811-1847* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 86-87.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 319.

mountain of material was before me. I had to compare, select, eliminate, elucidate. I gradually acquired the conviction that in reality these detached pieces were parts of one great whole—parts disseminated, scattered, and broken up, but lending themselves to the construction of one harmonious ensemble. . . . Such a compendium might fairly be regarded as a National Epic—a Bohemian Epic—and the strange tongue in which its strains would be delivered would be no stranger than anything else done by the people from whom it emanated.²⁹

The two composers' Hungarian compositional works stand as monuments to their patriotism. Both composers were associated with Hungarian works from their juvenilia to their late compositions. Liszt performed the famous *Rákóczy March* as early as 1839, before he adapted it to the now well-known *Hungarian Rhapsody no. 15*. The next two decades would be spent composing or revising the Rhapsodies. In the year preceding his death, Liszt would compose two more Hungarian Rhapsodies (nos. 18 and 19) and the *Historische ungarische Bildnisse* ("Historic Hungarian Portraits") (These would remain unpublished until the 1950's).

Bartók likewise devoted an enormous output to Hungarian music, from his collaboration with Kodály, *Hungarian Folk Songs*, (1904-1906) to selected numbers of the *Mikrokosmos* (1926, 1932-39, 1940). Like Liszt, he would also write music that while not labeled "Hungarian," contained significant Hungarian elements.

Hungarian music represented more than just a patriotic outlet for Liszt and Bartók. It also provided them musical material alien to the West at large—an enticing prospect for composers compelled to modernism. Liszt was, of course, not the first to use the *verbunkos* idiom in his music (as noted above, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, and many others preceded him). As a Hungarian, he was, however, uniquely positioned to represent

²⁹ Ibid, 337.

his nation in a western art music context. His Hungarian works contain some of his most modernistic writing. In spite of Liszt's penchant for combining styles, they also are remarkable for their homogeneity of style. Loya wrote: "As a collection of folk music, it [the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*] was unprecedented in richness and scope, and as a work of art music, its sustained use of a vernacular idiom was also unprecedented."³⁰ For Bartók, the 'discovery' of peasant music presented the opportunity of nationalistic music free at last from Germanic influence. Following analysis of their respective works will demonstrate progressive characteristics in Liszt's and Bartók's piano transcriptions.

C. RESEARCH/PROSE BY LISZT AND BARTÓK ON HUNGARIAN NATIONALISTIC MUSIC

Liszt's desire to create a "national epic" (of his Hungarian Rhapsodies) led to his idea of introducing the Rhapsodies with a preface. The 'preface' in turn grew into his two-volume *Les Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*, (1859) a musicological book with a troubled history. The first printing of the book damaged Liszt's standing with the Hungarian people, as in it he asserted that the Gypsies had originated Hungarian music. The inaccuracy of this claim aside (This was not the case—the gypsies had adapted the music, but were largely performers and improvisers; not composers themselves), the Hungarian people resented the implication that the Gypsies (whom they permitted to live in their country, but discriminated against socially) comprised the locus of Hungarian nationalistic music. Sámuel Brassai dealt with Liszt's book in a pamphlet in 1860, calling the feeling of the Hungarians towards the Gypsies "nearly completely identical to the

³⁰ Shay Loya, *Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 59.

Americans' toward the Negroes."³¹ Liszt's romanticized version of the Hungarian musical history—"a national epic, a *bohemian epic*³²"—had aggravated a national racism against Gypsies.

Liszt's troubles with the book were not over with the passing of the first controversy, however. In 1881, Liszt's mistress, Princess von Sayn-Wittgenstein performed a major revision in which she included new, anti-Semitic material. As was Liszt's custom, he did not read the final version, trusting her completely. The work was published under his name alone and the damage was instant, turning the Jewish community against him.³³ Liszt had attempted to unify the Hungarians by embracing the gypsy assumption of the *verbunkos* idiom. He had failed.

Bartók seized upon this public failure of Liszt as he sought to argue that Liszt's "Hungarian" sources were actually gypsy music and not Hungarian, while Bartók's source was the true Hungarian folk music.³⁴ In his essays in 1911, "Liszt's Music and Today's Public," written for the centennial of Liszt's birth and in 1936, "Liszt Problems", Bartók asserted the superiority of his own direction in Hungarian music, meanwhile affirming Liszt's place in Hungarian music history. Both works contain praise for the composer, but treat any of his "Hungarian" music with condescension, if not outright disdain.

Of the Hungarian Rhapsodies, Bartók writes, "The Hungarian Rhapsodies...are

³¹ Lynn Hooker, *Redefining Hungarian Music from Liszt to Bartók* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 86.

³² Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years 1811-1847* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 337.

³³ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: the Final Years 1881-1886* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 405-406.

³⁴ Béla Bartók, "Gypsy Music or Hungarian Music?" in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 206.

[Liszt's] least successful works (which is perhaps just why they are so widely known and admired). Beside many strokes of genius, there are for the most part merely conventional ideas—gipsy music, sometimes even mixed with Italianisms (no. 6), sometimes in a veritable formal conglomeration (no. 12).”³⁵ Bartók's second article on Liszt was more generous in his assessment of Liszt's Rhapsodies, but just as dismissive with regard to the source material thereof. “For the sake of truth I must stress that the rhapsodies, particularly the Hungarian ones—are perfect creations of their own kind. The material that Liszt uses in them could not be treated with greater artistry and beauty. That the material itself is not always of value is quite another matter, and is obviously one reason why the general importance of the works is slight, and their popularity is great.”³⁶ Bartók's rhetoric against Liszt's source was absolute. According to Bartók, his own musical source was truly Hungarian and was worthwhile; Liszt's source was neither Hungarian nor worthwhile.

Liszt's source of “Hungarian” music was certainly a more recent development in Hungarian musical history than the Hungarian folk music that Bartók was to discover. Jonathan Bellman, in his definitive *The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe* compares the rise of this style to that of jazz in the United States.³⁷ Bellman observes that both gradually grew from obscurity to become ubiquitous in their respective cultures, both were outlets for the sorrow of an oppressed and outcast society (the Gypsy and the

³⁵ Béla Bartók, “Liszt's Music and Today's Public” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 452-453.

³⁶ Béla Bartók, “Liszt Problems” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press 1976), 504.

³⁷ Jonathan Bellman, *The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 219-229.

African American), and both contained musical elements foreign to Western Music.³⁸

Another clear correlation between *verbunkos* and jazz that Bellman does not point out is that both of these musical forms formed a bridge between two vastly different musical approaches—linking the eastern hemisphere with the western. In any case, Bellman’s comparison to jazz illustrates that, indeed, the *verbunkos* idiom was a newer development than the peasant music that Bartók studied and incorporated into his compositional *oeuvre*. In addition to its more recent history, the style, like jazz, was also a conglomerate.

