

**Lecture Piano Recital on  
The Musical Language of Béla Bartók**

**An Honors Creative Project (HONRS 499)**

**By**

**Audra White**

**Thesis Advisor  
Dr. James Helton**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Helton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

**Ball State University  
Muncie, Indiana**

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Abstract:

Béla Bartók was a prodigy of the late nineteenth century, but it is what he did with his talent that makes me love his music. While many composers were searching for a nationalistic sound, Bartók went into the field to gather folk music from the peasants of his native country, Hungary. Instead of capturing the sound of a group of people, he transcribed many authentic melodies note by note and arranged them for piano or orchestra as art songs. His composition style for piano is unique because he imitates the sound of the folk instruments on the piano. The dances he transcribes are always full of energy, and many of his melodies have an instinctual haunting sound. While Bartók does use modern sounds, it does not take a professional musician to feel it.

The presentation itself includes a lecture section, and a performance section. During the lecture, I will include CD and video examples of the dances and a few of Bartók's more advanced works. The performance section includes pieces from Bartók's teaching series, the *Mikrokosmos*, from his *Fourteen Bagatelles*, opus 6, from his *Sonatina*, and from *Six Romanian Folk Dances*.

## Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Dr. James Helton for his continual encouragement as I have studied the piano at Ball State University, and as I developed this recital. He has created a performing environment where I could enjoy playing piano in public more than I ever have before. He was there to respond to my ideas before this project centered on Bartók, and his advice was invaluable.

I would like to thank Dr. Heather Platt for offering such an inspiring Piano Literature class. It taught me what a prepared and insightful lecture could be.

I would like to thank my family and friends for their time and interest as I have developed as a pianist. You have made it worthwhile to perform.

## Artist Statement:

I had a huge head start with this project. During the fall of 2008, I took Piano Literature ahead of schedule. It was for that class that I wrote my first paper on Béla Bartók. I also had to present my findings to a class of a few undergraduate music majors and about twice as many graduate music majors during class. Before this class, I would have never chosen to do a research recital. After it, I had the technical research done, and I had a semester of enjoyable lectures that convinced me that I could really add to my recital with a lecture.

I always knew I would give a piano recital the spring of my junior year. As a piano minor (non-music major), I was not required to give one at all, but I wanted to give one to show what I had learned during my time in college. In high school, I played well, but on an upright piano at home. After my time spent in college, I have improved immensely as a public performer. I still like playing for myself best, but now I can enjoy playing for others too. Until I attended the first day of Piano Literature, I was torn between playing a recital of different pieces I had learned throughout college, in which case it would not have had a lecture or been used for my thesis, or going ahead and including a lecture component so that I could use it for my thesis. I do not love giving speeches. I like technical things, and they usually make boring speeches. Speaking also requires a different kind of psychological preparation than does playing the piano, which makes it difficult to do both in the same presentation. Still, when I found out that I would already have given one speech during Piano Literature (and it was the kind I liked first, as luck would have it) I decided that it would be a shame not to show others what I had learned.

Picking the pieces I wanted to play at the end of my recital was easy. Dr. Helton pointed me in the right direction to find pieces that were the right level of difficulty for me, and also

adequately spanned Bartók's writing style. We started with Bartók's *Mikrokosmos*, a series designed to teach a beginner to appreciate and play folk music and in folk modes. The last two volumes include professional performance level pieces. From Volume V, I chose "Bagpipe." I happen to love bagpipes and this piece was composed specifically to imitate the folk bagpipe. From Volume VI, we chose two of the "Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm," number II and III. These pieces are in 7/8 (seven beats per measure) and 5/8 (five beats per measure), and are great examples of pieces that have unequal subdivisions between beats. Dance II is particularly driving, a characteristic of Bartók's, and III includes a two-voice canon. Canon is one of Bartók's most common forms of counterpoint. The pieces from *Fourteen Bagatelles* are the most dissonant on the program. I like bagatelle II, which is very chromatic and includes an ostinato pattern, the best. Bagatelles IV and VI are nice contrasting pieces to what I already had because they are slower. Bagatelle IV is a crushing lament of a cowherd who fell asleep at the job, while VI is quietly contemplative. Later I added Bagatelle III to the program. It features a melody over a chromatic wash similar to Debussy's style. To finish off the program, I have included two pieces I had previously studied; Bartók's *Sonatina* and *Six Romanian Folk Dances*. Ironically the *Sonatina* includes a "Bagpipers" first movement. The second movement is a heavy "Bear Dance." The finale is a quick, Romanian-type dance. The *Six Romanian Folk Dances* are one of the most often performed sets of folk dances by Bartók. They include different styles with specific settings for the dances and handily add to the program since I had previously studied them. Although I picked pieces with different characters, every one of them is a piece that I enjoy.

