



**UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)**

**Opera and nineteenth-century nation-building : the (re)sounding voice of nationalism**

Lajosi-Moore, K.K.

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Lajosi, K. K. (2008). Opera and nineteenth-century nation-building : the (re)sounding voice of nationalism

**General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

**Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

## Chapter Four

### *Conceptualising National Music in Hungary and Romania*

#### *Music in Discourse and Practice*

“Any aspect of reality that we wish to grasp has been formed in advance by language, which supplies the categories in which we perceive and interpret that reality.” (Carl Dahlhaus)<sup>130</sup>

“The history of a concept is not wholly and entirely that of progressive refinement, its continuously increasing rationality, its abstraction gradient, but that of its various fields of constitution and validity, that of its successive rules of use, that of the many theoretical contexts in which it developed and matured.” (Michel Foucault)<sup>131</sup>

#### I. Music and discourse

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 high as in nineteenth-century Europe. *Ut pictura poesis* had gradually been replaced by *ut musica poesis*. The function of music changed: from a form of entertainment it became the ultimate aesthetic experience. It 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, fervently pursued also the conceptualisation and definition of music in relation to language and the literary imagination.

Scholarly evidence seems to show that the discourse about music affects not only the listening process but also the compositional techniques. Nevertheless, this interconnection has seldom been studied either by musicologists or by cultural historians in reference to the emergence of nineteenth-century national musical

---

<sup>130</sup> Dahlhaus, Carl: *Foundations of Music History* (Trans. J.B. Robinson), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 72.

<sup>131</sup> Foucault, Michel: *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith), New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, [n.d.], 4.

canons. This chapter shall focus on the relation between discourse about music and the formation of national musical canons, as well as on the cultural-historical aspects of the conceptualisation of what was *national* in Hungary and Romania. The following pages are going to examine the dynamism between nationalistic discourses and musical compositions, as well as the function of music in the development of the public sphere in nineteenth-century Hungary and Romania. I shall argue, on the one hand, that music, as a central factor of cultural nationalism, became a marker of national identity and it had an important function in the construction of the public sphere, and, on the other, that the aesthetic and cultural role of music cannot be comprehended without considering its social and cultural context.

The term *discourse* as used in this dissertation denotes all those practices of written and oral communication that contribute to the definition and conceptualisation of a specific topic. Following the works of Michel Foucault and his theory concerning the relationship of discourse, knowledge, and power, I argue that discourse about music influenced the way people perceived music. By embodying music in nationalist discourses, referring to music in national terms, and comparing it to national language, the reception of certain musical textures and pieces came to be regarded as representations of national identity. As I have argued in the previous chapter, the perception of national music in the nineteenth century was most of the time a product of the interplay between cultural practice and discourse<sup>132</sup>, and was not grounded in any scholarly (ethno)musicological research. Though ethno-musicological investigations emerge only in the twentieth century,<sup>133</sup> when, in spite of the new evidences that questioned the historical accounts and musical perception of the previous century, the older discourse about national music lingered on in cultural memory.

In the nineteenth-century language was conceived as a world-view, not as a medium for the representation of ideas but as *the medium* through which our perception of the world is shaped. This view substantially contributed to the interpretation of all other aspects of human culture. Language became the ultimate legitimation for the perception of reality. As Foucault argues in *The Order of Things*:

---

<sup>132</sup> I define discourse in a broader sense incorporating oral, written, and visual representations and thematisations of music.

<sup>133</sup> In Romania ethno-musicological research was initiated by Constantin Brăiloiu (1893-1958), the famous ethnologist, and in Hungary by the composers Béla Bartók (1881-1945) and Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967).

“A profound historicity penetrates into the heart of things, isolates and defines them in their own coherence, imposes upon them the forms of order implied by the continuity of time. (...) But as things become increasingly reflexive, seeking the principle of their intelligibility only in their own development, and abandoning the space of representation, man enters in his turn, and for the first time, the field of Western knowledge.”<sup>134</sup>

In this chapter I seek to establish a relationship between nineteenth-century knowledge about national music and its neglected “space of representation”. This space of representation is formed by literary, political or scientific discourses about music and by the different musical practices<sup>135</sup>. How does knowledge about music look like? Where and how was this knowledge created? What was the role of the discourses about music in shaping this knowledge? What was the relation of the discourses and power, and how could they contribute to perceptions of history?

## **II. The conceptualisation of music in the eighteenth and nineteenth century**

### II. 1 Conceptualisation of music in terms of national style

As I have shown in Chapter Two, European art music became 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*.”<sup>136</sup> Styles are characterised by technical elements, such as types of melody, rhythm, 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 theorist such as Athanasius Kircher and Johann Mattheson.

---

<sup>134</sup> Foucault, Michel: *The Order of Things*, New York: Vintage Books, 1994, xxiii.

<sup>135</sup> Such as private and public performance and reception of musical pieces, writing of musical criticism or musical histories, adapting the creative principles of music and sonority in literary works (resulting in the musicality of texts), or the visual representations of music.

<sup>136</sup> *Musicology. The Key Concepts*, (ed. David Beard and Kenneth Gloag), London and New York: Routledge. 2005, 170.

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).<sup>137</sup> 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, an approach that found its culmination in Donald J. Grout’s *History of Western Music* (1960). The German philosopher Theodor Adorno believed that in the time of Monteverdi, when *style* entered the musical vocabulary for the first time, expressions of self-consciousness had already been explored in music. Adorno linked this attitude with Kant’s theory that individuals have a right to freedom through the exercise of moral choice.<sup>138</sup> The ethno-musicologist Philip Bohlman has recently emphasised that style’s shared, social dimension is crucial in its construction and recognition.<sup>139</sup>

## II. 2 Music, a potential medium for representing national character

Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1749-1818), whose name is mostly known for his biography of Johann Sebastian Bach, was the first to regard music theory and history as being part of music and a necessary discipline for musical education. He is therefore considered the father of historical musicology. In the *Introduction* of his *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* (1788)<sup>140</sup>, Forkel compares music to language and argues that music is the language of emotions/senses (*Empfindung*). In order 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<sup>141</sup>. The Port-Royal

<sup>137</sup> See Ratner, Leonard: *Classic music: Expression, Form and Style*, New York: Schirmer Books, 1980.

<sup>138</sup> See Adorno, Theodor: *Philosophy of Modern Music* (Trans. A.G. Mitchell and W.V. Bloomster), London: Sheed and Ward, 1973; *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music* (Trans. E. Jephcott, ed. R. Tiedemann), Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998; *Essays on Music* (Trans. S.H. Gillispie, ed. R. Leppert), Berkeley and London: University California Press, 2002.

<sup>139</sup> Bohlman, Philip V.: *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

<sup>140</sup> Forkel, Johann Nikolaus: “Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik” (1788), In: *Musik zur Sprache gebracht. Musikästhetische Texte aus drei Jahrhunderten*, (Eds. Carl Dahlhaus – Michael Zimmermann), München und Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1984, 120-128.

<sup>141</sup> Port-Royal des Champs is a monastery nearby Paris, which gained world-wide fame for its school of linguistics in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The most significant works of this school – Claude Lancelot: *Nouvelle méthode pour apprendre la langue latine* (1644), Antoine Arnauld-Claude Lancelot: *Grammaire Générale et Raisonnée de Port-Royal* (1660) and Antoine Arnauld-P. Nicole: *La logique ou l’art de penser de Port-Royal* (1662) – were translated and published in many countries in

grammar had an immense impact on modern philosophy by claiming that all languages can be described with 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 thought 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 representation of national character in music. In *Die Charakterdarstellung in der Musik* (The representation of character in music)<sup>142</sup> (1795) Körner argued that contrary to the widely spread view that music is unable to convey thoughts, it actually can express ideas, but in a different way than language. Music, though a different medium than language, is perfectly suitable 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. However, because of its volatile nature, music is less direct than the other sister arts, and requires the active participation of the imagination more than the other artistic media. Harmony, which he defines as the interplay and dynamic procession of rhythm and melody, is the actual mediator in the musical representation of character. As a representative of the pre-Romantic generation, Körner emphasised the primacy of

---

Europe and became important cornerstones of academic curricula. The representatives of the Port-Royal school developed their theories of language universalism and relativism in the spirit of Cartesian thinking. Similar to Descartes’s philosophy the linguists of the Port-Royal differentiated between “raison” (spirit) and body, arguing that the structural and the phonetic parts of a language can be separated. The “raison”, the thinking activity is universal to all the languages, but the bodies are different. They regarded language arbitrary to thinking, maintaining that language is a tool that expresses thoughts. This also entails that all languages are identical as far as thinking is concerned, however, they differ in the signs, which they choose in order to express thinking. Their strongest argument for the dichotomy between structure and sign was the claim that thinking is independent from linguistic sign. The aim of their grammar was to illustrate this. The novelty of their grammar that became very popular in the eighteenth century in France, England and Germany was on the one hand, the elevation of all languages to a scholarly status, on the other hand, the idea that the best way for foreign language acquisition is to learn the grammar of one’s own language.

<sup>142</sup> Körner, Christian Gottfried: “Die Charakterdarstellung in der Musik”, In. Wolfgang Seifert: *Christian Gottfried Körner. Ein Musikästhetiker der deutschen Klassik*. Regensburg: Anhang, 1960, 147-158.

harmony over melody – a musicological issue that has a long history – and thus the superiority of Romantic instrumental music over the music of the preceding centuries based on the accentuation of melody. Though Körner heavily relied on Schiller's ethical theories, in some respects he belonged to the previous generations, represented by Leibniz and Baumgarten. For example, his claim that beauty is inseparable from perfection distanced him from Schiller and Kant. Nevertheless, he was a pioneer in conceptualising the thought that music can express national character and it is able to express the ethos of a nation, as the *musiké* of ancient Greece.

Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773-1798) and Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) continued to conceive and theorise music in terms of language. In their *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (1797)<sup>143</sup> (The heartfelt outpourings of an art-loving friar), 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. This idea had an important impact on Schopenhauer's philosophy and Wagner's music theories. 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* (1799)<sup>144</sup> (Fantasies about Art for the Art lovers), which claimed that the history of every nation started with music. Music is the invention of poets and historians. Music therefore is essential to life of the nations.

Johann Gottfried Herder's (1744-1803) concepts about music and language, music and national character are a synthesis of the previous ideas. 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, who 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 held more superior than any other. As a collector of folk songs he argued that song and music are the true expressions of a peoples' soul, because, just like language, music is a social or community product that reflects this community and determines it. By the time of Herder music attained aesthetic, ontological and epistemological primacy over

---

<sup>143</sup> Wackenroder, Wilhelm Heinrich – Tieck, Ludwig: *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997.

all the other media, but was, paradoxically still defined and conceptualised in terms of the language. Music became the *language* – the “raison”– of Art, while it was still conceived through language.

To sum it up: The influence of the Port-Royal grammar increased the awareness of language in general and of vernacular languages in particular all over Europe. It stimulated a description and comparison of the European languages that emphasised universality on the one hand, and relativity as well as difference on the other. In the late eighteenth century, the crisis of the Enlightenment culminated in the Kantian critiques. These, in turn, gave rise to romantic ideologies and Hegel’s historicism, thus making Germany the major theatre of philosophic thought. Language and the relation of language to its cultural environment became a central issue in the German Aufklärung and Romanticism. Language gradually became to be seen not as a secondary tool of thinking, but as an inseparable part of “raison”. Language shapes the speaker’s view of the world. But language is a community product, thus it can be regarded as an authentic representation of the world-view of a cultural community. Culture and art were perceived in terms of language, as systems of signs that communicate something about the world. By the end of the eighteenth century, emotions were considered as important as reason. Music was more and more associated with the expression of emotions. Nevertheless, it was also seen as a system with a special logic that can formally be described with a “musical grammar”. The understanding of music on the one hand, involved the analysis of the specific structural logic of the medium, on the other hand, the perception and interpretation of the emotions that it represents. Music – because of its universally intelligible, abstract, not conceptual and emotional nature – was regarded the supreme art form with the highest ontological and epistemological value. Music became a recurrent topic of art theories and literary works. Paradoxically, while music was seen as a medium with an important explanatory value of existence, the art of arts, still, it was defined and conceptualised in terms of the language. To a certain extent it was the creation of the current discourse, and it never became something “absolute” or entirely “abstract”. 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 a national soul. The various perceptions and assessments of music accumulated,

---

<sup>144</sup> Wackenroder, Wilhelm Heinrich – Tieck, Ludwig: *Phantasien über die Kunst, für Freunde der*



resulting in an increased interest in musical practice. Musical as a 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 mid-century took a gradually 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 the 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 the epiphenomena of the European political and social movements, but also active agents in the process of nation building. Beginning with the end of the eighteenth-century, the word *national* became engraved in many major European cities on the façades of official buildings and cultural institutions, such as academies, theatres, opera houses, libraries, and galleries of art. The word national entered public discourse, and as a tough squatter it has never since left this very comfortable place.

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 on 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 study music as an active agent of culture and not simply as a product of its age. Aesthetic discourse, which centred on music in the nineteenth century, was as influential a factor of social reality as politics, law or economics. Nineteenth-century public 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. The following pages are going to examine the language use of Hungarian and Romanian musical discourses, and ask, how discourses affected the emergence and development of Hungarian and Romanian national music. I shall analyse the development of Hungarian music histories as a narrative of the nation-building, looking at those nodes

---

*Kunst*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994.

in the narrative of the culture at which music and literary history met. I shall ask, how *national music* was born from the materiality of language and the interplay of memory and history, and how this music shaped national consciousness. Music, which was claimed to be 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. Paradoxically, discourse about music did not simply describe music, but was actually creating its referent. The following pages are going to focus on the dynamic relation of discourse and musical practice in nineteenth-century Hungary and Romania.

### **III. A short historical overview of the practice, conceptualisation and institutionalisation of art music in Hungarian and Romanian culture**

#### III. 1 Musical practice in Hungary

The first written recollections about Hungarian music we can find in the chronicle of Anonymus, the court notary of King Béla III (1172-1196). In his *Gesta Hungarorum*, written after 1196, Anonymous mentioned an event, according to which bishop Gellért (980-1046), the teacher of the son of the Hungarian King István (Stephan) was wandering round Hungary together with his companion, Walther, when he suddenly heard a tune that was very strange to his ears. It was a kind of polyphony of a human voice and the rumbling, murmuring noise of some kind of instrument: a Hungarian peasant girl was singing a song while she was grinding something in a small hand-mill. According to Anonymus’s *Gesta*, bishop Gellért referred to the song as *Symphonia Hungarorum*, symphony of the Hungarians; he asked Walther whether he knew the *modulamen*( key or mode) of the song, and Walther answered that what this was just a *carmen*, a secular song.

Historians and musicologists examined this short account about Gellért’s reflection on Hungarian music, and some claim that the murmuring noise might have been a kind of musical instrument, the so-called hurdy-gurdy, which was a popular

Hungarian musical instrument from the sixteenth century onwards.<sup>145</sup> **(Image 6)** However, it has been proven that the hurdy-gurdy was not an authentic Hungarian instrument, and it came to Hungary from Bavaria much later than the story of bishop Gellért was told. The term “symphonia Hungarorum” is also ambiguous. Was Gellért ironic when he referred to the simple song of the peasant girl as “symphony”? Or did “symphony” have a different meaning then, denoting a kind of musical character or genre? The most plausible answer is that bishop Gellért used the word “symphonia” in the sense of *consonance*, and he did not refer to the name of a specific musical genre.

The chronicle of Ekkehard, *Casus Sancti Galli*, dating from around 1040, is another early written document about the European reception of Hungarian music. In 926 the residents of the abbey in Saint Gallen, Switzerland were escaping from the Hungarian troupes roving on the territory of their country. However, one monk, Heribald stayed behind. While the Hungarians were tapping wine from the barrels of the cloister, they merrily invited Heribald in the cellar to drink and sing with them. Since the day of the Holy Cross was approaching, Heribald began to sing Christian Gregorian songs. The Hungarian soldiers were very much amazed by the “strange tunes”, and they “began to praise their own gods in an awful tone, shouting and vociferously crying”, while dancing and engaging in a chivalric combat demonstration with their weapons. This short anecdote also shows that the cultivated music of Europe was in the tenth century very different from the music of the Hungarians, and that Hungarian songs sounded strange, rough and ear-splitting to the cultivated European listeners.

This is no surprise, because Hungarians just started to move gradually from the Asian steppes to Europe by the end of ninth, beginning of the tenth century. They spoke a Finno-Ugrian language, and their culture was related to that of the steppe Turks. They settled in the Carpathian Basin in about 895 under the pagan chieftain Árpád and they became famous for their incursions into Western Europe. The anecdote from Ekkehard’s chronicle is an account of such a Hungarian incursion. We can speak about Hungary, as a state, only once a descendant of Árpád, Vajk, changed his name, embraced Christianity and was crowned king in 1000. He was later

---

<sup>145</sup> Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon (The Dictionary of Hungarian Ethnology], (Ed. Gyula Ortutay), Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977 [Internet] Available at: <http://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02115/html/5-505.html> , [Accessed on: 27-02-2008] .

canonised as St. Stephen and became one of the most important historical figures of the Hungarians. St. Stephen's kingdom held significant power in the region for 500 years until it was conquered by the expanding Ottoman Empire in a series of battles. The year 1526 and the Battle of Mohács are traditionally regarded as the symbols of the end of Hungary's "Golden Ages". All through the following century, soldiers were often mentioned in relation to Hungary, since Hungary was seen as a "bastion of Europe against the invading Turks". In a multiethnic country as Hungary the soldiers could belong to any of the ethnic communities, but still they considered themselves "Hungarus", an identity linked to the state and country. Hungarian songs and dances connected to chivalric and military practices became a recurring topos in accounts about Hungarian music in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. They remain a constantly returning image also in the visual arts representing Hungarians.

According to the chronicles, when Hungarians demanded in 1060 the restoration of the old pagan religion from King Béla I (1016-1063), the leaders of the crowd were singing "infamous and dishonourable" anti-Christian songs", while the people were answering with a loud "Amen!".<sup>146</sup> It is interesting to note that the collective ritual of anti-Christian protesters is depicted here as a Christian antiphons or responsorial song. This has led some musicologists to argue that the Christian church music, which was actually the art music of the time, infiltrated the musical culture of the people. This resulted in a mixture of forms and genres, tonality and modes. A specific Hungarian Gregorian style was born around the years 1200, which in many aspects was similar to European church music, but still retained the modes and characteristics of earlier Hungarian songs.

