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BARTÓK'S REVISIONS TO THE INSTRUMENTATION OF 'DUKE BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE'

Márton Kerékfy

Q1

Abstract: The full score of Béla Bartók's one-act opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (1911) reached its final form through many intermediate stages and after many years. The most comprehensive revision had been carried out in 1917 before *Bluebeard* was finally put on the programme of the Budapest Opera House. Bartók's revisions concerned not only the ending of the opera and the vocal parts but also the instrumentation. On the basis of all available primary sources, the present article examines how the instrumentation changed between 1911 and 1925, when the full score was published by Universal Edition. As a result of experiences gained during rehearsals of *The Wooden Prince* in 1917, Bartók added two instruments, the celesta and the xylophone, which he had originally not used in *Bluebeard*. However, the original score included two tenor tuba parts, which he later replaced with trumpets and trombones. In the revised score Bartók applied new instrumental techniques, corrected an unplayable passage, made the orchestral material thinner in favour of the vocal parts, and altered the instrumentation in order to emphasize motivic connections. Most of these alterations, however, do not represent a conceptual change in the opera's instrumentation but rather realize Bartók's original ideas in a more precise and more elaborate way.

Photo. 1 - B/W online, B/W in print

Béla Bartók (photo: Boosey & Hawkes)



The genesis of Bartók's one-act opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* was anything but simple. Almost seven years elapsed between the completion of the full score (20 September 1911) and the première of the opera (24 May 1918), and it took another three and a half years until the piano-vocal score was published (December 1921). As manuscript sources show, Bartók made several alterations to the score during this decade. The most significant ones, as has been widely known since György Kroó's ground-breaking philological article,¹ affected the vocal parts and the conclusion of the opera. Much less attention has been paid to Bartók's revisions to the instrumentation, although the autograph full score and the first edition differ considerably also in that respect. On the basis of all extant primary sources, I will examine how the instrumentation changed between 1911 and 1925, when the full score was published by Universal Edition.²

¹ György Kroó, 'Data on the genesis of Duke Bluebeard's Castle', *Studia Musicologica* 23 (1981), pp. 79–123.

² For a list of primary manuscript sources of the opera and their stemma see László Vikárius, *Commentary to Béla Bartók, Duke Bluebeard's Castle, Op. 11, Facsimile of the Autograph Draft* (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2006), pp. 47–48.

In his article Kroó presents the formation of *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* between the completion of the opera and the publication of the piano-vocal score. Focusing mainly on the conclusion, he points out that the final version of the ending was composed as late as in the second half of 1917, when Bartók carefully revised his opera, and that it was preceded by two earlier versions dating from 1911 and 1912 respectively.³ In the appendix of his article, Kroó publishes the facsimile of the closing section of the autograph full score (pp. 102–118), as well as the last page of Márta Ziegler-Bartók's copy of the piano-vocal score. Further, he lists all the cuts and insertions, as well as some of the changes to the instrumentation made in 1917. Kroó also mentions Bartók's latest corrections to the music of *Bluebeard*, which he carried out in the second proof of the piano-vocal score published in late 1921 by Universal Edition. Beyond the question of the ending, Kroó presents mainly the formation of the vocal parts.

Philological problems and the genesis of *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* were also meticulously studied by Carl S. Leafstedt who, having re-examined all manuscript sources, devoted a whole chapter to Bartók's revisions to the opera in his book.⁴ He was the first to notice that the original full score did not contain either a celesta or a xylophone part, and that both were added during the 1917 revision. Leafstedt scrutinizes each source in detail and makes several important observations about their possible dates of origin, as well as about the micro-chronology of the composition during the summer of 1911. He also points out that there was not only one but in fact two opera competitions to which Bartók submitted the work. In his book, he publishes a transcription of the original version of the ending from Bartók's autograph draft. After comparing it with the final version, Leafstedt concludes that the Debussy-like, nonfunctional, coloristic harmonic language of the 1911 version was significantly altered six years later by using more complex and dissonant harmonies.⁵

Most recently, László Vikárius concerned himself with philological problems and the genesis of *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, in his commentaries to the facsimile edition of the opera's autograph draft.⁶ In his article, Vikárius describes in great detail the content of that piano-vocal score, as well as its notational characteristics and layers, and he presents the most decisive period of its genesis until September

