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Folk Song as Musical Wet Nurse: The Prehistory of Bartók's For Children

James Parakilas

This study is a case history of a nationalist idea in music: the idea that when a nation's art music was based on its folk music and when that folk music was taught to the children of the nation at an early age, they would grow up performing their national art music as naturally as they spoke their native tongue. Versions of this idea appeared throughout the Western world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; I will be examining its history in Hungary, where it inspired one of the greatest masterpieces of twentieth-century musical pedagogy, Bartók's piano collection *Gyermekeknek [For Children].*[1] This work has become a cornerstone of piano pedagogy not only in places far beyond the reach of Hungarian nationalism but in times and places at which it is hard to imagine how learning the piano could ever have been construed as a nationalist enterprise. One reason to trace the prehistory of *For Children* in pedagogical works by Bartók's Hungarian predecessors, then, is to discover how nationalism, taking forms now virtually unimaginable, affected the development of musical pedagogy as well as of musical composition and ethnomusicology in Bartók's lifetime. At the same time, the study of the remote ideological battles of Bartók's day can provide an instructive framework for the thoughts of musicians today who are debating very different ideological questions, such as that of multicultural education in music.

From Bartók's own account of how he came to compose *For Children* one would hardly guess that there was an ideological issue at stake, or even a local context. Here is that account as he delivered it in the United States in 1940, three decades after the fact:

> Already at the very beginning of my career as a composer I had the idea of writing some easy works for piano students. This idea originated in my experience as a piano teacher; I had always the feeling that the available material, especially for beginners, has no real musical value, with the exception of very few works—for instance, Bach's easiest pieces and Schumann's *Jugendalbum.* I thought these works to be

> insufficient, and so, more than thirty years ago, I myself tried to write some easy piano pieces. At that time the best thing to do would be to use folk tunes. Folk melodies, in general, have great musical value; so, at least the thematical value would be secured . . . I wrote them 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.[2]

Perhaps Bartók was being discreet in not mentioning the Hungarian composers who had contributed works of "no real musical value" to the "available material." But when he says he turned to folk melodies to assure the "thematical value" of his pieces, he fails to acknowledge that he owed the idea of a pedagogical work made up of folk song arrangements to composers of the generation after Schumann, in Hungary and elsewhere, or that this idea had always had a nationalist purpose. Nor does he reveal what kinds of music he thought *For Children* would prepare students to play, though the relation of pedagogical to advanced pieces was a question that had vexed his Hungarian predecessors. Bartók resolved that question in his own way, and the key to his solution lay in his innocent-sounding remark that he wanted to acquaint piano students with "the simple and non-romantic beauties of folk music." To understand how that phrase positioned Bartók in an ideological debate, we have to follow the debate from its beginning.

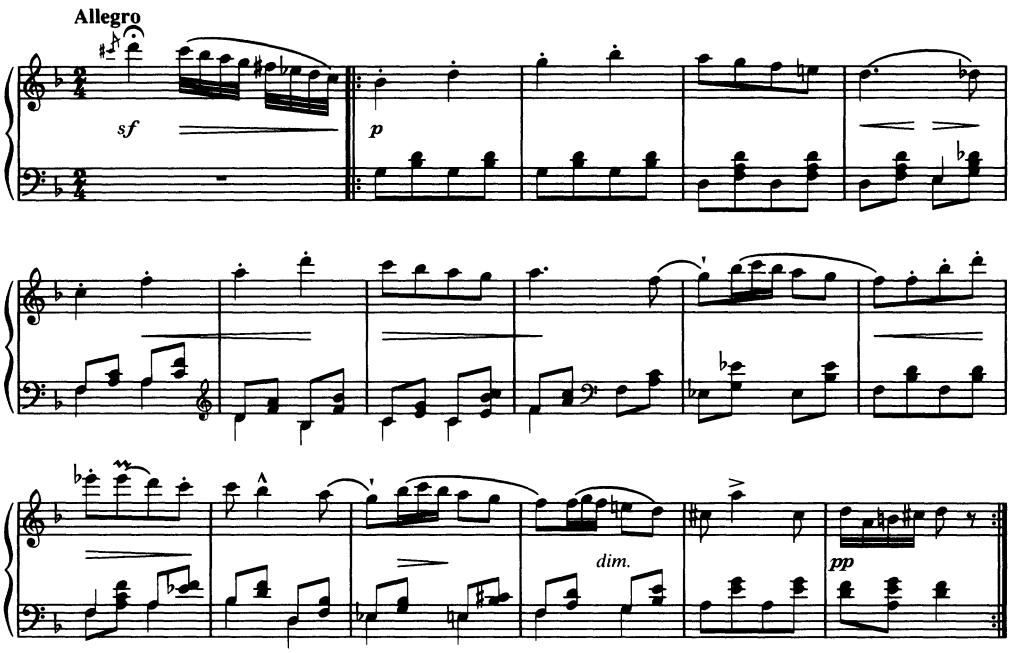
The debate about what music children should learn to play was touched off by one of the "very few works" Bartók himself cites as worthy precedents: Schumann's *Jugendalbum,* or *Album for the Young,* published in 1848. This was one of three works—along with the *Kinderszenen* of 1839 and the set of *Haus- und Lebensregeln*[3] of 1850—in which Schumann challenged the prevailing pedagogical philosophy of his day. If that was a philosophy to train young pianists for the adult task of playing virtuosic music, Schumann's aimed to appeal to them as children by offering them musical images of childhood. Through the pieces of the *Album for the Young* Schumann asserted—evidently to Bartók's satisfaction—that music simple enough to suit the performing abilities and imaginations of children could still be music of great value.

Schumann did not claim to portray an explicitly German experience of childhood or to write exclusively for German children, but in 1848, the year the *Album for the Young* was published, national revolutions failed throughout Europe, including Hungary, and nationalists turned to the task of patiently building national cultural and political

bases. The new political climate allowed non-Germans to interpret Schumann's pedagogical works as German in character, or at least as challenges to their own nationalities. One example of that response was a collection of piano pieces entitled *Magyar gyermekvilág*[4] *[Hungarian Children's World],* published in 1859 by Mihály Mosonyi (1815–1870). According to Mosonyi's biographer, Ferenc Bónis, it was composed "after the example of Schumann's *Kinderszenen.*"[5]

Mosonyi was one of many European musicians who remade themselves as nationalists at the midpoint of the century. At just this moment, in fact, he was changing his name from Michael Brand and abandoning an opera he had written in German in order to begin writing operas in Hungarian. When it came to composing his *Hungarian Children's World,* he could borrow from Schumann the idea of pieces that evoked children's experiences, especially their musical experiences: songs and dances, storytelling and festivals. But when it came to giving those experiences a distinctively Hungarian character, he, like other nationalist Hungarian musicians of his generation, knew only one distinctively Hungarian style, and that was a style difficult to associate with children's music: the rhapsodic *style hongrois* known to urban Hungarians (and to urban Europeans generally) from the playing of Gypsy café bands.[6] In the words of Judit Frigyesi, this music, though performed by Gypsy rather than Magyar musicians, was accepted in nineteenth-century Hungary as "not simply national music, but the original and spontaneous expression of the Hungarian soul."[7]

