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**MIKROKOSMOS: COMPANION FOR LATER GENERATIONS  
FROM THE YEARS OF CRISIS**

Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* is acknowledged as a collection of valuable pedagogical pieces. I propose that it can also be understood as the composer's reaction to his contemporary circumstances, and that it may hold a message for the audience, especially children, since pedagogical works usually have sustainable effects on children beyond the limit of strictly educational concerns such as transmitting knowledge or technique. Hungarians' political situation could be described as continuously unfavourable for the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; however, Bartók observed this differently. He emphasised the importance of co-operation among people instead of hostile acts rooted in nationalistic sentiment, which Bartók considered a true crisis. His ideology—in his words the 'brotherhood of peoples' or 'race impurity' which propagates cultural interaction as a positive and prolific phenomenon—can be taken as his counter-reaction to the crisis.

Even though Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* does not apply folk music from various nations as its basis (unlike *Forty-Four Duos*, which can be considered an embodiment of the 'brotherhood of peoples' due to its selection of materials), it freely combines elements distilled from folk music and produces an imaginary union of cultures that transcends the reality, similar to the *Fifth String Quartet*, in which at least four types of folk-music elements (Bulgarian, Hungarian, Slovakian and Rumanian) can be found. On the other hand, unlike his masterpieces, such as the *Fifth String Quartet* and *Cantata profana*, whose performances were not always accessible to a wider audience, *Mikrokosmos* can serve as daily bread for children. Thus, Bartók designed *Mikrokosmos* to be children's first steps toward acquaintance with other cultures, wishing to change society from the bottom up.

Keyword: Bartók, *Mikrokosmos*, nationalism, pedagogy, multiculturalism

## Introduction

It is thought that crises deprive artists of their creative power. There could be neither mental nor physical resources available to direct toward cultural activities. However, critical situations can be a prominent source of artistic stimulation for composers. For instance, Béla Bartók was one of the artists who got his very first inspiration in the time of crisis: *Kossuth*, a symphonic poem for orchestra, premiered in 1904. Despite his recent graduation from the Hungarian Royal Music Academy,<sup>1</sup> he was soon acknowledged as a composer representative of the time.<sup>2</sup>

Although this work describes a historical event (the Hungarian Revolution of 1848), it was nevertheless tightly linked to the actual political concern: the complete independence of Hungary from the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>3</sup> His self-perception as a fighting composer and his devotion to his motherland is clear in a letter he wrote to his mother the previous year, at the time of orchestration:

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.<sup>4</sup>

Opening with this naïve statement enables us to trace the changes in Bartók's attitude over the years. For instance, what did he consider critical twenty years later? Political circumstances were completely changed by that time, but Hungarians felt (again) that they were in crisis—the Kingdom of Hungary had lost a significant amount of territory and population, and now found itself surrounded by newly independent, hostile nations. What type of message did he attempt to convey? Could a jingoistic manifestation such as *Kossuth* still be valid during that time?

The following attempts to trace the change in Bartók's thoughts and attitudes and what crisis came to mean for the composer; then, I will interpret *Mikrokosmos* (1926, 1932–1939), the highly regarded pedagogical work, as his reaction to the crisis. It might be strange at first to imagine a link between a pedagogical work and social situations beyond certain educational issues; however, 'pedagogy' as a generic concept encompasses

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<sup>1</sup> The former name of the Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest.

<sup>2</sup> For contemporary critiques, see János DEMÉNY, *Bartók Béla tanulói és romantikus korszaka* [Bartók's years of study and his romantic period] = *Zenatudományi tanulmányok II*, ed. SZABOLCSI Bence and DÉNES Bartha, Bp., Akadémiai Kiadó, 1954, 418–433.

<sup>3</sup> Tibor TALLIÁN, *Béla Bartók the Man and His Work*, Bp., Corvina, 1981, 33–34.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to his mother, 8<sup>th</sup> September 1903 (Béla BARTÓK, *Béla Bartók Letters*, ed. János DEMÉNY, Budapest, Corvina, 1971, 29).

not only the transmission of knowledge or technique but also the mental upbringing of later generations.

Although Bartók, as it was his accustomed manner, did not provide any public hints for decoding his message,<sup>5</sup> an examination of unpublished documents and private correspondence in addition to a musical analysis enables us to sense the composer's pedagogical thoughts in the pieces of *Mikrokosmos*.

## 1.

Bartók's conversion can be well understood by confronting his early ideology with the well-known concept of 'the brotherhood of peoples', written down about thirty years later. This could appear too large a chronological gap to be relevant for Bartók; the idea itself, however, originated much earlier, as shown by this letter to Rumanian music writer Octavian Beu dated 10<sup>th</sup> January 1931.

My own idea [...]—of which I have been fully conscious since I found myself as a composer—is the brotherhood of peoples, brotherhood in spite of all wars and conflicts. I try—to the best of my ability—to serve this idea in my music; therefore I don't reject any influence, be it Slovakian, Rumanian, Arabic or from any other source. The source must only be clean, fresh and healthy!<sup>6</sup>

This obviously refers to *Cantata profana*, his work completed in 1930, just one year earlier. Whereas the use of the word 'brotherhood' offers a possible reading to subtly connect it with the protagonists of the work (nine brothers transformed into splendid stags), the concluding words of the work ('only from a pure source'<sup>7</sup>) correspond to the words found in the letter: 'The source must only be clean, fresh and healthy'. Nevertheless, Bartók's statement, 'of which I have been fully conscious since I found myself as a composer', indicates the idea's date of origin. Thus, this idea can be considered not only a contemporary artistic confession but also a dominant thought that affected his works for more than twenty years.