³ There is no consensus among scholars when exactly Bartók composed the second version of the ending. According to László Somfai, it was in 1911, whereas Carl S. Leafstedt dates it to late 1911–early 1912. See László Somfai, *Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts, and Autograph Sources* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), p. 171, and Carl S. Leafstedt, *Inside Bluebeard's Castle: Music and Drama in Béla Bartók's Opera* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 142–4. It remains certain that Bartók began the recomposition of the closing section only after he had received Béla Balázs's extended version of the drama's ending from Paris, and that he submitted the opera with the new ending to the competition sponsored by the Budapest music publisher Rózsavölgyi & Co. According to László Vikárius, 'Balázs stayed in Paris between 11 October 1911 and early 1912' and 'it is possible that [...] the new ending [was] ready in October' (Vikárius, *Commentary*, p. 32). In a letter sent to her mother-in-law on 15 February 1912, Bartók's wife, Márta Ziegler-Bartók, mentioned the full score submitted to the Rózsavölgyi competition: 'I have copied down the ending to the Bluebeard score, too (the part that the copyist wrote), and at the end of February Béla is entering it in the Rózsavölgyi competition.' See *Bartók Béla családi levelei* (Béla Bartók Family Letters), ed. Béla Bartók Jr. and Adrienne Gombocz (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1981), p. 217, English translation in Leafstedt, *Inside Bluebeard's Castle*, p. 148. Accordingly, Bartók must have composed the second version of the ending in late October 1911 at the earliest and in early February 1912 at the latest.

⁴ Leafstedt, *Inside Bluebeard's Castle*, pp. 125–58.

⁵ Leafstedt, *Inside Bluebeard's Castle*, pp. 153–8.

⁶ See footnote 2.

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1911 when Bartók finished the first version of the opera. Further, he compares the different versions of the conclusion of Béla Balázs's drama and that of the libretto.

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While on holiday in Paris and Switzerland, in July 1911, Bartók began the orchestration of his opera from the piano-vocal draft, which was then presumably still unfinished. According to a letter sent to his wife on 22 July, the first pages of the full score must have been written down by that time.⁷ Between late July and early September, Bartók went on with the orchestration, first in Zermatt,⁸ then in Waidberg by Zurich. At the latter place, he was on holiday together with the Kodálys, Béla Balázs and Edit Hajós.⁹ Bartók completed the full score, according to the dating on the last page, on 20 September.

Concerning the instrumentation of the opera, the most essential difference between the autograph full score and the final version is that the former, as Leafstedt has already pointed out, did not contain either a celesta or a xylophone part. In contrast, it included two tenor tuba parts that Bartók later omitted. Is it conceivable that Bartók did not know the celesta and the xylophone at that time? Whether that was the case or not, neither instrument appears in any of his earlier scores composed up to 1911.

Bartók's first orchestral work to use the celesta is the first of the *Two Pictures*, op. 10, 'In Full Flower'. Although it was composed in 1910, a year before *Bluebeard*, it did not originally include the celesta part. According to the autograph full score, the celesta's 10-bar long d^3-d^2 tremolo from bar 2 before fig. 10 to fig. 11 should have played by the first harp. Bartók introduced the revision into the first proof of the score in the summer of 1912 (see *Facsimile 1*). He was then also able to check the sonic result of that revision on 25 February 1913, when the *Two Pictures* were first performed by the Philharmonic Society Orchestra under the baton of István Kerner.¹⁰ Bartók's next work containing a celesta part is *The Wooden Prince*; there the instrument plays quite a significant role, similarly to many of his later scores. Thus, it might have been either the publication and the first performance of the *Two Pictures*, or the première of *The Wooden Prince* in the Royal Opera House, Budapest on 12 May 1917 that inspired Bartók to use the celesta in three scenes of the opera.

The addition of the xylophone part to the full score of *Bluebeard* may also be connected to the première of *The Wooden Prince*, as it was in the ballet that Bartók used that instrument for the first time.¹¹ Taking a closer look to the autograph full score is, however, also in this case revealing: originally it contained not a xylophone but a *sticcato* part. *Sticcato* is the Italian name of the straw fiddle (*Strohfiedel* in German), a wooden percussion instrument regarded to be an early, primitive form of the xylophone.¹² In Márta

⁷ *Bartók Béla családi levelei*, pp. 208–209, English translation in Leafstedt, *Inside Bluebeard's Castle*, pp. 132–133, and in Vikárius, *Commentary*, pp. 18–19.

