4 Slovakian Folk Songs - Bela Bartok

Background:

- Bela Bartok (1881-1945), one of the first ethnomusicologists through his folk song research
- Written in 1917, first of his folk song collections for the voice
- Bartok specifies three methods of utilizing folk melodies
 - Flour Slovakian Songs (1917)) :Introductory and concluding phrases are
 of secondary importances, "they only serve as an ornamental setting for
 the precious stone: the peasant melody"*
 - Four Hungarian Folk Songs (1930): The melody only serves as a "motto" while that which is built round it is of real importance
 - Cantata Profana (1930): The composer does not make use of a real peasant melody, but invents his own imitation of such melodies (no true difference between this method and the two described above)
- Bartok loved folk music
 - "My own idea...is the brotherhood of peoples, brotherhood in spite of all wars and conflicts. I try - to the best of my ability - to serve this idea in my music therefore I don't reject any influence."
- Four Slovak Folk Songs ornamental setting for the precious stone, "the folk tune dominates and accompaniment, prelude, or postlude may be considered only as the mounting of a jewel."
 - Only choral writing that uses just piano.
 - Very simple texture
- Four folk tunes employed in the settings were collected by Barok from three towns in the country of Zvolenska

Movements:

- First movement a melancholy wedding song (grief of bride)
- Second Movement short hayharvester's song
- Third and Fourth movement are short dancing songs.
- Cumulative time of the three quick statements of happiness is only about one half the length of the sad wedding song
- First movement is polyphonic, but most of it is homophonic.
- "To handle folktunes is one of the most difficult tasks; equally difficult if not more so than to write a major original composition...we must penetrate into it, feel it, and bring it out in sharp contours by the appropriate setting."
- Piece is often performed in Slovak or Hungarian, but is also translated into German and English

I. Wedding Song

- (a) Lányát az anya férjhez úgy adta Idegen országba,Megmondta neki, meghagyta neki: Többé ne is lássa.
- (b) "Átváltozom én rigómadárrá, Anyámhoz úgy szállok, Kertjébe ülök egy rózsatőre, Reája úgy várok."
- (c) Az anyja kinéz: "Furcsa egy madár, Be nagyon búsan szól; Szállj le csak hess, hess, te rigómadár Én rózsabokromról!"
- (d) "Rossz férjhez adtál, jó anyám, engem Idegen országba; Nehéz a sora hej, bizony annak, Kinek rossz a párja!"

- (a) Her daughter was married by her motherTo a foreign countryHe told her, left him:
- Don't even see it again.
- (b) "I am transforming into a thrush,I go to my mother soI'm sitting in his garden on a rosary,I'm looking forward to it."
- (c) His mother looks, "It's a strange bird, Be very sad;

Just get off hess, hess, you thrush I'm about my rose bush! "

(d) "You gave me wrong, my good mother, meTo a foreign country;It's hard to line up, hey,Whose pair is bad! "

II. Song of the Hay Harvesters

(a) Havasi legelőn,
Virágos nagy mezőn
Olyan jót adludtam,
Az ágyban sem jobban.
(b) Boglyában a széna,
Nincsen több dolgunk ma,
Gyerünk le, gyerünk le
A hegyről a völgy be.

- a) On an alpine pasture, in a flowery big field, I slept so well, Not in bed.
- (b) Stack of hay, We have no more business today, Come down, come down From the mountain into the valley.

III. Dancing Song (from Mezibrod)

- (a) Enni, inni van csak kedvem,
 S elmenni a táncba.
 Bezzeg nem volt soha kedved
 Szoknyaráncoláshoz.
 (b) A négy garast a dudásnak
 Azt is én fizettem.
 S te táncoltál, én csak álltam,
 Senki se hítt engem.
- (a) I just feel like eating, drinking, And go to the dance.
 Bezzeg never felt like it
 For skirt frown.
 (b) The four horns to the bagpipes I also paid.
 And you danced, I just stood,
 No one believed me.

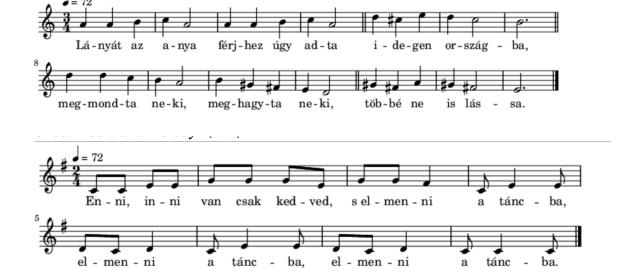
IV. Dancing Song (from Poniky)

(a) Szóljon a duda már,
Táncra vár minen pár,
Vígan szólon, ügyesen,
Talp alá való legyen!
(b) Fújd csak még, vígabban,
Még két garasom van:
A kocsmáros egyet kap,
A dudásnak is egy marad.
(c) Míg élt, kecske volt ez.
Jaj, be táncos, kényes,
Nem járja már táncát,
Kettétörték a lábát.

(a) Tell the bagpipe already,
Every couple is waiting to dance,
He speaks happily, deftly,
Be under your feet!
(b) Just blow more, merrily,
I have two more garas:
The bartender gets one,
The bagpiper also has one left.
(c) While he was alive, it was a goat.
Alas, be a dancer, delicate,
He doesn't dance anymore,
He broke his leg in two.

Sources and References

Original Folk Song Melodies - including manuscripts



Sheet music and melody [edit]



Thayer, Fred. "The Choral Music of Béla Bartók." *The Choral Journal* 26, no. 1 (1985): 33-36.