There are no other records about musical culture from this early period of music history in Hungary, just a few scattered descriptions. The hydraulicon (water-organ) in Aquincum (a former Roman settlement in Budapest), or the double-whistle from the Avar period, are precious treasures of Hungarian archeology, but these instruments may only tell us that Pannonia, the territory where Árpád and his people finally settled, was a kind of "carriageway" of different ethnic groups. Unfortunately no musical notations survived from this early period. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, when folk music research began in areas from where Hungarians migrated – the area of the Volga river and the region of the Black Sea – it

---

<sup>146</sup> Dobszay László: *Magyar zenetörténet*, Budapest: Planétás Kiadó, 1998, 22.

has been noted that the Hungarian wailing songs (*siratóénekek*) are closely related to Ostyiac epical songs. This ancient style<sup>147</sup> later mixed with the pentatonic mode. The wailing songs that were collected in twentieth-century Hungary among the peasants also show a tendency of thinking in terms of scales and church modes.<sup>148</sup>

Art music (i.e. church music) became gradually accepted and practiced in Hungary with the introduction of Christianity. This music was already institutionalised, and on many levels connected to other written, institutionalised fields of culture: theology, philosophy, poetry, and rhetorics. “Bestia, non cantor, qui non canit *arte* sed usu” – “It is an animal who only sings out of sheer habit, and not in the possession of the *art* of singing” – a Hungarian student remarked in his notebook in the Middle Ages.<sup>149</sup> The note suggests that musical practice was linked to education and the acquisition of a certain techné. From the reign of King St. Stephen (975?-1038) until the end of the eighteenth century Hungary’s educational system was based on the Carolingian-type of school. It was an imitation of the antique model of *septem artes liberales* divided into *trivium* and *quadrivium*. The art of music belonged to the *quadrivium*. Besides learning at school, music was an everyday practice for the students. They regularly sang in choruses as part of the church liturgy. We don’t have any details about the percentage of the educated men in Hungary, but the number of the literati must have been an increased little by little, because more and more schools were built in the country. We know however, that in Hungarian churches they didn’t hire professional singers as in France or Germany. Another interesting fact is, that more and more pupils were coming to schools from the lower social strata.<sup>150</sup>

The first musical notations in Hungary are from the eleventh century: *Benedictionale*, originally from Esztergom, *Szent Margit Sacramentarium*, from a Benedictine abbey, and the *Hartvik-Agenda*, supposedly from Győr. Music, as in other parts of Europe at that time, was recorded with neums. The next documents about musical notations are to be found in the *Pray-codex* (including one of our first literary records in Hungarian language) and the *Codex Albensis*. These pieces were already written on staves following the model set down by Guido of Arezzo in the eleventh century.

---

<sup>147</sup> The singers of these ancient wailing songs recite with a free movement – which means that they don’t move from note to note, but shift by every musical articulation freely on the range G-F-E-D.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 23-35.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. 46.

As far as the secular (popular) music is concerned, we do not have any written notations from this period. However, from other sources, such as Hungarian family names referring to a musical instrument – such as *bugler*, *trumpeter* (*kürtös*), *whistler* (*sípos*) or *drummer* (*dobos*) we may deduce that musicians were hired by royal court and aristocratic households. There are also documents mentioning the names of instruments and the presence of musicians in the country. According to the writings of some court reporters, King Mathias (1458-1490) had more musicians than the pope himself or the king of Burgundy.<sup>151</sup> The musical document of this age is the *Mathias-Graduale*, which contains more than hundred Gregorian songs. After the Battle of Mohács in 1526, the decline of Hungarian high culture can be also observed also in the field of music. When the new king, János Szapolyai (1487-1540), arrived to Buda, he sadly remarked that in the church there was no choir and there were no professional musicians to join the liturgy.<sup>152</sup>

We already mentioned that there are almost no records of the Hungarian secular music of the Middle Ages. We know that there were love lyrics that were performed by *joculators*. The only written documents are the two lines of *Soproni Töredék* (Fragment from Sopron) (1510). The humanist protestant writer János Sylvester (1504-1552) in one of his writings criticises the topic of these songs, but praises the beauty and poetic quality of their language. There are a lot of Hungarian folk songs that both in their form and style can be traced back to the Middle Ages love song culture.

There are some scattered fragments of the lost – or maybe never written – Hungarian epic, that preoccupied so much the nineteenth-century Hungarian poets – especially János Arany (1817-1882) – in such written pieces as the *Szent László királyról szóló dicsőséges ének* (Praising song about king St. László). The text was noted in several books at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the music is from the second half of the century. It is the same form that became popular later, in the verse chronicles or historical songs (*históriás énekek*) that developed from paraphrases of the biblical psalms and became very popular. These psalms were the basic material of Zoltán Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus* (1923).

During the centuries of Turkish occupation Hungarian culture was preserved and flourished in the independent principality of Transylvania. Palestrina dedicated

---

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. 88.

the fifth volume of his motets to cardinal András Báthory (1566-1599), the nephew of the Transylvanian suzerain and king of Poland, István Báthory (1533-1586). The organ music collection of the Venetian master, Girolamo Diruta *Il Transilvano* (1593) is dedicated to Zsigmond Báthory (1573-1613), prince of Transylvanian, who was a great music lover. But a more direct evidence for the high quality of Transylvanian musical practice is the musician Bálint Bakfark (1507-1576) (Bacfarci Transilvani or Bakfarci Pannonii, as his name also turns up), born in Brassó (Braşov or Kronstadt), who was the first Hungarian musician to enthral the European public with the virtuosity he played the lyre.

The modern period of music in Hungary begins with the invitation of Joseph Haydn to the count Esterházy's estate, where in 1766 he was appointed full Kappelmeister. The Esterházy family was one of the strongest and wealthiest aristocratic families in seventeenth-century Hungary, which was the most important supporter of arts, and contributed a great deal to Hungary's cultural revival. Pál Esterházy (1635-1713) was loyal to the Viennese court, but he tirelessly pleaded in Hungary's favour. He was not only the brightest Hungarian politician of his time, but also an important composer, who in 1711 published 55 cantatas under the title *Harmonia Caelestis*. These cantatas can compete with the best European church music in baroque Europe. Though they could have been written by Italian or French composers, they incorporate typical Hungarian church music motives, which give them an unmistakably Hungarian flavour. Count Miklós Esterházy (1714-1790) built on his estate in Eszterháza an opera house for 400 persons. The music life of Eszterháza was admired throughout Europe, having Joseph Haydn as conductor of the duke's orchestra for nearly 30 years. At the same time, Haydn's younger brother, Michael, was hired by bishop Patachich in Várada (Oradea/Grosswardein). He was succeeded by Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf, who left behind his position in the opera house of Vienna, for the new appointment at the bishop's court. The name of countess Mária Koháry (1793-1862) has to be mentioned because she was the first Hungarian woman composer. The Brunsvick family was also a great lover of music. Count Ferenc Brunsvick was a violinist and a friend of Beethoven. The great composer dedicated to the count his piano sonata in F Minor, op. 57, also known as *Appassionata*.

---

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. 92.

Pozsony (Bratislava, today the capital of Slovakia) was one of the most important musical centres of Europe: Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven gave concerts here. János Zsigmond Kusser (1660-1727), friend of Lully in Paris, was born in Pozsony, too. He later became a renowned conductor and composer in Germany and Ireland.<sup>153</sup> Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837) was born in the city, and later became Haydn's successor in Kismarton, as well as a widely appreciated composer. It is worth noting that beside the fact, that the most famous figures of the eighteenth-century European art music appeared for shorter or longer periods on the musical stage of the city, there were numerous music teachers living here. Heinrich Marschner (1795-1861), the composer of the operas *The Vampire* and *Hans Heiling* was resident of the city from 1817 onward as a music teacher of count Zichy. In 1780 Joseph Zistler taught music to János Lavotta (1764-1820), who became one of the leading figures of nineteenth-century Hungarian music, and from 1789 Heinrich Klein, the teacher of Ferenc Erkel is music instructor in the city. Besides teaching he was also composing and writing articles to the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*.

Some Transylvanian cities also had a thriving musical life. In Nagyszeben (Sibiu/Hermannstadt) Peter Schimert (1712-1785), the disciple of Johann Sebastian Bach, was the musical authority. Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (1791) was performed five years after the opera's first night in Vienna. Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca/Klausenburg) played an important role at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the development of Hungarian opera culture. After 1812 Philipp Caudella (1771-1826) was the music director of Kolozsvár. József Ruzitska's (1775-1823) opera, *Béla futása* (Béla's flight), was performed here in 1822. János Lavotta (1764-1820) was conductor in the city, and Ferenc Erkel (1810-1893) also began his musical carrier in Kolozsvár.

Pest assumed only in the second half of the nineteenth century the indisputable leadership in Hungary's musical life. By that time, János Bihari (1764-1827), Antal Csermák (1774-1822), János Lavotta (1764-1820), Márk Rózsavölgyi (1789-1848) already spread all over Europe the *verbunkos*. Why and how did this identification take place, and how was Hungarian music appreciated both outside and inside of Hungary? We have seen that the music of the first Hungarian settlers sounded strange to the European listeners. Later, Hungary not only conformed to the leading European

---

<sup>153</sup> Dobszay, 239.



musical cultures, but preserved its own character and became one of the most flourishing musical centres of the baroque era. In the nineteenth century, the value of *Hungarian music* increased, especially after Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*, and the late nineteenth-century operetta culture.