Finding himself as a composer may have occurred toward the end of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in 1908, when he succeeded in

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<sup>5</sup> László SOMFAI, *Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts, and Autograph Sources*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996, 9–24.

<sup>6</sup> BARTÓK, *op. cit.*, 201.

<sup>7</sup> 'Csak tiszta forrásból.' in Hungarian (author's translation). English translation by Robert Shaw does not literally follow Hungarian text (Béla BARTÓK, *Cantata profana*, Wien, Universal edition, 1934, 91–92).

establishing his own compositional style through the absorption of characteristic elements of folk music; his first mature compositions, such as *First String Quartet* (1908–9) and *Fourteen Bagatelles* (1908), began to emerge at that time.

Bartók's mention of 'brotherhood in spite of all wars and conflicts' was essentially a counterthought to issues that could be characterised as moral crises, which continuously threatened him and challenged his scholarly activity. He described this as 'ultra-nationalism' in his article 'Folk Song Research and Nationalism', published in 1937.

International co-operation is desirable in every branch of the sciences... But amidst the mentioned hostilities how is it possible even to *talk* of co-operation, since we see all over the world not co-operation but counter-activity? Besides, the most peculiar things might also occur. For instance... a collector belonging to nation A, after becoming more or less acquainted with his country's material, conceives of the 'terrible' idea to research that of the neighbouring nation B... But what happens? His compatriots cry shame because he 'wasted' his time on the study, collection, and preservation of a rival nation's cultural treasure...

From all that has been said, it follows that even if musical folklore is very indebted to nationalism, today's ultra-nationalism does it such harm as many times exceeds the benefits.

What should we do, what should we demand? We must require of every researcher, and therefore the musical folklore researcher also, the greatest objectivity that is humanly possible... [T]he sentiments connected with the maternal language and the affairs of his country are just the most intuitive, the strongest. But there should be sufficient strength of mind in a true researcher to refrain from and hold back these sentiments where necessary.<sup>8</sup>

The 'mentioned hostilities' refers primarily to the Hungarian-Rumanian relationship. Even though Bartók directly mentions only politically biased people from Rumania (perhaps as a reflection of his bitter experience when his ethnomusicological research concerning Rumanian

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<sup>8</sup> Béla BARTÓK, *Folk Song Research and Nationalism*, in Benjamin SUCHOFF (ed.), *Béla Bartók Essays*, London, Faber and Faber, 1976, 25–28 (28).

folk music was severely attacked by Rumanian professor Coriolan Petranu in 1936), it is clear that he also criticises their Hungarian counterparts—perhaps because in 1920, a contemporary writer criticised a same study that was later attacked also by Petranu from the Hungarian side.<sup>9</sup> It is important to mention that he confronted not only his contemporaries but also young Bartók himself, who swore his total devotion to his motherland as a primary mission.

The idea of brotherhood or international co-operation gains another dimension in an article published in 1942, ‘Race Purity in Music’. Although its title suggests the influence of Nazi racial ideology, Bartók argues in favour of the reciprocal influence of diverse cultures (according to his term, ‘race impurity’), mainly from the point of view of ethnomusicology.

Contact with foreign material not only results in an exchange of melodies, but—and this is still more important—it gives an impulse to the development of new styles. At the same time, the more or less ancient styles are generally well preserved, too, which still further enhances the richness of the music... The situation of folk music in Eastern Europe may be summed up thus: as a result of uninterrupted reciprocal influence upon the folk music of these peoples there are an immense variety and a wealth of melodies and melodic types. The ‘racial impurity’ finally attained is definitely beneficial...

It is obvious that if there remains any hope for the survival of folk music in the near or distant future... an artificial erection of Chinese walls to separate peoples from each other bodes no good for its development. A complete separation from foreign influences means stagnation: well assimilated foreign impulses offer possibilities of enrichment...<sup>10</sup>

Bartók speculates that past cultural interactions (or even the ‘co-operation’ of peoples), as prolific events, may have taken place in situations that were not entirely hostile. Thus, he considers the

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<sup>9</sup> Béla BARTÓK, *Answer to the Petranu Attack*, in SUCHOFF (ed.), *Béla Bartók Essays*, ed. cit., 227–236.

<sup>10</sup> Béla BARTÓK, *Race Purity in Music*, in SUCHOFF (ed.), *Béla Bartók Essays*, ed. cit., 29–32 (31).

‘brotherhood of peoples’ to be a historical concept, not simply his own ideology.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.

We have briefly reviewed how Bartók’s ideology changed over the course of time by examining his writings. Beginning his career as a nationalist, he drastically changed his standpoint. It is remarkable that while he had observed a ‘threatening’ (in fact, illusionary) opponent in the allied Habsburg Monarchy at the turn of the century and interpreted the situation as a crisis, he did not consider the unfavourable political situation in the wake of the Treaty of Trianon as a crisis in itself. For him, the true crisis seemed to be the hostility between the nations emerging from nationalistic feeling, which complicated international scientific co-operation.

In the following, we will examine the connection between Bartók’s pedagogical works and his beliefs. It is strange to imagine such a connection; however, it is possible if we consider that pedagogy encompasses not only concrete educational matters concerning the transmission of knowledge or development of technique, but also mental upbringing such as the development of personality and the formation of moral and aesthetic value systems. We know that these types of goals are not always reached by instructing children in what they must and must not do; rather, we can implicitly transmit our messages to them by selecting and compiling materials with this intent in mind.