The hard part about the presentation was deciding what to say. I knew I wanted to adjust the lecture part of my presentation to fit the general audience, but in a way that a musician would also be able to get something new, or at least interesting, out of it. One thing I did was to add the video of the Bulgarian dance. I considered teaching a Bulgarian dance to the audience when I found a site with many such videos (for my sake) on it. I soon discovered that the dances were very quick and intricate even for someone like me who is light on their feet and enjoys dances with steps. I decided that it would probably be best just to show it. Next I chose the musical examples that I wanted to play during the lecture. These were pieces, like those from the *Out of Doors* set, that were too difficult, or, like some of the earlier *Mikrokosmos* pieces, not up to performance level but still useful to illustrate a point. Eventually I realized that, as long as I spoke in general and played examples about what I was talking about instead of trying to show specific measures from a page without sound, the audience would probably be able to follow some of the analytical research that I had done for my Piano Literature class. This was the easiest way for me to feel like I was doing my best job to talk about Bartók's music instead of about Bartók himself.

It was as I moved into the final stages of preparation that the speech fell into place. For the first time in my life, I had much more information than what I could say in my speech. I wore a peasant's costume and added some anecdotes from Peter's memoir entitled *My Father* in order to work in some of Bartók's personality while still focusing on the music. The handout was included to aid the recognition of the names of major works as well as making them easier to look up later if someone was interested in listening to a recording. Dr. Helton listened to the speech, and helped me with the pronunciation of a few names. He told me where to leave

things out that were hard to say and did not add much. He also pointed out where I should introduce things in a different order to direct the audience's attention better. At last it was ready to go, and I just had to make sure that I pronounced things clearly during the recital and played my best.

Costume, Music Program, and Handout:



**AUDRA WHITE**  
piano

**SENIOR HONORS RECITAL**

**Lecture Recital on the Piano Music  
of Béla Bartók (1881-1945)**

I.  
Lecture

... brief intermission ...

II.

Program to be selected from the following works

Mikrokosmos, No. 138 "Bagpipe" (1937)

Fourteen Bagatelles, Op. 6 (1908)

- VI. Lento
- IV. Grave
- III. Andante
- II. Allergo gioso

Mikrokosmos, "Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm" (1937)

- No. 149. II
- No. 150. III

Sonatina (1915)

- I. Bagpipers
- II. Bear Dance
- III. Finale

Romanian Folk Dances (1915)

- I. Joc cu Bătă (Stick Dance)
- II. Brăul (Waistband Dance)
- III. Pe Loc (On the Spot)
- IV. Buciumeana (Dance of the Butschum)
- V. Porgă Românească (Romanian Polka)
- VI. Măruntel (Lively Dance)

Audra White is a student of James Helton.

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Honors Program at Ball State University.

CHORAL HALL  
Saturday, April 4, 2009  
5:30 p.m.

Series LXIII  
Number 176

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**Béla Bartók (1881-1945)**

Born in Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary (now Romania)

Could play by ear at age 4

Public debut as a pianist occurred on May 1, 1892, which included a piece that he himself composed called *The Course of the Danube*.