What is *verbunkos*, and why did it become identified with Hungarian musical idiom? Béla Bartók asserts in an 1934 article, *Our folk music and the folk music of the neighboring peoples* (Népzénénk és a szomszéd népek népzéneje), that the *verbunkos* or *Werbungsmusik*, developed under a strong North-Slavic influence and is a mixture of the musical styles of the neighbouring countries.<sup>154</sup> One telling example of this musical variegation is the *Rákóczi-song*. First it became to be 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 it is only in 1780 when the final version, which later became to be known as *Rákóczi-nóta* (Rákóczi-song), appears with a Hungarian text. These books contained virginal music, or music for clavichord, and their characteristic is, that they included songs written in different styles. We can find in them German minuets as well as “Hungarian” material (*Ungarescas*), or such oddities as Hungarian minuet written in binary measure.<sup>155</sup> The *Apponyi-Handschrift* dates from around 1730, and it is the first document that records the transition of styles towards the more and more widely spread Hungarian songs. The sequence of quavers that characterised the *Ungarescas*, in the *verbunkos* will become dotted rhythms. The figurations of these dotted rhythms will result in the typical 16-measure binary section form. This typical Hungarian “manner” could not have become so famous in Europe, unless it conformed to the classical harmonic rules. In this way melodies were regulated by the classical harmonic patterns, which could be the base for the capricious modulations, figurations and variations, from which the Hungarian dance music of 16-measure binary section period arose. Also the instrumental set-up for these dances became fixed by the late baroque period: violins + bass + dulcimer + clarinet. While the repertory of musicians playing entertaining music became broader and incorporated more elements of art music, the composers of art music were also more and more interested in the motives and melodies of dance music, and entertaining music in general. By the end of the

---

<sup>154</sup> Szabolcsi, Bence: “Die Handschrift von Appony (Oponice)”, In. *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 6, 1964, 3-7, 3.

<sup>155</sup> Dobszay, 267.

eighteenth century there is almost no composer who did not try his talent with the Hungarian *verbunkos*. There were more and more pieces set to bigger orchestra. Besides these Hungarian musicians, there were famous foreign musicians who were also interested in Hungarian music: Mozart included Hungarian passages in his A Major violin concerto (K. 219, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement), he used Hungarian dance music patterns in *The Abduction from Seraglio* in order to invent Turkish atmosphere in the opera and we can also find an examples of Hungarian dance motives 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony or Diabelli's Hungarian dances.

The adaptation of Hungarian motives 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 received 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 and associated in Hungarian discourses as a national symbol *par excellence*.

### **III. 2 The musical practices of the Romanians**

Romania became an independent country in the nineteenth century and was constituted in its present form in 1918 with the annexation of Transylvania to Wallachia and Moldova. In Transylvania, where three nationalities – Hungarians, Romanians and Saxon Germans – lived together, there had already been a flourishing musical culture even before the nineteenth century. However, as stated earlier, art music was mostly practiced and supported by the Germans and the Hungarians. Romanian musical culture was mainly folk music. In Wallachia and Moldova, which were under Turkish suzerainty until 1859, travelling Italian and German opera companies performed from time to time pieces from the European musical repertoire. The institutionalisation of Romanian music began in 1833, when Ion Heliade Rădulescu (1802-1872), a multifaceted Wallachian intellectual, established the “Philharmonic Society” in Bucharest. The founding goals he stated: “in order that our golden dreams to come true, we have to expel Turkish music from our society.” This assertion indicates that in Wallachia and Moldova many intellectuals, initially with

the Greeks, fought for the liberation of the Balkans. The anti-Ottoman attitude became gradually more assertive in all aspects of politics and culture. However, the two Romanian lands were characterised by a kind of mixture of East and West until the late nineteenth century. A whole set of dramas written by the playwright Ion Luca Caragiale (1853-1912) parody the conflicts between the Romanian boyars, who had an eastern outlook, and those with western worldviews. In music, the Eastern tradition was lingering on in the Orthodox Church, while Western music consisted basically of Italian, French and German imports. The development of an independent Romanian musical style began in the late nineteenth century. Romanian musicians and composers became known in the European concert halls and operatic stages in the second half of the twentieth century: the composer George Enescu (1881-1955), the conductor Sergiu Celibidache (1912-1996), the pianists Clara Haskil (1895-1960), Dinu Lipatti (1917-1950), Radu Lupu (1945-). Opera singers made illustrious carriers on the best-known European stages, in the Scala, in Bayreuth, Leningrad or in New York's Metropolitan Opera. Nicolae Herlea (1927-), Elena Cernei (1924-), David Ohanesian (1927-2007), Ludovic Speiss (1938-) are just a few of these.

In antiquity a population of Daco-Thracian origin lived on the present territory of Romania until 106 AD when Dacia was conquered by the Romans. There are no written documents about the early period of Romanian music, however, the archaeological findings – potteries representing musical instruments – the lyre or harp and the cithara (**Image 7**, **Image 8**) – and dances – led some musicologists and historians to think that there must have been a buoyant musical life in the region already by that time. The ethnic origin of the instruments is difficult to trace, because similar objects and images were found in many other parts of South-Eastern Europe. The trumpet, aulos (**Image 9**), the Greek pipe, and the horn are also regarded as typical instruments of the Daco-Romans. It is thought that music practiced on the territory of Dacia was very similar to Greek music and some ethno-musicological findings suggest that Dacian music was founded on the tetrachord, the four-note segment, with its diatonic, chromatic and enharmonic variants. Tetrachord literally means “four strings”, and was originally used in reference to harp-like instruments like the lyre or the cithara. Music built on chromatic and enharmonic tetrachord continued to be used in Middle-East and India and in Europe in the folk music of the Balkan. The diatonic tetrachord (two tones and a semitone) became the dominant tuning of European art music. Its permutations resulted in the Lydian, Dorian and

Phrygian modes. These modes have been preserved in Romanian folk songs, but also in the folk songs on the Balkan in general.

Dacians and Romans came into contact with the Slavs, Magyars and other peoples migrating into Europe. The Slavs assimilated with the indigenous population, who by that time – according to some hypotheses – was almost entirely Romanised. After the Roman Empire officially recognised the Christian faith in 313 AD, the territory of Dacia became a crossroad between East and West, Byzantine and Roman culture. The transfer of the centre of spiritual orthodoxy from the Middle-East to Byzantium influenced the religious affiliation of the whole Balkan region. In Wallachia and Moldova many monasteries were built and the cultural practices related to the church – also music – flourished in these religious institutions. According to the Romanian musicologist Vasile Vasile, the centre on the orthodoxy on Mount Athos was decisive for Romanian culture, too. In the early Middle Ages and Renaissance, which took a different turn in Wallachia and Moldova due to the Byzantine influence, the princes and wealthy boyars sent their sons to study there, who when they returned to their homeland, they contributed to the spread of the religious culture and the building of monasteries. This Byzantine culture can be described as the synthesis of four elements: “politics (the heritage of ancient Roman culture), Hellenism, religion (orthodoxy), and anthropology (Oriental).”<sup>156</sup> With the gradual conversion of the Slavs to Christianity (the Bulgarians in 864, the Serbs in 879, the Russians in 988) the importance of Slav culture increased in the region. The Romanians, who were initially attached to the Greek Byzantine church and, as a consequence, adopted Greek as the official language of literacy, came to choose under growing Slavic influence Slavic as the language of church and political affairs. Slavic remained the official language of Wallachia and Moldova between the tenth and the seventeenth century, as the religious books and the court chronicles of the suzerains show, but Greek lingered on until the fourteenth century. In 1359 the Episcopate (Mythropolis) of Ungrovalahia (Wallachia) and in 1359 that of Moldovalahia (Moldova) is founded, which became the centres of literate culture in the region. Illiterate did not use the official language of the church; just as elsewhere in Europe it adhered to the oral, visual and musical culture of the ancient times from generation to generation. Until the nineteenth-century, the gap between the learned elite and the

illiterate masses living mainly in rural conditions remained much greater than in Western and Central Europe. This also meant that the role of folklore was more decisive for the cultural practices of these people than elsewhere. The music of this entire period is characterised by a mixture of liturgical Byzantine style and the folk tunes. George Breazul identified the structure of psalms in the traditional *colindă* songs (Christmas-carol like chants preserving pagan elements), sang in Romanian villages.<sup>157</sup> Russian and Western influences introduced polyphony into this Byzantine religious music in the eighteenth century.

Music had a leading role in the religious schools of the monasteries (Cenad-Arad, Tismana Cozia in Wallachia and Humor in Moldova). The literati of these schools became the composers of melodies and hymns (*melurji* and *hymnographs*), performers of music, writers of sacred literary texts and teachers. In the Byzantine tradition, the composers of melodies had to be familiar with the musical repertory of the church, as well as with the theory of musical composition. Filotei, a divan boyar under the rule of Mircea cel Bătrîn (late fourteenth, early fifteenth century) was one of such learned man-of-all-trades, who is mentioned as hymnograph and friar of the monastery in Cozia. He is regarded the founder of the *pripeala* chant genre (of Slavic origin, meaning repetition, maybe similar to the Gregorian antiphons).<sup>158</sup>

Church music was the cradle of art music both in Eastern and Western part of Europe. However, there is a great difference in the musical development of the orthodox and Roman Catholic Church: in the Roman Church, musical instruments were gradually accepted and instrumental music became an important element of the liturgy next to the human voice, the Byzantine tradition remained hostile to instrumental music, preferring vocal chant. It was due in part to the Byzantine church tradition – its different musical notation and its rejection of musical instruments – that the practice of instrumental art music in Wallachia and Moldova developed centuries later than in Transylvania and other parts of Central and Western Europe. Before the nineteenth century, instrumental music was regarded as a form of entertainment and was practised mainly by folk musicians and Roma people. According to the controversial father of Romanian scholarly historiography, Nicolae Iorga (1871-

---

<sup>156</sup> Vasile, Vasile: *Istoria muzicii bizantine și evoluția ei în spiritualitatea românească*, vol. 1, București: Academia de Muzică, 1995.