Indeed, Bartók reveals the pedagogical intention behind *For Children* (1908–1911) in his 1940 lecture-recital manuscript entitled ‘Contemporary Music in Piano Teaching’.

I wrote [*For Children*] in order to acquaint the piano-studying children with the simple and non-romantic beauties of folk music. Excepting this purpose, there is no special plan in this work.<sup>12</sup>

Even though Bartók’s pedagogical concern to provide easy but aesthetically valuable pieces for children should not be undervalued, this sentence must not be taken literally. Without a doubt, Bartók intended to

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<sup>11</sup> This article could be important in that Bartók abandons the ideological value of ‘purity’. While he declared in his 1931 letter that ‘The source [folk music] must only be clean, fresh and healthy’, in 1942, he acknowledged that the sources which inspired him may not be entirely pure. However, the Central European folk-music tradition as well as Bartók’s own musical language were enriched precisely as a result of this impurity.

<sup>12</sup> Béla BARTÓK, *Contemporary Music in Piano Teaching*, in SUCHOFF (ed.), *Béla Bartók Essays*, ed. cit., 426–430 (427).

propagate folk music that was as yet unfamiliar to the residents of Budapest. In 1906, *Hungarian Folksongs*, a collection of folksong arrangements in collaboration with Zoltán Kodály, was intended to inform adults of their cultural heritage of Hungarian folksongs; unfortunately, this failed to obtain the expected result: it took thirty years to sell the first 500 copies.<sup>13</sup> Thus, it seemed practical to groom children to become future audiences as adults, that is, to shape people's musical tastes from the bottom up.

It is clearly observable that here meet two types of motivation. The first is nationalistic: to exploit folk music in order to achieve its goal, i.e. the elevation and representation of national culture.<sup>14</sup> The second, however, emphasises the folk music itself and its beauty. It could still be connected to nationalism if the composer used folk music of his own nation; however, Bartók never adhered to exclusive use of Hungarian folk music.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.

We must consider why *For Children* contains arrangements of Hungarian and Slovakian folksongs in nearly the same proportion. As discussed above, the ideology 'the brotherhood of nations' originated in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Bartók found himself as a composer. *For Children* was contemporary with those compositions; thus, the equal treatment of Hungarian and Slovakian materials could be viewed as Bartók's earliest manifestation of that humanistic idea. However, *For Children* must have been interpreted differently due to the atmosphere at that time, at least by certain politically oriented people.

In 1917, the Hungarian publisher Rózsavölgyi tried to promote *Piano Method* (written by Bartók and Reschofsky and published in 1913) as an official textbook of the Music Academy.<sup>16</sup> This was unsuccessful for several reasons. The publisher is partly responsible because it pushed this issue despite the rejection of an earlier petition made the previous year. However, the principal reason must be that *Piano Method* did not qualify as

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<sup>13</sup> TALLIÁN, *op. cit.* (see note 3), 58.

<sup>14</sup> See the Forward to Bartók-Kodály *Hungarian Folksongs*. Published as Zoltán KODÁLY, *Hungarian Folksongs*, in Ferenc BÓNIS (ed.), *The Selected Writings of Zoltán KODÁLY*, Bp., Corvina, 1974, 9–10.

<sup>15</sup> James Parakilas approaches *For Children* as a nationalistic production; however, he failed to sufficiently differentiate Bartók's ideology from others', who seemed interested only in Hungarian culture. See James PARAKILAS, *Folk Song as Musical Wet Nurse: The Prehistory of Bartók's For Children*, *The Musical Quarterly* 79(1995), 476–499 (490ff.).

<sup>16</sup> The primary source concerning this petition is now found in the Budapest Bartók Archives (BA-N 3600/24). For a detailed discussion of these circumstances, see Yusuke NAKAHARA, *Bartók's Mikrokosmos: Genesis and Concepts of the Years 1932–1934*, Master's thesis, The Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest, 2012, 25–32.

acceptable teaching material. Regardless of biased committee members, several of whom might even have been hostile toward the authors, it must be mentioned that the rejection of *Piano Method* itself was not totally baseless. This criticism was shared even by Margit Varró, who highly appreciated the musical value of Bartók's pieces but noticed inconsistencies in the method that needed to be solved in favour of application in practice.<sup>17</sup> The problem is the mode of criticism.

Árpád Szendy, the head of the Piano Department of the Royal Music Academy, disqualified Bartók's work with pejorative remarks, describing the music examples as 'tótul magyaros' [Hungarian in Slovakian style]. As Bartók's pieces in *Piano Method* do not show characteristically Slovakian features, it is probable that he was attacking Bartók by referring to his earlier pedagogical work, *For Children*.<sup>18</sup> I suppose that *For Children* reminded the nationalists of *Racial Problems in Hungary*, a famous book written by Robert William Seton-Watson under the pen name 'Scotus Viator', which criticised Hungarian policy toward its national minorities from a Slovakian point of view.<sup>19</sup> The book features a symbolic portrait of Andrej Hlinka, a Slovakian activist, on the page preceding the title page. Although Szendy did not explicitly mention it, the language evokes Emil Haraszti's critique of *Two Pictures*, published in 1913, which named Bartók as a 'Scotus Viator': a traitor to the Hungarian nation.<sup>20</sup>

A 'review' of *For Children* took a completely different position, though the essential differences cannot be ignored: this review was published in *Csabai Akkordok*, a magazine for young musicians, in 1935, almost twenty years after Szendy's opinion—consequently, in significantly different political (peacetime) circumstances, in mono- rather than multi-national Hungary—and written by ten-year-old Éva Adler. This provides some insight into children's acceptance of a pedagogical work; being *tabula rasa*, children are yet free of racial bias, while adults cannot escape from the prejudice rooted in their nationalism.