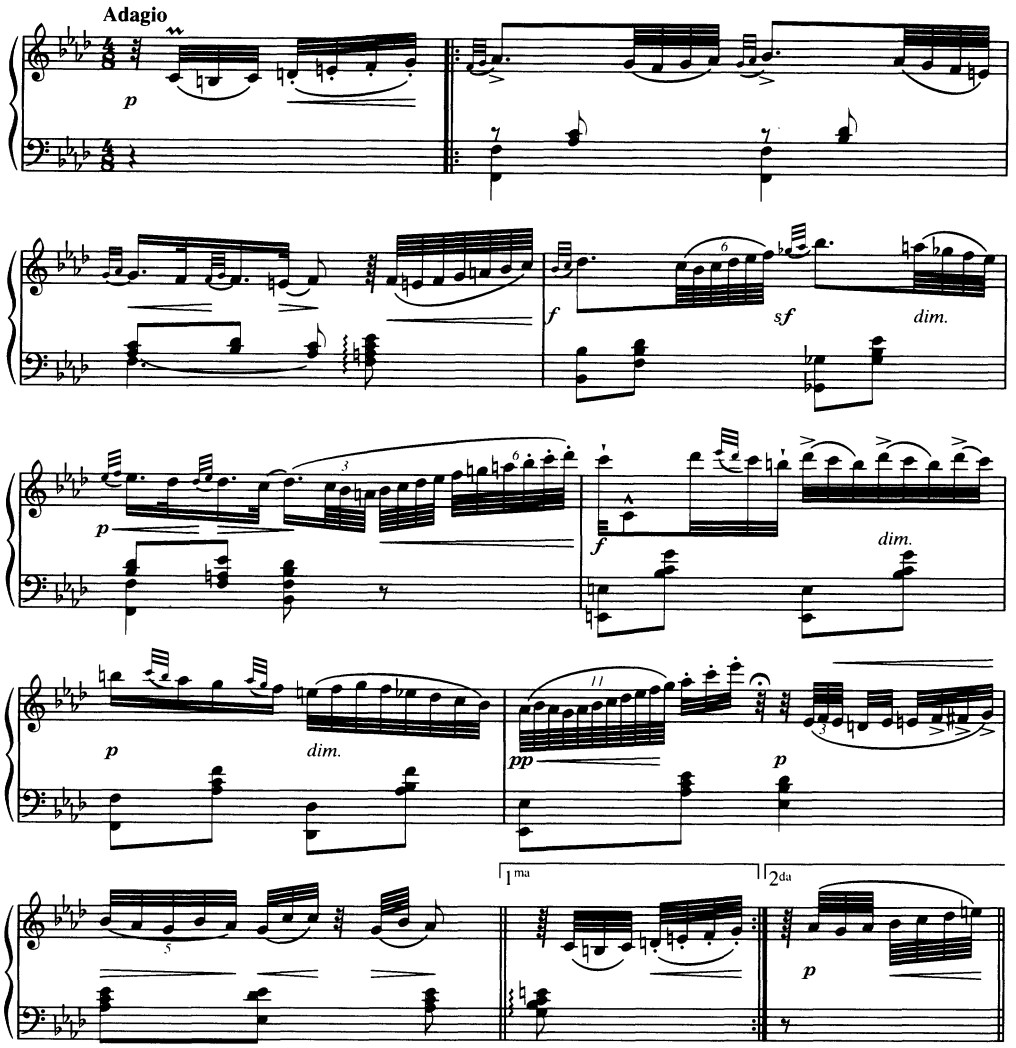
How did Mosonyi evoke a Hungarian children's world if his musical model of childhood was the romantic simplicity of Schumann, while his musical model of Hungary was the complex and virtuosic *style hongrois?* In the opening number of the collection, "Gyermekbáli jelenet" ["Children's Dance Scene"] (see Ex. 1), the two models seem to take turns asserting themselves. The opening gesture of the piece—which is to say, of the whole collection—is an unmistakable marker of the *style hongrois:* a fast, plunging Hungarian "Gypsy" scale, characterized by the interval of the augmented second appearing twice within the octave.[8] But to have continued in this vein would not have evoked childhood and might well have frightened young players away from the collection. After this identifying flourish, then, Mosonyi keeps the "Gypsy" scale and grand gestures of any kind out of the piece. He continues instead with music that is suitably childlike in effect, but—with its triplet turn figures and its reiterated cadence—only palely *hongrois* in style.



Example 1. Mihály Mosonyi, *Hungarian Children's World,* "Children's Dance Scene," mm. 1–17

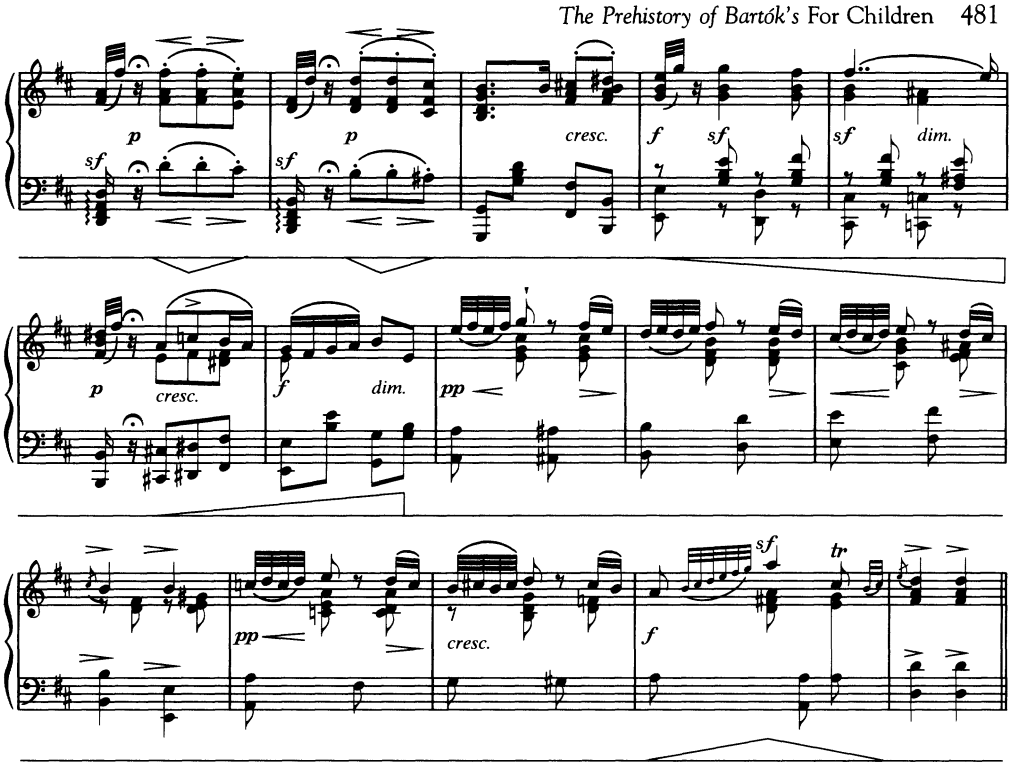
In later pieces in the collection, the *style hongrois* pervades the work, and the spirit of Schumann simply gets lost. Mosonyi may call these pieces "The Little Gypsy" ("A kis cigány") or "The Little Piper" ("Kis furulyás"), but he has not managed to simplify the gestures of the *style hongrois* to match the titles (see Ex. 2). Unintentionally, he demonstrates that the style comes into its own only when it leaves the imaginative world of children and the technical capacities of young players behind.

Mosonyi never came up with a convincing version of the *style hongrois* for beginning players. His chief concern in composing pedagogical works seems to have been to give guidance to classically trained pianists in performing a Hungarian national style of concert music. As in any case of a written concert style derived from an improvisatory style of popular music, the performers would have needed the most guidance in the one element of this style that was hardest to pin down in notation: its characteristic rhythmic flexibility. Mosonyi addressed this problem, in his *Magyar zeneköltemény*[9] *[Hungarian Musical Poem]* for piano (1860), with a form of rhythmic notation he devised (according to a note in the score) "to facilitate the



Example 2. Mosonyi, *Hungarian Children's World,* "The Little Gypsy," mm. 1–8

correct performance of Hungarian music." By placing under the staff a line that rises when the performer should accelerate and falls when the performer should slow down, he indicated the rhythmic fluctuations appropriate to the Hungarian style (see Ex. 3). To Mosonyi, then, Hungarian performance style seems to have meant a set of techniques that could be learned at a fairly advanced stage, not something that needed to be ingrained at an early age, and not something that was accessible only to Hungarians.



Example 3. Mosonyi, *Hungarian Musical Poem,* "Allegretto quasi Andante," mm. 1–15