<sup>157</sup> Cosma, O. L.: *Hronicul Muzicii Românești*, vol. 1, *Epoca străveche, veche și medievală*, București: Editura Muzicală a Uniunii Compozitorilor, 1973, 64-65.

1940), the Romas appeared on Romanian territories as slaves of the Tartars. According to a document from 1570, slave trade of the Roma people, some of whom were mentioned as folk musicians (*lăutari*), was still in practice both in Wallachia and Moldova.<sup>159</sup> The Romas belonging to the Episcopates were freed in Moldova in 1844 and in Wallachia in 1847. For this occasion, Constantin Steleanu composed a collection of folk dances (hora dances), *Hori naționale românești pentru piano-forte* (National hora dances for piano-forte), which he dedicated to the suzerain (hospodar) of Wallachia, Gheorghe Bibescu (1804-1873). Steleanu is the first Romanian name to appear on the cover of a musical publication in Bucharest.<sup>160</sup>

In the eighteenth-century, Wallachia and Moldova folk (instrumental) music was mainly practised by the Roma, while in Transylvania and the Swabian Banat mostly by peasants. The first Romanian editor of folk songs, Eftimiu Murgu (1805-1870), published his anthology in 1830 in Budapest.<sup>161</sup> The orthodox church-cantor and vocal music teacher Anton Pann (1790-1854), also mentioned as Anton Pantoleon or Petrovici, was born in Sliven, Rumelia (today Bulgaria) can be regarded as the first Romanian folklorist and one of the most important man of letters of nineteenth-century Wallachia (**Image 10**). His life was worthy of a picaresque novel. During the Russo-Turkish war (1806-1812) he fled with his family to Chișinău, Bessarabia, where Anton was first employed as a singer in a Russian orthodox choir. Later he moved to Bucharest, where he spent most of his life. Beside his church obligations, Pann regularly enjoyed the company of Roma folk musicians in Bucharest and its surroundings; he collected the songs of these *tarafe*, Romanian folk music bands, (**Image 11**) and Ottoman-Turkish music; later he published some of these *manele tabulatures*<sup>162</sup>. Pann was the first to use modern musical notation and Italian tempo

---

<sup>158</sup> Tulvan, Ghizela: *Scurtă istorie comparată a muzicii maghiare și românești în context istoric și european*, București: Arvin Press, 2007, 20.

<sup>159</sup> Breazul, George: *Pagini din istoria muzicii românești*, vol. 1, București: Editura Muzicală, 1966, 157.

<sup>160</sup> Breazul, George: *Pagini din istoria muzicii românești*, 170.

<sup>161</sup> Lakatos, István – Merișescu, Gheorghe: *Legături muzicale româno-maghiare de-a lungul veacurilor*, Cluj: Filarmonica de Stat, 1957, 25.

<sup>162</sup> *Manele* (the plural form of the *manea*) is a mixture of musical styles mainly deriving from love songs – sometimes with a very vulgar character – that was widely spread in the Balkans, in Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian, Albanian, and Serbian areas. It was a very popular genre in the Phanariot period in Wallachia and Moldova. It is believed that the Phanariots brought it from Istanbul to Wallachia. The earliest written references to *manele* date from the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century, during the period of Turkish suzerainty. The music of the *manele* is a mixture of Turkish and Gypsy music and was practiced during the nineteenth century in the region mainly by Roma musicians. Among some social groups it is still very popular today in Romania, but modern *manele* have almost no connection with the original term. Today the *manele phenomena* is a dividing line between the taste of the

markings, while he also practiced the Byzantine church tradition. As an employee of the Neophyte, Metropolitan of Hungro-Wallachia he was asked to translate several religious books and kept on working as a music teacher in the seminary. In 1843 he established a printing press and published the authors of his day and many almanacs. He was the editor of the first Romanian-Turkish-Russian lexicon. Pann, acknowledged as a significant writer of his time, relied mainly on a codified oral tradition; he used a familiar tone that appealed to a semi-literary audience.<sup>163</sup> It has been pointed out by Romanian literary critics that in spite of all the appearances, Pann reworked many classical texts, and was familiar with the literature of the elite, which he consciously combined with folklore.<sup>164</sup> After a series of satires, he published a book centred on the protagonist, *Nastratin Hoge*, who unites in his figure many folkloric elements of the Balkan. His *manele* collection, *Spitalul amorului* (The hospital of love) and the *Memory of the Great Fire of Bucharest from 1847* (**Image 12**) became popular among the young generation of boyars. The poet, Vasile Alecsandri (1821-1890) lamented in a letter in 1872 that “Anton Pann has not yet been fully appreciated, and in Wallachia his significance is even questioned by learned men of letters”.<sup>165</sup> According to some musicologist, he had co-authored the music of the Romanian national anthem, *Deșteaptă-te Române* (Awaken, Romanian!), which was traditionally attributed to Gheorghe Ucenescu. Ethno-musicologists have meanwhile shown that the melody was a popular tune, also known among the Turkish population, and Pann published it in one of his *manele* collections. However, he makes no direct references to the composition of the anthem.

Anton Pann’s work excellently illustrates the entanglement of Romanian music and culture. His texts, mostly in Romanian, contain a mixture of high and low

---

educated middle-class and those who enjoy this kind of music. In Bucharest, but also in other parts of Romania *manele* refers to a subculture with a very strong Roma character.

<sup>163</sup> This style could be compared to the Hungarian nineteenth-century *népiesség* (folksiness). Its representatives were educated literati (like the Hungarian national poet, Sándor Petőfi (1823-1849), who deliberately used a simple, folk-like style. On the one hand, folksiness functioned as a conscious artistic experiment, on the other hand, as a token of appreciation for the peasantry, the folk, whose creative faculty was highly appreciated in nineteenth-century Europe.

<sup>164</sup> Călinescu, George: *Istoria literaturii române*, București: Minerva, 1983, 91-95.

<sup>165</sup> Ibrăileanu, Garabet: *Spiritul critic în cultura Românească: secolul al XIX-lea*, [Internet] Available at:

[http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Spiritul\\_critic\\_%C3%AEn\\_cultura\\_rom%C3%A2neasc%C4%83:Veacul\\_al\\_XIX-lea\\_Factorii\\_culturii\\_rom%C3%A2ne%C5%9Fti\\_din\\_acest\\_veac](http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Spiritul_critic_%C3%AEn_cultura_rom%C3%A2neasc%C4%83:Veacul_al_XIX-lea_Factorii_culturii_rom%C3%A2ne%C5%9Fti_din_acest_veac) , [Accessed on: 28-02-2008] – “Anton Pann –zice Alecsandri într-o scrisoare din1872 – nu a fost până acum prețuit la adevărata lui valoare, ba, încă, în Valahia meritele sale sunt chiar disprețuite de majoritatea literaților moderni.”

culture, of dominant ideology and subversive discourse, of Eastern and Western traditions and a synthesis of many national traditions in the Balkan region. Pann definitely belongs to Romanian literature and culture, but one may argue that he was actually a true chronicler of Bucharest. The cultural memory and identity reflected in his oeuvre, show him as a man of the Balkans, an ingenuous writer and musician who was driven by his passion for people, art and folklore, rather than by the Romanian nationalism.

Another interesting phenomenon of Romanian culture and music is the case of a folk band led by Nica Iancu Iancovici (1821-1903). According to *Histoire de la musique roumaine en Transylvanie* by Tiberiu Brediceanu, this band participated in the 1848-49 Hungarian revolution and war of independence, singing even to general Józef Bem (1794-1850), the leader of the Hungarian army in Transylvania. It somehow ended up in the camp of Lajos Kossuth (1802-1894), the Regent-President of Hungary, who enjoyed the company of the musicians but dressed them up in Hungarian clothes to avoid the fury of the radical nationalists.<sup>166</sup> This anecdote, whether it is true or not, can be seen as symbolic for nineteenth-century musical life and culture in general: cultural practice and cultural artefacts were carried, transferred, transposed, adapted in the whole region by many ethnic communities, while “national” art was actually a matter of “dress”. Nevertheless, the “dress-code” was important, and the representation of the national differences already defined the identity and self-perception of the people.

Enthusiasm for the study of folklore and folk song collection began to take a more scholarly turn with Vasile Alecsandri (1821-1890), the luminary figure of nineteenth-century Romanian poetry. He became interested in folklore during his study in France, where he got acquainted with Herder’s ideas. After his return in 1839 to his homeland, he began to study the Romanian *doina*, a musical folk genre that originated with the melancholic musical-laments of the Wallachian shepherds<sup>167</sup>. Alecsandri attributes them to the languor and yearning of the Romanian spirit. In the foreword to the folk song collection *Poezii populare, Balade (Cântece bătrânești) adunate și îndreptate de V. Alecsandri* he remarks:

---

<sup>166</sup> Cosma, Viorel: *Figuri de lăutari*, București: Editura Uniunii Compositorilor din R.P.R., 1967, 68-69.

<sup>167</sup> This genre was also found in the East-European Klezmer music. A similar form called *daina* can be found in Latvia and Lithuania.