⁸ On 14 August, he wrote to his wife, 'weren't the burden of the full score on me, I would long ago have left' (*Bartók Béla családi levelei*, p. 214, my translation).

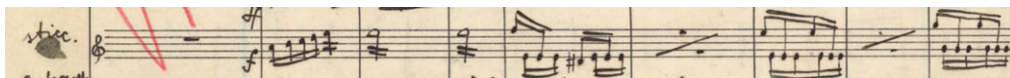
⁹ See Balázs's diary entry, Florence, 7 September 1911, in Béla Balázs, *Napló* (Diary), ed. Anna Fábri (Budapest: Magvető, 1982), vol. I, pp. 509–513, as well as Kodály's recollection in Zoltán Kodály, *Visszatekintés* (Looking Back), vol. III, ed. Ferenc Bónis (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1989), p. 481. Both are quoted in Vikárius, *Commentary*, pp. 21 and 25.

¹⁰ György Kroó, *A Guide to Bartók*, trans. Ruth Pataki and Mária Steiner (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1974), p. 56.

¹¹ An early stage work in which the xylophon is used is Richard Strauss' *Salome*, where it is called 'Holz und Strohinstrument.'



Facsimile 1:



Facsimile 2:

Ziegler-Bartók's full score copy the *sticcato* part appears in its original form, since she had already made the copy before Bartók introduced the xylophone part into the autograph score. In doing so, he not only corrected the name of the instrument but also substantially simplified its musical material (see Facsimile 2 and Example 1).

When did Bartók decide to change the *sticcato* part? The possible date can be concluded from a letter sent by the composer to his wife on 31 March 1917. 'Imagine', he wrote, 'they are preparing a keyed xylophone so these "complicated" modern xylophone parts can be played more easily.'¹³ Thus it was most likely late March–early April – that is, a couple of weeks before the first rehearsal with the orchestra – that the *sticcato* part was transformed into a xylophone part, probably because it was too difficult to play. This presumption is also supported by marginal notes made in Márta's full score copy by Egisto Tango, conductor of the first performance of *The Wooden Prince*, who noted down *Xilofono*, *Sistro?*, and *glok* (=Glockenspiel) in blue pencil at the *sticcato* part at figure 91. It was probably Tango himself who suggested the keyed xylophone.¹⁴ It may well be that Bartók's experiences with the xylophone during the preparation of the première of *The Wooden Prince* gave him the idea to introduce the instrument into two scenes of *Duke Bluebeard's*

¹² George Grove, 'Strohfiedel', in George Grove, ed., *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* [1st ed.] (London: Macmillan, 1878–89), vol. III, p. 746, and *Grove Music Online*, s.v. 'Xylophone' (accessed 3 December 2009).

¹³ Bartók Béla *családi levelei*, p. 266, English translation in Leafstedt, *Inside Bluebeard's Castle*, p. 69.

¹⁴ There are two different manuscript copies of the xylophone part of *The Wooden Prince* in the archive of the Budapest Opera House. In the original 1917 part, one finds the name 'sticcato' at the top of the second page. On the cover of both copies of the xylophone part, 'KLAVIATURÁS' (with keyboard) has been written, what shows that the keyed xylophone was used at performances of the ballet, too.

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Example 1:

Castle. The opera's xylophone part is definitely written for a keyed instrument, as neither the extremely fast scale fragments in parallel octaves in the first door scene, nor the triads from figure 87 to figure 88 can be played on the traditional xylophone, at least not by a single musician. Thus Bartók had good reason to add the following footnote to the xylophone part in the published full score: 'If there is no keyed xylophone, this part must be omitted.'¹⁵