As a thorough researcher, however, Bartók did not accuse Liszt’s Hungarian music of being devoid of Folk influence. Bartók references certain “Hungarian folk” extractions that Liszt used in his Rhapsodies. In his 1933 essay *Hungarian Peasant Music*, Bartók pointed out the Magyar rhythm (discussed later) in Liszt’s fourteenth Rhapsody.³⁹ He also pointed out a Hungarian Peasant song that Liszt used in his 13th Rhapsody, though he also noted that Liszt’s use of grace notes and the gypsy scale “distorted” the melody.⁴⁰ Bartók cannot deny the complexity of the evolution of Hungarian music. As much as Bartók propagated the idea, Hungarian folk music is not as simple as two completely disparate styles—one authentic; the other inauthentic.

The animosity demonstrated toward “gypsy music” was a later development in Béla Bartók’s life. As a child in the small Hungarian town Nagyszentmiklós, in what is now modern Romania, Bartók played the Rákóczi March (the same national tune that Liszt used to rouse patriotic sentiment in 1839, and which became the subject of Liszt’s

³⁸ Ibid, 229.

³⁹ Béla Bartók, “Hungarian Peasant Music” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 88.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 91.

Hungarian Rhapsody no. 15) with his school orchestra. He gained national recognition with his tone poem (a genre championed by Liszt) *Kossuth* BB 31, which owed much to Strauss and to the *verbunkos* idiom.

This adherence to the widely adopted national idiom was about to change, however. In 1904, after having completed his studies and while on vacation in Slovakia, Bartók overheard strains of a Hungarian folk song—a Transylvanian nursemaid singing to her charge, and quickly notated the melodies she sang. Until that moment, he believed the *verbunkos* melodies—that had entranced him as a child and that were so popular in Hungary and the rest of Europe—to be Hungarian folk songs. The strangeness of these ancient melodies sung by a nursemaid suggested limitless possibilities to the young composer. He transcribed and published one of the maid's melodies, winning a government grant to study folk melodies in Transylvania. Upon discovered another composer who had already published such a collection in 1904, Zoltan Kodaly, Bartok formed a partnership. In 1905, the two composers set out together across Transylvania, beginning the first of many folk-song collecting expeditions. Between 1905 and 1918, Bartok collected approximately 10,000 folk melodies, including 2,771 Hungarian (the others consisted of Romanian, Slavic, Arabian, Bulgarian, and Serbian). Kodaly had discovered another 3,500 Hungarian melodies. This research was a revelation, even for most Hungarians.

Unquestionably, Bartók was the more thorough, more prolific, and more influential of the two Hungarian composers. That Liszt devoted any time, however, to his *Les Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*, is remarkable. Without diminishing the importance of Bartók's research, it is important to note that Liszt had established a

precedent, if a flawed one.

**PART II. LISZT'S *HUNGARIAN RHAPSODIES* S.244
AND BARTÓK'S 15 *HUNGARIAN PEASANT SONGS*, BB 79**

A. HARMONIC PROGRESSIVENESS THROUGH HUNGARIAN IDIOMS

It must first be noted that this document will not attempt to show the full extent of progressiveness achieved in the late works of the respective composers. Rather, the purpose is to compare two works that each demonstrated progressive qualities plumbed, in Liszt's case from the *verbunkos* idiom, and, in Bartók's case, from Hungarian peasant music. Shay Loya notes that the *verbunkos* scale inspired Liszt in three ways: to "explore the symmetrical properties of the *verbunkos* scale", to unite two tonics (the tonic and sixth scale degree of the *verbunkos* minor) and to "deriv[e] special chords" from it.⁴¹ Bartók himself identified Hungarian Folk music as the catalyst that freed him "from the tyrannical rule of the major and minor keys."⁴² Ernő Lendvai, in his ground-breaking analysis of Bartók's compositions, observed that folk music was not the only source of progressiveness in Bartók's music. Lendvai's thesis states that folk music in combination with Western art music (the same general combination that Bartók reviled in Liszt's work) all worked together to form Bartók's mature harmonic language."⁴³ For both of these composers, Hungarian music offered compositional solutions alien to Western conventions and, by that virtue, progressive.

Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6 stands among the most obvious examples of Liszt's

⁴¹ Shay Loya, *Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 243-244.

⁴² *Béla Bartók Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 410.

⁴³ Ernő Lendvai, *Béla Bartók: An Analysis of His Music* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1990), viii.

verbunkos-inspired harmonic innovations. Shay Loya calls attention to the pendulum effect of the first and sixth scale degrees in the *friska* portion of Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6. The thirds-relationship modulation is, of course, not an exclusively *verbunkos*-derived idiom. What distinguishes Liszt's practice from that of Beethoven or Schubert, though, is how he takes advantage of shared qualities of the D and B \flat and the G-*verbunkos* scale, blurring the function of each chord, so that it is unclear which is the tonal center. Liszt begins the *friska* in B \flat , but starting from measure 113, modulates directly to D in the left hand, and embellishes with a g-*verbunkos* scale in the right (see Example 4a). The three tonalities have many overlapping qualities. The g-*verbunkos* scale implies d-minor, with only the E \flat out of place. The presence of the E \flat , however, indicates g-*verbunkos*, the relative of B \flat .

Example 4a. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, measures 113-118

The image shows a musical score for Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, measures 113-118. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It features a complex texture with multiple voices in both hands. The right hand has a melodic line with many ornaments and slurs, while the left hand has a bass line with many ornaments and slurs. The piece is marked 'piu dolce' and includes a 'cres.' marking. The score shows a modulation from B-flat major to D major.

The tonal ambiguity intensifies in bars 121-127. Here, Liszt uses D octaves as a pedal (another prominent *verbunkos* idiom discussed later) and goes deeper into the cross relationships by involving the relative minor of the D. The resulting progression is b-minor to B \flat major, to D. Liszt evokes the gypsy indifference to/ignorance of western musical rules by the parallel fifths created in the left hand of these measures (see

Example 4b). Both the progression and the voicing are atypical for western music.

Example 4b. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, measures 121-127

Although Liszt's 'gypsy scale'-derived harmonies often give way to conventional harmonies at cadences, there are some exceptions that defy common practice harmony and that are a direct result of Hungarian idioms. The final cadence of Hungarian Rhapsody No. 5, for instance, uses a harmonic progression based on the 'gypsy scale' with very unusual results. The penultimate chord (F#, A#, [C# implied], E) is unusual because of the A#. This creates a major-minor seventh chord on the second scale degree of E-minor (see Example 5, penultimate measure, last beat).

Example 5. Liszt's Rhapsody no. 5, measures 81-85.

While the second scale degree major-minor chord may be passed off as exoticism, the part-writing caused by the bass notes contradicts traditional part-writing rules. Note that the penultimate bass note moves from D \sharp to E and that, in the right hand, a note moves from A \sharp to B. Again, Liszt is defying common practice voice-leading rules in favor of prominent parallel fifths. As noted above within Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, these are rare in nineteenth-century music.