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<sup>17</sup> Margit VARRÓ, *Zongoratanítás és zenei nevelés* [Teaching the piano and music education], Bp., Rózsavölgyi és társa, 1921, 148–149.

<sup>18</sup> By that time, Bartók's arrangements of Romanian folk music had been composed but still not published. *Two Romanian Dances* was published in 1910; however, it is less relevant to the context of piano pedagogy.

<sup>19</sup> SCOTUS VIATOR, *Racial Problems in Hungary*, London, Archibald Constable, 1908.

<sup>20</sup> It is not, however, certain whether the extreme criticism represented by Haraszti's review was predominant at that time. Another critic judged Bartók's followers (and possibly Bartók himself) as chauvinists. See János DEMÉNY, *Bartók Béla művészi kibontakozásának évei (1906-1914)* [Bartók's years of artistic development: contact with folk music] = *Zenetudományi tanulmányok III*, ed. SZABOLCSI Bence and DÉNES Bartha, Bp., Akadémiai Kiadó, 1955, 426.



In my first year studying piano, I had already started to play Bartók's *For Children*. Soon I loved the pieces, especially singing them, but as usual I did not learn the text very much (out of laziness). But, we can understand the pieces only with their texts. I sang Bartók's pieces all day. The most enjoyable part of practicing is playing his pieces. And because he is one of my favourite composers, I try to master as many of his pieces as possible. I have already learned 40 Hungarian and 20 Slovakian folk songs.<sup>21</sup>

*Csbai Akkordok* was created by a local music teacher, Jolán Bacher. Young musicians not only wrote the articles, but also edited the magazine itself (with adult guidance).<sup>22</sup> Only two articles focused on Bartók; however, one published volume included Bartók's composition 'Gyermekdarab' [*Children's Piece*] as a facsimile supplement. This was the first facsimile in the magazine, which suggests that Bartók was a spiritual protagonist for the children.<sup>23</sup>

This *Children's Piece* is, in fact, none other than a piece that will constitute part of *Mikrokosmos* few years later.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4.

Considered one of the most important pedagogical work in music history, Bartók's *Mikrokosmos*, essentially composed between 1932 and 1939, comprises 153 pieces and 33 exercises. Published in six volumes by English publisher Boosey & Hawkes in 1940, the pieces are organised progressively from very simple pieces to demanding concert works. Few compositions have been written for educational purposes with such care that the development of technique is seamlessly interwoven into the musical challenges at a very high level (in contrast to Czerny's mechanical studies, for example), not to mention that Bartók is one of the most prominent composers of the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Unlike *For Children*, while *Mikrokosmos* carefully concerns technical problems, this work still seems not to reveal its profound ideological concepts for us at first sight, because it is not based on folksong

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<sup>21</sup> Éva ADLER, *Bartók Béla: A gyermekeknek* [Béla Bartók: *For Children*], *Csbai Akkordok* 4(October 1935), 12 (author's translation).

<sup>22</sup> According to Klára Huszár's reminiscence (Ferenc BÓNIS, *Így láttuk Bartókot* [So saw we Bartók], Bp., Zeneműkiadó, 1995<sup>2</sup>, 167).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* According to Huszár, it is an arrangement of a folksong known as 'Virág Erzsi' that might correspond to *Mikrokosmos* No. 74 'Hungarian Matchmaking Song'. None of the facsimiles is, however, known to us, perhaps lost.

arrangements, which were key influences in *For Children*. *Mikrokosmos* mainly consists of pieces based on Bartók's original themes. This difference can, however, be derived from the educational purpose.

My idea was to write piano pieces intended to lead the students from the very beginning and through the most important technical and musical problems of the first years, to a certain higher degree. This determined programme involves a very strict proceeding: there must be no gaps in the succession of the technical problems which have to follow each other in a very logical order. Of course, the realization of such a plan could hardly be based on folk music; it would have been quite impossible to find folk melodies for every technical or musical problem. So, I decided to write pieces on entirely original themes.<sup>25</sup>

This type of pedagogical intention had not been present in *For Children* and *Forty-Four Duos*, another pedagogical work based on folksong arrangements composed in 1931, directly preceding *Mikrokosmos*.

Still, despite its medium (written for violin duos), *Forty-Four Duos* is important for the present discussion because it references various nationalities.<sup>26</sup> This simultaneous presence of multiple nations has been considered an embodiment of the 'brotherhood of peoples' concept. In this instance, we must note the mature manifestation of this idea, significantly different from earlier attempts in which Hungarian and non-Hungarian folk music are featured in parallel, as in *For Children*. However, with *Forty-Four Duos*, Bartók picked up melodies that suggest cultural interactions in and of themselves.<sup>27</sup> In the *Fifth String Quartet* (1934), another piece contemporary to *Mikrokosmos*, Bartók mixes compositional elements distilled from various kinds of folk music, namely Bulgarian, Hungarian, Rumanian, and Slovakian.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Béla BARTÓK, *Contemporary Music in Piano Teaching* (see note 12), 427–428.