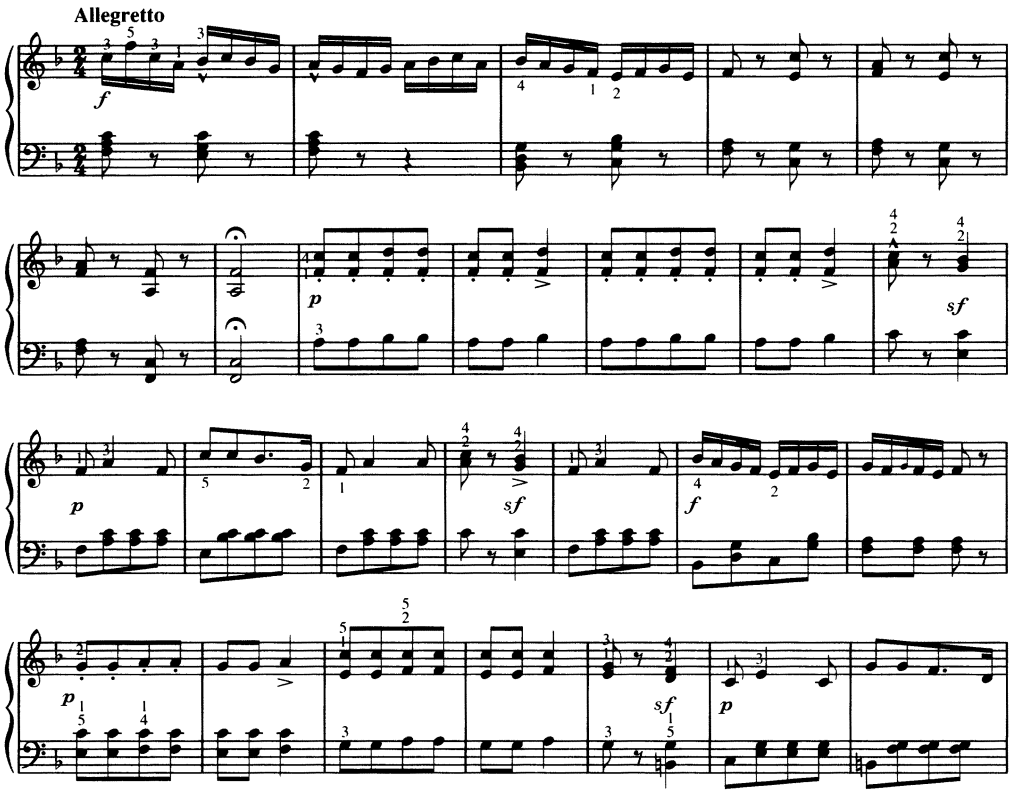
Nevertheless, he recognized a need to teach the style to the young. Here is what he wrote in the preface to his most important collection of piano pieces, *Tanulmányok zongorára*[10] *[Piano Studies for Development in the Performance of Hungarian Music]*, published in 1860:

> These studies of mine already presume a certain technical proficiency; I therefore recommend the following works as preparatory studies for Hungarian music [Here he lists three contemporary works, by István Bartalus, Kornél Ábrányi, and Imre Székely.[11]] One would wish that transcribed Hungarian songs of this latter sort were more abundant, since Hungarian songs have unfortunately been transcribed only by virtuosos for virtuosos, and students are regularly tortured with these transcriptions by their relatives and even by the unwise choice of their teachers.

The three works that Mosonyi recommended do not in fact form a satisfactory preparation for his *Piano Studies,* Ábrányi's transcriptions because they are no simpler than Mosonyi's own pieces and the other two because, though they are much simpler, they bear very little stylistic relation to Mosonyi's studies. One of those two works, however,

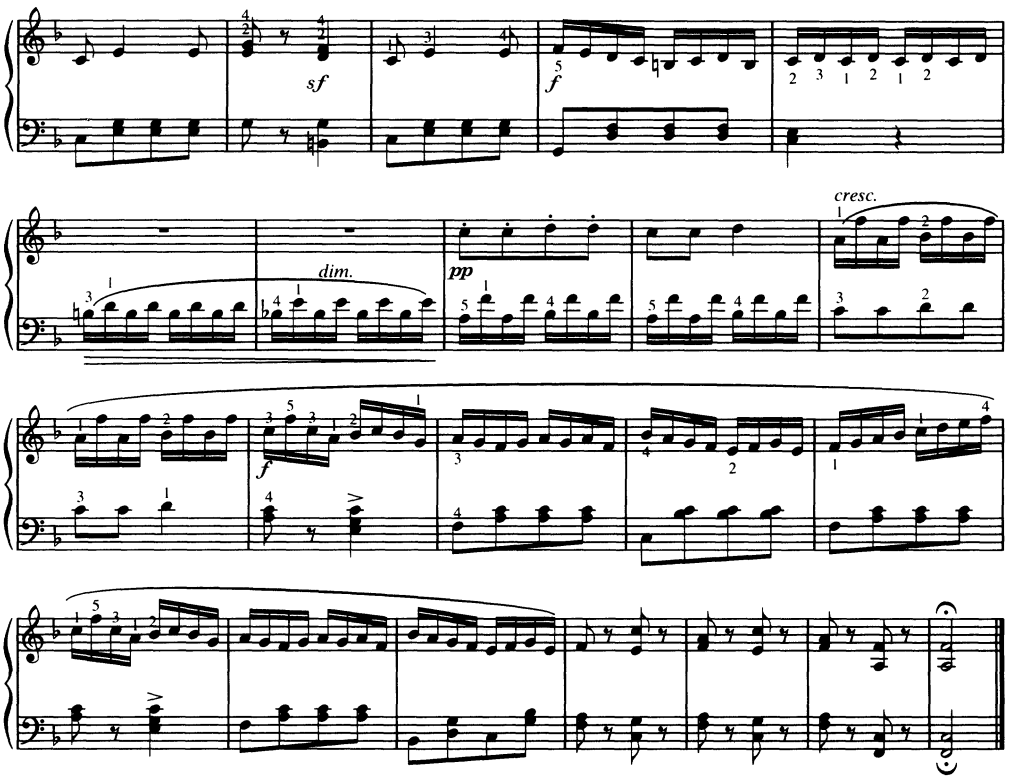
merits examination here because, far more than any of Mosonyi's pedagogical works, it anticipates the concept of Bartók's *For Children.* This work is *Gyermek lant [Children's Lyre, for Students of the Piano, (Transcribed) from Hungarian Folk Songs],* published in 1860 by István Bartalus (1821–1899).[12] It is a collection of six little arrangements of Hungarian folk songs for beginning piano students, an early work by the scholar who would later compile the largest nineteenth-century collection of Hungarian folk songs.[13] The pieces in *Children's Lyre* share a few traits of melodic detail, to be sure, with Mosonyi's *Piano Studies,* including reverse dotted rhythms and cadences with chains of appoggiaturas. But in most respects they demonstrate the vast stylistic difference—unacknowledged by Mosonyi—between the folk songs of Hungarian peasants and music in the *style hongrois.* Not only do the Bartalus folk song arrangements lack rhapsodic embellishment, as might be expected in music chosen and arranged for beginners, but they are utterly different in melodic form from even the simplest of Mosonyi's pieces, as a comparison of a number from *Children's Lyre* (Ex. 4) to the opening number of Mosonyi's *Hungarian Children's World* (Ex. 1) will show. The folk song melody (beginning in the eighth measure of Ex. 4) starts with the most confined movement possible and never leaps or stretches like the Mosonyi. It is a strophically repeating melody, while the Mosonyi unfolds in new sections. The folk song melody stays within its scale (though Bartalus transposes it down a fourth at its first repetition), while Mosonyi's modulates restlessly. And the song uses none of the most arresting features of the *style hongrois,* like the so-called Gypsy scale with augmented seconds. In fact, though augmented seconds were *not* a feature of Hungarian folk song, Bartalus would later introduce them into his folk song arrangements, presumably as a way of making Hungarian folk songs sound more "Hungarian"; for that he earned Bartók's bitterest scorn.[14] But he does not do so here.

All six pieces in *Children's Lyre* are equally unassuming. But if we take the music together with the preface Bartalus wrote to the set, it is clear that they represent a far greater revolution ideologically than anything written by Mosonyi. Bartalus writes in the opening of that preface, "Because the chief task of music is the ennoblement of the spirit, the teacher needs to begin the development of the spirit as soon as possible. There are things that a child learns more easily from his wet nurse than later from his learned master, such as the correct accent of his mother-tongue and, likewise, the interpretation of our national music in Magyar spirit."



Example 4. István Bartalus, *Children's Lyre,* "Piros rózsa ibolya," complete

To understand what is revolutionary in this language, one has only to compare it to the ways musicians wrote about national style a century earlier. In the mid-eighteenth century, a national style meant a set of musical conventions, not a matter of spirit. It was something to be learned not from one's musical wet nurse, but only after one had mastered the basics of musicianship, technique, and good taste, and at that point one could learn to play in a variety of national styles, not just one's own. Johann Joachim Quantz, for instance, in his *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (1752), advised flute players that "you must know the French manner before you venture upon the Italian" and even suggested that the best style would be "a style blended and mixed together from the good elements of both."[15] These national styles, of course, owed virtually nothing to folk music. But as early as the late eighteenth century the concept of national



Example 4. continued

style, at least in literature, was developing a new meaning—as a birthright, a subconscious attribute of nationality—in Herder's proclamation that folk song texts were the embodiments of a nation's character. By the mid-nineteenth century musicians were making the same claim for folk song melodies. Schumann, in his *Haus- und Lebensregeln* of 1850, advised young musicians, "Listen attentively to all folk songs. These are mines of the most beautiful melodies and will teach you the characteristics of the different nations."[16] But actually giving children folk song arrangements to play at the piano was another matter. "National airs" of various nations had sometimes appeared together in pedagogical piano works, such as Dusík's twelve *Leçons progressives*[17] (1794), but it is questionable whether many of these melodies can be considered folk songs, and in any case a sampler of various national styles is hardly designed to teach any one of those styles in a serious way. Even Schumann's *Album for the Young,* the

work that his *Haus- und Lebensregeln* accompanied, is filled with pieces in "folk tone" rather than actual folk songs.