The ninth rhapsody, the “Pesther Carneval” is an example of how Liszt used the *verbunkos* idiom as a means of tonal exploration. The overall tonal plan appears at first to only be adventurous in the western tradition. Liszt is famous for exploiting the ‘thirds relationship’ so popular in Germanic music of the Romantic period and this piece does that, moving from E \flat to A \flat (with forays into C \flat), then ostensibly to E major. It is at the move to E major in the *Allegretto* section, where Liszt uses Hungarian influence to create the ambiguous tonality for which his late works would be famous.

The tonal ambiguity of the *Allegretto* of Liszt’s Rhapsody no. 9, the “Pesther Carneval” rhapsody, illustrates all three of Loya’s simplified list of *verbunkos* harmonic principles: “tonal ambivalence between the first and fifth scale degrees, non-functional or modal harmony, and unprepared modulations and the juxtaposition of distantly related chords.”⁴⁴ The section contains conflicting clues as to which is the tonic and which the dominant of the section. The tonal center may logically be thought to be either E major or B major. The melody itself indicates E as the tonic—with its leap from the B to the D \sharp resolving to the E (see Example 6a, measure 2, first and second beats). However, each phrase is punctuated with a cadence in B. The pull to B is further

⁴⁴ Shay Loya, “Beyond ‘Gypsy’ Stereotypes: Harmony and Structure in the Verbunkos Idiom” *Journal of Musicological Research*, 20 August 2008, 258.

enhanced by the “C#” pedal created in the left hand arpeggiation. The C# is only resolved downward in the B major cadences, further creating a pull to B major. It’s worth noting that this “ambivalence between the first and fifth scale degrees” created by a pedal (in this case the pedal is the dominant itself) is also used by Bartók in his first song of the *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs* (see Example 6b).

Example 6a. Liszt’s Rhapsody no. 9 (“Pesther Carnival”), measures 270-275.

Example 6b. Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs* no. 1, measures 1-3.

Liszt employs the “non-functional harmony” by his retention of the C# pedal into the contrasting phrase with the borrowed minor. This creates a chord progression of B minor (with an added second scale degree) to a minor supertonic and back to the tonic—an uncommon progression. The resulting seventh chord (C#, E, G#, B) used as the resolution parallels harmonic progressiveness that Bartók knowingly borrowed from Hungarian Folk music. In “The Folk Songs of Hungry” Bartók wrote:

Because of the equal importance of the above-named degrees of the pentatonic scale, it follows that in pentatonic melodies the modal diminished seventh takes on the character of a consonant interval. This fact,

as early as 1905, led me to end a composition in f# minor with the chord: f#, a, c#, e. Hence, in the closing chord the seventh figures as a consonant interval.⁴⁵

Naturally, Liszt's 'consonant' minor seventh chord occurs at the end of a phrase, and not an entire piece. However, it is obvious that Liszt's Hungarian influence (*verbunkos*) inspires a freedom to use the seventh as a consonance, at least for the course of this isolated passage.

If there is a difference between the manner in which Liszt uses national music for progressive harmony and the manner in which Bartók uses it, it is that Bartók's uses are less isolated, more pervasive. This is only logical, as the *verbunkos* harmony (Liszt's source) was essentially Western and, thus, the tonal language did not yet diverge significantly from western music. The earlier-mentioned *bakázó* figure, for instance, was typically an embedded authentic cadence within a larger cadence (see Example 7). It was the melodic and rhythmic gesture itself—not the cadence—that gives it the particular "Hungarian" feel.

Example 7. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, measures 11 and 12.

The image shows a musical score for two staves, treble and bass clef. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature is 4/2. The first measure (measure 11) starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with a 'bakázó' figure, marked with a triangle and a '4/2' time signature. The left hand has a harmonic accompaniment. The second measure (measure 12) continues the melodic line, marked with a triangle and a '4/2' time signature. The piece concludes with a 'calando' marking and a final cadence.

Bartók's harmonies in his Hungarian "transcriptions" (for so he categorized the *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*⁴⁶) were free and derived from Hungarian folk modes,

⁴⁵ Béla Bartók, "The Folk Songs of Hungary" in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 334-335.

though not strictly confined to them. For instance, the melody of the first dance is in D Dorian (D, E, F, G, A, B, C). The harmonies outlined in the accompaniment, however, contain pitches not found in the scale (D \flat , E \flat , G \sharp) and the first cadence is on a non-tertian chord not found in the Dorian mode. The first cadence point in dance no. 1 demonstrates advances in western harmonic thinking influenced by Hungarian music (see Example 8).

Example 8. Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 1, measures 10-12.



Bartók alluded to this development in an essay near the end of his life, “The Relation Between Contemporary Hungarian Art Music and Folk Music” (1941). In this essay, Bartók asserted that a transcription could be as “creative” as an original work, and explained that the Eastern European absence of the dominant chord made room for great freedom in harmonization.⁴⁷ As mentioned above, the Eastern European modality often lacked the leading-tone. Without it, harmonies built on the fifth scale degree do not have the same functional pull toward tonic.

Bartók's harmonic language had developed significantly during the course of his *Fourteen Bagatelles for Piano*, Op. 6 (1908). He began work on the *15 Hungarian*

⁴⁶ Béla Bartók, “The Relationship Between Contemporary Hungarian Art Music and Folk Music” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 348.

⁴⁷ Béla Bartók, “The Relation Between Contemporary Hungarian Art Music and Folk Music” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 352-353.

Peasant Songs approximately four to six years after the Op. 6 *Bagatelles*. These pieces show intermediate steps in his gradual departure from the major-minor system.⁴⁸ His use of quartal-quintal harmonies (those based on the interval of a fourth rather than on the interval of a third) might have been inspired by his contemporaries (Stravinsky and Debussy were writing similar things) or of his study of folk material. Bartók himself gave credit to the folk melodies, saying, “The frequent repetition of this remarkable skip (the perfect fourth found in melodies) occasioned the construction of the simplest fourth-chord.”⁴⁹ He also drew inspiration from the fact that, in the Hungarian folk music, intervals were treated as consonant that would be considered dissonant in a Western context.⁵⁰

Bartók further submitted that it was actually folk music that had influenced Debussy and Stravinsky:

In 1907, at the instigation of Kodály, I became acquainted with Debussy’s work, studied it through thoroughly and was greatly surprised to find in his work ‘penatonic phrases’ similar in character to those contained in our peasant music. I was sure these could be attributed to influences of folk music from Eastern Europe, very likely from Russia. Similar influences can be traced in Igor Stravinsky’s work. It seems therefore that, in our age, modern music has developed along similar lines in countries geographically far away from each other. It has become rejuvenated under the influence of a kind of peasant music that has remained untouched by the musical creations of the last centuries.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Elliott Antokoletz, *the Music of Béla Bartók: A Study of Tonality and Progression in Twentieth-Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 28.

⁴⁹ Béla Bartók, “The Folk Songs of Hungary” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 336.

⁵⁰ Béla Bartók, “Hungarian Folk Music” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 74.

⁵¹ Béla Bartók, “Autobiography” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 410.