<sup>26</sup> Although the origin of the melodies used in *Forty-Four Duos* is known to us by means of Vera Lampert's catalogue (Vera LAMPERT, *Folk Music in Bartók's Compositions: A Source Catalog*, Budapest, Hungarian Heritage House et al., 2008.), Bartók rarely made references.

<sup>27</sup> Kata RISKÓ, *Eszmények és emlékek Bartók Negyvennégy hegedűduójában* [Ideals and memories in Bartók's *Forty Four Violin Duos*], *Magyar Zene* (2012), 457–471.

<sup>28</sup> János KÁRPÁTI, *Bartók Béla és egy Duna-völgyi zenei integráció lehetősége* [Béla Bartók and the possibility of a musical integration of the Danube Valley] = K. J., *Bartók-analítika*, Bp., Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2003, 111–123.—It can be, however, a sensitive question to judge Bartók's intention: which was dominant in his workshop, the Bartókian ideology, or autonomous compositional-aesthetical decisions to enrich sonic experience with original musical language? According to László Somfai, Bartók primarily considered the aesthetic quality of the work rather than non-aesthetic elements. The manuscripts of *Dance Suite* and *Sonata* (1926) contain discarded sections. *Dance Suite* had a Slovakian movement, and *Sonata*

*Mikrokosmos* can also be analysed from the perspective of the ‘brotherhood of peoples’ or cultural interaction because it has references to various nationalities as well as geographical places (Bulgarian, Hungarian, Transylvanian etc.), similar to the compositions mentioned above; indeed, several scholars have already mentioned it briefly in connection with *Mikrokosmos*.<sup>29</sup> In my opinion, however, one of Bartók’s statements should be examined because it strengthens our argument, and is directly connected to *Mikrokosmos*.

## 5.

In 1940, Bartók was interviewed by Miklós Szentjóni. Bartók talked about *Mikrokosmos* and its compositional circumstances, and then about the pieces written in Bulgarian rhythms. According to him, no Bulgarian folksongs were used, and the melodies were rather Hungarian—that is, they were ‘bolgár ritmusba oltott magyar’ [Hungarian implanted into a Bulgarian rhythm]. Most important for us, however, is the following excerpt that cannot be found in older compilations of the interview. András Wilhelm informed two somewhat different versions of the interview.<sup>30</sup> One is the well-known text first published in *Magyar Nemzet*, a Hungarian newspaper, on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1940; the other was published in *Híd*, a Hungarian periodical, on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1940. According to Wilhelm, Szentjóni (the interviewer) originally planned to publish in *Híd*, but because the editor sent the manuscript to the printing office without authorisation from Bartók, he chose another paper to publish the authorised text earlier; consequently, he attempted to invalidate the later-published unauthorised version.<sup>31</sup>

The following text is missing from the *Magyar Nemzet* interview:

Now—at the first time—Bartók burst out laughing.

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(1926) contained a bagpipe episode which might have perfected Bartók’s original concept (suite of folk music imitations of various nations or a ‘catalogue’ of ethnomusicological genres), but he cut them for the sake of compositional quality. See SOMFAI, *op. cit.* (see note 5), 189-190.—Further bibliographical information can also be found there.

<sup>29</sup> An early commentary can be found in János Breuer’s liner notes for *Bartók Béla Complete Edition* (Hungaroton, LPX 11405-7). László Vikárius’s article mentions it only in connection with *Bulgarian Dances*, still he gives hints for enlarging the range of ‘brotherhood’ (and its ideological meaning) by suggesting that Harriet Cohen, the dedicatee of *Six Bulgarian Dances*, was an English Jew. See László VIKÁRIUS, *Bartók’s Bulgarian Dances and the Order of Things*, *Studia Musicologica* 53(2012), 53–68 (64–67).

<sup>30</sup> SZENTJÓNI Miklós, *Bartók Béla a Mikrokosmosról, az új Magyar zenészgenerációról és amerikai útjáról* [Interview with Béla Bartók: *Mikrokosmos*, the new Hungarian generation of musicians and his American tour], in WILHEIM András (ed.), *Beszélgetések Bartókkal: Interjúk, nyilatkozatok 1911–1945*, Bp., Kijárat, 2000, 204–208.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 207–208.

—Think of mule in zoology. It can be, so to say, sterile to a certain extent, still it can be useful. It can pull burden...<sup>32</sup>

Wilheim explains the difference between the two versions: (1) Bartók himself revised the text published in *Magyar Nemzet*; or (2) the editor of *Magyar Nemzet* shortened the text due to lack of space.<sup>33</sup>

Whatever the truth, these few lines might woefully have affected contemporary readers: first, the word ‘mule’ has a negative connotation in daily use; second, the metaphor of ‘mule’ as a hybrid animal might have unnecessarily provoked readers under the threatening influence of Nazi racial ideology at the time. It is, however, quite important for us that the metaphor of ‘mule’ as a hybrid animal suggests the direct link between the cultural hybridity mentioned in ‘Race Purity of Music’ and Bartók’s own work.<sup>34</sup>

Still, I suppose that Szentjóni well understood Bartók’s implication in this short commentary, which could be why he emphasised it by inserting laughter as a human gesture—this is, indeed, its first appearance in the interview. In the continuation of the interview, Szentjóni argues that the future of East-Central Europe depends upon the tight economic, social, and cultural collaboration of its residents. In the following question, however, he narrows the topic to music and asks what is to be done. Bartók further limits the discussion to folk music research and argues that knowledge of languages is necessary for researchers: not merely English or German; he requires fluency in Serbian, Croatian, Slovakian, and Rumanian.<sup>35</sup>

## 6.

In the following section, we examine the embodiment of this ‘hybridity’ in *Mikrokosmos*. Are there any other compositions besides Bulgarian pieces that suggest the interaction of cultures or can be interpreted as its result? Further, does it have special meaning within *Mikrokosmos* in comparison to his other contemporary masterpieces?

