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National stereotypes and music

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ABSTRACT. Music became a marker of national identity in nineteenth-century Europe. Western art music consists of tonal systems that are universally intelligible, but certain rhythms and musical idioms have been associated with national styles. How, when, and why does a musical phrase or piece become national? What political and cultural circumstances contributed to the development of national styles and facilitated the emergence of resonant topographies? What was the relationship between music as cultural practice and nineteenth-century national thought as discursive space? These questions are addressed with a particular focus on *verbunkos*, which came to be characteristic of Hungarian national style, and on the *Rákóczy March* which became famous thanks to Berlioz's *Faust*. This essay traces the complex process of cultural transfer through which these martial tunes of mixed ethnic origins have become emblematic of Hungarian music.

KEYWORDS: cultural transfer, Hungary, music, national style, nation-building, *verbunkos*

Introduction

Music is often considered a universal language of humankind, one of the most abstract art forms, which – exactly because of its universality – is remote from such determining and restricting social realities as political ideologies. This assumption naturally leads to the belief that music, as a self-referential system *par excellence*, has no extra musical signifiers: music is a metareferential art completely lacking any kind of heteroreferentiality.

However, if we look at the history of Western music, this purist view becomes quite problematic. Music can be perceived as a sequence of Hanslick's tonally moving forms,¹ yet these sound patterns have always been a topic of philosophical discourse provoking debates concerning their meaning. Plato for example excluded poets from the ideal State, but appreciated musicians who could stir patriotic feelings in citizens and could influence the audience's political behaviour. During the Middle Ages the Catholic Church used music to express and to arouse religious fervour. In Renaissance Italy a group of poets, musicians, and scholars founded an artistic forum called the Florentine Camerata, where they discussed the rhetorical capacity of music (Palisca 1989). But the first occasion when a strictly musical issue gained a broad political significance was the so-called *Querelle des Bouffons*. The

debate about the primacy of Italian vs. French opera divided not only the leading music theorists and philosophers of the age, but also the French royal house: the king defended the French style, while the queen favoured Italian opera because of its melodic characteristics and *buffa* topics, which presented scenes from the everyday life of common people as opposed to the mythological dramas and more elitist style of the French *opéra lyrique*. This debate foreshadowed criticism of the autocratic political and cultural atmosphere in France – since the opera was a status symbol of the French royal court and aristocracy – in favour of the more democratic Italian cultural products.

With the advent of nation-building processes in nineteenth-century Europe, music became a political instrument to enhance national sentiments. The universal forms were mixed with '*couleur locale*' inspired by 'folk traditions', but in the nationalistic frenzy to emphasise the particular, music was stripped of its cosmopolitan context and moulded into 'national' patterns. The invention of 'authentic' musical traditions is a ubiquitous characteristic of nineteenth-century Europe. The longevity of nations and the stability of culture were seen as an equation in which both sides had to reinforce each other in order to prevail in the future. The cultivation of specific cultural markers (like language or music) was just as important for the self-identification of nations as territorial or social claims.

Nineteenth-century music criticism and national histories of music invented new ways of looking at old stereotypes and disseminated the image of national music on an unprecedented scale. By scrutinising the Hungarian case, this paper discusses the role of music in creating and disseminating stereotypes in nineteenth-century nation-building processes. It will argue that the national element is a matter of perception: who saw what as national, and when?

Music and national consciousness

From the very beginning, the origin of European art music is arguably linked to nationalism, since the Gregorian chants, the earliest musical notations in *neumes*, were the products of an alliance between the Roman Church and Frankish Kings, whose primary goal was the foundation of the Carolingian Empire. In 754 when King Pepin, the father of Charlemagne, accepted the proposal of Pope Stephen II to unite with the Roman Church against the Lombards, he decided to repress the old Gallican liturgy in favour of the Roman one. Charlemagne continued his father's liturgical reforms to unify his expanding multiethnic and multicultural empire under a single rite (Treitler 1974: 338). According to some musicologists (Busse Berger 2005; Levy 1998), during Charlemagne's reign an authoritative antiphony² might have circulated in the Empire from 800–900, until the new musical notation superseded the Gallican chants. The new culture wiped out old traditions and established a new common language.

However, this theory has been criticised because it simplifies the role of folk songs in the 'official' antiphony and does not take account of the countless

local variants, reducing music to its notation. These chants circulated mostly orally: they were exposed to mixture with other local variants, and they also contributed to the development of a unified European musical style. In short, though politics tried to transform and unify musical notation, we cannot speak about a complete European homogeneity since there were persistent local variants that strongly resisted the endeavours to standardise.

Territorial centralisation usually went hand in hand with cultural standardisation. Administrative languages played a vital role in this process of unification, not only for practical reasons but also in a more refined way, to create the image of unity and homogeneity. Benedict Anderson argues that the appearance of the printing press was a major factor in this process. The printing of literary works written in the vernacular greatly influenced the speed and range of their dissemination, thus contributing to the formation of national consciousness and to the creation of 'imagined communities'.