But immediately after the publication of the *Album for the Young*—and the revolutions of 1848—folk song arrangements suddenly assumed prominence in pedagogical materials for piano. In 1852 the prolific German pedagogue Louis Köhler (1820–1886), whose output would achieve a commanding position in the late-nineteenth-century market, published his *Volksmelodieen aller Nationen der Erde*[18] *[Folk Melodies of All the Nations of the World, as Exercise Pieces for the Piano].* From the Herderian title of this work (as well as the printing of the title page in German, French, and English), it seems as if there is no narrow nationalism underlying the work. The preface likewise anticipates Bartók's ideology-shunning rhetoric about *For Children* rather than Bartalus's chauvinist rhetoric in *Children's Lyre*: "Music containing real melody and breathing forth a native simplicity of heart and manners can alone have a good influence on beginners and especially on the feelings of children. For these qualities no kind of music is equal to that of national songs." But from the layout of the songs themselves—certainly as compared to the layout of Herder's *Volkslieder*—a distinctly nationalist picture emerges: the first of the six graded volumes consists entirely of German-language folk songs, with non-German songs appearing only little by little in the subsequent volumes, until by the sixth volume they finally outnumber the German ones. In the end, Köhler teaches a Germany-First kind of internationalism: his piano students (who were evidently meant to include non-Germans) first learn German folk song and then apprehend the folk song of other nations by comparison to that norm.

Bartalus, because his music lacked the cultural power of German music and his publishers lacked the marketing power of German publishers, could not hold up Hungarian folk music as an international norm. But he did adopt Köhler's idea of beginning a child's piano training with the folk music of a single nation. In the preface to *Children's Lyre,* however, he asserts more explicitly than Köhler that a nation's folk music defines a national style, and more exclusively than either Köhler or Mosonyi that a national style belongs to the musicians of that nation. By comparing national style in music to native accent in language, he implies that only Hungarian musicians can perform "in Magyar spirit" (and then only if they are trained in their national music from the earliest age[19]); foreigners, even if they study with a "learned master," will always, presumably, perform that music with a foreign accent. Bartalus was evidently one of the first musicians

in history to define musical pedagogy as the training of a nation's musicians to perform their national music.

But exactly what Bartalus had in mind when he spoke of "our national music" is not so clear. He may have meant both simple folk songs, such as those he arranged in *Children's Lyre,* and the *style hongrois,* as found in Mosonyi's *Piano Studies* or Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies. But these are two repertories, derived from different sources, with distinct styles, rather than simple and complex versions of a single style. How would learning one style prepare a student to perform the other? Would the "Magyar spirit" somehow overcome the differences? Perhaps what Frigyesi calls the nineteenth-century Hungarian nationalists' "grandiose theory of unified national music"[20] prevented Bartalus from even acknowledging this discrepancy, any more than Mosonyi did. In any case Bartalus does not write as if the simple folk song arrangements of *Children's Lyre* are to be considered stepping stones to a more virtuosic style; rather, he suggests that folk songs learned at an early age, like a native accent in speech, would represent perfect embodiments of the "Magyar spirit" in themselves.

Nor is it easy to say exactly how Bartalus imagined the "Magyar spirit" would be cultivated in a student's playing. The rhythmic flexibility that Mosonyi wanted students to use in performing his virtuosic Hungarian pieces would be out of place in playing the simple songs of *Children's Lyre.* But if Bartalus's idea was that students should learn to play those songs with a "native accent," the obvious way for them to begin would have been by singing the songs, and he did not supply the words. In fact, the preface to *Children's Lyre* is printed in both Hungarian and German, reflecting the fact that some of the Hungarian students for whom Bartalus intended the collection spoke German rather than Hungarian. He seems to have had faith that the "Magyar spirit" could be communicated entirely by the pitches and rhythms of a few very simple melodies.

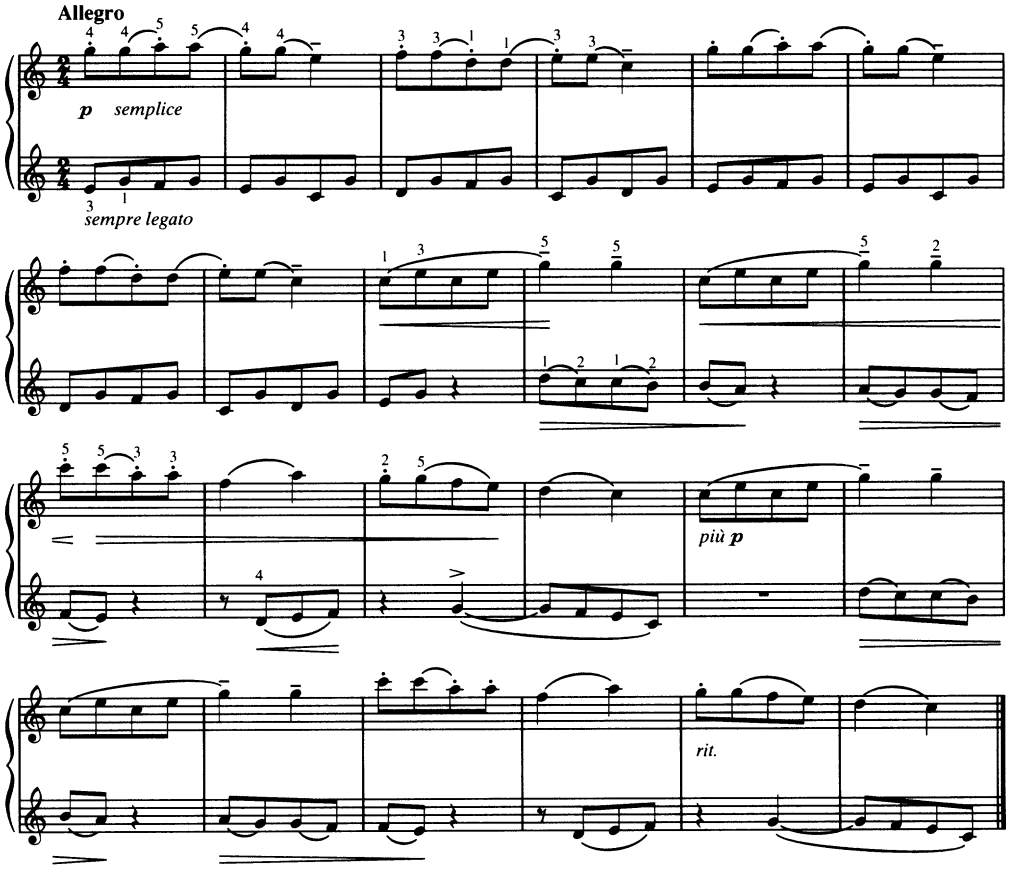
Half a century later, when Bartók entered the pedagogical fray with *For Children,* Hungarian musicians had made no progress toward reconciling the styles of their folk music and their art music. In fact, the scholars who collected and studied Hungarian folk music—Bartók among them—were making it clearer all the time how deeply that music differed from the Gypsy café music and its art-music spinoffs.[21] *For Children* represented the first decisively new step in Hungarian musical pedagogy since Mosonyi and Bartalus, and though that work embodies Bartók's thorough rethinking of the questions of nationalism and music, the essential similarities between *For Children* and *Chil-*

dren's Lyre show how much of those predecessors' thought he still took for granted.