For all their progressive qualities, the pieces in the *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs* remain tonal. All fifteen pieces end on (or imply) either major or minor chords. Among the notable endings are no. 2, which ends on a unison (D), no. 3, the final chord of which is an F# minor chord in second inversion (an unusual use of the second inversion chord), and the penultimate song, which modulates away from its tonal center (F# minor) at the very end to anticipate the tonal center of the final piece (an enharmonic Bb minor) (see Example 9).

Example 9. Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 14, measures 31-39, and no. 15, measures 1-6.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano. The upper system, labeled '15' above it, represents measures 31-39 of piece no. 14. It features a treble and bass clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 2/4 time signature. The music includes various chords and melodic lines, with dynamics ranging from *pp* to *ppp*. A tempo marking of *poco rit.* is present. The lower system, also labeled '15' above it, represents measures 1-6 of piece no. 15. It is in a different key signature (two flats) and features a treble and bass clef. The tempo is marked *Allegro (♩ = 152)*. Dynamics include *sf*, *mf*, and *poco sempre*. The notation includes chords and melodic lines, with a marking *(quasi cornemuse)* above the final measure.

The *Hungarian Peasant Songs* are tonal, but display harmonic characteristics beyond the common harmonic usage. Carl Dahlhaus said, “Bartók, continuing certain ideas explored by Liszt, developed a harmonic system based primarily on the principle of symmetrical octave division (C–f#–C', C–E–G#–C', C–E♭–F#–A–C'): a region of harmony that had lain at the edge of traditional tonality or beyond it was established as

the centre by Bartók and subjected to systematic organization.”⁵² In the *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, Bartók was obviously drawn to symmetrical chords, but he had not yet fully formulated a pervasively symmetrical harmonic language. Ernő Lendvai called Bartók’s folk-derived music “stages on the road towards Bartók’s complete integration of the deepest fundamentals of tonality with perfect formal proportion.”⁵³

For Bartók, this “road” to the new must be built upon the old. He wrote, “Every art has the right to strike its roots in the art of a previous age; it not only has a right to but it must stem from it.”⁵⁴ Lendvai suggests that the leading tone can be seen among the vestiges of common practice tonality that Bartók kept in this phase (*15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*)—even while he avoids its use at melodic cadences.⁵⁵ The number 5 *Scherzo* features half-steps prominently, beginning with the grace notes as secondary leading tones (see Example 10). The melody itself is C-Dorian, which, though it has two half-steps, (D-Eb, A-Bb) does not contain a leading-tone to the tonic. Bartók, however, ends with parallel leading tones both to the tonic (C-Dorian) and the dominant (G) (see the F#’s and C#’s in the treble clef of Example 10). Not only is Bartók using a Western musical form (the Scherzo), he’s also using half-steps that are more reminiscent of the gypsy scale than the Dorian of the peasant melody.

Example 10. Bartók’s *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 5 *Scherzo*, measures 1-6.

⁵² Carl Dahlhaus, *Oxford Music Online*, s.v. “Harmony” <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/50818> (accessed April 13, 2013).

⁵³ Ernő Lendvai, *Béla Bartók: An Analysis of His Music* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1990), viii.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

The image shows a musical score for 'Allegro' (Op. 132) by Béla Bartók. The score is in 2/4 time and features a piano (p) dynamic. The upper staff is marked 'L.H.' and the lower staff is marked 'L.H.'. The tempo is 'Allegro' with a metronome marking of quarter note = 132. The score shows a sequence of chords in the bass line, including C, F, Bb, and Eb, illustrating a circle-of-fifths sequence. The score is numbered 5.

This leads to another of the remnants of functional harmony noted by Lendvai: the functional use of the subdominant and dominant⁵⁶. This may sound contradictory, since Bartók had said that the lack of dominant in the Eastern European melodies opened up harmonic possibilities. It is not, however. As I mentioned previously, Bartók did not confine himself to harmonizing the melodies within their given modes. He often avoided the functional dominant, and the folk melody allowed him to do so. However, he could and did use the functional pull of the fifth, as demonstrated in measures 5 through 10 of the first song. There, Bartók uses a brief circle-of-fifths sequence in the bass. The bass C leads to an F, then a B \flat , then an E \flat (see Example 11) (Also illustrated in the harmonic reduction below).

⁵⁶ Ernő Lendvai, *Béla Bartók: An Analysis of His Music* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1990), 1.

Example 11. Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 1, measures 5-14.

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system contains measures 5 through 10, and the second system contains measures 11 through 14. The music is in 2/4 time and features a complex harmonic structure with many chords and moving lines. A 'meno f' (mezzo-forte) marking is present in measure 10. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D minor).

Example 12 (see following page) illustrates through a reduction of the harmony how Bartók used aural expectations such as the pull of ‘tendency tones’ and the traditional resolution of non-chord tones. All these are in a modal context and with a tolerance of dissonance in repose. Throughout the piece Bartók uses seventh chords rather than triads as arrival points. The cadence in measure 10 (Example 11) is on a chord that foreshadows Bartók’s symmetrical harmony system. The chord is two perfect fourths stacked a half-step apart (A-D, Bb-Eb). A predecessor to the pitch class identified by Leo Treitler as Bartók’s cell “Z”, the chord can be seen either as two interposed perfect fourths or as two half-steps a major 3rd apart. In “Z” the intervals are (0167), while these are (0156).⁵⁷

Preceding the chord, in measure 9, is another symmetrical chord: from the F in the center are, on either side, major thirds. On the outside of these are two half-steps (see Level B, measure 9 of Example 12). Another possible symmetrical reduction of the chord at measure nine can be seen in section 3: with “F” as the fulcrum, on either side is a major third, followed by a minor third.

⁵⁷ Leo Treitler, “Harmonic Procedure in the *Fourth Quartet* of Bela Bartók” *Journal of Music Theory*, vol. 1 no. 2, November 1959, 294.

The following harmonic reduction is a combination of the melodic and harmonic material in the first song from the *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*. The object of the reduction was to examine the harmonic structure and function of the piece. For this reason, the melody has also been reduced to its outlined harmony. The reduction is at three levels: “A” shows the melody and harmony in inversions that allow for the smoothest traditional voice-leading. “B” shows the same harmonies rearranged into their most symmetrical configuration. The “C” reduction is of the bass-line only. The bass note with the asterisk by it (measures 19-20) has been enharmonically altered to show the implied modal scale of the second stroph.

Example 12. Harmonic Reduction of Bartók’s *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 1.

The image displays a musical score for Example 12, consisting of three staves labeled A, B, and C. The score is divided into two strophes: Stroph 1 (measures 1-9) and Stroph 2 (measures 10-25). The time signature is 2/4. Staff A shows the melody and harmony in inversions. Staff B shows the same harmonies rearranged into their most symmetrical configuration. Staff C shows the bass-line only, with an asterisk next to the bass note in measures 19-20.