These print-languages laid the bases for national consciousnesses in three distinct ways. First and foremost, they created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars. [. . .] These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community. Second, print-capitalism gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation. (Anderson 1983: 44)

Anderson's theory finds support in the first musical genres to be disseminated in print in the sixteenth century: vernacular songs. These songbooks – Petrucci's book of *frottolas* in Venice (1504), Antico in Rome (1510) Öglin in Augsburg (1512), Attaignant in France (1528) – were intended for local trade and became a lucrative business. Vernacular song genres differed from country to country, just like their languages, in contrast to the international 'Franco-Flemish' idiom of sacred music. These vernacular songs circulated in print and were performed as household music; they can be considered a kind of forerunner of later bourgeois entertainment, which, of course, was practised on a much larger scale.

The most dramatic instance was the new 'Parisian' *chanson style*. During the 15th century, the word 'chanson' connoted an international courtly style, an aristocratic lingua franca. A French song in a fixed form might be written anywhere in Europe, by a composer of any nationality whether at home or abroad. The age of printing fathered a new style of French chanson – the one introduced by Attaignant and associated with Claudin de Sermisy – that was actually and distinctively French in the way the frottola was Italian and the Hofweise setting (or Tenorlied) was German. (*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 2001: 690)

While vernacular music was played in households on the continent, England was the first country where public concerts were held in the modern sense of the word; this is where modern concert life was born. The Händelian oratorio was the genre of this public musical self-expression. Ruth Smith argues that the oratoria contained coded subtexts in which Old Testament stories were used to reflect contemporary political debates (Smith 1995).

Athanasius Kircher, the seventeenth-century thinker, remarks in his *Musurgia universalis* (1650) that the French and Italian styles do not please the Germans, and explains:

I think this happens for a variety of reasons. Firstly, out of patriotism and inordinate affection to both nation and country, each nation always prefers its own above others. Secondly, according to the opposing styles of their innate character and then because of custom maintained by long-standing habit, each nation enjoys only its own music that it has been used to since its earliest age. (cited in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 2001: 690)

As early as 1650, expressions like ‘innate character’, ‘custom maintained’, or ‘long-standing habit’ were used to explain the existence of different national styles. In the nineteenth century this rhetoric became the foundation of nationalist discourses all over Europe. However, even before the nineteenth century there was an ongoing discursive tradition and a series of debates about national styles in music. One of the most famous controversies concerning the relationship between music and national consciousness was the *Querelle des Bouffons* (War of the Bouffons), a pamphlet war that took place in France between 1752 and 1754. Instigated by the public performance of Pergolesi’s *La serva padrona* at the Académie Royale de Musique in Paris by a group of travelling Italian actors known as *buffoni* (hence the name of the quarrel), the dispute involved the defenders of the French *tragédie lyrique* style of Lully and Rameau, and the proponents of Italian operatic music. With the exception of the German diplomat Friedrich Melchior Grimm (1723–1807), all the participants in the pamphlet war were French. From the beginning the quarrel also had a political tint, since the French *lyrique* style was associated with the royal court, and the Italian style with free public music making. With a slight exaggeration we might say that one represented the stiff, aristocratic world, while the other the more democratic, bourgeois society. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, together with other contributors to the *Encyclopédie*, was a supporter of Italian opera. One aspect of the quarrel was the relation of language and music: melody must originate from speech, Rousseau argued; it should follow the Italian operatic style and should not collapse into an artificial style of singing, as in the French *tragédie lyrique*.

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), the philosopher, folk-song collector, and protestant preacher, forged a link between the romantic ideology of culture and nationalism. Like Rousseau, Herder argued that language and music were strongly connected with each other and that language, as the world-view of a cultural community, was the most authentic expression of the nation’s soul or *ethos*. Herder maintained that no language, hence no nation, could be deemed superior to another. Small nations contribute to the universal treasury of human civilisation as much as the powerful big nations. Anticipating modern semiotics, Herder extended the concept of language to other aspects of culture and learned behaviour (such as customs, dress, and art), and he argued that every cultural component is an authentic expression of the

collective spirit and character of the nation. Thus the concept of *authenticity* was born and became a dominant ideology of the arts until the emergence of the twentieth-century avant-garde movement. The expression or representation of authenticity was regarded as both an inherent property and a goal of Art (Schaeffer 2002).

Music and discourse: how did nineteenth-century authors describe the national element in music?

One of the most significant aspects of nineteenth-century musical culture is its prevalence in public discourse and literary texts. The aesthetic currency and the social function of music were never so important as in nineteenth-century Europe. *Ut pictura poesis* had gradually been replaced by *ut musica poesis*. This is the century that fostered both the emancipation of instrumental music and the development of musical genres related to texts, such as the Romantic *lied* and opera. Paradoxically, the century that elevated the aesthetic position of pure instrumental music to unprecedented stature also fervently pursued the conceptualisation and definition of music in relation to language and the literary imagination.

By embedding music in nationalist discourses, referring to music in national terms, and comparing it to national languages, certain musical textures and pieces came to be regarded as representations of national identity. The perception of national music in the nineteenth century was mostly a product of the interplay between cultural practice and discourse, and was not grounded in any scholarly (ethno)musicological research.

European art music came to be defined in national terms in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, the roots of the idea of a *national music* can be traced back to the seventeenth century, when the debate about musical *styles* began: 'The concept of *style* refers to a manner or mode of expression, the way in which musical gestures are articulated. In this sense, it can be seen to relate to the concept of *identity*' (Beard and Gloag 2005: 170). Styles are characterised by technical elements such as types of melody, rhythm, or certain features of harmony and their relation to each other. Styles may also determine historical periodisation. The term emerged in the late Baroque and the Enlightenment with the impulse to categorise, and was soon used by German theorists such as Athanasius Kircher and Johann Mattheson.

