

*BÉLA BARTÓK HUNGARIAN INSTRUMENTAL
FOLK MUSIC COLLECTION*

[*Bartók Béla hangszeres magyar népzene gyűjtése*]

by Lujza Tari

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There is a sense that, at the turn of the twenty-first century, ethnomusicology has reached a critical point, when an overwhelming amount of archival data, fieldwork collections and other materials used for traditional music research has influenced a significant and ever-increasing number of historical studies; as well as interpretation of these accumulated materials in current research, which serves as a strong force in profiling research strategies and enables a new dialogue with the past. However, this could be regarded as a natural condition of the discipline, because it has always been linked, to a greater or lesser extent, with the past, historical sources. The book by a Hungarian ethnomusicologist and specialist in instrumental music, Lujza Tari, titled *Béla Bartók Hungarian Instrumental Folk Music Collection*, brings those sources to the fore, as an original contribution to the 130th birthday anniversary of one of the greatest figures in ethnomusicology.

This book presents a unique perspective on the archival materials, collected by the great Hungarian composer and ethnomusicologist Béla Bartók during his field research between 1906 and 1914. Although his field investigation covered a large span of different types of music creation – from vocal to instrumental forms, the book reaches the horizon of his instrumental music collection. Taking both chronological and geographical distributions of Bartók's materials and of Hungarian instrumental music into consideration, Tari offers not only a survey of recorded materials and its transcriptions, but also an intrinsic view into the features of Hungarian instruments, forms and musical styles, skillfully blended with ethnomusicological perspectives

– both historical and contemporary. A large number of transcriptions, 150, have been released in a single volume for the first time. In addition, the book also reproduces a significant number of facsimiles (Bartók's transcriptions in handwriting) and photographs. The publication is exceptionally well presented, with notations, illustrations, summary (in Slovak), the list of references and valuable indexes.

The book opens with a Foreword in which the author discusses Bartók from the perspectives of his influential work as a researcher of traditional folk music instruments. The discussion also provides some essential guidelines and explains the approach that has been followed, before shifting focus to the collections and their place in this research.

The central chapters of the book are organized to elucidate Hungarian instrumental music by means of a chronological and geographical (or, more precisely, specifically cultural) disposition of the collected materials. Therefore, it follows the main characteristics of traditions within the large areas of Great Hungarian Plain (chapters Alföld I and II), Transdanubian region (Dunántúl), *Székely Land* – an autonomous region in Transilvania (Székelyföld I and II), and Upper Hungary (Komárom and Hont Counties). In this way, Tari follows and accentuates the processuality of Bartók's fieldwork investigations, locating not only the materials which he collected, but also the phases of his working expeditions. It is obvious that the geographical distribution of the materials was selected in accordance with the historical momentum in which the instrumental practices developed within Hungarian communities. As it is emphasised in the book, "the results of this collection have been introduced in chronological order but also in the order in which he had visited certain villages of Hungary before World War I" (p. 353). It was also indicative that Bartók's collection from Nagymegyér and Ipolyság, which he recorded in 1910, bears a special significance for the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, not to mention his own origins and family connections in the area of Pozsony and Gömör County.

As was the case with many other European traditions, Hungarian instrumental music, practiced in rural communities, was mainly used to accompany dances, and many instruments were played by shepherds, agricultural

workers and village craftsmen¹. Many of these tunes, collected in the areas introduced by chapter titles and related content, became a distinctive part of Hungarian and European music through Bartók's, Weiner's and Kodály's artistic transpositions of folk songs into the sound realms of classical music. However, Tari's book has a rather different aim. The author's goal is to recreate traditional instrumental music of the Hungarians by referring to archival materials and following their pathways, in order to reestablish the capacities and the main features of the repertoire, as well as their distribution or cultural location. In other words, the status of Bartók's collections is twofold. By observing instrumental music as archival artifact, the book also aims to recollect and categorize traditional music according to given criteria. Within such overall consideration, Tari recollects and represents a full spectrum of music forms characteristic of Hungarian instrumental music, among which one finds recognisable melodies of *lassú csárdás*, improvisations, *forgató*, *tekerő* and many more. Comparing the repertoire and the number of tunes, the Maros-Torda and Ipolyság Collection seems to include the largest number of instrumental forms. At the same time, the reader can observe the features of folk instruments such as pipes (*furulya*), bagpipes (*duda*), swineherd's horn tunes (*kanásztülök*), clarinet and violin (*hegedű*), as well as their disposition in different regions and places. This is one of the most significant contributions of the book, because it aims to specify music repertoires and to link them with the researcher's fieldwork, as well as their cultural location and, by doing so, to provide a platform for their comparison, instead of gathering materials as mere archival artifacts.

Such approach to the archival materials is also crucial for the process of recollection and representation presented in this book. It is a well-known fact that, aside from their musical value, Bartók's transcriptions are also valuable because they were written meticulously with the help of his phonograph recordings. Going further from this point, Tari does not only present the transcriptions and facsimiles, but also provides a full description of the sound

¹ J. Szendrei et al, "Hungary", *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed April 2, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13562>.

carriers, as well as Bartók's handwritings and other archival materials and references. The most striking effect is achieved by presenting all the details found in written materials, such as Marta Ziegler's (Bartók's former spouse) recognisable handwriting, Bartok's green ink, the original codes and signatures of the archival materials, images from the museum collections etc.

This publication also provides a vivid selection of the instrumental music collected from the Székely area, which is presented in the last part. It includes the tunes that have been collected by such distinguished researchers as Csíky János (Székely village Marosteréről and Maros-Torda County), Veress Gábor (Maros Torda and Brassó County), and Molnár Antal in 1911 (Csík County). Although these additional materials slightly divert the reader's attention, they complement Bartók's collections. Moreover, this particular chapter could also be perceived as a, perhaps unexpected, epilogue, which rounds up the entire book in lieu of concluding remarks. However, this does not affect the general conception of this publication and its scope.

With her attentive approach and vigorous execution, the author Lujza Tari has provided an insight into the wonderful world of Hungarian folk instrumental music, and the materials collected Béla Bartók, masterfully presented in a single volume. The book offers an excellent pallet of instrumental music transcriptions, reliable classification, and very valuable comments on Hungarian instrumental music, occasionally using Bartok's recognizable and almost calligraphic facsimile transcriptions, whenever the author of this publication had the chance to do so. It is obvious that none of this would have been possible had Hungary not had a great historical legacy, paired with an appreciation and great understanding for folk music, a stimulating scientific environment and distinctive researchers, including the imposing figure of Béla Bartók. This book also serves as a symbolic connection between Bartók and current ethnomusicology, thus providing a platform for a constructive dialogue and stimulating further thinking on the issues rediscovered and reaffirmed.

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