“The Romanians whether they are succumbed by joy or sorrow, or astounded by the sublime, sing their grief and happiness, they sing about their heroes and history, and the soul of this nation is therefore an infinite fountain of beautiful poetry. Nothing can be more interesting than to study the character of this folk as it is represented in his songs, because they contain all the heartfelt outpourings of its spirit and a glimmer of its genius.”<sup>168</sup>

Alecsandri collected folk songs among the Romanian folk musicians (*lăutari*) and shepherds in Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldova. However, folk song collection in this period was done “with the ear”, not yet with a phonograph recorder, and this led sometimes to significant discrepancies between the music and the text. In the beginning, around the 1830s and 1840s, both Hungarian and Romanian folklorists collected mainly among the literate population – priests, teachers, doctors and lawyers – of the urban areas, and thus their anthologies actually contained no authentic peasant songs.

The nineteenth-century Romanian literary journals – *Albina Românească* (1829-, Iași), *Curierul Românesc* (1829-, Bucharest), and *Gazeta de Transilvania* (1838-, Brassó/Brașov/Kronstadt) – also contributed to the spread and collection of folk songs. The editor of the *Dacia Literară* (1840-, Iași), the famous nineteenth-century Romanian thinker and statesman Mihail Kogălniceanu (1817-1891), invited his readers “to collect and send in folk songs from all of Dacia”. One of the most remarkable answers to this appeal came from Costache Negruzzi (1808-1868), who wrote an essay about the melancholic minor mode of the Moldavian Romanian songs.<sup>169</sup>

Ion Andrei Wachmann (1807-1863), composer of the first Romanian national opera as we shall see, edited in Vienna a four-volume anthology of Romanian folk-songs and dances. Wachmann added a short foreword to the third volume, in which he explained that he did not want to modify one single note of the collected folk songs, but he wrote a harmonic accompaniment trying to imitate the harmonic characteristics of the folk music bands. This attitude represents already the next stage of folklore studies, in which the collectors no longer altered the style or form of the collected

---

<sup>168</sup> Breazu, George: *Pagini din istoria muzicii românești*, 246 “De-l muncește dorul, de-l cuprinde veselia, de-l minunează vreo faptă măreață, el își cântă durerile și mulțemirile, își cântă eroii, își cântă istoria, și astfel sufletul său e un izvor nesfârșit de frumoasă poezie. Nimic, dar, nu poate fi mai interesant decât a studia caracterul acestui popor în cuprinsul cântecilor sale, căci el coprinde toate pornirile inimii și toate razele geniului său.”

material to meet their own expectations or taste. Brăiloiu, Brediceanu, Bartók and Kodály, the most important representatives of this future generation, mapped the folk (peasant) song-culture of the region in the early twentieth century.

As we have seen, the collection, practice and publication of folk music involved all the social strata, and became a central concern among the nineteenth-century Romanian educated classes. Art-music performance was rare then and mainly represented by foreign travelling companies. The lack of continuous music performances may explain the absence of Romanian musical journals and music histories. However, the foundation of musical institutions in Bucharest (1833) and Iași (1836) was an important step to promote art music. In 1833 in Bucharest Ion Heliade Rădulescu, the librettists of the first Romanian national opera, founded the *Societatea filarmonică* (Philharmonic Society) and he also plead for the establishment of a Romanian National Theatre. In 1835 a music school was opened as part of the philharmonic society, where boys and girls could study vocal and instrumental music free of charge. Ion Andreas Wachmann, who moved to Bucharest in 1830, became its director. He must have been an excellent pedagogue, because within a short time his students were apparently able to perform operas by Rossini.<sup>170</sup> In 1836 Gheorghe Asachi (1788-1869) founded in Iași another school of music, the *Conservatorul filarmonic dramatic* (Dramatic Philharmonic Conservatory), whose aim was the cultivation of music and drama, as well as the elimination of dilettantism in the performing arts. In 1838 the students of this conservatory presented Bellini's *Norma* (1831) in a Romanian translation of Asachi.<sup>171</sup> The first director of this institution, the composer Francis Serafim Caudella, was succeeded by his son, the opera composer Eduard Caudella (1841-1924).

After the unification of Moldova and Wallachia in 1859, art music developed fast, and by the end of the century many Romanians became celebrated artists of the European music stages. The newly formed Romanian state commissioned operas and musical pieces composed in the national style, which gradually shaped the musical consciousness of the Romanian audience. Italian and French operas, especially the vaudeville sung in Romanian, remained public favourites. In spite of the official cultural policy, which promoted “authentic” Romanian music, the concert-going and

---

<sup>169</sup> Tulvan, Ghizela: *Scurtă istorie comparată a muzicii maghiare și românești în context istoric și european*, 84.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. 78.

opera-loving urban public of Bucharest, Iași and other cities still preferred European art music, to which he was used. However, the composers Ciprian Porumbescu (1853-1883) and George Enescu (1881-1955) created a musical style that was Romanian and truly European at the same time. Their musical language was partly based on folklore and partly on the Western art-music tradition.

To sum it up: From the sixteenth until the late eighteenth century, folk and church musical practices defined Romanian musical consciousness. The Orthodox Church represented the vocal music and was hostile to instruments. Folk musicians, among whom we can find many Romas, practised instrumental music. Art music began to gain more and more space in Wallachia and Moldova by the mid-nineteenth century, when foreign travelling companies performed the pieces of the European repertory. Opera and art music was popular among the Romanian boyars and educated men of letters, but they were also interested in folk songs. Wallachia and Moldova had few cities where Romanian art music could develop. The conceptualisation and institutionalisation of music started by the 1830s, when more and more Romanians went abroad to study in Hungary, Germany, France or Italy. Concert halls and theatres were built, where next to foreign performers Romanian musicians also appeared regularly. However, the institutionalised music criticism was scarce and the discourse about music refrained to folk songs that were perceived and interpreted in Herderian spirit. Alecsandri and Negruzzi wrote the two most significant works, which pursued to analyse the relation of music and the ethos of the Romanian folk. Alecsandri developed a theory about the *doina* folk genre, which he relates to melancholy and yearning, two aspects of the Romanian national character. Negruzzi also claimed that melancholy as expressed in the minor mode, characteristic to Romanian folk songs, is the musical representation of the national character. These were the undeniable signs of an awakening interest in cultural self-representation and cultural heritage. However, it has to be noticed that the folk music – especially in urban areas – was a mixture of different musical styles and genres of the Balkan, and the discourse about music – just like in Hungary – was defined by mainly German nineteenth-century musical discourse. The discursive creation of national music already started in the 1840s in the writings of Romanian men of letters inspired by the general European

---

<sup>171</sup> Breazul, George: *Pagini din istoria muzicii românești*, 101.

interest in folklore and cultivation of national culture, but it is going to take a musical shape only in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century.

#### **IV. National music in the nineteenth-century Hungarian discourse**

There is an interesting sociological factor to be considered regarding the development of Hungarian music history and discourse about music: while the majority of the important writers of the Hungarian revival of language and literature were Magyars, in music the overwhelming majority of the learned art music composers and music teachers were foreigners, mostly ethnic Germans born on the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom. When music became accessible to a broader public, many Hungarians with superficial musical education – mainly urban middle class and village intellectuals – began publishing “dilettante” opinions about music in the press. They preferred simple character pieces, which were usually regarded as Hungarian music *par excellence*. Their taste was similar to that of Anton Pann, whose collection of *manele*, the music of a lower social stratum carried and practiced mainly by Roma musicians, became a popular genre even among the Romanian boyars in the nineteenth century. In Hungary dilettante and professional musical criticism and discourse about music appeared earlier in the media, because of the more advanced stage of urbanisation. Hence, both art-music practice, and discourses about art music and national music emerged sooner than in Romania.

In Hungary, the taste and the ideology of the aristocracy differed from those of the middle-class intellectuals and artists. A decisive part of the aristocracy regarded music only empty entertainment, and wanted to prevent that their children pursue a musical carrier. As in nineteenth century Wallachia and Moldova, the lowest strata of society provided entertaining music: the Gypsies, who learned music from their parents and grandparents. Music was a family trade in many Gypsy families. They had to improvise because they did not play music from sheets, but preserved and carried music in their memory. Their skills of figuration, variation and improvisation developed to a high level. They travelled abroad and played music that became to be known as “Hungarian”. Ferenc Liszt wrote an eulogy of Gypsy music in his *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (The Gypsy and their music in Hungary) (1959), a book that was first published in Paris, and “canonised” in Europe the music played by the Hungarian Gypsy musicians as *typical Hungarian*. The book was

translated in 1861 into Hungarian, and became the topic of many debates and pamphlets.

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 endangered to become stiff and stuck into these stereotypical motives. A significant part of the public did not encourage the domestication of “foreign” music, hence “Hungarian music” became more and more provincial, a situation that Kodály diagnosed by remarking: the educated were not Hungarian enough, and the Hungarians were not educated enough.

Keeping in mind Kodály’s remark, I want to explore now the different nineteenth-century discourses about Hungarian music under three major aspects: 1) the sociological structure of the Hungarian musical culture; 2) the problem of folk music and its different concepts; 3) the development and characteristics of discursive language about Hungarian music.

#### **IV. 1 Sociological Structure**

The competition of the *verbunkos* and the folk song 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 folk songs (Egressy, Szénfy, Simonffy, Szerdahelyi) were born in Eastern Hungary and were closer to the folk culture, to 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. According to Szénfy, the geographical position determined the character of the musicians. His ideas became later known as “area theory”. The first Hungarian musical journal, *Zenészet* (1860-76),<sup>172</sup> published several chapters from this book. One of the editors of it, 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.