While Bartók ends the inner cadences on dissonances in the first song, he still uses the dichotomy of dissonance and consonance as a means of tension and release. This occurs on a micro level, as in the traditional non-chord tone resolutions seen in the first line of Harmonic Analysis 1—measures 1-3, 4, 14-15, 16, and 17, as well as on a macro level. On the micro level, suspensions are resolved according to western convention. The opening 6-5 suspension resolves just before a 4-3 suspension is introduced (measure 4). Further 3-4 suspensions in measures 14-15 and 16-17 create even greater tension and release, since the chords themselves are growing (9th and 11th chords respectively). At the

macro level, Bartók resolves dissonances maintained by seventh chords at cadence points until the end (measures 5 and 10) and by sustained use of pedal points.

One of the pedals used is the Bb. The Bb major seventh chord, which he treats as a consonance at the opening of the song, is finally resolved to a traditional triad in measure 24. As seen in the second and third systems of Harmonic Analysis no. 1 (Levels B and C of Example 12), Bartók resolves the Bb down to the dominant (A) and also brings the B♭ up from the bass to a C, then finally the tonic D. At this point, at least, Bartók is guilty of the very compositional approach that he condemned in Liszt: he uses the national harmonic practices as an enhancement, but yields to western expectations on some levels.

In no. 2 from *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs* Bartók again uses dissonance to build tension. He begins with simple chords ‘diatonic’ to the Dorian mode of the melody (containing only the pitches of that mode). As he moves into the second phrase of the melody, however, he introduces chromatic pitches (those outside the mode). As in the first dance, these chromatic pitches have strong leading tendencies: A C♯ is introduced in the left hand in the fifteenth measure of the dance. The C♯ vacillates to and from D (though at an octave displacement) for the next four measures. In a greater pull to a cadence (though not an authentic cadence, of course) the G in the bass in measure 17 steps down to F, then E♭, then D. Thus, half resolutions not possible in the D Dorian (with its whole step between the sixth and seventh scale degrees) are achieved by the imposed C♯ and E♭ (see Example 13, measure 15).

Example 13. Bartók’s *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 2, measures 8-24.

The image shows three systems of musical notation for piano. The first system is titled "Poco sostenuto (♩. = 66)" and includes markings for *mf*, *espr.*, and *(sempre Ped.)*. The second system is marked *poco rit.* and includes *mp* and *mf*. The third system is titled "Più andante (Tempo I)" and includes a *p* dynamic. The notation consists of treble and bass staves with various rhythmic values and articulations.

The folk melodies that Bartók used, unlike Liszt's *verbunkos* melodies, were not based on major or minor scales with occasional uses of the *verbunkos* scale. These melodies—discovered by collecting samples on the field with staff paper and a dictaphone—were instead based on ancient scales—Phrygian, Aeolian, Dorian, Mixolydian, and Pentatonic scales⁵⁸. In the *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, the Dorian scale is most prominent. Interestingly, though, the melody of No. 12 is in the *A-verbunkos* mode, (A, B, C, D \sharp , E, F, G \sharp) interrupted only by the “g-natural” in the ninth measure of the piece; this occurs at the cadence and is a denial of the leading-tone, making it similar in construction to a Mixolydian scale (see Example 14).

The linear use of the *verbunkos* scale in No. 12 contradicts Bartók's claims that the gypsy scale (*verbunkos* scale) is completely foreign to Hungarian peasant music. In Bartók's 1933 article for *the Musical Quarterly*, he blamed the gypsies of importing the augmented second found in the “Hungarian scale” (the *verbunkos* scale) from the

⁵⁸ Béla Bartók, “The Melodies of the Hungarian Soldiers' Songs” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 51.

Balkans.⁵⁹ He further implied that the scale was not to be found in Hungarian peasant music. While the augmented second is not found used successively in the melodic line of no. 12, the melody itself clearly spells an *A-verbunkos* scale: A, B \flat , C \sharp , D, E, F, G \sharp , A.

The melody itself is constructed of two identical phrases, the second a repetition of the first a fifth lower. As the *phrase* repetition is exact (the exact intervals are maintained) there is a variable pitch—the circled "G" in measure 9 of Example 14. Since this phrase structure appears to have been a common one in Hungarian peasant music (Bartók presents an old Hungarian melody from Transdanubia with the identical structure⁶⁰) is it not possible that this combination is what led to the *verbunkos* scale in the first place?

Example 14. Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 12, measures 1-10.

The image shows a musical score for Example 14, Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 12, measures 1-10. The score is in 2/4 time, marked *Allegretto* (♩ = 112). It features a piano accompaniment and a melody. The melody is constructed of two identical phrases, the second a repetition of the first a fifth lower. A circled 'G' is highlighted in measure 9 of the second phrase.

Pentatonicism, held over from eastern influences, was common in Hungarian folk music and influenced Bartók's melodic and harmonic choices. Indeed, David Schneider proposes that Bartók's compositional tastes may have contributed to his attraction to

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 80.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 335.

Hungarian folk music in the first place.⁶¹ It is surprising then, to encounter it in Liszt's music. The Romantic tradition was so steeped in chromaticism that pentatonic scales were not common. Was it simply pianistic concerns (a flourish involving the black keys only) that inspired the figure in the climactic 40th measure of the 6th Rhapsody, or did the Gypsy style incorporate Hungarian folk elements, as it cross-pollinated urban and rural, transnational areas? In either case, the pedal marking allows the 6th scale degree to ring with the others, creating a pentatonic sound (see Example 15). Jeremy Day-O'Connell noted two types of pentatonic use in Liszt: Religious (inspired by ancient chant) or "coloristic" flourishes.⁶² This "coloristic" flourish appropriately adorns folk music based largely on the pentatonic scale.

Example 15. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, measures 39-40.

⁶¹ David E. Schneider, *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition: Case Studies in the Intersection of Modernity and Nationality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 188.

⁶² Jeremy Day-O'Connell, "Debussy, Pentatonicism, and the Tonal Tradition" *Music Theory Spectrum* 31 (2009): 230.

Regardless of the source of this affect, whether inspired by gypsy tonality or in the interest of making the passage more pianistic, this pentatonic harmony is also an intricate development of one of the gestures of the *Verbunkos* style: the *bokázó* (shown in example 1, repeated below) derived from the clicking together of heels with spurs.⁶³

Example 1. *Bokázó*.



The opening *lassú* section ends each phrase with this cadence. Liszt both develops this cadence (a western concept of unifying themes) and invokes improvisation (a characteristic of gypsy music) in bars 36-40. The figure goes through a series of deceptive cadences, all emphasizing the 3rds-relationship (which is worked out in the final section by the D to B♭ dichotomy). It cadences in two cycles from D♭ to A major, to D♭ to B♭ minor before pausing on the G♭ chord (fourth scale-degree). The trill, fermata, and the pentatonic figures are all part of a plagal cadence that finally brings the *bokázó* figure to close on a partial pentatonic D♭ ascending arpeggio (lacking only the B♭ to be complete) (see Example 16).

Example 16. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, measures 34-40.

⁶³ Jonathan Bellman, *The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 119.

Similar to how the final section of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6 develops a simple cadence by fragmentation and intensification, the finale of Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs* also develops and intensifies the simple material from a cadence (albeit, not a *bakázó* figure). The seminal cadence occurs in bars 41-43 (see Example 17a). Example 17a. Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 15, measures 41-43 (key signature contains 3 flats).