The disappearance of the tenor tubas from the score of *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* does not seem to be connected with any other compositions by Bartók. *Kossuth* (1903) is the only one of his earlier works in which a pair of tenor tubas in B flat is used. In contrast, tenor tubas appear in two passages of *The Miraculous Mandarin* (1918–19, orchestrated 1924). From bar 3 after figure 79 to bar 1 after figure 81 the 2nd and 4th horns change to tenor tubas; then, between figures 97 and 101, only the 2nd horn changes to tenor tuba. In *Bluebeard*, tenor tubas should have originally played in the brass echo of the fifth door's fanfare (from bar 2 after figure 78 to figure 79), after the sixth door scene (in the three bars before figure 102), and in Judith's hysterical scene preceding the opening of the last door (from figure 115 to bar 4 after figure 116), in each case combined with other brass instruments, namely trumpets, trombones, and the (bass) tuba. In all these passages, Bartók replaced tenor tubas with trombones and trumpets, and for that reason he had to add a fourth trombone before the last door scene. It is not known why Bartók decided to omit the tenor tuba parts. He did so possibly for some practical reason, although it is unlikely that the Opera House had no such instruments, since they were needed for performances of Wagner's operas.¹⁶

During the revision of the *Bluebeard* score, Bartók introduced not only new instruments but also a new playing technique for the flute, *Flatterzunge* (*frullato*). This can also be associated with the instrumentation of *The Wooden Prince*, where Bartók applied *Flatterzunge* for the first time. That this technique was new to him at the time when he composed the ballet is suggested by its appearance on a bifolio (BA-N: 2016a, Budapest Bartók Archives) on which Bartók noted down specific playing techniques of the flute, the trombone and the horn, with examples from *The Wooden Prince*.¹⁷ In *Bluebeard*, he used *Flatterzunge* flutes in the third, fourth, and sixth door scenes. In all these scenes, they join in with the celesta, the harps and the strings'

¹⁵ 'Sollte kein Tastenxylophon zur Verfügung stehen, dann bleibe diese Stimme fort.' (First edition of the full score, Universal Edition 7028, 1925, p. 38, figure 30.) For reasons unknown, this footnote is missing in later editions. There is only one recording of *Bluebeard* in which a keyed xylophone is used. According to the CD liner notes, the instrument is probably identical with the one Bartók knew. See Béla Bartók, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, László Polgár, Ildikó Komlósi, Budapest Festival Orchestra conducted by Iván Fischer, CD, Philips 470633-2 (2003). On using a keyed xylophone in *Bluebeard* see also László Somfai, 'Historic performance of the music of yesterday: Béla Bartók's fight for perfect notation and why it is misleading today', *Hungarian Music Quarterly* 8:1–2 (1997), p. 2.

¹⁶ Wagner often uses two tenor and two bass tubas in E flat and B flat, respectively, as well as a contrabass tuba, as, for instance, in the opening bars of *Siegfried*.

¹⁷ This is a rare piece of evidence for Bartók's having consulted with musicians about technical capabilities of their instruments. See Somfai, *Béla Bartók*, p. 232.

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N.B.: a trombe szólamait 6 trombitás játssza egymást felváltva így:

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'I. II. III.' and the bottom staff is labeled 'IV. V. VI.'. Both staves show chords in G major. The top staff has a *pp* dynamic marking under the second measure and a *pp* marking under the fourth measure. The bottom staff has a *pp* marking under the second measure and a *pp* marking under the fourth measure. The word 'stb.' is written at the end of the top staff.

Example 2:

tremolos to produce a characteristically iridescent sound. In the original version, in contrast, the flutes should have played simple tremolos in the third and sixth door scenes and fast tone repetitions without a *Flatterzunge* indication in the fourth door scene. Such fast tone repetitions had already occurred in the flutes at the end of movement I of the Suite No. 2 (1905–07).

Concerning the instrumentation of the third door (treasury) scene, two further observations must be added. First, the strings' tremolos that are notated somewhat sketchily in the autograph full score became more elaborate and differentiated in the revised form. In the original version, the D major triad should have been played by the (presumably *divisi*) violoncellos in the middle octave. Later, Bartók changed this passage, by exploiting the natural harmonics, to flageolet tremolos played by the divided violas and cellos. Second, the trumpets are also notated in a sketchy way in the autograph score: they should have held a single D major chord for as long as 54 bars. Bartók provided possible solutions of this passage both in the autograph score and in Márta's copy, but neither were published. In the autograph, Bartók suggested the alternation of three trumpets in the orchestra with three other trumpets (those which would play on stage later in the fifth door scene) in every six or eight bars. In contrast, he prescribed the alternation of three trumpets with three other trumpets in every three bars in a footnote he added to Márta's copy (see Example 2).