The Jesuit polymath Kircher in his *Musurgia universalis* (1650) used the word 'national' when referring to different musical styles; the influential German music theorist Mattheson also wrote about national styles in *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739; see Ratner 1980). Charles Rosen applied 'style' in *The Classical Style* to refer to a common practice, a kind of *shared language*. In *Der Stil in der Musik* (1911), Adler described the history of music as a history of style. The ethno-musicologist Philip Bohlman argues that the shared social dimension of styles are crucial for their construction and recognition (Bohlman 1988).

Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1749–1818) in the introduction to his *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* ([1788] 1984) compares music to language and argues that music is the language of the emotions/senses (*Empfindung*). To explain his thoughts about the nature of musical language he applied the language paradigm and terminology of the school of Port-Royal des Champs. The Port-Royal grammar had an immense impact on modern philosophy by claiming that all languages can be described with a universal logic and structure. Forkel tried to write a universal ‘grammar’ for music. The most significant novelty of his theory was the idea that music can be analysed in structural terms, and music as a semiotic system can convey meanings similar to language. Another important aspect of his system was the claim that in music we could differentiate between an ‘absolute beauty’ that is universal to all the people, and a ‘relative beauty’ that is expressed in *national* or *individual* characters. According to Forkel, relative *national* beauty expresses the emotional character of the nation’s most cultivated minds.

Christian Gottfried Körner (1756–1831) was the first to theorise the representation of national character in music. In *Die Charakterdarstellung in der Musik (Characterisation in Music, [1795] 1960)* Körner argued that music is perfectly suited to depict character. It becomes comprehensible to the mind – not only to the emotions – when the intellect imposes certain boundaries on the seemingly boundless and incomprehensible musical material. The way we perceive art in general, and by implication the art of music in particular, is always pre-figured by the mind trained to conceptualise the surrounding world.

Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773–1798) and Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853) continued to conceive and discuss music in terms of language. In their *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders (Heartfelt Outpourings of an Art-loving Friar, [1797] 1997)*, which became very popular in Romanticism, they introduced a new paradigm. According to them, art has epistemic value, and artistic experience can lead to knowledge. They ranked music as the highest art form, and saw it as the medium having ultimate ontological and epistemological value. Following Wackenroder’s sudden death, Tieck published another book from the fragments left behind by his friend, *Phantasien über die Kunst, für Freunde der Kunst (Fantasies about Art for Art Lovers, [1799] 1994)*, which claimed that the history of every nation started with music. Music is the invention of poets and historians. Music therefore is essential to the lives of nations.

Johann Gottfried Herder was also influenced by Rousseau’s ideas about the common origin of language and music, and by Johann Georg Hamann’s (1730–1788) theories of language and knowledge. Hamann claimed that the ability to think rests on language. Herder maintained that language represents a nation’s ethos, and that no language, and no nation, should be deemed superior to any other. As a collector of folk songs he argued that song and music are the true expressions of a people’s soul, because, just like language, music is a social product that reflects a community and determines it. Music

became the *language* – the ‘raison’ – of Art, while it was still conceived through language.

Music – because of its universally intelligible, abstract, and emotional nature – was regarded the supreme art form with the highest ontological and epistemological value. Paradoxically, while music was seen as a medium with an important explanatory value, the art of arts, it was still defined and conceptualised in terms of language. With the advent of nineteenth-century nationalism, music was often (but certainly not always) conceptualised in national terms, regarded as the most perfect expression of the national soul. The various perceptions and assessments of music accumulated, resulting in an increased interest in musical practice. Music as cultural practice, music as discourse, and music in discourse had an important role in creating and shaping the public sphere of the nineteenth century. When the mere curiosity and passion for national culture, folklore, and history in the mid-century gradually assumed an increasingly obvious political character, music went along. It became a symbol of national identity, and musical practice became intertwined with the politics of culture. Music was part of the institutionalisation of national discourses.

In nineteenth-century Europe, the institutionalisation of vernacular literatures and the writing of the first literary histories went hand in hand with the publication of the first national music histories. These national histories were not only epiphenomena of European political and social movements, but also active agents in the process of nation-building. The independence of music from other aspects and fields of culture was just an illusion. Never before was music so directly linked with politics as in the nineteenth century, and never before had music such an impact on social-political events as in the nineteenth century when instrumental music came of age. Most studies of nineteenth-century musical culture present the relation of music and politics as a one-way engagement, in which music was a reflection or representation of politics. Here I wish to discuss music as an active agent of culture and not simply as a product of its age. Nineteenth-century political discourses and the discourses about arts used the same *topoi*, the same metaphors, images, and rhetorical strategies, and the two referents constructed by these discourses, music and politics, were deeply and inevitably interlinked. Music, hailed for being typically national, was actually a joint product of different ethnic cultures; it became baptised as specifically ‘national’ in nineteenth-century historiographies, the press and literature. National discourses in general affected musical practice and musical perception.