1905 Made up his mind to “collect and study Hungarian peasant music unknown until then” (Suchoff 2002 7)

1906 First work transcribing Slovak peasant music

1906 Bartók begins to publish folk melodies

1907 Gathered Transylvanian-Romanian folk music

1909 Ill-received in Budapest

1934-1937 Studied Hungarian folk music at the Budapest Academy of Sciences

1939 Moved to the United States

***Mikrokosmos* – “Small World”**

Purpose is to “provide an opportunity for pianists to become acquainted with the simple and non-romantic beauties of folk music” (Suchoff, 1971 7)

Teaches basic skills needed to play different kinds of music, and particularly focusing on rhythmic and harmonic problems likely to be encountered by students.

Uses a variety of scales and tonalities (including modes)

Published in 1939 in six volumes, ranging from beginner (I-II) to professional (V-VI)

**Melody and accompaniment**

Treatment of folk melody: feature, accompaniment motto, atmosphere (most abstract)

Simple means that the harmony mostly consists of notes found in the melody.

For example, number 138 “Bagpipe” from the *Mikrokosmos*

Complex means that the harmony consists of notes mostly not present in the melody.

For example, number three from *Fourteen Bagatelles*, Op. 6

**Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm, two traditional dances**

Rüchenitsa – wedding dance, written in 7/8 (2+2+3) meter (II)

Pajdushko horo – open circle dance, written in 5/8 (2+3) meter (III)

**Allegro Barbaro – “a message from distant realms, unfamiliar and savage” (Kárpáti).*****Out of Doors***

I. With Drums and Pipes

II. Barcarolla

III. Musettes

IV. Musiques Nocturnes

V. The Chase

Transcript:

Even if you have not studied music, Béla Bartók is probably a name that you have heard before. He was a brilliant Hungarian composer and had an exceptional ear for music, and what he was able to do for the first time in history was take folk music and make it his own. He grew up learning the music of many of the greats. Bach and Beethoven were two of his favorites. As musicians of his time started reacting against the music of the Romantic Era, Bartók chose to discover his own country's nationalistic music. Little did he know that his endeavor would take him to the borders of Hungary and beyond.

In case you were curious about what "Hungary and beyond" means, the map you are looking at depicts each location that Bartók gathered folk music, and which kind of folk music he called it. In the center is Hungary. The Hungarian villages are noted with a red circle. To the north, the green triangles note Slovakian villages. The country to the southeast is Romania, and the blue squares show the Romanian villages. The two black circles with X's through them show the Bulgarian and Serbian villages. Curiously enough, in Serbia to the south, Bartók only found Hungarian and Romanian songs. The two remaining notations are the Ruthenian, and the Arabic and Turkish locations. Of these, I will spend the most time talking about the Romanian and Bulgarian villages, since I will be playing songs from these groups. I will also talk about Hungarian music since Bartók himself was Hungarian.

Before I address his musical goals, it helps to know a little bit of background. Bartók had a very traditional beginning to a musician's life. His mother was a musician and taught him from a very young age. According to her testimony, he could recognize a melody by ear at the age of eighteen months. Nonetheless, his piano training began much later. He learned

rhythms on a drum first, as well as singing with his mother. Even when he began studying the piano, he learned first by playing note by note what he heard his mother sing. It was not until his fifth birthday that he was given piano music to read (Suchoff 1971 3). When Bartók was nine years old, his father died. His family moved, and his mother had to teach many other students in order to support her children. At this time, Bartók started to compose some of his own music. In fact, his debut as a performing pianist occurred May 1, 1892 (age 11) and included a piece titled *The Course of the Danube* that he himself composed. It was at this time that Bartók's talent was noticed by the virtuoso pianist and composer Ernő Dohnányi, who referred Bartók to his own teacher (Nissman 1). This teacher was István Thomán, a legacy of the famous Franz Liszt. Although in his autobiographical essay Bartók claims to have been under the strongest influence of Brahms and Dohnányi during his undergraduate studies, Dohnányi continued in the romantic tradition long after Bartók moved on to his mature style. The truth is that Bartók had training that included many of the historically great composers. In his early career, he did compose romantic-style sonatas and other orchestral or chamber music. His earliest work, *The Course of the Danube* exemplifies one direction of the romantic style, which was in the direction of character pieces, pieces meant to depict a particular scene or emotion. Bartók never grew out of this form, but built on it throughout his career by adapting more sounds into his musical palate. Since Bartók was a bit ahead of his time in embracing peasant tonality, he earned his income from teaching music rather than composing.