The *Piú vivo* section (itself an acceleration) takes the descending thirds shown in the treble of Example 16a and inverts them (see Example 17b, measures 44-51). The performance instruction of *sempre piu vivo e cresc* enhances the intensification already

achieved by the use of shorter fragments and ascending bass notes closer to the end (see Example 17c).

Example 17b. Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 15, measures 44-51.

Più vivo (♩. 172)

p

sempre più vivo e cresc.

Example 17c. Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 15, measures 61-69.

sempre più agitato

The final section provides intensification through faster note values (now mostly sixteenthths) and through greater dissonance, although the tempo is actually reduced (see Example 17d).

Example 17d. Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 15, measures 70-100.

meno vivo ($\text{♩} = 100$)

The musical score consists of five systems of staves. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a tempo marking of 'meno vivo' and a quarter note equal to 100 beats per minute. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and a 3/4 time signature. The right hand features a complex, rhythmic melody with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, while the left hand provides a more rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and quarter notes. The score includes various dynamic markings such as 'sf', 'f', 'p', and 'ff', as well as performance instructions like 'sempre' and 'dtm.'. The piece concludes with a final chord marked with a 'p' and 'ff'.

It would be futile to attempt to prove that the two composers shared a harmonic language. Bartók moved well past the tonal language to which Liszt and the rest of his generation was bound (though Liszt's *Bagatelle sans tonalité* S. 216a is a monument to Liszt's experiments with eliminating a tonal center). Both Liszt and Bartók, however, introduced progressive elements by means of indigenous harmonies. Both composers used the practices of their respective sources as inspirations for new uses of scales, chords, and tonal centers.

B. Hungarian/Eastern European Rhythms

Not only was Liszt's harmony progressive and essentially Hungarian, his use of rhythm also displays these qualities. The short-long rhythm common in Hungarian folk music (although not unique to Hungary—other eastern European countries used it as

well) serves as a good example of a Hungarian folk idiom used in both Liszt's and Bartók's music. The first song that Bartók sets in the *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs* demonstrates this rhythm in the second measure (see Example 18).

Example 18. Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 1, measures 1-3.



Both the 2/4 time and the short-long rhythm are also common gestures in *verbunkos*. Schneider theorizes that perhaps the Hungarian language itself accounts for the presence of this and other syncopated rhythms being shared by “Hungarian folk” and *verbunkos* melodies. He notes that Bartók's name itself demonstrates the short long rhythm—the natural accent is on the first syllable and the accent sign over the “o” elongates the second syllable.⁶⁴ Bartók's essay “Hungarian Folk Music” confirms this gesture as distinct from western European language:

These difficulties [the frequency of the accented short, unaccented long rhythms in Hungarian music] occur because the following syllabic sequence is impossible in German: short = accented + long = unaccented. (The English language is indeed more flexible, owing to the existence of the so-called Scottish rhythm which corresponds exactly to the Hungarian dotted one.)⁶⁵

⁶⁴ David E. Schneider, *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition: Case Studies in the Intersection of Modernity and Nationality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 21.

⁶⁵ Béla Bartók, “Hungarian Folk Music” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 76-77.

Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6 not only begins with the short-long figure; it exploits it as a unifying element in almost every section. The opening rhythm, very specific to *verbunkos*, is known as *düvö*. It consisted of a bowed instrument playing a chord twice per each bow (stopping the sound in between). Liszt captures this sound on the piano by using fourths and fifths—evoking open strings—and using a staccato mark over the first and an accent over the second beat (the value of which is not longer but sounds so as the upper note is held with the damper pedal) (see Example 19).

Example 19. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, measures 1-5.



The “Eastern” portion of the piece--the opening gesture--was retained from Liszt's less-embellished *Magyar Dallok* no. 5.⁶⁶ The “Western” part of it (remembering the transcultural nature of Liszt's composing and of *verbunkos* in general) is the use of the gesture as a motive. The first four bars indicate that the *düvö* will be an accompaniment figure, but the melody of the first section is also in this same rhythm. The second *presto* section punctuates each sub-phrase with the gesture (see Example 20a, measures 44 and 48). The final *Allegro-Presto* section also concludes each sub-phrase with the short-long rhythm (see Example 20b, measure 97).

Example 20a. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, measures 41-48.

⁶⁶ Shay Loya, *Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 102.

Example 20b. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, measures 93-103.

Another striking parallel shared between these two pieces is the use of the *düvö* figure in the opening of Bartók's *finale* to *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs* (see Example 21, the opening to Liszt's HR6 and Bartók's *finale*). Both establish a 4-bar drone of a fourth atop a bass note. Both also create a syncopated feel by the linking of the second and third eighth notes, creating a pattern across the bar.

Example 21. The opening measures of Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, measures 1-6, and Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, measures 1-5.

15

Allegro (♩ = 152) (quasi cornemuse)

Tempo giusto (R.H.)

Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody* no. 1 displays evidence of evolution from Hungarian Folk music in its opening rhythms. The long-short, short-long rhythm is one that Bartók characterizes as Hungarian folk. It can be seen in Example 22 in the third beat of the first measure and the third and fourth beats of the second measure.

Example 22. Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody* no. 1, measures 1-2.

Lento quasi recitativo

f

Though the inequality of the second and third note values (Sixteenth versus thirty-second) might argue against the validity of the Hungarian folk origin, the purer form is seen in the *recitativo* section shown in Example 23, measures 104 to 107. The metric placement of the second short note in each bar (such as the downbeat of 107) is also the accented short-unaccented long rhythm discussed earlier.

Example 23. Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody* no. 1, measures 104-107.

104 **Più lento**

recitando plintivo

tre corde

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 4 also contains the accented short-long figure beginning in the 86th measure, in the *friska* section (see Example 24).

Example 24. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 4, measures 83-87.

(a tempo)

In Rhapsody no. 7, the beats are hyper-emphasized rhythmically by shorter values on the metrically strong beats and longer values on the metrically weaker beats (see Example 25).

Example 25. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody 7, measures 105-109.

p *schergando*

4

Bartók's use of Hungarian/Eastern European rhythms in his transcriptions imbue these works with freshness, a departure from western art idioms. The examples above, however, prove that this inspiration was not new with Bartók. Liszt's rhapsodies show uses of many folk rhythms that Bartók himself identified as

distinctly folk Hungarian. Though Bartók condemned the Rhapsodies as full of “mere conventional ideas—gypsy music”⁶⁷, they display seminal rhythmic characteristics of the oldest of Hungarian music.