Hungarian music in discourse

The *verbunkos* and the Hungarian song (*magyar nóta*) were the two main styles competing with each other. Since both of them were based on small and fixed patterns, ‘Hungarian music’ was in danger of becoming stiff and stuck in these

stereotypical motifs. The competition of the *verbunkos* with the Hungarian song or *nóta* can be described in geographic terms: the composers preferring *verbunkos* (Bihari, Lavotta, Csermák, Mosonyi, Erkel, Liszt) were born in the western part of Hungary and had a German musical education; while the composers preferring popular folk songs (Egressy, Szénfy, Simonffy, Szerdahelyi) were born in Eastern Hungary and were closer to the folk culture, the rural culture of Hungary. Gusztáv Szénfy (1819–1875) argued in his *Magyar zenekönyv* (*Hungarian music book*, 1858–59) that the difference of style was linked to the regional character of the composers. His ideas later became known as ‘area theory’. The first Hungarian musical journal, *Zenészeti Lapok* (*Journal of Music*, 1860–1876), published several chapters from this book. One of the editors, the composer and publicist Kornél Ábrányi (1822–1903), was inspired by Szénfy’s ‘area theory’ and based his own concepts about Hungarian music on this geographical distinction.

This geographical division soon became an ideology. According to Szénfy, music is the art most capable of expressing emotions. Every nation is characterised by its own individual spirit that distinguishes it from other nations. However, the nations can also share common, universal emotions, which are reflected in similar and mixed musical idioms. In Europe, there are two distinct musical trends: a Western and an Eastern one. The Eastern style can be found in Hungary, Transylvania, Croatia, Slovenia, Turkey and Russia; it has, according to him, a ‘fabulous tranquillity’, as opposed to the light, simple, melodic Italian songs. Eastern music is more masculine, while Western music is more feminine (in *Zenészeti Lapok* 1862: 2, 282–3). He concludes that the most valuable Hungarian music is Eastern, because it is ‘pure’. The music in Western Hungary is a blend of all kinds of national traditions and different styles and does not reflect faithfully the Hungarian soul. Szénfy proposed that the Eastern style should be institutionalised as the official musical ‘mother tongue’ of the Hungarians, following the example of the linguists, who also standardised the Eastern dialect.

Territory as landscape gained popularity in nineteenth-century national narratives. One can view ‘national landscapes’ as culturally defined topographies which often fail to coincide with the geopolitical space. Landscapes belong more to the realm of imagination than to reality, and they become the artistic space of national myths and stereotypes. The spatial imaginary played an important role in ‘locating’ nineteenth-century Hungarian music on the cultural map of Europe. Part of the nation-building process was to create a national sonic space. Writing about the aspects of national music was an important component of nationalising the sonic spaces of nations.

According to Gábor Mátray (1797–1875), the author of the first Hungarian music history, ‘The most effective means of expressing the characteristics of a nation is Music. While appealing to the mind, at the same time it enraptures the heart too. It is the most perfect instrument to excite and affirm national feelings’ (Mátray 1984: 132). Mátray was one of the pioneers who

institutionalised Hungarian music, and he was among the founders of a Hungarian musicological terminology. He was born in an ethnic German family as Gabriel Rothkrepf. He Magyarised his name in 1837, joining a trend among non-Magyar intellectuals living in Hungary. In 1828 he began to publish in serial form his *A' Muzsikának közönséges története (General History of Music)* in the journal *Hasznos Multságok (Practical Entertainment)*, and later in the *Tudományos Gyűjtemények (Scientific Journal)*. Mátray claimed: 'The nation lives in its music' (*Ibid.*). This stipulation paraphrased another renowned statement allegedly first used by count István Széchenyi (1791–1860): 'The nation lives in its language.' The similarity between the two sentences is more than a rhetorical coincidence.

Language became the most important marker of national identity and a central element of Hungarian cultural nationalism. The right to use the Hungarian language in the Habsburg Monarchy became the focal point of the Hungarian nobility's resistance to the Emperor Joseph II (1741–1790), who wanted to make German the official language of the Empire. In the eighteenth century, the concept of the nation was used in a restricted sense, referring only to the nobility, which claimed to 'own' the Hungarian nation by right of ancestry. The members of the other social classes were excluded from this national concept. In the nineteenth century, the concept of the nation became redefined as a community with a common cultural heritage. Hungarian language and literature were regarded as the most important elements of the cultural heritage. In the nineteenth century, music was compared to language as the prime expression of national identity. Language and music were understood as evidence for the uniqueness and the almost exotic isolation of Hungarian culture, though it was also claimed that this culture was organically European.

Analysing Hungarian music, Mátray claimed that the most obvious characteristics of Hungarian national music were: 1) a noble dignity, which triggers the listeners' special esteem; 2) a seriousness and pride, which suggest to foreigners that Hungarian music is full of sensibility and masculine passion; 3) a joyful spirit and agility; 4) a complex simplicity and the expression of national freedom; and 5) that it expressed the innocent purity of the national soul (*Ibid.*: 137). Mátray was the first to elaborate on the task of writing about music in Hungarian. He also contributed a great deal to the collection of folk songs, and, as the musical director of the Hungarian National Theatre, Mátray supported the foundation of a Hungarian Opera. As the chief editor of the two leading literary journals of the age, *Honművész (Art of the Fatherland, 1833–41)* and *Regélő (Legends, 1833–41)*, he was the founder of discourse about Hungarian music.

