

Musical Traditions and New Music in Educational Context

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Abstract

The topic of the presentation is the traditions of Hungarian elementary music schools. In this school type, music is taught in a higher number of lessons from the first to the eighth grade, in the lower primary years (from the first to the fourth grade) 4+2, later 3+2 lessons a week, the +2 refers to choir practice. The material is traditionally based on folk music, music eras, and the works of Kodály and Bartók. The presentation collects the works of Kodály and Bartók, taught in the eighth grade, and other significant pieces. New music is represented by Miklós Kocsár's piano pieces and choir pieces.

Keywords

Hungarian music, elementary music school, music tradition, Zoltán Kodály, Béla Bartók

In music education, it is essential to preserve, teach and learn valuable traditions, and also to communicate and learn new music. These values include the art of Bartók and Kodály. The study presents a special musical training in which the work of these two authors plays an important role. Analyzing the curriculum, we show how the art of the two composers is presented and which pieces of Miklós Kocsár are taught in the last year of an elementary music school.

The history of specialized elementary music schools

The first school was opened by Gulyás György in Békéstarhos in 1946. (Pálffy Zsuzsa, 2002) The school had a very high-level entrance exam. The theoretical training was

advanced, using Kodály's reading exercises, relative solfeggio, and musical reading and writing. The students also learned instruments and sang in a choir. Renowned composers, such as Sándor Szokolay and Imre Mező studied here. Due to unfavorable circumstance, the school later closed down.

In 1950, the first elementary music school opened in Kecskemét. This type is still operational (Katona József Könyvtár, 2021). This is an elementary school where the number of music lessons is higher, today it means three lectures and two choir lessons a week. These schools can be found in Budapest and every county; in Csongrád-Csanád county there are such elementary classes in Szeged, Makó, Hódmezővásárhely, Kistelek, and Szentés; while in Szeged there is a higher-level music class in one secondary grammar school, where students can take the final exam in music at the end of their last year.

The material in elementary music schools is based on folk music, music history, and the works of Kodály and Bartók, and also focuses on musical reading and writing. In choir lessons, significant pieces of music history are sung.

The eighth-grade book was written by Helga Szabó in 1987. The 4th edition was published in 1994. (Szabó, 1994) It begins with folk songs and revises the types of the songs learned in eight years. The Kodály topic starts with a biography, discusses the field tips and Kodály's most important pieces, the *Psalmus Hungaricus*, *Te Deum*, the stage works *The Spinning Room* and *János Hány*, the orchestral works *Dances of Galanta* (1933), *Dances of Marosszék* (1930), *The Concerto for Orchestra* (1939–40), *Symphony in C* (1930s–1961), and *Variations on a Hungarian folk song Fölszállott a páva (Peacock)* (1939), which is followed by the choir pieces and Kodály's social role.

This is followed by the presentation of the pedagogical works: *33 Reading Exercises*, *Kis emberek dalai* (Songs of little people), *Ötfokú zene (Pentaton music Ö) I–IV: Bicinia Hungarica I–IV: Énekeljünk tisztán* (Sing clearly), *15 kétszólamú énekgyakorlat* (Two-part singing exercises), *77-66-55-44-33-22 kétszólamú énekgyakorlat* (Two-part singing exercises), *Tricinia, Epigrammák*. (Szabó, 1994)

Two of Kodály's works are presented in detail: his most significant piece, *Psalmus Hungaricus*, with its origins, analysis, and partiture; and the *Peacock*, its 16 variations and an analysis of the variations.

The Bartók chapter introduces the circumstances of his field trips and his arrangements of the Hungarian, Romanian and Slovakian collected folk songs. The Hungarian arrangements are illustrated with *Gyermekeknek, Vol. I-II* (For Children), *Magyar képek* (Hungarian Pictures), *15 Magyar parasztdal* (Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs), the pieces of *Mikrokozmosz* (Mikrokosmos) that are based on folk songs, e.g., *Népdalféle* (in Folk Song Style) and *Dobbantós tánc* (Stamping Dance). Then Romanian folk songs are introduced through the *Kolindák* (Romanian Christmas Carols, Vol. I-II), and finally the Slovakian arrangements, *Gyermekeknek* (For Children, Vol. III-IV), *44 Duos for Two Violins and Falun* (3 Village Scenes Sz. 79, BB 87b).