---

<sup>172</sup> *Zenészet* is available online on the Internet at: <http://www.fidelio.hu/zeneszetilapok/browse.asp> [Accessed on: 29-02-2008].

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 the other nations. However, the nations can also have 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.<sup>173</sup> 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. Szénfy’s theory does not differ much from Vasile Alecsandri’s ideas about Romanian folk music, since both seem to have been inspired by the German emotion aesthetics of Forkel and Körner. It is not likely that either of them read these German writings or even heard about their authors, but because of the discursive practices that circulated in Europe they also joined the common European “discursive space”. Since the public sphere grew in importance, these ideas reached more and more people. Paradoxically, although they were trying to formulate what is national music and therefore were searching for particularities, they were actually part of a European discourse that spread through the media and universities in the great European cities.

For many Hungarian musicians, the Eastern Hungarian plain or lowland (alföld) was a central source of inspiration. This poetised landscape infiltrated music from literature and the fine arts. Nineteenth-century Hungarian artists wished to capture the essence of the Hungarian nature in the landscape of the *puszta* (heath,

---

<sup>173</sup> „az érzelmeknek legfenségesebb nyilatkozati modora a zene, s hogy ennek oly számos nemei s fajai vannak, ahányféle a nép-nemzetek. A nép-nemzetek érzelm-rokonsága szüli zenéjük rokonságát is. (...) Európában két zenecsalád uralkodik, t.i.: a nyugoti s keleti, melyek meghatározott s könnyen fölismerhető jellemmel bírnak. (...) A mennyire eddig sikerült kipuhatólnunk, a keleti zenecsalád a következő országokban van elágazva, mint: Magyarországon, Erdélyben, Horvátországban, Slavóniában s egyrészen Törökországban- s Oroszországban. Ezek szerint egy zenecsaládhoz tartoznak ezen zenék: magyar, oláh, salvon (tót) s némi részben az orosz és török is, bár ez utóbbi inkább az arab s persa zenéhez szít” (ZL II. 1862, 282). Szembeállítják a gyöngébb, egyszerűbb, könnyedébb olaszosan dallamos magyar zenét és a határozottabb körvonalú, erősebb „keleti pompával

steppe). Aspects of the landscape became national symbols and are still stereotypes of Hungary for the tourists: the *gulyás* (shepherd), who gave his name to the famous Hungarian soup, *csárda* (pub) and *csárdás* (also the name of the type of Hungarian dance), the pastoral scenes on the plain that were captured and created by the Hungarian national poet Sándor Petőfi. Ferenc Erkel “resolved” the East-West opposition by combining in his compositions both aspects, although he was primarily a representative of the Western tradition.

Nineteenth-century Hungarian musical life can also be divided according to the musical education that composers received: Erkel’s background was the Italian and French *grand opera* tradition, Mihály Mosonyi came with a German musical heritage, while Liszt represented mostly the romantic French musical culture. The different traditions determined the way these composers conceived Hungarian music: in Erkel’s oeuvre we can recognise the short, closed operatic forms and the heroic tone; Liszt’s strength was the subtle play with forms and the ingenious experimentation with tonality and *couleur locale*; while in Mosonyi’s works one can recognise the classical style and the more intimate forms of the German Romantic heritage.

Nineteenth-century Hungarian music can also be approached chronologically: János Bihari (1764-1827), János Lavotta (1764-1820), Antal Csermák (1774-1822), Ignác Ruzitska (1777-1833), and József Ruzitska (1775-1824), the pioneers of the *verbunkos* style, lived and performed mainly in the period between 1750 and 1800. The second generation – Gábor Mátray, Béni Egressy (1814-1851), András Bartay (1799-1854), and Károly Thern (1817-1886) – developed the language of the Hungarian art music. The third generation, Ferenc Erkel, Ferenc Liszt (1811-1886), and Mihály Mosonyi (1815-1870), create in the 1860s the “great” works that represent the core of Hungarian musical romanticism. The fore-mentioned composers have two characteristics in common: all of them used *verbunkos* style in their music and moved on the axle of Pest – Buda – Pozsony (Bratislava) – Vienna.

After having sketched a social, chronological, territorial and cultural differentiation of the composers, let us now look at the public. The majority of the public came from the aristocratic strata, and the newly emerging bourgeoisie and intellectuals. They had different musical education and different tastes. While some

---

teljes” tisztáji zenével. „Amaz hevít, ez csillapít, határozottá tesz. (...) Amaz nőies, emez pedig férfias

Hungarian intellectuals glorified Erkel's first opera, *Mária Báthori*, count István Széchenyi wrote in his diary: "*Mária Báthori* – opera in Hungarian: not enjoyable".<sup>174</sup>

In the 1840s, the *Opera War* dominated the Hungarian musical life. Most of the leading Hungarian literati were against opera, because they were afraid that this "foreign" artistic form would endanger the newly born Hungarian theatre. They also thought that it is inappropriate to represent national heroes singing on the stage. However, the public generally enjoyed opera, and opera performances usually filled the theatre. In the beginning, the German theatre attracted the opera-loving public of Pest because it had a more colourful repertory and a greater budget to hire excellent singers. The Hungarian theatre performed mainly prose and the operas were poorly performed because of a lack of professional musicians and singers. The situation changed when Ferenc Erkel took over the musical directorship at the Hungarian theatre and began to build his orchestra and to hire for leading roles professional singers from outside and inside Hungary. He had an extremely difficult time shaping Hungarian musical life, not only because of a lack of money but also because of resistance and ill will by some of his contemporaries. But, in spite of differences, the will of promoting and developing a great Hungarian musical culture united the public. By the 1860s Pest-Buda became the centre of Hungarian musical culture. It became a unified city and capital of Hungary known today as Budapest in 1872. Before, Vienna and some regional centres such as Kolozsvár (Cluj), Pozsony (Bratislava), Sopron, Veszprém and Kassa (Kosice) nurtured the musical education of Hungarians and the developing Hungarian musical culture.

Pest-Buda was a truly multiethnic city, and the Magyars were actually in minority. The majority of the population was German, but there were also Serbs, Slovaks, Romanians, Bulgarians, Jews and other ethnic groups living in the city. The majority of the inhabitants belonged to the middle-class. Beginning with the second half of the nineteenth century there was a dynamic and prosperous cultural life in Pest, but basically every ethnic group was cherishing its own culture and was developing its own national consciousness. Pest-Buda encompassed all these different endeavours. The Hungarian nationalists tried to make Pest a Magyar city, and to cultivate Magyar culture. That is partly why during the "opera war" (that is going to be discussed in Chapter Six) in the 1840s some intellectuals wanted more support for

---

jelleggel bír" (ZL II. 1862, 283)



the prose theatre and wanted to reduce the role of the opera, because they considered this latter a foreign art as opposed to the theatre, which was regarded a bastion of the national language.

When Richard Wagner visited Hungary in 1863, he remarked:

“I can only encourage the ambition of cultivating the Hungarian song as a form of art music. This aspiration is very welcome and will enjoy the support of Europe’s musical life. But this endeavour can succeed only if it goes hand in hand with the development and improvement of Hungary’s art-musical culture in general. If it does not reach this stage of maturity, then there will be a dangerous gap between the superficial national element and art music, which will result in cheap naturalistic use of the national motives, and the superficial knowledge of art music would only estrange the lovers of national tunes.”<sup>175</sup>

Wagner had actually a prophetic insight, because by the end of the nineteenth century the Hungarian song actually did sink into cheap naturalism, and served as the entertainment of the gentry<sup>176</sup>. By that time the performers and creators of Hungarian songs were the Gypsies. The Hungarian musicologist Bálint Sárosi remarks:

“The musical “naturalists” were the Gypsy musicians who were also musically illiterate. They were in possession of an arsenal of virtuoso tools developed in the trade of musical entertainment for generations, and depending on talent they could turn a mediocre tune into an effective piece, or clothe a foreign melody in “Hungarian” attire. (...) Festive occasions, entertaining programs, theatre pieces, and first of all, popular stage plays were unimaginable without popular tunes (*verbunkos, csárdás*, popular songs) played by Gypsy bands”. [...]“The ‘Hungarian song’ (Magyar nóta) was not only meant to entertain but also to demonstrate against foreign influences. At the time score reading musicians were mainly foreigners in Hungary. Making music as a living had no respect as yet. ‘Hungarians must not make themselves servants but leave that humiliation to foreign nationals who are willing to debase themselves in their hunt for gain: to crawl about Hungarians’ tables and boots – for money’ – as Mihály Bernáth wrote in his biography of Lavotta in 1818. That, however, chiefly applied to serious musicians. Later, the foreign teachers and spirit of the Music Academy founded in

---

<sup>174</sup> Széchenyi István: *Napló*, Budapest: Gondolat, 1978, 918.

<sup>175</sup> Zenészeti Lapok (III 1863, 224) „Az a törekvés, mely a magyar dal művészi kifejlesztésére irányul, hogy az közvetlen kapcsolatba kerülhessen a mi fejlett műzenénkkel, komoly sikerre számíthat a teljes magyarországi zenekultúra emelése és fejlesztése terén. Amíg azonban ilyen siker nem mutatkozik, veszélyes, sőt végzetes távolság választja majd el Önöknél a nemzeti elemet az azzal csak felületileg érintkező művészi zenétől, éspedig oly módon, hogy a nemzeti zene, vagyis a népies tánc- és dalmuzsika olcsó naturalizmusba süllyed, annál is inkább, mert a pusztán felületi termékeiből megismert műzene jóformán csak elvadásító hatással lehet amarra.”