The most obvious of these similarities is in the conception: like Bartalus, if on a much larger scale, Bartók fashioned a national collection of folk song arrangements as a method for beginning piano students. Actually, his is two national collections rather than one: the first half of the set is based on Hungarian folk songs, the second on Slovak ones. But that is a far different matter from a mixed collection like Köhler's. Bartók was creating separate national collections of folk song arrangements for piano students of two nationalities—neighboring nationalities within what at the time of publication (1909–11) was the "Hungarian" half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[22]

A second similarity between *Children's Lyre* and *For Children* is that both collections enshrine folk song at its simplest. In the Hungarian part of *For Children,* the first, easiest pieces are in fact based on the melodies of children's game-songs, eleven of which Bartók drew from the magnificent *Collection of Hungarian Children's Game-Songs*[23] (1891), by Áron Kiss (1845–1908). But even toward the end of both parts, where Bartók takes the student to a much higher level of difficulty than Bartalus reaches in *Children's Lyre,* the increasing difficulty comes more from the nature of Bartók's arrangements than from that of the melodies themselves, just about all of which are still extremely plain. And this in spite of the fact that by the time he wrote *For Children,* Bartók had himself transcribed some highly embellished folk music in Hungarian and Slovak villages. Clearly, though he understood the stylistic range of folk music and even the folk practice of performing the same tune either simply or elaborately, he had embraced the faith of predecessors like Bartalus and Kiss that the simplest folk songs embodied the nation's true musical spirit, and the faith of Bartalus in particular that those songs could act as a national wet nurse, teaching students their musical native tongue.

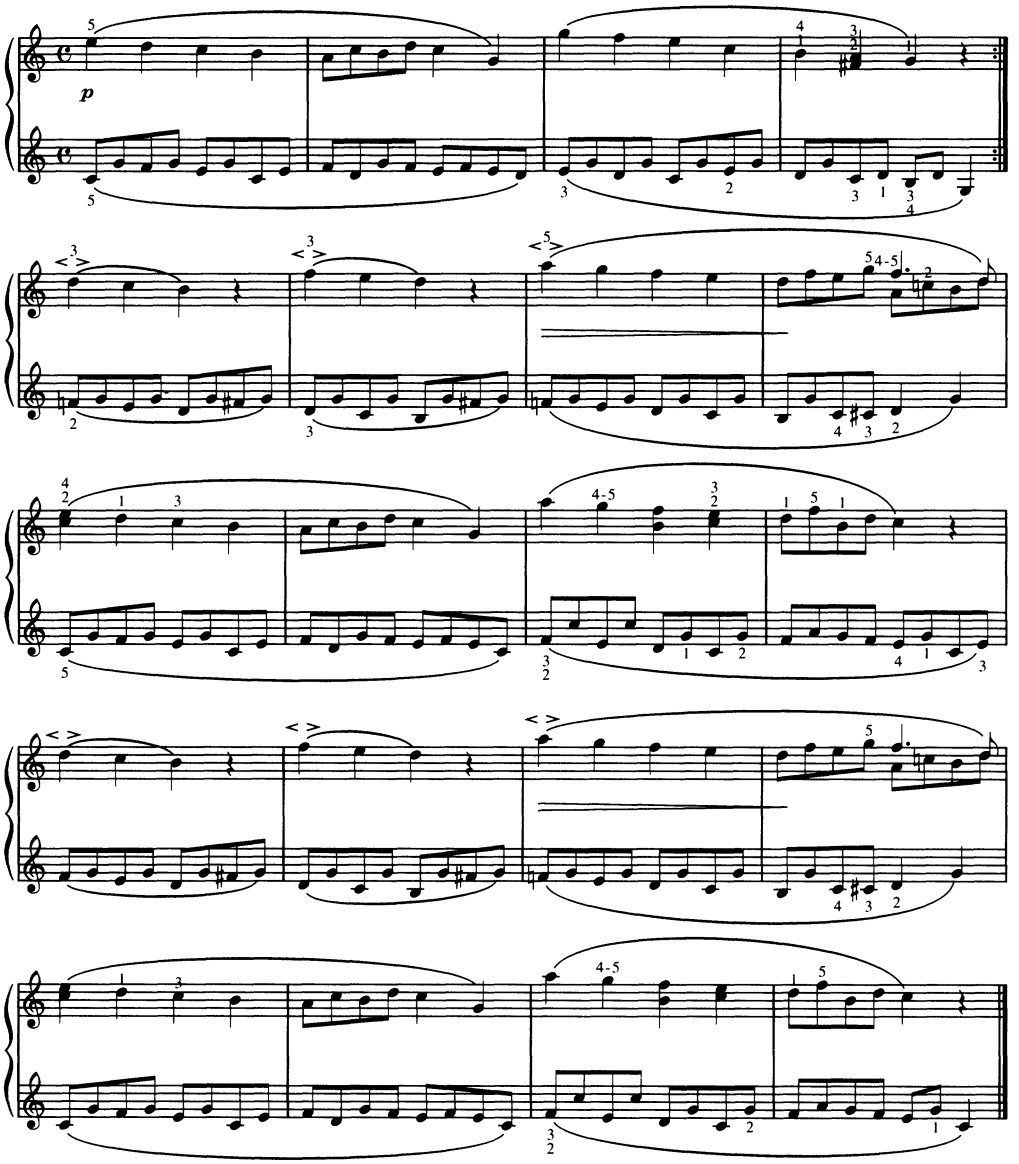
But Bartók also differed utterly from Bartalus in his ideas about the simplicity of folk music. In his description of *For Children* in 1940, he wrote that "some [of the melodies have] even an almost international character."[24] What he meant by "international character" can perhaps be gleaned from an examination of the very first number in *For Children* (see Ex. 5). Though this folk melody and the one from the Bartalus collection examined above (Ex. 4) have similarities—both open with the same seesaw motive—they differ in that the one arranged by Bartók lacks any markers of "Hungarianness," such as reverse-dotted rhythms. In fact, this melody could as easily be western



Example 5. Béla Bartók, *For Children,* vol. 1, no. 1, complete

European as eastern European. Bartók seems even to have followed one of his favorite international models in his arrangement: not only does his left-hand figuration remind us of the first number of Schumann's *Album for the Young,* "Melody," but he has also changed the Hungarian melody, adding a repetition of its longer second phrase, so that it agrees in structure with that of Schumann's melody (see Ex. 6).[25] Not all melodies in *For Children* have such an "international character," but Bartók seems to be asserting, in this opening number of the set, that a folk song of "international character" can be as Hungarian as one with distinctively Hungarian characteristics. He rejected the idea, dear to both Mosonyi and Bartalus, that a set of Hungarian style features constitutes Hungarianness in music.

Beyond that, he rejected the connection that Mosonyi and Bartalus yearned for between Hungarian folk music and the *style hongrois.*



Example 6. Robert Schumann, *Album for the Young,* no. 1 ("Melodie"), complete

Bartók did not make this explicit in the original publication of *For Children,* but in his account three decades later (quoted at the beginning of this study), he says that he "wrote them in order to acquaint the piano-studying children with the simple and non-romantic beauties of folk music." The phrase "simple and non-romantic beauties" is significant because throughout his career he defined folk song in terms

of simplicity—in one instance calling it "the classical model of how to express an idea musically in the most concise form, with the greatest simplicity of means"[26]—while he described the *style hongrois*, as played by Gypsy bands or as adapted into art music, in exactly opposite terms: "its shortcomings were a certain trend toward commonplace style, an exaggeration in sentiment, and, in a certain sense, a tendency toward overcomplication."[27] In other words, while Mosonyi and Bartalus wanted folk music to lead students to the *style hongrois*, Bartók wanted an appreciation of true folk music to awaken them to the defects of the *style hongrois*.

In effect, Bartók was rejecting the idea that either a nation's folk music or its art music should be identified by a set of style characteristics—the idea that had inspired both Mosonyi and Bartalus (in his later folk song arrangements) to introduce"Gypsy" augmented seconds into pieces to make them sound more "Hungarian." At the same time he was rejecting Mosonyi's idea that performers could be taught a set of style characteristics for performing a national music.

Does it make sense, then, to consider *For Children* to be a nationalist work at all, let alone the fulfillment of a dream that Mosonyi and Bartalus had tried and failed to fulfill, the dream of Hungarian folk song arrangements that would provide the best preparation for the performance of Hungarian art music? I believe that the work can be said to be both things, allowing that Bartók conceived of the issues very differently from his predecessors.