The editors of the *Zenészeti Lapok*, Mihály Mosonyi (1815–1870), Kornél Ábrányi (1822–1903), and István Bartalus (1821–1899), wanted to propagate Hungarian art music: 'Hungarians by nature are meant to cultivate music' – its first issue proclaimed. The same article characterised Hungarian music as 'naturally rare' and 'uniquely rich' (ZL 1860: 1, 2). These editors were the

first to complain about the tendency to play 'one awful *csárdás* after the other'. Mosonyi complained in his article on *Hungarian Music*:

Ancient Hungarian music vanishes because of the *csárdás*-makers and because of the bad musical taste of a public longing only for entertainment, which will lead to the disappearance of the nobler musical instincts. Since Gypsy bands are playing mainly French quartets, polkas, waltzes, and Italian operas, the ancient originality of Hungarian music has been neglected – especially in the capital – and it begins to vanish to such a degree that its honourable charm and chivalrous pathos, which are the main characteristics of Hungarian music, no longer affect the Hungarian public. (*Zenészeti Lapok* 1860–1862: 1, 5).

According to Mosonyi, Hungarians have noble musical instincts, thus Hungarian music is excellent by nature, but began to deteriorate under the influence of French, German, and Italian music. The Gypsy musicians were the cause of this decline because in their performances they mixed Hungarian elements with non-Hungarian musical styles. Though written almost simultaneously with Liszt's *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*, this statement sharply contrasts with it. Liszt pleaded for Gypsy music, arguing that Hungarian music must be grateful that the Gypsies have made it known all over Europe.

Unlike Liszt, Samuel Friedrich Stock, a German notary in Nagyszeben (Sibiu/Hermannstadt), claimed that the Gypsy musicians were damaging the image of Hungarian music. In his Transylvanian music history, *Geschichte der Musik in Siebenbürgen*, published in 1814 in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, he compared Hungarian music to German musical culture: 'It is not by chance that for centuries Hungarians were famous for their horses and swords, and not for their culture. Music was detested among Hungarians, and it became the property of the Gypsies' (Stock 1929: 50). After discussing and expressing his appreciation for the role of the Germans in the musical culture of Transylvania, Stock asserted that contrary to German music, Hungarian music is played by the 'lowest of the low, by the trash of society', the Gypsies (*Ibid.*).

The metaphors used when talking about Hungarian music proved to be resilient. Mosonyi might have taken the expression of 'chivalric pathos' from Heinrich Klein, who wrote in his essay *Ueber die Nationaltänze der Ungarn* that 'there is no German dance that can compete with the heroic nature of the Hungarian national dances' (cited in Legány 1962: 149). The increased interest in *otherness* and the *exotic* contributed to the appreciation of Hungarian music. The Hungarians themselves stressed their *otherness*, and tried to present it as an advantage. As Mosonyi writes: 'Even though a Hungarian composer can easily imitate the French, Italian and German style, the foreigner – who did not spend his life with us and did not learn to feel and think with us – will never be able to create a Hungarian masterpiece' (*Zenészeti Lapok* 1860–1862: 1, 6). Mosonyi was German by origin and had been called Brand, but he regarded himself as Magyar; he included himself in those of 'us' who feel and think the same way. According to Mosonyi, a nation was

not an ethnic community, but a community with a common cultural heritage. Mosonyi connects language with the spirit of the language community, and argues that ‘Hungarian music, just like the whole Hungarian nation, is isolated in the middle of Europe as a magical Promised Land’ (ZL 1861: 1, 190).

Gyula Rózsavölgyi complained in his *Egy Magyar zenetörténelmi mű szükségességéről* (*The Necessity of a Hungarian Music History*) that Hungarian musical education and practice lagged behind the developments of Hungarian art music (*Zenészet Lapok* 1860–1862: 1, 7). Therefore it was necessary to write a proper Hungarian music history, which would contribute to the refinement of musical taste in the country.

Mosonyi also often lamented the poor musical education of the Hungarians, and he compared Hungarian music to a rich and mysterious jungle that should be transformed into a cultivated park (*Zenészet Lapok* 1860–1862: 1, 11). However ‘exotic’ and ‘unique’ it might be, Hungarian music had to be cultivated and adapted to European standards, according to the general principles of Western music theory. In another article Mosonyi asserted: ‘As drama elevates the language and develops national feeling and spirit, opera will advance Hungarian music’ (*Zenészet Lapok* 1860–1862: 1, 51). In *The Opera and the Hungarian National Theatre (A dalmű s Magyar nemzeti színház)* he gave some guidelines to Hungarian operas: 1) he emphasised the importance of *Sprachgesang*; 2) he suggested that the arias should follow the rhythms of Hungarian speech; 3) he postulated that the melodies ought to be original Hungarian; and 4) he pleaded that the choruses be carefully composed since they are the focal points of the opera and can inspire feelings and a national spirit. Hungarian opera should not be content with the cheap *csárdás* and *verbunkos* ‘experts’, but should be a musical historical tableau (*Zenészet Lapok* 1860–1862: 1, 66). Mosonyi tried to promote Wagner’s concepts of opera and musical drama, and at this point he came in conflict with Erkel, who preferred the Italian operatic style.

Although Mosonyi stressed the specificity and uniqueness of Hungarian music, he urged that Hungarians should shape their art music according to European standards and should not remain stuck in their ‘folk idioms’. Mosonyi objected to the proposition of one Hungarian reader living in Paris, who, in a letter addressed to the editors of the *Zenészet Lapok*, pleaded for the re-introduction and use of the *tárogató*, an ancient Hungarian wind instrument, in Hungarian orchestras. He compared this suggestion to living in ancient Hungarian tents instead of using the new, comfortable and beautiful buildings (*Zenészet Lapok* 1860–1862: 1, 148).