As far as special playing techniques are concerned, it is worth studying how the harp parts developed. Similarly to the fourth door scene, Bartók originally used the so-called 'synonym' technique also in the third door scene, where both harpists should have played fast repetitions of As and Ds, respectively, with alternate hands. 'Synonym' playing means that quickly reiterated notes of the same pitch are produced on two adjacent strings by tuning them enharmonically with pedals. It can be executed, however, only with nine of the 12 pitches and not with D, G, and A.¹⁸ Therefore 'synonym' repetitions of As and Ds had to be changed to A–F \sharp and F \sharp –A tremolos, respectively. Bartók might have faced that problem in 1912, while preparing the full score of the *Two Pictures* for publication. In the first movement of that work, harp 1 should have originally played a fast repetition of Ds with alternate hands. In the proof, however, Bartók transcribed that unplayable passage for the celesta, as *Facsimile 1* shows.

During the 1917 revision of *Bluebeard*, Bartók carefully elaborated the harp parts in the sixth door (lake of tears) scene. Originally, the 1st harp should have played simple broken chords while the 2nd harp rested. In the final version, both harps are used, which allows a much more differentiated sound produced by *glissandi* up and down, as well as broken and arpeggiated chords. Two further

¹⁸ Grove Music Online, s.v. 'Harp' (accessed 20 January 2011).

modifications in the orchestration of this scene deserve mentioning. According to the autograph score, a tremolo A minor chord on the timpani should be played by three players.¹⁹ In the revised score, Bartók changed this, presumably for practical reasons, to an A–E tremolo that could be easily played by two players. He also enriched the sound of this scene by using the tam-tam, which was not present in the original version (see [Example 3](#)).

The first door (torture chamber) scene was also subject to significant alterations. Here, the orchestra falls, functionally speaking, into three layers: (1) a shrill A \sharp /B tremolo played by clarinets 1–2 and the 1st violins, (2) a leaping, up-and-down scale motif played by the piccolo, flute 1, oboes 1–2, the xylophone, and eventually by one of the clarinets, (3) pizzicato chords executed by the rest of the strings and the harps, supported by quick passages of the rest of the woodwinds, and echoed by *pp* chords of the stopped horns and the muted first trombone. Bartók's revision affected all layers. The first layer became simpler: pizzicato quintuplets of the 2nd violins that had coloured the A \sharp /B tremolo of the 1st violins in the original version were deleted, and the tremolo, transformed into *sul ponticello*, was spread out in two octaves. The somewhat mechanically alternating clarinet parts became more varied. In the final version, the two clarinets alternate more frequently and the one that does not play the tremolo joins temporarily the second instrumental layer. Regarding the second layer, the addition of the xylophone has already been mentioned. The alarming effect of its stiff sound is reinforced by the alternating exploitation of low and middle registers of the piccolo that should have originally played in its lowest register only (see [Example 4](#)).

The seventh chords of the third layer were transformed into more dissonant ninth chords in the final version. Therefore a trombone had to be added to the four horns, and the harp parts had to be modified.²⁰ The orchestration of the third layer became significantly thicker. Originally, it was constituted by the oboes, clarinet 3, bassoons 1–2, the harps, the violas and the cellos, whereas in the final version flutes 2–3, bassoon 3, the 2nd violins and the double basses also join. Yet the autograph score itself shows Bartók's tendency to make the strings' *pizzicati* more sonorous. Originally, the divided violas and cellos did not play all pitches of the seventh chords, but only their lowest and highest notes, both doubled an octave higher, too (see [Example 5a](#)). Thus violas and cellos were forced to play in a relatively high register, where plucked notes are not sonorous enough and decay almost immediately. In the autograph score, Bartók corrected the viola and cello parts so that they play all four pitches of each chord in the harps' register (see [Example 5b](#)). Finally, during the 1917 revision, he made the strings' *pizzicati* more robust and sonorous by joining 2nd violins and double basses to the violas and the cellos, as well as by using double- and triple-stops (see [Example 5c](#)).

[Table 1](#) summarizes the most important differences between the instrumentation of the original and the final versions.