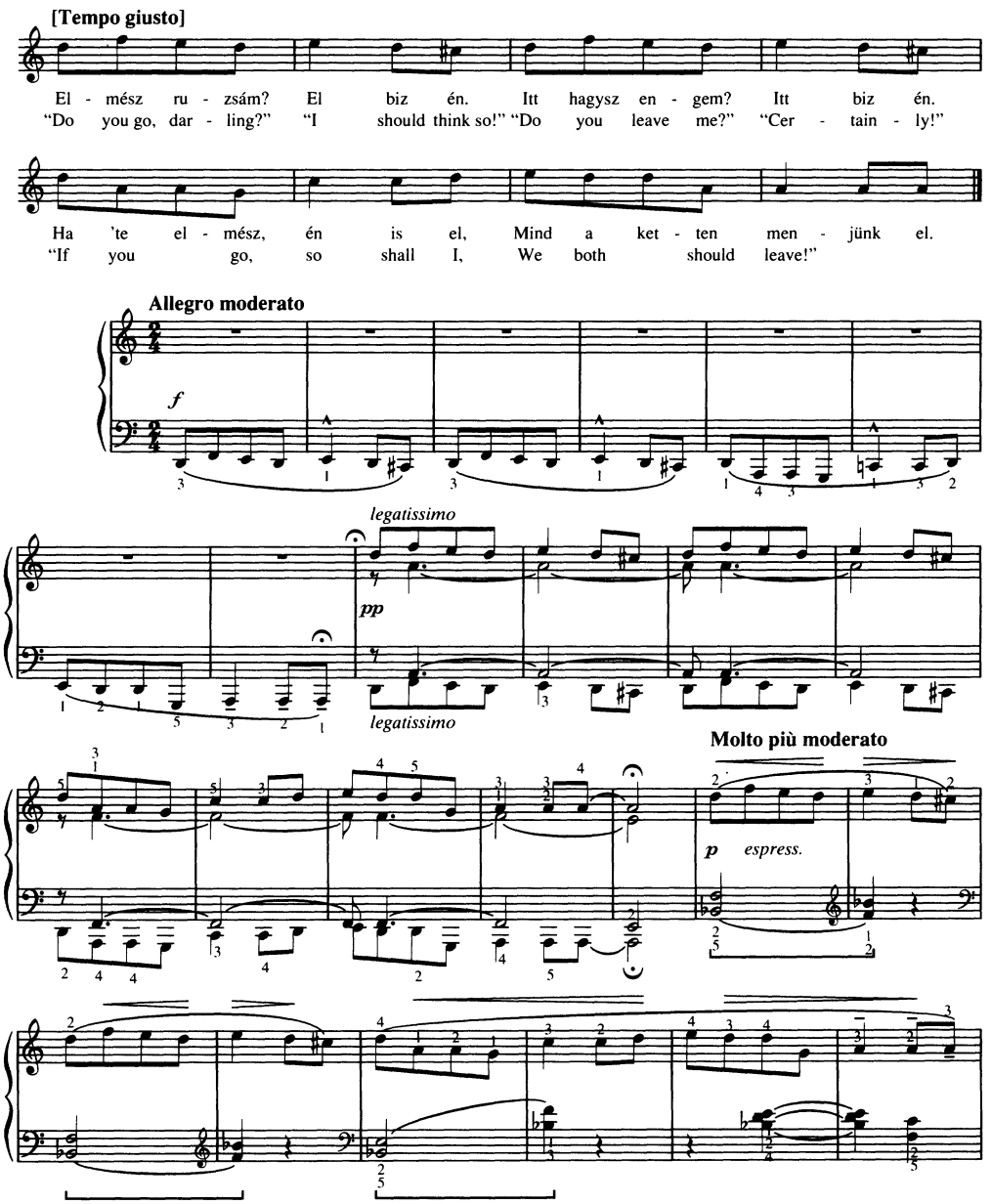
It is nationalist, first of all, in that it collects and converts village songs into national folk song repertories. Bartók himself recognized the nationalist impulse behind folk song research,[28] and in both the Hungarian and the Slovak parts of *For Children* he went to great lengths to bring together songs of different social functions and musical types, collected from various regions by himself and others, to form within the framework of a pedagogical method a comprehensive monument of the nation's folk songs. Furthermore, he undertook to teach these songs to Hungarian and Slovak children as national songs, not just as piano pieces. Unlike Bartalus, Bartók printed the words of both the Hungarian and the Slovak songs (at least one verse and sometimes more) at the back of each volume of *For Children*, so that piano students could learn to sing the songs as they learned to play them.[29]

For those who learn the words, even Bartók's arrangements participate in the project of teaching the songs, since—though this has not been much recognized—Bartók derived the nature of these arrangements from the texts of the songs. In some instances the

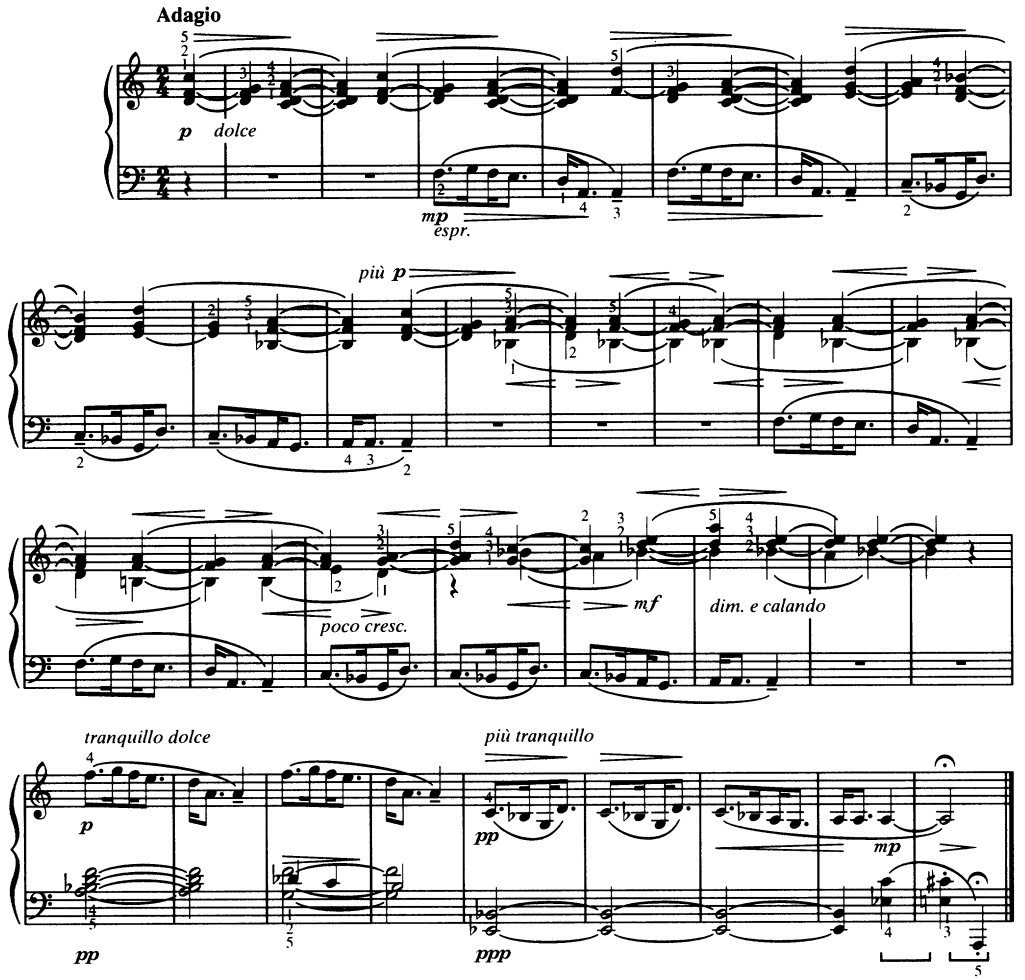
arrangement creates a little character piece by imparting a mood appropriate to the song text as a whole: a raucous setting for the drinking song "Ten Liters Are Inside Me,"[30] poignant settings for three songs sung by parents giving their children away to be married.[31] He even makes a musical cycle out of three songs dealing with death and heartache, marking the three to be played without a break.[32] In the case of a narrative song, he dramatizes the tragic story with stark changes of setting for each new stanza of the melody,[33] while in the case of a song with a dialogue text[34] he moves the melody back and forth between bass and soprano ranges to suggest the voices of the lovers (see Ex. 7). In general, by taking an idea from the words of each song, Bartók has given these pieces a depth of characterization and artfulness of form hardly to be expected in beginning piano pieces; within a modest range they connect national folk song arrangement to national art music by being both at once.[35]

Bartók's nationalism allowed room, in both the Hungarian and the Slovak parts of the collection, for folk songs of the most diverse musical natures in appropriately diverse piano arrangements. This diversity is in a sense his response to those in the tradition of Mosonyi and Bartalus who believed that one set of style characteristics defined the nation's folk music. In the first melody of the Hungarian volume (see Ex. 5) we have already come upon an example of what Bartók called "international character." Elsewhere are melodies that fit the description Bartók later gave of eastern European folk music: it "avoids allusions to the dominant triad in its melodic structure, thereby allowing in its harmonization a much more extended liberty."[36] In setting a melody of that type in the Slovak part of *For Children* (vol. 4, no. 38), he demonstrates just such an "extended liberty," employing chords that are seldom triads to create harmonic progressions without dominant-tonic relationships (see Ex. 8). But just before this song in the collection Bartók placed one (vol. 4, no. 37) that, perhaps because it was a folk adaptation of a popular recent art song,[37] provided him with plenty of opportunities for tonic-dominant chordal relationships (see Ex. 9).

