

the Roumanian Census Institute to the effect that nobody in Rumania was feverishly (*avec fièvre*) anxious to see the census results is surprising. We are not feverishly anxious to have them either, but in six years' time something might have been published — fever or not. Another striking sentence in Dr. Manuila's article states that they do not intend to publish the nationality statistics of each village separately, but in aggregate. Well, this will really justify everybody in taking these round numbers with a grain of salt. To obtain a clear notion of the nationality aspects of any district we certainly require the statistics of every village separately, especially in a country like Rumania, containing large territories inhabited by a mixed population. The statistics of the several villages can be controlled, and they alone are of any value to research work. How, for instance, does Dr. Manuila propose to draw a detailed nationality map of Rumania — a thing which would have been necessary long ago — if village statistics are not to be made public? Or are geographers to be deprived utterly of the possibility of using different methods of throwing light from all sides on nationality conditions? Is the nationality map of Rumania to be drawn by the Census Institute itself, and are its statistics to be inaccessible to everybody else?

There is one thing which we do not understand. Now, as before the war, the Rumanians could not be loud enough in asserting that the

figures of the old Hungarian censuses were unreliable. Such an extensive propaganda campaign was launched to make people believe this that many at home and abroad were misled by it. Yet the Hungarian Statistical Office was never afraid to publish the nationality data of each village separately and in every kind of combination. Dr. Manuila, as a statistician, must know that such publication affords to everybody the only serious possibility of control which makes falsification — at least undiscovered falsification — well-nigh impossible.

After this I wonder whether there is anyone who accuses the Hungarian statistics of being unreliable, when the Rumanians could not or would not publish their "better and more reliable" statistics for eighteen years. Even Rumanian scientists are obliged, for lack of better and more particularized data, to use the 25 years old Hungarian statistical sources when they wish to establish the nationality conditions of any district accurately and in detail.

In conclusion may I be allowed to remark that the offensive tone in which the „Revue de Transylvanie" introduces and adds a few closing words to Dr. Manuila's article and in which V. Dima, in the same periodical, criticizes an article of mine on the increase of the population in Transylvania is an unfailing sign of a lack of serious preparedness. When we get a criticism based on earnest argument, we shall take up the latter theme too.

HUNGARIAN FOLK-SONGS

by

Rudolph Boros

Hungarian music, like the Hungarians themselves, was formerly considered something exotic by the peoples of the West. The word exotic is applied to a diversity of things that come from remote regions, to things strange and widely different from the well-known domestic ones, and therefore interesting, often even excitingly interesting. Probably this is the attitude of many towards Spanish or Russian music, for instance — and not without foundation —, but compared with the music of the South and the North, it is justified in a higher degree in connection with that of the East, which bears even more apparent traces of Asiatic origins and influences.

Here we must clear up one or two points. What the West on the whole knows as Hungarian music; what Westerners grew so fond of in the last century; what in its "exotic" charm so often enchants the English and the French, is primarily the so-called "Cigány" (gypsy) music. The term has been much disputed ever since the middle of the past century. It was natural for the Hungarians to feel that the music played by their favourite gypsies, which to all appearances so completely expressed the fulness of their emotions and was so firmly rooted in the hearts of the people, gentry and peasants alike, was peculiarly their own, the offspring of their own hearts.

Great then was their surprise when the most outstanding figure in the Hungarian world of music, Francis Liszt of European fame, came forward with the startling statement that the music played by the gypsies was not a manifestation of the creative art of the Hungarian genius, but was simply the product of gypsy talent. This startling opinion of Liszt's was founded on his observations of Russian, Rumanian, and Spanish gypsies during his tours in those countries. He found a great similarity in their music — the embellishments of the theme, the characteristic, capricious rubatos, and above all the intervals of one and a half tones derived from the Indian scale etc. etc.

With musical science on the level it was on more than three quarters of a century ago, all the heated discussion and wrangling did not lead to a satisfactory solution of the problem. Today we know that gypsy music is an *ad libitum* and very greatly transformed — from certain points of view corrupted — rendering of original Hungarian tunes. By the time — practically only in the first quarter of this century — pure, original folk-songs which the better classes had either never heard, or thought beneath their notice, were brought to light again, were discovered in the literal sense of the word; the educated classes had long since turned away from them. Another reason why those classes were averse to them lay in the circum-

stance that, especially after the Turkish occupation, the population of the towns had taken on a very mixed character owing to the German and Slav elements introduced by the Habsburgs. The music of the old Hungarian songs was simple in construction, severe, and unsentimental, and it was the variations which the gypsy's bow had ornamented with flourishes, tinged with eastern voluptuousness and over-sentimentalized, that alone appealed to the upper classes, coupled with the so-called "uri nóta" — pseudo-Hungarian songs — which for a century back had been springing up like mushrooms among the upper classes.