¹⁹ The timpani part, to which Bartók wrote *hárman* (by three players), appears in the bottom staff, suggesting that it was inserted at a later stage. (In [Example 3a](#), it is moved to its proper place.)

²⁰ The transformation of seventh chords into ninth chords makes problematic the execution of the harp parts between bar 4 after figure 30 and bar 2 after figure 31, as ten-note chords cannot be played on the harp (except if broken). (NB Harpists only use their first four fingers, see [Grove Music Online](#), s.v. 'Harp'.)

A

Molto adagio

The score is for a 4/4 time signature and is marked **Molto adagio**. It features the following parts and markings:

- I. fl.:** Treble clef, 4/4. Starts with a 7-measure rest, followed by a 3-measure triplet of eighth notes marked *p*.
- II. fl.:** Treble clef, 4/4. Starts with a 3-measure rest, followed by a 3-measure triplet of eighth notes marked *pp*.
- III. IV. fl.:** Treble clef, 4/4. Starts with a 3-measure rest, followed by a 3-measure triplet of eighth notes marked *pp*.
- I. klar. (in B):** Treble clef, 4/4. Starts with a 7-measure rest, followed by a 3-measure triplet of eighth notes marked *p*.
- I. II. corni:** Treble clef, 4/4. Starts with a 3-measure rest, followed by a 3-measure triplet of eighth notes marked *pp* and *con sord.*
- 3 timp.:** Bass clef, 4/4. Starts with a 3-measure rest, followed by a 3-measure triplet of eighth notes marked *pp* and *hárman*.
- harpa:** Treble and bass clefs, 4/4. Starts with a 9-measure rest, followed by a 3-measure triplet of eighth notes marked *p* and *f*.
- I. viol. div.:** Treble clef, 4/4. Starts with a 3-measure rest, followed by a 3-measure triplet of eighth notes marked *pp* and *con sord.*
- 5.-8. p.:** Treble clef, 4/4. Starts with a 3-measure rest, followed by a 3-measure triplet of eighth notes marked *pp*.
- viole (div.):** Bass clef, 4/4. Starts with a 3-measure rest, followed by a 3-measure triplet of eighth notes marked *pp* and *con sord. arco*.
- vcello (div.):** Bass clef, 4/4. Starts with a 3-measure rest, followed by a 3-measure triplet of eighth notes marked *pp* and *con sord. arco*.

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Example3 - B/W online, B/W in print

B *Adagio*, ♩ = 80

1 Fl. 2, 3 *pp* Flatterzunge 3 457
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Cl. 1 (Si) *p* 7 3 7 470
471
472
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Cor. 1, 2 (Fa) *pp* 3 475
476
477
478
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Timp. *p* 3 480
481
482

Tam-tam *ppp* 483
484

1 Arpa *pp* *gliss.* *f* 3 485
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2 *p* 9 *f* 9 489
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492
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Cel. *p* 3 498
499

5^o, 6^o, 7^o, 8^o *leggio* *con sord.* 3 500
501

VI. 2 *pp* 3 502
503

4^o, 5^o, 6^o *leggio* *arco* *con sord.* 3 504
505
506

Vle. div. *pp* 3 507
508

3^o, 4^o *leggio* *arco* *con sord.* 3 509
510
511
512
513

pp

Example3 - B/W online, B/W in print

Example 3: continued

fl. picc. 514
515
516
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I. 518
fl. col fl. picc. 519
II. III. 520
521
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I. 523
ob. f 524
II. f 525
526
527
cor. ing. f 528
529
530
2 klar. (A) I. 531
II. p 532
533
klar. basso muta 534
in III. klar. (A) f 535
536
I. 537
fag. f 538
II. f 539
540
541
542
543
4 corni pp 544
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2 harpa a2 f 549
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J. p 553
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div. 558
viol. I. f 559
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div. pizz. s 561
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viol. II. f s 563
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Example4 - B/W online, B/W in print

Example 4:

A

Vla.

Vc.

B

Vla.

Vc.

C

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.Bass

sul I.....III.....IV.....I.....III.....IV

Example 5 - B/W online, B/W in print

Example 5:

In addition to the above alterations, which affect the orchestration of longer sections, there are also several minor alterations. Two of them seem important insofar as they show that Bartók aimed to emphasize connections between music and drama by means of instrumentation.