Excerpts are presented from Bartók's correspondence, and the circumstances of the Turkish field trip are shown. The Twenty-Seven Two- and Three-Part Choruses and the partiture of four pieces are also presented. (Szabó, 1994)

The collection of 20th century composers is a suggested creative task. The elementary music school gives stable bases for understanding these masterpieces, which tradition should be carried on. The material is solely based on classical music. New book was presented in 2021. (Szabó, 2021)

Content of the new book is *Choral works for festive occasions* (Miklós Kocsár: *Salve regina*), Late romantic: Wagner, Verdi, Puccini – Music at the turn of the century (Debussy: *La Mer, Les Trois Nocturnes, Children's Corner*, Ravel: *Bolero*), Music in the 20th century: Stravinsky: *Le Sacre du Printemps L'Histoire du soldat*, Arnold Schönberg: *Pierrot Lunaire*, George Gershwin: *Rhapsody in Blue, Jazz*, Carl Orff: *Carmina burana*, Benjamin Britten: *A Ceremony of Carols*, John Cage: *4'33"*, Krzysztof Penderecki: *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*, Arvo Pärt: *Magnificat; Hungarian music of the XX. century, Summary of the music of the 20th century, Jazz and popular music, Contemporary classical music* (Ligeti, Kurtág), *Glossary*.

Content of Hungarian music of XX. century is in the new book:

Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967), Live of Kodály and Hungarian folk song, *Éneklő ifjúság* (Youth singing), *Psalmus Hungaricus*, *Dances of Marosszék*, *Spinning room*, Mixed choir *Anna Molnar*, *Psalmus Hungaricus*.

Béla Bartók (1881–1945), The new material in this book are *Bluebeard's Castle*, *Cantata Profana*, *Concerto*, *Music for Strings*, *Percussion and Celesta*.

The book shows another composer too: László Lajtha (1892–1963), Ernő Dohnányi (1877–1960) and László Sáy (1940–).

An important representative of new music is Miklós Kocsár (1933–2019), whose works are taught through choir pieces, although he wrote piano pieces for pedagogical purposes. (Gerencsér, 2002)

He started his musical studies with improvisations of dance pieces, studied composing and trombone at the Debrecen Conservatory. At the Academy he was Ferenc Farkas's student. Besides his early brass compositions, he wrote vocal pieces as well, the first significant one of which is the *Évszakok* (Seasons), based on Lajos Áprily's poetry, where directed aleatory first appears.

In the 1970s, he encountered László Nagy's poetry and wrote the pieces *Tűz, te gyönyörű*, *Liliomdal*, and *Három nőikar*. *Tűzciterák* became a compulsory piece at the Debrecen International Choir Competition. A characteristic feature of these pieces is the importance of contrast. Between 1976 and 1986, he composed orchestral pieces for clarinet, flute, oboe, and horn. In the 80s and 90s, he wrote choir pieces for mixed and female choirs on László Nagy's and Carl Sandburg's poetry and instrumental pieces for flute, horn, trombone, and cello.

During this period, he composed several pieces for children's choir, such as *Téli alkony* (Téli alkony, Ne félj, Jó szánút, jó fejsze), *Five Bicines* (Zsörtölődő, Tánc a havon, Tél derekán, Madáretető), based on Sándor Kányádi's poems; and children's choir pieces with accompanying piano or chamber orchestra: *Katonadal*, *Orbán*, *Ha a világ rigó lenne*, *Arany ágon*, *Kutyatár*, *Keskeny út*, based on Sándor Weöres's poems.

His pieces in Latin are *Salve Regina*, *Ave Maria*, *Subtuum Cantate Domino* (also for mixed choir), *Magnificat* (mixed choir, orchestra), *Jubilate Deo* with accompanying organ or brass orchestra, *Missa in A*, *Missa Secunda* with accompanying organ.

His pedagogical pieces were written in his early and late period: *Miniatures* (1955/56), *Tizenöt kis zongoradarab* (1977), *Sound portraits for piano* (1995–96), *Games with Intervals* (2005), *Tre Notturmi* (1997 and 2009) and *Piano pieces* (2009).

Two of these pieces (*Sound portraits for piano* and *Games with Intervals*) were performed with the instructions and presence of the author by the students and teachers (Maczelka Noémi Joóbné Czifra Éva, Dombiné Kemény) of the Department of Music Education, Juhász Gyula, Faculty of Education, the University of Szeged on the 85th birthday of Mr. Kocsár, besides *Forintos Nóták* by the department mixed choir, and *Jó szánút, jó fejsze* and *Subtuum presidium* by the children's choir of the elementary music school.

Kocsár's choir pieces are very popular in Japan. Several competitions are organized for his Hungarian, Latin, and English compositions. At the opening concert of the ISME conference in Glasgow, *Cat and dog* was performed with great success. (Opening ceremony of 32nd World Conference of International Society for Music Education from 24 to 29 July 2021, Glasgow)

In conclusion, we can say that the material in the last year of elementary school provides children with a comprehensive picture of the choir pieces of Kodály and Bartók. These compositions, based on folk songs, give a reliable base for further musical studies and general musical literacy.

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