In these circumstances it was no light task that a tiny group of a few excellent musicians undertook when, armed with phonographs, they set out thirty years ago in search of peasants songs. The songs they were after had been handed down orally from father to son and grandson and sung by the simple illiterate peasantry for centuries, even — as it turned out — for a thousand years. They wandered over hill and vale, through forests and across snow-clad mountains, visiting remote farms and villages in their quest. Two world-tamed Hungarian composers, Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály — then young men — were among the first pioneers. Their work was shared by Professor Ladislav Lajtha. Previous to this, Béla Vikár, an eminent authority on world literature, and a student and translator of Finnish literature, had been engaged in that exhausting and arduous task demanding such a large stock of patience, and later on several young musicians took it up too. Official circles, unfortunately, did not at first recognize the scientific and national significance of their work, and after the catastrophe of Trianon the financial state of the country tied their hands. But even so the fruit of their arduous labours is considerable in quantity and well-nigh inestimable in value. About 8000 old songs have been recorded and saved from oblivion, especially the songs of the Székely (Sicilian) people of Transylvania at present groaning under the Rumanian yoke. Their songs are matchless in their power to enthral, full of the deepest feelings; mournful songs from pristine Asiatic depths, many of them preserved for the stage in Kodály's famous opus, the "Székely Fonó" (Sicilian Spinnery).

The new Hungarian musical art struck root deep down in this fertile soil. A peasant girl's song awoke in young Bartók an interest in the virgin, unadulterated manifestations of folk-psyche, which besides being spontaneous and sincere have a certain primitive peasant force, sometimes even bluntness. As the soul of the Hungarian peasant thus gradually unfolded itself more and more clearly before him and Kodály in all its robustness, they were compelled by degrees to discard the falsely romantic and sentimental picture of the peasant cherished by the previous century and by their own contemporaries. The new, true view of the peasant permeates even Bartók's individual lyrical muse; hardness, wildness, defiance, force and sensuality have become the characteristics of his music. Bartók has discarded the wailing of the mournful violin, the sentimental homage of the troubadour serenading under his lady-love's window, and in his thoroughly modern art naturalism

often makes itself apparent with the mercilessness of a Darwin.

But that the folk-psyche has more than one facet and nuance may be seen when we turn to Kodály. Those who preter lines of a wider curve and more passive elements, grief and reverie, rejoice in his music. Then there are trends which lead us partly back towards the old romantic conceptions and to a certain extent rehabilitate them. There are musical aestheticians who assert that in form and style the Hungarian songs of the upper classes with their accompaniment of gypsy music, even if they are not wholly the offspring of the Hungarian folk-psyche, have so much of it, and are so inseparable from, the Hungarian genius that they must be considered national works, even in their present gypsyfied form, and that not only because they have their roots in folk-melodies.

The tunes of the real folk-songs culled from the lips of the peasantry are — as has been ascertained by comparative musical research — not merely centuries, but actually thousands of years old. This form of peasant art, springing from a virgin soil, knows nothing of the rigid adherence of modern music to major and minor keys. There is enchantment, a mournful solemnity, in these old songs in the Doric, Phrygian, Mixolydic etc. keys which lack the dominant seventh so characteristic of our own, and, principally for this very reason, they make an excitingly majestic, primitively vital impression. More than that; behind these a great number of older tunes, in even more primitive keys of Asiatic origin, are unmistakably recognizable. Such, for instance, amongst others, are songs in the scale of five intervals so characteristic of Chinese music, the typically vibrant majesty and rapturous melancholy of which cannot be expressed in words. The age of these songs may be put at about 1500 to 2000 years, for we cannot attribute to mere chance the striking resemblance between so many of them and the songs of cognate ancient peoples and other races with which the Hungarians came into contact before they took possession of Hungary in 896 A. D. We must see common origins in this fact.

The sources of folk-songs did not dry up during the bygone centuries, or in the more recent ones, but the traces of earlier records have been lost to us, partly owing to the rigid severity of the Church in the past, partly because of the 1500 years of Turkish dominion (in the XVI and XVII centuries) which wrought havoc in everything Hungarian. There were, however, times when the old spring bubbled up with reinforced abundancy in the soul of the folk. Such was, for instance, the time of the "Kuruc" struggles for liberty under Thököly and Francis Rákóczi II during the period of Habsburg religious and national oppression at the turn of the XVII and XVIII centuries.

The few records from the past century we do possess are very meagre, especially where the music is concerned. It is therefore to be understood that Kodály's and Bartók's research work has revealed an entirely new world to the Hungarians themselves and to astonished musical circles in the rest of Europe.

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