The characteristic theme of the introductory scene, played by the cor anglais,²¹ is preceded by multiple repetition of a three-note motif within the range of a minor third that was taken over by the woodwinds from the 1st violins and the violas. In the original version,

²¹ By the way, the only extant sketch to *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, which survived in Bartók's 'Black Pocket-book' (fol.12', line 10), features precisely this theme. See the facsimile edition of Bartók's sketchbook: Béla Bartók, *Black Pocket-book: Sketches 1907-1922*, ed. László Somfai (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1987). According to Somfai, this theme perhaps belonged to ideas for the 1910 *Two Pictures*. See Somfai, *Béla Bartók*, p. 43.

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Table 1:
The most important changes to the
instrumentation of *Duke Bluebeard's*
Castle.

| Scene | Autograph full score | Final version |
|----------|---|---|
| 1st door | piccolo in its lowest register | alternately in its lowest and middle register |
| | no trombone | trombone 1 added |
| | no xylophone | xylophone added |
| | 1st violins not <i>sul pont.</i> | <i>sul pont.</i> tremolo, <i>divisi</i> in 2 |
| | 2nd violins pizz. quintuplets | 2nd violins join the violas and the cellos |
| | violas and cellos <i>divisi</i> , <i>f</i> , <i>pizz.</i> | double- and triple-stops, non <i>divisi</i> , <i>ff</i> |
| | no double basses | double basses added |
| 3rd door | flutes tremolo sextuplets | <i>Flatterzunge</i> |
| | no celesta | celesta added |
| | harps 'synonym' <i>D</i> , <i>A</i> | <i>A-F#</i> and <i>F#-A</i> tremolos |
| | cellos D major chord, tremolo | violas and cellos, flageolet tremolo |
| 4th door | flutes not <i>Flatterzunge</i> | <i>Flatterzunge</i> |
| | no celesta | celesta added |
| 6th door | flutes 2, 3 & 4 tremolo | <i>Flatterzunge</i> |
| | 3 timpani | 2 timpani |
| | no celesta and tam-tam | celesta and tam-tam added |
| | harp 1 only, broken chords | 2 harps, broken and arpeggiated chords, <i>gliss.</i> |

this motif should have appeared ten times, played by (1) the 1st violins and the violas, (2) clarinets 1–2 and a bassoon, (3) the 1st violins and the violas, (4) bassoons 1–2, (5) horn 2, (6) bassoon 1, (7) to (10) horn 2. During the revision, Bartók reduced the number of repetitions by two, and he put the third statement of the motif into the cor anglais and the bass clarinet. By doing so, he clearly differentiated between a melodic layer and an ostinato accompaniment, the former being played by the woodwinds and horn 2, the latter by the strings, and he emphasized the motivic connection between the repeated motif and the subsequent cor anglais theme.

Another local yet important modification was carried out in Judith's hysterical scene preceding the opening of the last door, where the so-called blood motif²² was moved from trombones 2–3 into the stopped horns 3–4. There are two possible reasons for the change of instruments. First, since the blood motif was associated from the beginning with the sound of muted or stopped horns, it might have seemed reasonable that the last, emphatic statement of the motif

²² The blood motif is one of the central musical motives of *Bluebeard*. After isolated occurrences, it appears explicitly in the torture chamber scene for the first time as a slowly pulsating *G#-A* dyad in the trumpets at figure 34. On that motif see also Leafstedt, *Inside Bluebeard's Castle*, pp. 69–78.

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Table 2:
Thinning down the instrumentation
in *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*

| Bar | Figure | Modification of the instrumentation | Vocal part |
|---------------------------------|---|--|------------|
| 195–213 | [17]-4-[18] + 5 | piccolo deleted dynamics reduced by one or two levels | changed |
| 328–329 | [28] + 2–3 | sustained notes interrupted with rests | unchanged |
| 383–386 | [37]-4–1 | oboe 1 and clarinets deleted horns modified and muted | unchanged |
| 726–731 | [72] + 1–6 | flutes, horns and timpani deleted in bar 732, brass changed to <i>p</i> | unchanged |
| 735–736 | [73] + 1–2 | clarinets 1–2, trombone 3, tuba and timpani deleted | unchanged |
| 810 | [78] + 1 | flutes, oboe 2, horns 1, 3 & 4 deleted clarinets transposed down, strings changed to <i>pp</i> | unchanged |
| 844–845, 847–851, 856–861 | [81] + 1–2, [82]-5–1, [82] + 5–10 | woodwinds halved in some places (1. instead of a2) horns and trumpets deleted | unchanged |

should be played by two trumpets and two stopped horns. Second, it leaves the trombonists a rest before the climax at figure 117, and it gives them time to remove their mutes.