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<sup>32</sup> ‘Most – először – elneveti magát Bartók. – Gondoljon az állatvilágban az öszvérre, bizonyos mértékig úgyszólván steril lehetne így, de hasznos. Terhet híz...’ in Hungarian (*Ibid.*, 205.–author’s translation.)

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 207–208.

<sup>34</sup> The possible reading of Bartók’s ethnomusicological article as a key to understand his compositions is often suggested by Somfai; I mention a single source in which he refers to the article in question, ‘Race Purity in Music’: László SOMFAI, *Mi a magyar Bartók Béla zenéjében? Nacionalizmus, ‘népek testvérré válása’, világzene* [What is Hungarian in Béla Bartók’s music? Nationalism, ‘brotherhood of peoples’, worldmusic] = *Mi a magyar?*, ed. Ignác ROMSICS, Mihály SZEGEDY-MASZÁK, Bp., Habsburg Történelmi Intézet – Rubicon, 2005, 252n.

<sup>35</sup> Miklós SZENTJÓBI, *op. cit.*, 205.

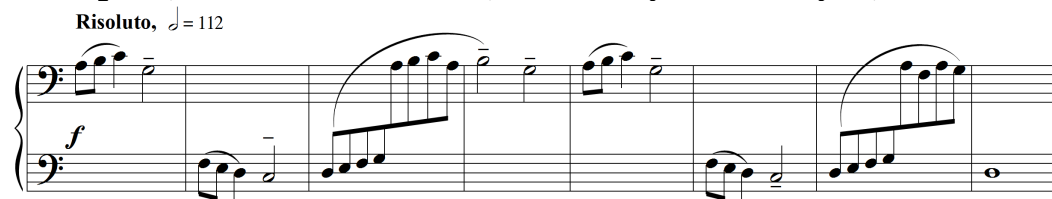
The national identity of musical elements cannot always be unequivocally determined. For instance, certain modal scales or rhythmic structures thought to be characteristic of a certain nation can often be found elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> This does not, however, mean that such elements must be seen as ‘international’ rather than belonging to any specific nation. On the contrary, one of Bartók’s ethnomusicological research purposes was to disclose the origin of these elements, so we can attribute certain elements to certain nations according to what Bartók would have thought. His thoughts can in turn be deduced from his ethnomusicological studies as well as his own folk music collection.

I will confine my examination to two cases to accommodate the limited extent of the present article.

1.) No. 53 ‘In Transylvanian Style’ and No. 52 ‘Unison Divided’

The title of the former reveals a little in itself what was in Bartók’s mind. In Transylvania, various nations lived together (Hungarian, Rumanian, German etc.). According to Bárdos, it is rhythmically and melodically close to Rumanian folk music, an example of which can be found in Bartók’s Bihar collection (Example 1 and 2).<sup>37</sup> The use of *shifting rhythm* in the second part of the piece cannot be mistaken; this phenomenon is characteristic of Rumanian instrumental folk music (Example 3 and 4).<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, the melodic contour at the end of the first section shows a Hungarian character in its downward fourth jump.

**Example 1, *Mikrokosmos* No. 53, ‘In Transylvanian Style’, bars. 1–8.**



**Example 2, *Rumänische Volkslieder aus dem Komitat Bihar*, No. 10.**

<sup>36</sup> For instance, the so-called ‘Bulgarian’ rhythm can be found in wider regions outside of Bulgaria; the more neutral term ‘aksak’ was coined by Constantin Brăiloiu.

<sup>37</sup> Béla BARTÓK, *Rumänische Volkslieder aus dem Komitat Bihar*, hrsg. D. DILLE, Bp., Editio Musica Budapest, 1967 (*Ethnomusikologische Schriften Faksimile-nachdrucke*), 6 etc.; Lajos BÁRDOS, *Bartók-dallamok és a népzene*, Bp., Országos pedagógiai intézet, 1977, 110.

<sup>38</sup> Béla BARTÓK, *Rumanian Folk Music*, ed. Benjamin SUCHOFF, Den Haag, Nijhoff, 1967, I, [665].

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*Parlando, ♩ = 66-70*  
*Poco allegretto*

Vaşcău (Vaskóh).

Cod-ru-le, pă vâr-ful tă - u, Asta-i na-na  
 Aşa-i na-na

Lo - go - jea - na, Mă-ri-u-ţă dela Ram - na.  
 ce t'a - du - nă 'Ster-ne-mi pa-tru-şă dor-mim  
 sau: de la Ramni.

**Example 3, Mikrokosmos No. 53, bars. 17-24.**

*f*

*shifting rhythm*

**Example 4, Rumanian Folk Music, Vol I, [665].**

2.

