

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
 - Four Slovakian Songs (1917): Introductory and concluding phrases are of secondary importance, "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
mother

To a foreign country
He told her, left him:
Don't even see it again.

(b) "I am transforming into a thrush,
I go to my mother so
I'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, me

To 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 hitt 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,
Vigan szolon, 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

The image displays two musical staves for folk songs. The first staff is in 3/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 72. The melody is written on a treble clef staff. The lyrics are in Hungarian and English. The second staff is also in 3/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 72. The melody is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are in Hungarian and English.

$\text{♩} = 72$

Lá - nyát az a - nya férj - hez úgy ad - ta i - de - gen or - szág - ba,
8
meg - mond - ta ne - ki, meg - hagy - ta ne - ki, töb - bé ne is lás - sa.

$\text{♩} = 72$

En - ni, in - ni van csak ked - ved, s el - men - ni a tánc - ba,
5
el - men - ni a tánc - ba, el - men - ni a tánc - ba.

Sheet music and melody [\[edit \]](#)



Szóljon a du-da már, vígan szóljon, ügyesen,
tánc-ra vár minden pár, talpa - lá va-ló legyen!

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