C. Pianistic Evocation of Hungarian Gypsy/Folk Instruments

In addition to using their respective Hungarian sources for harmonic and rhythmic advancement, the two composers also used those sources as fodder for texture. Each mimicked on the modern piano the idioms of Hungarian singing and playing on indigenous instruments. As a general rule, Bartók’s *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs* mimic a singer on the melody (the notable exception is the *finale*—a bagpipe tune) and peasant instruments, Bartók listed these in 1911 as “bagpipe, peasant flute, the so-called hurdy-gurdy, natural horn.”⁶⁸ Liszt’s Rhapsodies generally evoked instruments, and the gypsy band in particular. These were typically comprised of strings and a solo instrument, cimbalom or clarinet being the most likely choices.⁶⁹

Liszt approximates bowed strings both in the opening four measures of Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6 (see again Example 21, the opening four measures) and again, in the highly improvisational third section of the same piece. Here, Liszt is depicting the free, highly embellished *lassú* portion of a gypsy dance.⁷⁰ The final flourish takes its idiom

⁶⁷ Béla Bartók, “Liszt’s Music and Today’s Public” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 452-453.

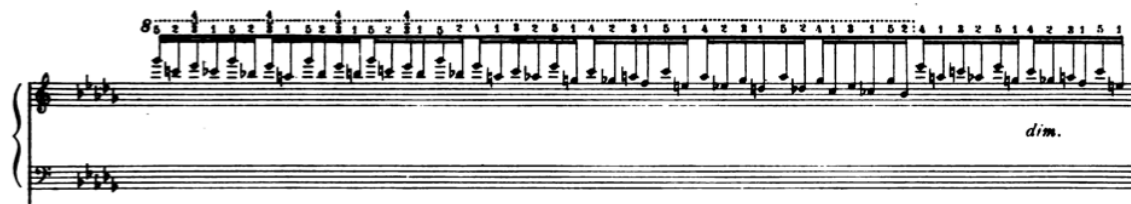
⁶⁸ Béla Bartók, “The Folklore of Instruments and Their Music in Eastern Europe” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 240.

⁶⁹ Shay Loya, *Liszt’s Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 61.

⁷⁰ David E. Schneider, *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition: Case Studies in the Intersection of Modernity and Nationality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 54.

from the violin—the repeated upper notes and descending lower ones, reminiscent of a bow crossing between two strings (see Example 26).

Example 26. Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, measure 92.



Liszt also evokes the cimbalom (hammered dulcimer-like instrument) in the repeated notes of the *Finale* (see Example 27).

Example 27. Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6, measures 127-130.

Note that in this example Liszt does not simply use the imitation of the cimbalom as “color.” Instead, this variation is a development/intensification of the initial single notes at the beginning of the *finale* (see Example 20b). As those single syncopated notes were derived from the opening *düvö* theme, this use of instrumentation demonstrates a crafting of Hungarian sounds to achieve a carefully planned climax.

Bartók identifies the *finale* as a bagpipe piece, even specifying the type of bagpipe he imitates (*cornemuse*). In his essay “The Folklore of Instruments and Their Music in Eastern Europe,” Bartók gives a detailed explanation of the bagpipes indigenous to

Hungary.⁷¹ These details illuminate many essential elements of the *finale*, including the mode (the bagpipes produce what is roughly a Mixolydian scale [C, D, E, F, G, A, B \flat , C]), the voicing (the 3rds and 5ths in the double-note passage at the end are given as possible chords played by a skilled player, (see example 28, measures 90-100), and textures (like the grace notes seen in measures 91-94).

Example 28. Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no. 15, measures 89-103.

Comparisons of Liszt's and Bartók's instrumental/vocal evocation on the piano show that, for all of Bartók's differences from his predecessor, both composers imitated indigenous instruments in piano transcriptions. Both composers further used these evocations as an integral component of the composition; not simply a surface addition. The influence of Hungarian folk music upon *verbunkos* is clearly evident in the *düvö*-like figures shared in the opening of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 6 and the *finale* of Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*.

⁷¹ Béla Bartók, "The Folklore of Instruments and Their Music in Eastern Europe" in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 245-246.

D: LISZT'S USES OF FOLK SONG MATERIAL

Before discussing Liszt's peasant folk elements in his Hungarian Rhapsodies, an important irony must be highlighted—the musical examples provided in the following pages to prove links between Liszt and Hungarian peasant music are provided through the conscientious efforts of Béla Bartók. However, Bartók expended much effort trying to convince Hungary and the world at large that *verbunkos*-derived art music was not pure and, thus, valueless. Of music blending Western elements with Hungarian folk-derived *verbunkos* (such as Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies) Bartók wrote, "...even if these melodies preserve some faint exotic traces, they are too vulgar to have any intrinsic value."⁷² In some of his writings, Bartók took the rhetoric further, claiming that *verbunkos* works were not Hungarian music. In his 1911 essay "On Hungarian Music" Bartók wrote: "We did not have, hitherto, [prior to the discovery of Hungarian Peasant music] a valuable and yet distinctive art music, *characteristically Hungarian*." (Italics added.) It is indeed interesting then, that Bartók would provide proof of indigenous Hungarian musical characteristics embedded in Liszt's rhapsodies.

One of the most folk-song influenced of Liszt's Rhapsodies, Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 13 contains two old-style Hungarian folk songs, highly embellished with *verbunkos* elements. Bartók published the sources along with their lyrics in his 1933 article "Hungarian Peasant Music."⁷³ The "figurations in gipsy style" that "distort the melodies" probably refers to the *bakázó* figure of measure 105 and running sixteenths in

⁷² Béla Bartók, "Hungarian Folk Music" in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 59.

⁷³ Béla Bartók, "Hungarian Peasant Music" in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 90-91.

bars 103-105 and 114-117 (see Example 29b, measures 100-105, Example 29c, measures 114-117). Compare Example 29a, Bartók's transcriptions to Examples 29b-d, the same folk tunes in Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 13.

Example 29a. 2 Hungarian folk songs found in Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 13. (Transcribed by Béla Bartók.)

Tempo giusto

Ket - ten men - tünk, hár - man jöt - tünk, tedd rá,
 Jaj de ha - mer so - kan let - tünk, nyomd rá.
 Le - hús - ták a jegy - kö - töt e - lö - le,
 Ugy ta - kar - ták a gyer - me - ket be - le.

12

Tempo giusto

Ak - kor szép az er - dö, mi - kor zöld,
 Mi - kor a vad - ga - lamb ben - ne költ,
 A vad - ga - lamb o - lyan, mint a lány,
 Ma - ga jár a szép le - gény u - tán.

Example 29b. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 13, measures 100-105.

Vivace 1320

pp *leggiero*

tre corde *Ped.* * *Ped.* *

Example 29c. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 13, measures 112-117.

leggiero

Ped. * *Ped.* *

Example 29d. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 13, measures 124-139.

un poco meno vivo

dolce

Ped. * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.* *

Ped. * *Ped.* * *Ped.* *

Bartók's prejudice against Liszt's Hungarian works can be observed even as Bartók draws attention to another Hungarian peasant element—the rhythm in Liszt's

Hungarian Rhapsody no. 14. While he admits that a prevalent peasant rhythm is present in Liszt's music, he undermines the validity of Liszt's music with subtle language that distances Liszt from his heritage: "These rhythms have been *imitated* by our composers of *folk song like* art songs (for instance, in the first theme of Liszt's Fourteenth Rhapsody)."⁷⁴ [Italics added] The rhythm to which Bartók refers is long, short, short, long. He illustrates it with a dotted quarter, eighth, eighth, dotted quarter (see the melody of Example 30).