Eventually, Bartók would write a teaching series, the legendary collection entitled *Mikrokosmos*, in order to encourage a public that would be more accepting of peasant music. In 1912, Bartók had previously written a collaborative teaching series for the piano with several

of his colleagues including his good friend, Zoltán Kodály. The first piece he wrote intended for the *Mikrokosmos* series was composed several years later in 1926. Bartók sought to enable pianists to read and feel more intuitively the folk styles for which his own contemporaries were not prepared. Although Bartók published quite a few short, easier pieces, the 153 pieces included in his monumental collection *Mikrokosmos* are his attempt to confront rhythmic and harmonic problems as exhaustively as possible. It is not limited to folk style, however. Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* is a set of imaginatively designed pieces intended to present many different sounds, sometimes imitating existing composers such as Bach and Schumann, or to provide ear training to interpret more abstract music and feel more complex rhythms. Bartók's own translation of the title "Mikrokosmos" is literally "small world," reflecting the intention of the series to represent many different styles in one series, or as the world in a size intended to be appropriate for children. Bartók makes use of a variety of scales and tonalities (including modes) in these pieces, most of which have roots in authentic peasant music and have an intuitive emotional appeal. In fact, his intentions in writing the *Mikrokosmos* method were most simply to "provide an opportunity for pianists to become acquainted with the simple and non-romantic beauties of folk music" (Suchoff, *Guide* 7). Many of the difficult elements included in Bartók's advanced works are introduced individually or in a simpler context in the *Mikrokosmos*.

Of the scales and tonalities represented in the *Mikrokosmos*, the ones designed to train the ear to hear folk music are mostly those in modes. One of the earliest examples of this is a piece titled "Phrygian Mode," number 34 in the first volume. You can think of the Phrygian

mode as a major scale that is played from the third scale degree to the third scale degree. By itself it sounds like this:

[Play a Phrygian scale]

In Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* it sounds like this:

["Phrygian Mode" from Track 1 (0:49).]

In most cases, especially in the first four books of the *Mikrokosmos*, the two hands share very similar parts, usually sharing the folk melody in counterpoint. Bartók transcribed pieces by the seventeenth and eighteenth century composers such as Frescobaldi to piano. As a result, his use of counterpoint often resembles that of Renaissance Italy as well as German Baroque counterpoint. This means that, instead of voices entering at the end of the motive or subject, each voice often enters in canon shortly after the voice preceding it. It is not necessary that each repetition be exactly the same; voices may enter in a staggered fashion and imitate one another. Also, voices may enter in inversion or retrograde or make use of multiple subjects simultaneously. In the following example, Number 60 from the second volume, you should be able to hear this imitative style. There is something else that Bartók introduced in this piece. If you listen very carefully, there were actually four parts. The first note of each phrase in each hand is held through the rest of the phrase. This was how Bartók introduced more than two voices into his teaching series. Rather than immediately recommending studies from *Anna Magdalena Bach's Notebook*, which he used in the collaborative teaching series (Nissman 226), Bartók uses sustained notes to get the hand used to feeling two parts at once.

[Play "Canon with Sustained Notes" from Track 2 (0:42).]

The idea to have the second part in one hand be a drone could have also been inspired from the way a traditional bagpipe sounded. Maybe you do not share my fascination with bagpipes, but hearing one will give you an idea of what Bartók was imitating in this next piece. First, you should know how a bagpipe works. There are actually five pipes, although you will not be able to see them all. The first pipe, called the blowing pipe, is used for air to fill the bag itself. Then, as the air leaves the bag through the pipes, the other four sound. The second pipe, called the “chanter,” has holes that may be fingered to play the melody. The remaining pipes, called drones, play a low note, and only one to a pipe. In this example, the main drone is tuned to A, which means that the A does “drone on” throughout the piece. The other two drone pipes in Bartók’s piano piece called “Bagpipe” sound in regular intervals on the tonic and dominant notes, G and D. The effect of all of these drones playing at the same time is that there is often a strong dissonance between the drone notes and the melody. Also you will notice some extra squeaks that do not seem to match. Bartók incorporated these in another of his pieces, the *Sonatina*, but not in this piece.