221(a-e). 3-3|:1-4|:2-2||  
553(1a, 3a, 1b, 3b, 1c)

222(a-c). 2-4|:1-4|:2-2||  
568(1d c b)

223(a-d). 3-4|:2-4|:3-3||  
567(1b a d c), 566(1b a e)

224(a-b). 5-5|:1-5|:1-1||  
554(1b a g), 560(1a), 554(1d b c m l), 597(4a), 554(1 2 a), 560(1b), 554(1 a f k), 544(2), 597(4b)

225(a-c). 4-5|:1-5|:1-3||  
569(1b c a)

226(a-b). 5-5|:1-5|:3-3||  
634(2a), 578(1a), 634(1b, 2a b), 576(2), 578(1 c d), 634(2 c, 1a), 578(1 b)

227(a-c). 4-5|:1-5|:4-4||  
609(1c b), 636(5)

228(a-l). 3-5|:1-5|:5-5||  
564(1c b), 559(4a), 575(2a), 589(1d), 559(4b), 564(1a), 571(1b), 575(2b)

229(a-g). 3-5|:1-5|:5-5||  
543(2a b), 592(4a), 559(5b), 569(1a), 572(1a), 571(1a), 537(1a), 592(13a), 572(1b), 559(5a), 573(1c), 571(1c b), 572(1d), 592(13c), 543(2c), 557(1d), 592(13b), 557(1e), 559(5c), 592(4b e)

230(a-b). 6-6|:2-5|:3-3||  
581(1a b)

231(a-e). 5-6|:3-5|:3-3||  
562(1a), 595(2a b), 562(1b), 595(2c)

232(a-b). 3-5|:3-5|:5-5||  
654(1), 560(2), 547(1)

233(a-e). 3-5|:1-6|:2-2||  
597(4c), 577(1b a c d)

234(a-g). 5-6|:3-6|:4-4||  
576(1a), 560(8b), 582(3a), 576(1b c), 582(3b)

The latter piece, No. 52, can be taken as its companion piece, with a melody played by alternating hands, similar to the beginning of No. 53. Bárdos mentions a Slovakian folksong arranged by Bartók in *Five Village Scenes* (1924).<sup>39</sup> While Bárdos primarily considers the successive thirds, their melodic contour is also similar (Example 5).

**Example 5, a) Mikrokosmos No. 52, ‘Unison Divided’, bars. 1–4;  
b) Village Scenes No. 5, ‘Lads’ Dance’, bars. 27–28  
(transposed and simplified)**

<sup>39</sup> BÁRDOS, *op. cit.*, 104.

a)

Allegro,  $\text{♩} = 112$

b)

Further, the modality in this piece deserves attention. The characteristic raised fourth reminds us of the Lydian scale thought to be widespread in Slovakian folk music (the melodic resemblance further supports this interpretation); however, its seventh degree (F natural instead of F sharp) rather suggests G-acoustic scale, not Lydian.<sup>40</sup> The acoustic scale is, on the other hand, thought to be characteristic to the Bihar region—the same region where the melodies similar to No. 53 were found.<sup>41</sup>

I suppose that this was a conscious decision on Bartók's part. These two pieces, which not only follow each other but also apply a similar technique (to play a melody in alternating hands), refer to the three nations (Hungarian, Rumanian, and Slovak) closest to Bartók. Moreover, Bartók couples Rumania and Slovakia, whose folk music had virtually no previous interaction due to their geographical separation.

## 2.) No. 146 'Ostinato'

The beginning of this piece presents a so-called 'polymodal chromaticism', in which two different modal scales can be observed (Lydian and Dorian) on the same root, D (see Example 6).

### Example 6, a) *Mikrokosmos* No. 146, 'Ostinato', bars. 8–12.

#### b) Extraction of modal scales (absent notes are blackened)

<sup>40</sup> C5 is used instead of C#5; however, that can be explained from the perspective of playability. The piece is to be played without changing hand position; C#5 requires a spanned position of fingers that Bartók does not require in the early volumes.

<sup>41</sup> Ferenc LÁSZLÓ, *Rumänische Stilelemente in Bartóks Musik: Fakten und Deutungen*, *Studia Musicologica Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 36(1995), 413–428.



a)

b)

Although modal scales seem to have no national attributes in and of themselves, a detailed examination reveals their national identity based on the context. In the second section of the composition (bars. 32ff., see Example 7), the *shifting rhythm* of the Lydian melody unambiguously shows its Rumanian character.

**Example 7, *Mikrokosmos* No. 146, bars. 32–36.**

In the following section (bars. 62ff., see Example 8a), we find the Dorian melody consisting of two phrases in regular rhythmic structure. It is worth mentioning the relationship between these two phrases, *fifth shifting*, a characteristic phenomenon widely found in ‘old-style’ Hungarian folksongs, even though it is blurred by melodic inversion.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the melodic contour can also be recognised as Hungarian (see Example 8b).

**Example 8 a) *Mikrokosmos* No. 146, bars. 62–73**

**b) thematic comparison with the folksong used in *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs* No. 9 (transposed)**

<sup>42</sup> BÁRDOS, *op. cit.*, 71.

a)

*p. leggero*

b)

Looking backward, I suppose that the beginning theme can be seen as a hybrid of Rumanian and Hungarian folk music; ‘polymodal chromaticism’ is not only a purely Bartókian compositional concept but also an embodiment of his extra-musical concept, in this case.

## 7.

From a panoramic view, we can see the mosaic of elements inspired by various folk music practices present in *Mikrokosmos* as a whole. Apparently, this is similar to other large-scale works, such as the *Cantata profana* or *Fifth String Quartet*, however, as in *Forty-Four Duos*, *Mikrokosmos* not only represents Bartókian ideology, but also transmits musical elements derived from various nations to children. Herein lie the peculiarity and the significance of *Mikrokosmos*. While his masterworks are suitable for representing Bartókian ideals publicly in concert halls, *Mikrokosmos* is daily bread that children can feed upon. If bias and antipathy come from lack of knowledge, *Mikrokosmos* could serve as a first exposure to elements outside their culture. On the other hand, contrary to *Forty-Four Duos*, by not applying actual folk music as a ready-made material, *Mikrokosmos* can transcend the reality which sometimes confines our imagination. It can bring Slovaks and Rumanians as well as Hungarians and Bulgarians into direct relationship.