Zenészet Lapok contributed to the elevation of Hungarian music by fashioning it to European standards while at the same time emphasising the importance of national characteristics. When talking about Chopin’s music, Ábrányi wrote that ‘a composer can become famous only if he is able to elevate his nation’s music to a world-famous level’ (*Zenészet Lapok* 1860–1862: 1, 155). *Zenészet Lapok* became a central forum for Hungarian musical life

during its fifteen years of existence by creating a language for musical discourse in general and for national music in particular.

The discourse about national music can be approached as a narrative that first of all tried to define itself and its own role within the broader context of nation-building processes. “Hungarian” music was created by a complex web of ideologies, defined on the one hand by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century aesthetics, and influenced on the other hand by the rise of nationalism in European political and cultural discourse. It was the dynamic interactions among cultural memory, practice, and discourse that made a certain style *national*.

Cultural memory and national music: the image of *verbunkos* as Hungarian music

We may describe cultural memory as the way in which people with a common historical knowledge and cultural consciousness perceive the past that shapes their present identity. Sharing a common cultural memory and invoking the legacy of a common cultural heritage are important factors in constituting cultural identity.

Memory – whether collective or personal – becomes important when one wants to define or redefine, present or re-present oneself. Every newly formed nation wanted to remember and reconstruct its past and thus to create temporal and topological *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989: 7). While remembering seems at first sight to be an entirely natural – and often uncontrollable – process, collective remembering or commemoration is largely controlled, manipulated, and contingent. In order to understand remembering we have to interpret and understand the intentions of the ‘re-producers’ of memories and the motivations, and the reactions of the ‘consumers’ of memories.

Cultural memories are transmitted both in time and space. In studying cultural memory one should consider both its *temporal aspect*, denoting the time span in which memories have been passed from one generation to the next, and its *topographic aspect*, referring to the spatial territories where these memories were circulating. A memory that seems to be ages old and typical for a specific cultural community can actually be just newly created – for example for political reasons – and can be borrowed from another cultural community. Nineteenth-century nationalism often manipulated both the temporal and the topographic aspects of cultural memory, which could result in serious debates. Such was the case of the so-called *Vadrózsa-pör* (the quarrel of the wild roses), a debate about the originality of national ballads in Transylvania involving a series of pamphlets written by Hungarian and Romanian intellectuals in the 1860s, which was triggered by the publication of a volume of folk ballads by the Hungarian collector János Kriza (1811–1875).

Memories were unearthed and remembered, or, if there were none, they were created or forged. Memories are not homogeneous, but can be divided

along power relations into dominant and subversive memories, or into controlled and uncontrolled memories. Can we describe the circulation of memories with one universal model or system? Or, on the contrary, does every age have its own specific way of remembering and commemorating the past? If memory is constantly changing, how is it possible that certain units of memory (the name of a hero, a significant battle or other political event, etc.) are nevertheless remembered, passed on from generation to generation, and continue to evoke strong emotions (like nationalist sentiments) century after century? Nationalism consciously used and shaped collective memories; and the restructuring of memories inherited from previous centuries became more significant than ever before. According to Ann Rigney, ‘Once cultural memory is seen as something dynamic, as a result of recursive acts of remembrance, rather than as something like an unchanging and pre-given inheritance, then the way is opened to thinking about what could be called “memory transfer” ’ (Rigney 2005: 25). Following this line of thought we shall focus on memory transfer as *cultural recycling*.

Music is less tied to national boundaries than literature, which is linguistically defined. Nevertheless, music can create and establish national memories. It is not the use of the 16-measure binary section form motif in itself that makes a piece of music Hungarian, but rather its historicity and its place in cultural memory. *Verbunkos* has been associated with Hungarian music since the eighteenth century: Mozart, Haydn and Schubert use *verbunkos* in their pieces, and often they refer to it as *Ungaresca* style. In the nineteenth century Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsodies popularised the *verbunkos* and, as the title suggests, identified this type of music with Hungarian style. However, the topology and geopolitical location of the *verbunkos* is highly problematic. The *Rákóczy Song* is a good example of how cultural memory is recycled through music and how music can become a medium for the remediation and dissemination of national stereotypes.

In 1845, following his concert in Budapest, Berlioz wrote to his friend Humbert Ferrand about the stunning effect that his Rákóczy March exerted on the Hungarian public: when the main theme returned *fortissimo*, the hitherto calm public erupted in an unspeakable explosion of emotion and stampings of feet (Hector Berlioz Website). Nothing could stop the volcano of violent passions triggered by this music. Berlioz’s letter reveals how significant and alive this tune was in the cultural memory of the Hungarians. But why and how did the Rákóczy-march and *verbunkos* music come to be regarded as Hungarian *par excellence*? In order to answer this question, pure musicological research is not enough. Only an interdisciplinary investigation might throw some light on the relationship of *verbunkos* to Hungarian national identity.

What is *verbunkos*, and why did it become identified with the Hungarian musical idiom? In an article of 1934 entitled ‘Our folk music and the folk music of neighboring peoples’ (‘Népzénénk és a szomszéd népek népzénéje’), Béla Bartók asserted that the *verbunkos* or *Werbungsmusik* developed under a

strong North-Slavic influence and is a mixture of the musical styles of the neighbouring countries (Szabolcsi 1964: 3).