[Play Hungarian bagpipe clip from Youtube.com (0:54).]

There are a few more things you should realize before you hear Bartók’s “Bagpipe,” number 138 from Volume V. When speaking of the melody and accompaniment in the context of Bartók’s music, what sounds simple includes notes from the melody in the harmony rather than including different notes as a musical setting. The melody, in any case, is the singing voice that provides the tonal direction for the piece. This piece is a simpler one in this regard. As for the pipes, the tonic and dominant found in the left hand creates a sense of G tonic. In the lower part in the right hand, again the first note as in “Canon with Sustained Notes,” is the

drone. Above that is the melody. I believe that Bartók moved the drone because most listeners are used to hearing the bass of the chord in the lowest part, and the notes that determine the key are more accurately the tonic and dominant. There are enough things going on with the rhythm to trick your sense of what matches the melody and what does not. The melody follows the time signature, which is a duple signature. The accompaniment acts as if it is 3/8 time, aligning with the melody at the end of each phrase, only. Another tricky rhythmic element occurs in the B section, when the right hand plays quintuplets over a duple left hand part.

The other of the bagpipe songs I will be playing is the first movement of the *Sonatina*. It has one extra feature, which comes from the high-pitched squeaks that a bagpipe makes between quick phrases. These are included through adding extra descending grace notes at wide intervals. Another interesting thing about this piece is that it was originally a bagpipe duet. In the first section, the first bagpipe plays its melody, a very strong-sounding one. In the second section, the other bagpipe plays back in a much more playful tone. By contrast, the second movement of the *Sonatina* is a bear's dance. The bear was originally represented by playing the melody on the lowest register of the violin. Both melodies of the bagpipe movement and the Bear's Dance contain Romanian, rather than Hungarian, melodies. Because I will play both movements from the *Sonatina*, and "Bagpipe" from the *Mikrokosmos* myself, I will not play them from CD at this time.

Another set of pieces that I will be playing are the Romanian Folk Dances. The sound of these will have a lot in common with the *Sonatina*. The contexts are all original, however. The second Romanian Dance was typically done in the spinning house by young women, danced in a circle with arms around each others' waists, hence the translation "Waistband Dance." On

some occasions, young men and women would dance it together. The third Romanian Dance was danced in one place. It is sometimes called “Stamping Dance” because of the motion required to keep ones feet in one place. I prefer the translation “On the Spot” because it better represents the softer, fragile nature of the dance. Both the “Waistband Dance” and “On the Spot” were originally played on the flute. The fourth Romanian Dance is one of the few in which Arabic sounds may be heard. It was originally played on the violin. The dance is unique, following the haunting melody. The fifth dance, a polka, is a children’s dance, while the sixth dance is a couple’s dance. Both of the last two dances are very lively.

I mentioned earlier the simple case of the relationship between Bartók’s melody and accompaniment. In the complex case, the harmony consists of notes mostly absent from the melody. One example of this is Bagatelle III from *Fourteen Bagatelles*, Opus 6. In this example, there is still a clear melody and accompaniment pattern, but the notes in the accompaniment are barely used in the melody at all. Instead, using a wash of chromatic notes, it sets a tense tone for the melody, a descending, melancholy line.