Whereas the nationalism of Mosonyi and Bartalus required a single national music, unified in style, Bartók defined a nation's folk music by its stylistic variety, cherishing the possibilities that that variety suggested for the creation of a national art music. And whereas Bartalus in particular insisted on the exclusively Hungarian nature of Hungarian music, Bartók embraced the "crossing and recrossing" of ethnic borders that he felt gave Hungarian folk music its vitality.[38] For both stands Bartók was accused, during his lifetime,



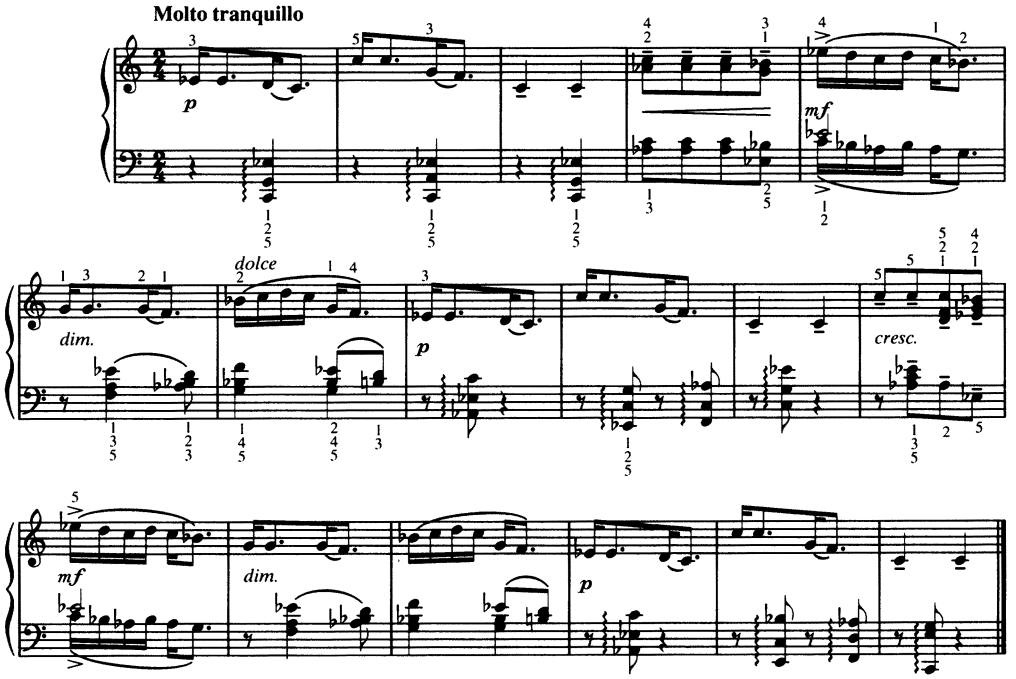
Example 7. "Elmész ruzsám?" (Hungarian folk song), transcription by Bartók; followed by his arrangement of it in *For Children,* vol. 2, no. 41, mm. 1–25



Example 8. Bartók, *For Children,* vol. 4, no. 38 complete

of undermining the basic tenets of his country's musical nationalism, with the accusers still defining that nationalism more or less as Mosonyi and Bartalus had.[39] But he himself insisted that his more open spirit—open to the cultural importance of the long-despised peasant stratum of Hungarian society as well as to the musical influences of foreign cultures—was nonetheless nationalist in its own terms, as when he declared the Rákóczi March, for all its heterogeneous origins and elements, "incontestably Hungarian."[40]

That still leaves the question of how Bartók's folk song arrangements for beginning piano students would prepare Hungarian or



Example 9. Bartók, *For Children,* vol. 4, no. 37, complete

Slovak children to perform a fully developed national music. To answer that, we have to look beyond *For Children.* It is through the unity of Bartók's work as an ethnomusicologist, a pedagogue, and a composer of art music that he was able to forge, at least in his own work, the link between the easiest pedagogical pieces and the most virtuosic concert works that had eluded the earlier generation of Hungarian composers. The key was to base compositions at every level of difficulty on the "simple and non-romantic beauties of folk music."

Whenever folk melodies were employed in art music, the simplicity of the melodies became, for Bartók, not only a virtue in itself but a spur to compositional originality: "the simpler the melody the more complex and strange may be the harmonization and accompaniment that go well with it."[41] But because all his arrangements, from the simplest to the most complex, are connected by the same respect for the "simple and non-romantic beauties" of the melodies, his pedagogical folk song arrangements do in fact make the best possible preparation for the performance of his virtuosic *Improvisations,* op. 20, for piano, the work where he reached, in his own words, "the extreme

limit in adding most daring accompaniments to simple folk tunes."[42] And even in the score of this concert work Bartók printed the words of the original folk songs, as if to say, in response to Mosonyi, that the only special performance style needed for this national music was to know the melodies as songs.

But a national music need not be limited to folk song arrangements; it can include music in which, as Bartók wrote in 1931, "neither peasant melodies nor imitations of peasant melodies can be found," but which is nevertheless "pervaded by the atmosphere of peasant music," his example being Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus*. In order to write such music, he says, a composer "masters [the idiom of peasant music] as completely as a poet masters his mother tongue."[43] It is wonderfully fitting that he draws here on the same mother-tongue metaphor that Bartalus used long before. Fitting because Bartók in this passage is completing what is for all intents and purposes an answer to Bartalus: an account of how musicians, when they are educated in their national folk music, can create a national musical language. The real difference between the two accounts is that Bartalus relies on a racially defined national spirit to overcome a discrepancy between two national musical styles, while Bartók relies on a single musical experience—a deep training in the nation's folk music—to breathe a common musical spirit into all kinds of music making, performance as well as composition.

Bartók proved that his was the more efficacious solution through his complementary work in ethnomusicology, pedagogy, and composition. But how many musicians today take the interest he took in the formation of a national music or understand folk music as he did? Folk music may keep its role as musical wet nurse in the classrooms and music studios of the world, but appreciation of folk music for its "simple and non-romantic beauties" no longer seems to extend far beyond those rooms. Ethnomusicologists, composers, and performers all increasingly prize other qualities in folk music and in fact are increasingly interested in the one kind of "folk music" that Bartók's nationalism excluded: commercial transformations of traditional music, the descendants, in effect, of the café music of the Hungarian Gypsy bands. New ideologies are evidently at work, especially multicultural ideologies, which put a premium on music that manifests the complexities of exchange between one culture and another and between past and present.

But however great the ideological differences may be between late-nineteenth-century nationalism and late-twentieth-century

multiculturalism, the urge to teach music multiculturally provides the most compelling reason today to reexamine the pedagogical works of nationalists like Bartók and his predecessors, for their debates raise the most important questions that need to be addressed in multicultural education. The linguistic and wet-nurse metaphors of Bartalus, for instance, can help clarify the aims of those who are interested in teaching students to perform the musics of more than one culture. Do they want their students to be able to perform each kind of music "authentically," like "native speakers"? If so, do their students need to begin learning several musical traditions from the earliest age, so that no one tradition becomes more "native" to them than any other? But perhaps the ideal of musical authenticity, so valued by nineteenth-century nationalists, is now tainted as a component of nationalism and racism; or perhaps the aim of multicultural music teaching is rather to promote awareness of differences between one's own music and that of others; or perhaps it is the nature of multiculturalism to promote adaptability more than authenticity in music, to place more value on the combining of old styles to create new ones than on the perpetuation of any style in its traditional form. In any of these cases, Quantz might make a better patron saint of musical multiculturalism than Bartalus.

Likewise, if the aim of multiculturalism in music is to enable students to reproduce or even recognize a variety of musical styles, teachers will be drawn to Mosonyi's model of a musical language as a style system capable of being transferred from one medium to another, whereas if the idea is to use music as a tool for teaching about different cultures, they will be more attracted to Bartók's model of music as a cultural spirit capable of expressing itself in different styles. Each aim, each model dictates a different pedagogical approach and may even require starting at a different age.