One telling example of this musical variegation is the *Rákóczi-song*. First it was known as 'Oláh tánc' (Wallachian dance) and appeared with a Slovakian text in the *Vietorisz-Kodex*; a few years later it was published without text in the *Szirmai – Keczerschen Handschrift*. And not until 1780 did the final version, which later became known as *Rákóczi-nóta* (Rákóczi-song), appear with a Hungarian text. These books contained virginal music, or music for clavichord, and characteristically they included songs written in different styles. We can find in them German minuets as well as 'Hungarian' material (*Ungarescas*), or such oddities as a Hungarian minuet written in binary measure (Dobszay 1998: 267). The *Apponyi-Handschrift* dates from around 1730, and is the first document that records the transition of styles towards the more widely disseminated Hungarian songs. The sequence of quavers that characterised the *Ungarescas* is replaced in the *verbunkos* with dotted rhythms. The figurations of these dotted rhythms result in the typical 16-measure binary section form. This typically Hungarian 'manner' could not have become so famous in Europe had it not conformed to the classical rules of harmony. In this way melodies were regulated by classical harmonic patterns, which could serve as a base for the capricious modulations, figurations, and variations from which Hungarian dance music of the period of 16-measure binary sections arose. Also the instrumentation for these dances became fixed by the late baroque period: violins, bass, dulcimer, and clarinet. While the repertory of musicians playing popular music became broader and incorporated more elements of art music, the composers of art music were also more and more interested in the motifs and melodies of dance music, and of popular music in general. By the end of the eighteenth century there is almost no composer who did not try his talent with the Hungarian *verbunkos*. More and more pieces were set to bigger orchestras. Mozart included Hungarian passages in his A Major violin concerto (K. 219, 3rd movement); he used Hungarian dance music patterns in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* to suggest a Turkish atmosphere; and we can also find examples of Hungarian dance motifs in the *Concerto for flute and harp in C Major*, K. 299 in the final passage of the rondo section. We should not forget the rondo with Hungarian color in Haydn's D Major piano concerto (Hob. XVIII), the *verbunkos*-like style in Beethoven's 3rd Symphony, or Diabelli's Hungarian dances.

The adaptation of Hungarian motifs became very fashionable by the end of the eighteenth century both in Hungary and in other parts of Europe. When the Hungarians realised that the European public welcomed Hungarian music with enthusiasm, they themselves began to use it and export it more and more consciously. As a consequence, music began to be regarded in Hungarian discourse as a national symbol *par excellence*. As mentioned before, Liszt claimed in his *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (1859) that since Hungarian music was carried and performed in Europe by the Gypsies, it profited enormously from the Gypsy's inventiveness and virtuosity. Liszt's

opinion reflects a nineteenth-century infatuation with the exotic, but it is based on the undeniable historical fact that the Gypsy musicians born in Hungary became famous and were appreciated by the European public. One of the best-known of these Gypsy musicians was János Bihari (1764–1827), who pioneered the *verbunkos* style. Hungarian music was associated with the Gypsies in European cultural consciousness already in the eighteenth century, as shown by visual representations of Hungarian music and musicians in numerous drawings, painting, and lithographs.

Berlioz mentions in his *Mémoires* that his Viennese friends suggested the idea of playing the Rákóczy March for a Hungarian public, and that it was Ferenc Erkel (1810–1893), the conductor of the National Theatre in Pest, who gave Berlioz the musical score. The Rákóczy March was therefore already widely known in Hungary and in neighbouring Vienna; it stirred up national feelings in the public prior to the revolution of 1848.

The *Rákóczy-nóta* (Rákóczy-song) became widely played in Hungary during the *kuruc* uprising and the following war of independence (1706–1711) led by Prince Ferenc Rákóczy (1676–1735). This Hungarian revolt became well known in Europe and was regarded as a war against Habsburg absolutism. Hungarians were associated with the idea of freedom fighters even from the sixteenth century, when Hungary became the Western border of the expanding Ottoman Empire. The association of Hungarians with military practices had already become embedded in European cultural memory. It is no wonder that in the upheaval of the revolution of 1848 – another war of independence against Habsburg rule – the Rákóczy theme again became popular not only in music, but also in literature and the fine arts: witness the many dramas, novels, poems and paintings inspired by the Rákóczy uprising.

The image of the Hungarians as soldiers became a stereotype. Many *magyar huszárs* (Hungarian soldiers) of noble origin emigrated to France after the Habsburgs suppressed the Rákóczy revolution. These *huszárs* – in French *hussards* – were quite popular in the circles of the anti-Habsburg French court and aristocracy. The French literati idealised the Hungarian *huszár*: for example Montesquieu created a highly idealised image of the Hungarian nobility, emphasising their struggle for freedom and independence (Köpeczi 1985: 319–36). This image was recycled in French literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The *huszár* became a popular figure of plays and novels. One of the first records of such a character on the French stage is in the play by Ronchon de Chabannes entitled *Heureusement* (1762). In the nineteenth century the *huszárs* appear more frequently in the theatre, especially in operettas and vaudevilles (Hankiss 1935: 67). Stendhal in *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1839) and Balzac in *Le Lys dans la vallée* (1835) also use the figure of the *huszár*. French Romantic artists and travel writers sympathised with the Hungarian revolution of independence, and they often mention the *huszárs* as a symbol of freedom. Auguste de Gerando gave one of the most suggestive descriptions about the ornamented dress and the chivalrous nature of the *huszárs*, stressing the exotic oriental origins of the MAGYARS (cited in

Rubin 1982: 57–8). In French cultural memory the Magyar *huszárs* represented the joyful hero who assumed mythical properties through the ages. No wonder, then, that Berlioz included the passage of the Hungarian Plains in his *Faust Symphony*.