Bartók’s bagatelles are very emotional works, much deeper than the pieces he included in his *Mikrokosmos*. Part of the reason for this is that they were written much earlier, during the time when he had first been to hear Hungarian folk music, and developed a taste for what was only absolutely necessary. This was part of the Modern Movement as well, and probably why many of the pieces are very short, taken without repeats. The *Fourteen Bagatelles* were, in fact, thought of as advanced studies, written at the same time as *Ten Easy Pieces*. They also include most of the techniques found in his most difficult works, for example the *Out of Doors* collection, which I will talk more about later. Although it took some time for the general public

to appreciate these pieces, they were also praised at the time by “the avant-garde composer-pianist Busoni” as “at last something truly new,” “out of the ordinary and entirely individual” (Nissman 35). Of the pieces I will be playing from this set, I believe all to have an emotional inspiration. Number four includes the text “I was a cowherd/ I fell asleep by my cows/ I awoke in the night/ Not one beast was in its stall” from an original Hungarian melody. The setting of the piece is still Bartók’s; he uses minor seventh chords in a pattern when it is unusual to see them with every note. Similarly the setting for Bagatelle number three combines folk-like melody with the wash of sound heard in much of Debussy’s work. The name “bagatelle” itself was taken from Beethoven. Debussy and Beethoven were two of Bartók’s favorite composers. By borrowing from others in his own manner, the *Fourteen Bagatelles* are a perfect example of the way Bartók internalized the styles around him.

Despite these complexities in tonalities, Bartók’s writing is often cohesive because of his rhythmic drive. During the time that Bartók was developing the *Mikrokosmos*, he was also giving concert tours across Europe and the United States, finally moving to the United States in late 1939 to escape WWII. He performed most of the pieces found in the *Mikrokosmos*, even the basic teaching pieces. In nearly every case, however, he performed the final set of “Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm.” If you could not guess from “Bagpipe” alone, rhythm is one of the most challenging elements of Bartók’s music.

For Western listeners, the hardest rhythms to feel are the Bulgarian additive or grouped meters. There are at least two traditional kinds of dances that Bartók found in existing collections. The first is the *rūchenitsa*, or wedding dance, which was written in 7/8 (2+2+3). The second is the *pajdushko horo* dance, which is written in 5/8 (2+3) meter. Not all have odd-

numbered meters, however. In fact, the fourth and sixth Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm included in Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* collection are in 8/8 (3+3+2 and 3+2+3 respectively). In Bartók's son Peter's memoir to his father, he relates an instance when his father asked his family all to clap one such meter, the three plus three plus two. Because they were used to even meters, all of them wanted to round it out to three plus three plus three. I think that is part of the reason that Bartók includes dances in Bulgarian rhythm in the *Mikrokosmos* rather than actual Bulgarian dances. The dances in the Bulgarian rhythms are hard enough when the rhythm is accented as the focal part of the piece. Actual Bulgarian dances deemphasize the rhythm and probably would have been published in their own volume as a harder set. Even though the ones I will be playing use Bulgarian rhythm rather than a Bulgarian dance itself, it is helpful to see how a similar dance would have been danced. They are very quick dances with a lot of footwork. This is an example of the *rüchenitsa*, the first type of dance. See if you can hear the two plus two plus three rhythm under the melody. Even though the drums will play it, the steps do not particularly emphasize the rhythm any more than the melody does.

[Play "Bulgarian Dance video from Youtube.com (0:21-2:38).]

It helps to understand why people were overwhelmed by the peasant music presented by Bartók before the *Mikrokosmos*. Before Bartók traveled, collecting authentic peasant music, a Hungarian dance could be written by someone of any nationality and it would be expected to sound merely exotic. European dances composed during the end of the sixteenth century might have used the title "Ungaresca" in a dance that evokes the structure of folk traditions, such as the different pipes on a bagpipe. By the end of the eighteenth century, the most popular Hungarian themed style was the "verbunkos," known for its dance rhythms. Some

composers also managed to internalize this style to the extent that it seemed to show up in their art music. The “verbunkos” style, primarily played by gypsies, spread across Europe easily because it was played often, outside in cafés, salons, and other public meeting places. This error of mistaking usually sentimental gypsy styles for Hungarian peasant music is part of what motivates Bartók to discover the real thing for himself. To him, “the melodies which are erroneously considered to be Hungarian folk music – but in reality are more or less trivial, rustic-style compositions – are of little inherent interest” (Kárpáti). In other words, he believed the authentic peasant music to be the true Hungarian national music.