Example 30. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 14, measures 3-6.

Not only did Liszt's material for the rhapsodies contain actual peasant melodies (as in no. 13) and peasant rhythms (as in no. 14), but they also contained melodic formal characteristics. Bartók illustrated this in "Hungarian Peasant Music", when he points out that rhapsody no. 14 contains the formal structure of A, A⁵, B, A (the A⁵ an indication

⁷⁴ Béla Bartók, "Hungarian Peasant Music" in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 91.

that the repeat of the first phrase is at the fifth).⁷⁵ As one can see from Example 31, the first three melodic units are clear as A (25-28) A⁵ (29-32) and B (33-36). The first two measures of the final phrase are altered, meaning that the final unit is A'.

Example 31. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 14, measures 25-43.

Clearly, Bartók's transcriptions are entirely folk-song based, while Liszt's transcriptions retain less folk music. Liszt's folk music is what has been retained in the transcultural context of *verbunkos*. However, Bartók's comments too dismissive to give an accurate representation of folk music in the rhapsodies. To call the above examples "faint exotic traces" is to deny the folk music influence on *verbunkos*, as well as the sophistication of Liszt's treatment of the idiom.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 96.

E. HERITAGE

In 1988, Bartók's body was exhumed from its burial place in New York and taken to Budapest, where it was posthumously repatriated in a highly publicized funeral.⁷⁶

Bartók's Hungarian music had been largely ignored or rejected by the Hungarians during his lifetime, and was banned for its modernism by the post-war Soviets. In 1921, a disheartened Bartók wrote:

My works which, from Opus 4 onward, tried to convey something of the development just described were received in Budapest with animosity... In 1911, when these controversies became very heated, a number of young musicians, Kodály and myself among them, tried hard to found a New Hungarian Musical Society. The chief aim of the new organization would have been to form an orchestra able to perform old, new and recent music in a proper way. But we strove in vain, we could not achieve our aim"⁷⁷

Only in the 1960's did Bartók's music begin to gain widespread acceptance.⁷⁸

In his own day Bartók's version of nationalistic music—based on the peasant class—was a source of contention with the public, who were still loyal to the Romantic Hungarian music.⁷⁹ While Bartók's *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs* did not find a foothold in the repertory (as have his more original *Improvisations Op. 20*), they did, however, serve as a stepping-stone on the way to his development as a 20th-century, nationalist

⁷⁶ Susan Gal, "Bartók's Funeral: Representations of Europe in Hungarian Political Rhetoric" *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 18, no. 3, *Representations of Europe: Transforming State, Society, and Identity* (August, 1991): 440-458.

⁷⁷ Béla Bartók, "Autobiography" in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 410.

⁷⁸ Susan Gal, "Bartók's Funeral: Representations of Europe in Hungarian Political Rhetoric" *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 18, no. 3, *Representations of Europe: Transforming State, Society, and Identity* (August, 1991): 449.

⁷⁹ David E. Schneider "Hungarian Nationalism and the reception of Bartók's music" in *The Cambridge Companion to Bartók*. Edited by Amanda Bayley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 185.

composer. Pianist Barbara Nissman views them as an intermediary step on the way to the *Improvisations Op. 20*.⁸⁰

Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies, likewise, if successfully in the canon (at least in the case of nos. 2, 6, and 10), proved to be intermediary in Liszt's development of *verbunkos*. Loya wrote of them:

For a study of the *verbunkos* idiom too, Liszt's late style was a highly seductive concept because of the way its otherworldly and prophetic qualities seem oddly to dislocate, if not to annul, the generic meaning of the material used. The concept of late style resolved, in one fell swoop, the questionable cultural respectability of Gypsy music and—even for those who did not subscribe to this specific prejudice—the limited artistic worth of popular dance music. Gárdonyi had already arrived at such a conclusion in 1931, as we saw in chapter 4, by showing that in the late works, the *verbunkos* idiom was abstracted and transformed into a highly personal language that no longer bore any direct resemblance or relationship to popular traditions.⁸¹

Loya would be referring to the late works, including *Csárdás macabre* S.224 (1881-1882), “Sunt Lacrymae Rerum” from *Anées de pèlerinage III no. 5* (1883), *Hungarian Rhapsodies 16–19* (1882-1885), 2 *Csárdás* S. 225 (1884), and *Hungarian Historical Portraits* (1885). Before Bartók's Hungarian idiom had evolved from the Germanic *verbunkos* of *Kossuth* to the indigenous modernism of the *Improviations, Op. 20*, Liszt's *verbunkos*, already elevated from the virtuosity of the Rhapsody to the profound abstraction of *Sunt Lacrymae Rerum*.

⁸⁰ Barbara Nissman *Bartók and the Piano: A Performer's View* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 106.

⁸¹ Shay Loya *Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition*. (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 227.

Conclusion

The comparison here of these works (the first 15 Hungarian Rhapsodies and the *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*) by Liszt and Bartók reveals many parallels within what may be considered an intermediary level of their respective progressive Hungarian idioms. A fruitful endeavor awaits those interested in comparing the late (or more mature) Hungarian works of each composer, or in taking the research further to trace the influence of these works on later Hungarian composers, such as Lajos Bárdos, György Ligety, or György Kurtág.

Though the musical revolutions of the twentieth-century create a barrier between the works of Liszt and Bartók, and despite efforts inspired by Bartók's "anxiety of influence,"⁸² those same works stand as a testament to the composers' shared experiences. Both composers devoted a certain amount of their lives and livelihoods to the good of Hungary. Both brought their country's music unprecedented international exposure, while maintaining the integrity of their respective musical traditions. Both did this service while spending a period of their lives (in Liszt's case the majority of his life) in exile from Hungary. It is the author's hope that this thesis contributes to an effort to view each in his own historical and social context as a composer of great Hungarian music. That is, music that both represented legitimate (if differing) aspects of Hungarian music cultures, and that, meanwhile, transcended that culture to have an influence on later composers.

Bartók's words were instrumental in casting doubt on the legitimacy of Liszt's

⁸² A term inspired by Harold Bloom's book by the same name, this term describes the state of mind of an artist who must follow another great artist.

Hungarian legacy. It is fitting to turn again to Bartók for a quote more in line with the current view of Liszt's *verbunkos* works. This quote was made in the context of an essay Bartók wrote in 1942, when insistence on racial purity held a particularly sinister undertone in Europe. After Bartók traces the evolution of the *Rákóczi March* (the subject of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody no. 15) from its origins in the middle east through Eastern European (including Hungary), and through its adoption by the Hungarian military, he concludes, "Nevertheless, the way they are transformed, melted, and unified presents as a final result a masterpiece of music whose spirit and characteristics are incontestably Hungarian."⁸³ The same sentence might apply to Bartók's music as well.

⁸³ Béla Bartók, "Race Purity in Music" in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 32.

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