This would be Bartók’s answer to the moral crisis of his time, and his guidance for those who are to bear the destiny of human society on their

shoulders. Bartók, however, did not impress his thoughts upon them. Instead, he would have expected them to realise it some day.

### **Afterthought**

In the concluding section, I would like to raise the question of whether *Mikrokosmos*' secret ideology had any influence on the following generation. Should Bartók's beliefs be regarded as unique and exceptional among the circle of composers of that era, or are there 'disciples' of Bartók's who further disseminated their master's thoughts? By 'disciple' I mean someone who learned through Bartók's composition but did not study under him (he did not officially teach composition). Finding such 'disciples' is not a trivial question here, because it will consolidate my thesis.

*Zongora-Ábécé* [*Piano ABC*], a piano method published shortly after World War II (1946), is an excellent subject of investigation for several reasons.<sup>43</sup> First, its chronological proximity to *Mikrokosmos* (only six years had elapsed since its publication) lends itself to comparison; second, it became an official textbook for piano education that was thought to represent official educational policy.

The editor, Erna Czövek, was a piano pedagogue who became one of the most important figures in Hungarian music education reform in 1945. *Zongora-Ábécé* was designed to be a tool for reconstructing the nation after the cataclysm of World War II, in part because she believed that Hungarian folk music could be the nucleus of national unity. This is clearly communicated in the motto on the inner title page: 'The Hungarian language is the mother tongue for Hungarian children: they must first learn music in Hungarian'.<sup>44</sup> She was also clearly influenced by Zoltán Kodály's ideology, as his name appears as one of the three collaborators on the textbook (others are Pál Kadosa and Sándor Veress). While Kodály concentrated on vocal music education, Czövek tried to establish a textbook that could simultaneously satisfy Kodály's ideology and the practical needs of piano teachers.

Thus, Hungarian folk-music arrangements and pieces written in that style dominate the piano method. On this point, the piano method demonstrates that its pedagogical concept is significantly different from Bartók's in *Mikrokosmos*. First, according to his assessment, it is

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<sup>43</sup> *Zongora-Ábécé*, ed. CZÖVEK Erna, Bp., Cselépfalvi, 1946.

<sup>44</sup> 'Magyar gyermeknek magyar az anyanyelve: muzsikálni is magyarul tanuljon először' in Hungarian (author's translation).

impossible to write a systematic piano method by exclusive application of folk-music materials; second, the dominance of Hungarian music seems to be ‘an artificial erection’ of walls which, according to him, may cause stagnation in the development of art music. It is worth mentioning that a few pieces in the second volume of *Mikrokosmos* already make clear references to foreign folk music, such as No. 40 ‘In Yugoslav Style’ and No. 53 ‘In Transylvanian Style’.

However, Pál Kadosa’s pieces deserve a detailed investigation. The style of Kadosa’s pieces is clearly different from the others, since he imitates Bartók’s style in *Mikrokosmos*. His easiest piece brings to mind the first piece of *Mikrokosmos* (Example 9). It seems that his ideal musical mother tongue is Bartók’s music, not Hungarian folk music. Examining the concluding piece of the piano method shows that Bartók’s influence was not strictly confined to the musical language; it also extended into the ideology behind the music.

**Example 9 a) Pál KADOSA, *Zongora-Ábécé* No. 12  
b) BARTÓK, *Mikrokosmos* No. 1**

a)

b)

The last piece (it could even be called the ‘finale’) of *Zongora-Ábécé* is a spirited piece for children (Example 10). While many pieces by other composers could be described as dry, with little to do with musicality, this piece has an exceptionally interesting musical element. In bar 8, the closing measure of a period, suddenly introduces false notes that fall outside of the tonality ( $G\cong$  and  $A\cong$  in G Dorian). Although it is not mentioned whether the piece is an original composition, considering its context, it seems that the piece is an arrangement of a Hungarian folksong (or perhaps a realistic imitation). Even a stylistic analysis shows its Hungarian character in several aspects: rhythmically (choriambus), melodically (descending melody, in minor pentatonic scale), and structurally (four-line structure).

**Example 10, KADOSA, *Zongora-Ábécé* No. 66.**

However, in a later collection of piano pieces (*Fifty-Five Little Piano Pieces*), Kadosa named this piece ‘Román népdal’ [*Rumanian folksong*]. Indeed, the original transcription of this folksong can be found in Bartók’s collection from Maramureş country (Example 11).<sup>45</sup>

**Example 11, *Volksmusik der Rumänen von Maramureş* No. 101.**

This type of folksong testifies to past cultural interaction. As discussed above, that is what Bartók believed to be essential, and attempted to propagate in his writing and a significant part of his oeuvre. Kadosa might have transmitted what he learned from his master but without overtly explaining it. Instead, by following his manner, secretly.

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<sup>45</sup> Béla BARTÓK, *Volksmusik der Rumänen von Maramureş*, hrsg. D. DILLE, Bp., Editio Musica Budapest, 1966 (*Ethnomusikologische Schriften Faksimile-nachdrucke*), 71.