Beyond these significant alterations, Bartók made several minor modifications that did not change the character of the orchestration but only refined it. Most of them aimed at making the orchestral material thinner, and thus putting the vocal parts more into relief (see Table 2).

One of the above modifications is worth closer investigation. A slight alteration of the instrumentation before the fifth door scene not only serves the practical purpose of allowing Bluebeard's part to be more effective, but also is important to the musical process. The same, lively material in 3/4 time that represents Bluebeard's enthusiasm and passion starts three times, at figs 70, 72, and 73, respectively, and is interrupted for the first and second times by Judith's words, full of suspicion: 'Fehér rózsád töve véres, Virágaid földje véres' (But your whitest rose is bleeding, all your flower-beds are bleeding) and 'Ki öntözte kerted földjét?' (Who gives water to your flowers?).²³ This enthusiastic material becomes each more and more condensed at each appearance: it lasts nine bars for the first, seven bars for the second, and three bars for the third time. Its last statement is interrupted by a pause and followed by an intensification of dynamics and tempo that leads directly into the climax of the entire opera, the opening of the fifth door. This musical material is the most massively orchestrated on its first appearance, when both vocal parts pause. The second and the third statements had already been orchestrated more thinly in order to allow Bluebeard's voice to be more audible (no trumpets and trombones 1–2), but during the revision Bartók felt a need to reduce the orchestral texture more radically. However, he succeeded in preserving the impression of an orchestral tutti by flashing the tutti sound for a few moments (bar 7 after figure

²³ Translation from Béla Balázs, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, performing version commissioned by Merlin International Theatre Budapest for the Edinburgh Festival, August 1998, trans. Peter Zollman (n.p., n.d.).

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72 and bar 3 after figure 73). Consequently, the music does not lose its intensity, while the vocal parts can stand out and the long crescendo that leads to the absolute orchestral tutti of the fifth door scene can be effectively executed.

In one case, Bartók thinned down the instrumentation, not in favour of a vocal part but of the soloistic viola part. In the first five bars after figure 26, he interrupted the originally sustained notes of the 2nd violins with rests in every instance of the viola part going below the 2nd violin part. Bartók's original idea can be regarded as an evidence of his 'pianistic' way of thinking: in piano playing it would not cause any aural confusion if the melody crossed one note of a sustained chord, because it dies away after having been struck. But this is not the case with sustained notes on a stringed instrument.

Finally, I will point out a special effect of the instrumentation of *Bluebeard*. In the original version, Judith's 'shuddering' in the first two bars before figure 96 is only expressed by the strings' tremolos and fast figurations of the flute and the clarinet. Later Bartók added downward *glissandi* on the harp, lending this effect a particular flavour.²⁴

As Carl Leafstedt points out in his monograph on *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, it is not justified to think of Bartók's opera as only a culmination and the end-point of his early period. In fact, the compositional process of *Bluebeard* did not end in 1911. Six years later, Bartók revised his opera with new stylistic ideals and a new harmonic conception in mind, and he modified certain passages substantially.²⁵ As manuscript sources show, the *Bluebeard* score changed considerably in terms of instrumentation, too. Bartók elaborated passages that had originally been notated in a sketchy way, and he made use of his experiences gained during the rehearsals and performances of the *Two Pictures* and, especially, *The Wooden Prince*. Despite all these revisions to the instrumentation, however, Bartók remained basically true to his 1911 *Bluebeard* score. His new experiences only helped him to realize his original ideas more precisely, more elaborately, and more effectively.

²⁴ Downward *glissandi* on the harp are also to be found in Richard Strauss's works, for example in *Salome*, figure 57.

²⁵ Leafstedt, *Inside Bluebeard's Castle*, p. 158.