Determining the right aims and methods for a multicultural program in music may seem dauntingly difficult, but it was no less difficult for Mosonyi and Bartalus and Bartók to work out their nationalist programs. If we disregard the difficulty they faced, we can easily find their pedagogical work—even Bartók's—naive. But it will help us face our own pedagogical difficulties, as well as do justice to theirs, if instead of asking whether *For Children* provides a perfect solution to pedagogical problems, we consider it as an inspired argument within an exemplary debate.

Notes

I read a version of this article at the International Conference on Nineteenth-Century Music, University of Surrey, on 15 July 1994. I am grateful to Róbert Murányi at the Széchény National Library, Budapest, for his assistance in locating materials; to Katalin Komlós of the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest, for information and translations; and to Jonathan Bellman of the University of Northern Colorado and László Vikárius of the Bartók Archívum, Budapest, for corrections and stimulating comments.

1. The editions of *For Children* relied on here are the original edition (Budapest: Károly Rozsnyai, 1909–11) and the critical edition by Benjamin Suchoff in *Piano Music of Béla Bartók*, ser. 2 (New York: Dover, 1981).

2. Bartók, "Contemporary Music in Piano Teaching" (1940), in *Béla Bartók Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992; original ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 426–27.

3. Schumann wrote the *Haus- und Lebensregeln*, or *Household Rules and Maxims*, as an "instructive appendix" to the second edition of the *Jugendalbum*.

4. Mihály Mosonyi, *Magyar gyermekvilág: 12 életkép zongorára szerzé és a magyar fiatalságnak ajánlja* (Pest: Rózsavölgyi, 1859). Mosonyi's piano works have been recorded by István Kassai and Klára Körmendi and issued in three volumes (Marco Polo 8.223557/8/9). Of the works mentioned here, *Hungarian Children's World* and the *Piano Studies* are found in vol. 1 and *Hungarian Musical Poem* in vol. 3.

5. Ferenc Bónis, "Mosonyi, Mihály" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 12, p. 613.

6. For a comprehensive survey of the elements of this musical style, see the chapter titled "A Lexicon for the *Style Hongrois*" in Jonathan Bellman, *The "Style Hongrois" in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993).

7. Judit Frigyesi, "Béla Bartók and the Concept of Nation and *Volk* in Modern Hungary," *Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (summer 1994): 270.

8. See Bellman, 120–21.

9. Mihály Mosonyi, *Magyar zenekölteményy* (Pest: Rózsavölgyi, 1860).

10. Mosonyi, *Tanulmányok zongorára, a magyar zene előadása képzésére* (Budapest and Leipzig: Rózsavölgyi, 1860).

11. István Bartalus, *Gyermek lant: növendek zongara tanúlók számára magyar népdalokból* (Pest: Rózsavölgyi, 1860); Kornél Ábrányi, "Repülj fecském ablakára"/"Ezt a kerek pusztát járom en" (Pest: Rózsavölgyi, [1850s]; Imre Székely, *Idylles hongroises: 19 Transcriptions sur des airs nationaux hongroises / 19 Magyar Idyllek, népdalokra alkalmazva* (Pest: Rózsavölgyi, 1858).

12. A second, similar collection by Bartalus is his *Gyermek dalhon [Children's Songs]* for piano, 3 vols. (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi, 1860s).

13. Bartalus, *Magyar népdalok egyetemes gyűteménye*, 7 vols. (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi, 1873–96).

14. See Bartók, "Gipsy Music or Hungarian Music?" (1931), in *Béla Bartók Essays,* 206–23, especially 211–14.

15. Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (Berlin: Voss, 1752), trans. Edward Reilly as *On Playing the Flute,* 2d ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1985), 163, 342.

16. Schumann, *Haus- und Lebensregeln,* trans. Paul Rosenfeld as "Household Rules and Maxims," in Schumann, *On Music and Musicians,* ed. Konrad Wolff (1946; reprint, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 35.

17. Jan Ladislav Dusík, *Six Leçons progressives pour le piano-forte dans lesquelles se trouvent introduite des airs caractérisé de différentes nations,* 2 sets (Berlin: C. A. Challier, 1794); modern edition as *Dvanáct melodických etud,* op. 16, ed. Václav Jan Sýkora, vol. 21 of *Musica Antiqua Bohemica* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění, 1954).

18. (Christian) Louis Köhler, *Volksmelodieen aller Nationen der Erde als Uebungsstücke für das Pianoforte,* 6 vols. (Braunschweig: G. M. Meyer, [1852]). It was succeeded by four volumes of folk melodies arranged for piano four hands and by further sets of *Folk Dances of All the Nations of the World.*

19. Judit Frigyesi writes that late-nineteenth-century Hungarian nationalists interpreted Hungarianness in music as "spontaneously inherited" (275). But for practical musicians like Bartalus, that belief would have been perfectly compatible with their commitment to develop in Hungarian children the musical spirit they had so spontaneously inherited.

20. Frigyesi, 268.

21. A short but authoritative history of Hungarian folk-music collecting in this period can be found in Bálint Sárosi, *Folk Music: Hungarian Musical Idiom,* trans. Maria Steiner (Budapest: Corvina, 1986), 12–17.

22. According to János Kárpáti, Bartók's crossing of ethnic boundaries, in his field work as well as his own compositions, agrees with his political philosophy of "integration" among peoples of the Danube region—a philosophy that Bartók maintained after the disintegration of the Hapsburg Empire, when he was attacked from all sides for it. See Kárpáti, "Béla Bartók: The Possibility of Musical Integration in the Danube Basin," in *Bartók and Kodály Revisited,* Indiana University Studies on Hungary 2, ed. György Ránki (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), 147–65.

23. Aaron Kiss, *Magyar Gyermekjáték-Gyűjtemény* (Budapest: Viktor Hornyánszky, 1891; reprinted with modern bibliography, Budapest: Könyvértékesítő Vállalat, 1984). For a complete catalog of the sources of *For Children,* see Vera Lampert, "Quellenkatalog der Volksliedbearbeitungen von Bartók," *Documenta Bartókiana,* vol. 6, new series, ed. László Somfai (Mainz: Schott, 1981).

24. Bartók, "Contemporary Music in Piano Teaching," 426.

25. The original Hungarian melody can be found in Lampert, 48, or Suchoff, ed., *Piano Music of Béla Bartók,* ser. 2, ix.

26. Bartók, "The Relation of Folk Song to the Development of the Art Music of Our Time" (1921), in *Béla Bartók Essays,* 322. See also, in the same collection,

"Hungarian Peasant Music" (1928), 83; "The Folk Songs of Hungary" (1928), 333; "The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music" (1931), 341; and "What Is Folk Music?" (1931), 8.

27. Bartók, "Harvard Lectures" (1943), in *Béla Bartók Essays*, 363. See also, in that collection, "On Hungarian Music" (1911), 301, and "Liszt Problems" (1936), 506–7.

28. See Bartók, "Folk Song Research and Nationalism" (1937), in *Béla Bartók Essays*, 25–28.

29. Those texts have long since been dropped from international editions of *For Children*, though they have been restored, with English translations, in Suchoff's *Piano Music of Béla Bartók*. I am told that in Hungarian editions the song texts have always been retained and that they are regularly used by Hungarian piano teachers as an integral part of their instruction.

30. "Tíz litero, bennem van," vol. 2, no. 38.

31. "Elvesztettem páromat," vol. 1, no. 3; "Elvesztettem páromat," vol. 1, no. 11; and "Kis kece lányom," vol. 1, no. 17.

32. Vol. 4, nos. 23–25.

33. The ballad "Pasol Janko dva voly," vol. 4, no. 39. For an account of how this piece follows the narration of the song text, see James Parakilas, *Ballads Without Words: Chopin and the Tradition of the Instrumental Ballade* (Portland, Or.: Amadeus, 1992), 192–94.

34. "Elmész ruzsám?" vol. 2, no. 41.

35. On parallel techniques in Bartók's arrangements of folk songs for voice and piano, see Ingrid Arauco, "Methods of Translation in Bartók's Twenty Hungarian Folksongs," *Journal of Musicological Research* 12 (1992): 189–211.

36. Bartók, "The Relation Between Contemporary Hungarian Art Music and Folk Music" (1941), in *Béla Bartók Essays*, 353.

37. See Suchoff in *Piano Music of Béla Bartók*, ser. 2, xx, footnote to no. 37.

38. Bartók, "Race Purity in Music" (1942), in *Béla Bartók Essays*, 30.

39. See Frigyesi, esp. 274–78.

40. Bartók, "Race Purity in Music," 32.

41. Bartók, "The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music," in *Béla Bartók Essays*, 342.

42. Bartók, "Harvard Lectures," 375.

43. Bartók, "The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music," 344.