Before nationalism, Hungarian people did not pay a lot of attention to the peasant villages. In fact, since Hungary had been ruled by Austria for a long time, many people started to speak German at home as well as at school. According to his son Peter, Bartók already had a problem with this too. In fact, in later years, he not only insisted that his family speak Hungarian at home, but he also began wearing peasant attire. He had a lot of pride in his heritage. For that reason, I also chose to wear peasant attire for this recital. Mine happens to be Romanian, chosen partly for the country that currently controls Bartók’s hometown, and also for the nature of the pieces that I will be playing. I think it is extreme that Bartók chose to wear folk attire, but it shows how committed he was to finding his heritage.

In Bartók’s quest to hear folk melodies from the peasants themselves, his best companion was Zoltán Kodály, both in the research and in subsequent concerts. They both performed many times in Budapest to promote Hungarian peasant music. At the same time in Paris in 1910, works by six Hungarian artists was being performed in the “Hungarian Festival,” including works by Bartók and Kodály. By 1914, they had turned the face of Hungarian folk

music to a national flavor that was wild and seeming to come from a totally alien world. At this point in time, it was somewhat recognized for its relentless rhythm as well as the unusual tonality as coming from the “East.” This was a result of a particular piece composed by Béla Bartók, the *Allegro Barbaro*.

The *Allegro Barbaro*, written for piano, “came to be seen as a message from distant realms, unfamiliar and savage” (Kárpáti). It was originally composed in 1911 with just the title “*Allegro*,” but when it was performed in Paris at the Hungarian Festival, a critic made a comment about it coming from one of those barbarian Hungarians. The change of name from “*Allegro*” to “*Allegro Barbaro*” implies that this suited Bartók’s original intention for the piece. It was published in 1913, first in *Nyugat*, a literary journal, and not until 1919 in the Vienna music journal *Musikblätter des Anbruch*. The fact that it was published in a literary journal first represents the fact that Bartók intended his music to be appreciated by non-musicians as well as musicians, though the music journal called his music “Hungarian avant-garde music” (Kárpáti). Still the *Allegro Barbaro* was Bartók’s piece that was most often played in France.

[Play “*Allegro Barbaro*” from Track 3 (0:30).]

While “*Allegro Barbaro*” painted Hungary for the world, the fourth movement from the *Out of Doors* suite, “*Musiques Nocturnes*,” rings of home to Béla Bartók’s family. Peter, in his memoir, mentions a performance of this movement given by Leonid Hambro, in which he played the piece “as if he had been to Szöllös himself” (164) because he played the tone clusters so that they sounded exactly like the frogs from that region. The movement is dedicated to Bartók’s wife Ditta. While this piece is slower than many of the others, it involves several layers of sound that are very difficult to play at once. Together, they recreate the sound

of the night, complete with the usual nocturnal animal activity. The other piece from this set that I would like you to hear is “The Chase,” which is movement five. Every piece from this set is difficult, but this is one of the most virtuosic.

[Play short sections of “Night’s Music” from Track 4 (2:00) and “The Chase” (2:11).]

As has been evidenced, Béla Bartók made a name for himself most admirably by collecting and transcribing authentic peasant music. He performed both for musicians and the public. He also recognized the value of folk music in teaching. Not only is the variety of tonalities which he uses impressive, but the way he is able to accommodate the original folk melody into an artistic context that represents its original atmosphere. This is accomplished both through the harmonic setting and often with appropriate counterpoint. Bartók’s use of a driving rhythm created a symbol for new Hungarian music and allowed his pieces to remain cohesive. The best example of pieces held together by their rhythm is the Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm, the last six dances in his *Mikrokosmos* series. His tonality may always label him “Eastern” or even “barbaric,” but there is nothing unsophisticated about his music.

[Questions]

The pieces listed on the program are mostly in order. One small change is that after the second movement of the Sonatina, I will skip to the second Romanian Dance. If there are no further questions, we will take a short intermission before I play. Thank you.

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