But why was *verbunkos* music, a mixture of Magyar, Slovak, Serbian and Romanian cultural influences, identified as a Hungarian style? Music history needs again to join forces with cultural history in order answer this question. Hungary was at that time the second largest country under Habsburg rule. However, the inhabitants of Hungary were of multi-ethnic origin: Magyars, Slovaks, Serbs, Croatians, Romanians and Germans constituted the population, among whom Magyars were the largest group. In the eighteenth century, cultural-political identity was bound to the land and not to the culture of a specific ethnic group. This *Hungarus* identity began to disintegrate slowly by the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the former patriotism – loyalty to one's country – was replaced by nationalism – a form of cultural identity defined by 'national' values.

The Magyars, since they were the largest group living on the territory of Hungary, tried to shape their separate *Hungarian* identity and to distinguish themselves both from the German-speaking population and from the other ethnicities. Magyar – a word used as a synonym for Hungarian – national consciousness was seen as a direct and organic continuation of the *Ungaresca* or *Hungarus* identity. Even though the *Hungarus* concept had disintegrated by the mid-nineteenth century, the new *nationalist ideology* merged with the *older terminology*, thus creating a sense of national continuity and authenticity.

Verbunkos music was identified with Hungary and Hungarian style because this music had been played on the territory of Hungary for at least two centuries, and its early versions were mentioned in German collections as *Ungarescas* or Hungarian dances. However, the concept of *Ungaresca* in the eighteenth century meant something different from the Magyar (or Hungarian) concept of the nineteenth century. This semantic shift was in disjunction with the actual cultural reality. This is how the *Ungaresca* style, later known as *verbunkos* music, came to be viewed as Magyar-Hungarian national music *par excellence*. In the nineteenth century, art was regarded as evidence of 'national excellence' everywhere in Europe and became an ideology that could nourish national pride. Music became one of the most important tools of this ideology.

A certain memory *is* never national in essence, but is only perceived as such. The way a tune recalls the image of a nation involves a long process of identification. Recognition is always cultural and temporal. What and how does one recognise? It is strongly linked to identity, whether we have to recognise (i.e. identify) something or we want others to recognise us. In order to recognise something, we have to have a notion of the thing or to have seen or heard it before. Recognition involves memory. Paul Ricoeur argues in *The Course of Recognition* that we have to separate the *idem* identity (same as itself) from the *ipse* identity (changing identity). The *ipse* identity is always grounded in historical conditions (2005: 101). Ricoeur introduces a third kind: narrative

identity, which places the *idem* and *ipse* identity in dialectic relation. Narrative identity also involves another dialectic: identity confronted by otherness. Identity in this sense has two sides: a private and a public one. According to Ricoeur:

It is worth noting that ideologies of power undertake, all too successfully, unfortunately, to manipulate these fragile identities through symbolic mediations of action, and principally thanks to the resources for variation offered by the work of narrative configuration, given that it is always possible to narrate differently. These resources of reconfiguration then become resources for manipulation. The temptation regarding identity that lies in the withdrawal of *ipse*-identity to *idem*-identity thrives on this slippery slope. (Ricoeur 2005: 104)

Nineteenth-century nationalism, as expressed in public discourse and in the arts, was promoting this shift from *ipse*-identity to a consciousness of *idem*-identity. The first music histories and literary representations of national music can be approached with an analysis of *narrative identity*, which is an interplay of the *ipse* and *idem* identities. This interplay was used – both consciously and unconsciously – to conceptualise national music and to influence its reception by national and European audiences.

To sum up: although one could trace the origins of national styles in music back to antiquity, only in the nineteenth century were certain musical idioms first classified as *national*. Like every categorisation, the definition of national musical styles was to some extent arbitrary and contingent on political circumstances. As we have seen, these national elements were not the results of organic development, but were created by the transnational interplay of auto-images (how one sees oneself) and hetero-images (how others see one), shaped by practice and discourse. National histories of music and professional journals created a discourse and a musical jargon that formed our idea of national styles. As Jim Samson points out, ‘the distinctiveness of individual national styles was greatly exaggerated at the time’ (Samson 2002: 598). Though a significant part of the narrative about national music could be described as the ‘invention of tradition’, to use Eric Hobsbawm’s (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) phrase, some of its features recycled and remediated resilient cultural memories and stereotypes. Unlike twentieth-century modernism, the national element in nineteenth-century art music was not a matter of musical syntax and morphology distilled from folk music, but a romantic image of remediated stereotypes identified as national.

Notes

1 In his book *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (1854), the Viennese music critic Eduard Hanslick (1825–1904) described the essence of music as tonally moving forms, in reaction to the metaphysical explanations of the Wagnerite aesthetics. Hanslick is seen as the father of musical formalism.

2 An antiphonary is a liturgical book in the Roman Catholic Church intended for use *in choro* (i.e. in the liturgical choir). It contained antiphons that were sung at various points of the liturgy.

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