<sup>176</sup> Land-owning social class as opposed to hereditary nobility.

1875 were also condemned as alien, so was the Opera for its foreign musicians. Gypsy musicians playing without scores were not alien as their musical culture was identical with that of their audience. (...) Few pondered the question how much this music, felt to be Hungarian music, had absorbed from western, mainly Viennese musical culture. To no insignificant degree, the *verbunkos*, *csárdás*, and popular song owed their popularity to foreign influences incorporated from West.”<sup>177</sup>

Although these *csárdás* dances were not of high musical value, they were cherished, as we saw, even by Berlioz, Brahms, or Liszt. By the late 1860s almost everybody believed that the incorporated Western elements unclear are Hungarian.

“The simple *csárdás* composed in a style digestible for western tastes, the easy popular songs and the effective music of the best Gypsy bands largely contributed to the Magyarisation of the inhabitants of foreign origin in the capital. That was how the popular music of the decades around the *Ausgleich* became national music linking various social strata.”<sup>178</sup>

#### **IV.2 Folk music and its different concepts in the nineteenth-century Hungary**

The word *folk music* became one of the most controversial concepts of musicology. Originally conceived by Herder, in the nineteenth century it became frequently used in discourses about music. In contrast to the art song, the *Volkslied* was seen as something natural, untouched by the artificiality of the civilisation. However, its actual musical material was a mixture of urban and rural styles. Nineteenth-century folk-song collectors sought in folklore some kind of “pure”, spiritual essence of the national character. Later it turned out that their notion was a delusion: musicological research – in which Béla Bartók played a prominent role – showed that the overwhelming majority of the nineteenth-century folk songs were actually either forged by the “collectors” or were present all over the region: the tunes were the same, only the language of the adapted text differed. These were regional products rather than authentic national artefacts. From the very start, “discovering” folk culture meant in the same time re-imagining the “folk”. The collectors of

---

<sup>177</sup> Sárosi Bálint: “Everyday Hungarian Music in Pest-Buda around 1870”, In. *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 1999, 325-352.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. 334.

traditional songs tried to shape and publish them according to the ideologies of their time.

Ferenc Faludi (1704-1779), an eighteenth-century Jesuit poet, was among the first Hungarian intellectuals who studied the language and culture of the Hungarian countryside. He was first of all interested in language *per se*, language as the raw material of literature. Faludi was not yet influenced by the nationalist ideology; instead, he studied language from an artistic perspective, as a medium of literary creation.

The Hungarian literary historian Ferenc Toldy (1805-1875) canonised Faludi as the first poet who cherished the traditional Hungarian folk songs and was aware of the importance of the folk culture. Toldy's appreciation of Faludi could have been influenced by the fact that one of the most popular prose writers of that time, András Dugonics (1740-1818) used Faludi's poems in his novel about the Hungarians settling in Pannonia. Faludi's poems became rapidly well-known through Dugonics's novel. Nobody thought that Faludi himself wrote these "ancient folk songs" from the time of Árpád, the second High Prince of the Magyars. When at the urging of the leading cultural reviews of the time, *Hasznos Mulatságok* (1817) and *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* (1817-1841) Hungarians started collecting folk songs, school teachers, doctors, writers, journalists and others responded with dozens of songs. The majority of these proved to be Faludi's poems. Paradoxically, Faludi looked for inspiration for his poetry in the peasant culture, and he actually "went out" to do his field research and collect songs from Hungarian peasant, but when in the nineteenth century the fashion of collecting folklore started, the people actually collected "art" poetry, mostly "folk" poems written by Faludi. Most of this "folk" material was sent to the journals by literati. Some of these village intellectuals even tried to compose "folk" songs, and it was prestigious to get one published.

We may conclude that what was considered folk song, i.e. authentic, ancient peasant song, in the nineteenth century was actually produced by the popular, mostly urban musical culture of the Hungarian literati, who were inspired by folk tunes. These songs were very different from those folk songs that Bartók and Kodály collected at the beginning of the twentieth century in the rural areas of Transylvania and Hungary. It would be more appropriate to call the nineteenth-century "folk songs" popular songs and the twentieth century "folk songs", peasant songs, as Bartók and Kodály referred to them.

### IV.3 The development and characteristics of the discursive language about Hungarian music

“The most effective means of expressing the characteristics of a nation is music. While appealing to the mind, at the same time it also raptures the heart. That is why it is the most perfect instrument to excite and affirm national feelings. The nation lives in its music.”<sup>179</sup> – thus Gábor Mátray (1797-1875), author of the first Hungarian music history and pioneer in conceptualising and institutionalising Hungarian music. His articles gave an impetus to the *Zenészet* (1860-1868), the first Hungarian musical journal. Mátray 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. Mátray began to publish parts of his *A' Muzsikának közönséges története* (General History of Music) in the journal *Hasznos Multságok*, and later in the *Tudományos Gyűjtemények*.

Mátray claimed: “The nation lives in its music”.<sup>180</sup> The sentence paraphrased another renowned statement by count István Széchenyi: “The nation lives in its language.” The similarity between the two sentences is more than only a rhetorical coincidence. Language became the most important marker of national identity and a central element of Hungarian cultural nationalism. The right to use Hungarian language in the Habsburg Monarchy became the focal point of Hungarian nobility’s resistance against 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 basically excluded from this nation concept. In the nineteenth century, the concept of the nation changed, and became now defined as a community with a common cultural heritage. Language and Hungarian literature were regarded as the most important elements of the cultural heritage.

---

<sup>179</sup> „A szép mesterségeknek leghathatósabbika, ’s a’ nemzeti Tulajdonságoknak kijelentésére legalkalmasabb Mesterség, a’ Muzsika. Ez, midőn az elme megfoghatóságával játszik, a’ szív érdeklését olly erővel gyakorolja, hogy ellene állhatatlanul elragadtatik. Ugyan azért valamint a’ Nemzeti érzéseknek gerjesztésére nintsen hathatósabb eszköz; úgy azoknak megerősítésére sintsen kedvesebb és fogatosabb. (...) A’ nemzet a’ Muzsikájában él.” (Mátray, Gábor (1984) *A muzsikának közönséges története és egyéb írások*, Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 132.)

<sup>180</sup> Mátray, 133.

Lyric and epic poetry were considered the highest artistic literary genres in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Hungary. With a few exceptions, the novel was missing from Hungarian literature in that time. Poetry was seen as literature *par excellence*. Poems were often accompanied by music, or influenced by well-known folk tunes. The development of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Hungarian poetry could hardly be discussed without referring to its musical aspects. The formation of Hungarian poetic forms and the metric structure of many Hungarian songs cannot be separated from each other. Words and notes, literature and music, were strongly intertwined. In the nineteenth century, with the strengthening of nationalism in Hungary, the advocates of national music – consciously or unconsciously – made use of this already existing connection. Music was compared to language as the prime expression of national identity. Language and music were understood as evidence for the uniqueness and almost exotic isolation of Hungarian culture, though, it was claimed that this culture was also organically European.

Analysing Hungarian music, Mátray stipulated that the most obvious characteristics of the Hungarian national music were: 1) Noble dignity, which triggers the listeners' special esteem; 2) Seriousness and pride, which suggest to foreigners that Hungarian music is full of sensibility and masculine passion; 3) Joyful spirit and agility; 4) Complex simplicity and the expression of national freedom; 5) That it expressed the innocent purity of the national soul.<sup>181</sup> It cannot be accidental that almost the same characteristics are mentioned in an article written by Heinrich Klein, teacher of Ferenc Erkel, who wrote that Hungarians were “ardent music lovers”, but formulated the same warning as later Wagner, that Hungarian music must be elevated by professional musicians, who have a comprehensive knowledge of European art music, otherwise it is going to shrink into triviality.

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 two leading literary journals of the age, *Honművész* (1833-1841) and *Regélő* (1833-1841), he was the founder of discourse about Hungarian music. The editors of the *Zenészet* *Lapok*, Mihály Mosonyi, Kornél Ábrányi and István Bartalus (1821-1899) struggled to propagate Hungarian art music:

---

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. 137.

“Hungarians by nature are meant to cultivate music” – we can read in its first issue. The same article characterised Hungarian music as “naturally rare” and “uniquely rich”.<sup>182</sup> These editors were the first to complain about the tendency to play “one awful *csárdás* after the other”, and the first to recognise the significance of Richard Wagner. Mosonyi complains in his article *Hungarian Music*:

“Ancient Hungarian music vanishes because of the *csárdás*-makers and because of the bad musical taste of the 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 the Hungarian music has been neglected – especially in the capital – and it begins to vanish in such a degree that the honourable charm and chivalrous pathos, which are the main characteristics of the Hungarian music, do not affect any more the Hungarian public”.<sup>183</sup>

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 they mixed in their performance the 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 pleads in favour of Gypsy music, arguing that Hungarian music must be grateful that the Gypsies have made it known all over Europe. Actually, both Mosonyi and Liszt are right, but from different points of view. Hungarian music indeed was carried and performed in Europe by Gypsies, and it became famous because of their ability of invention and virtuosity. Though their music conformed to the European tradition, it preserved some aspects of Hungarian originality. Still, Mosonyi’s fear that entertainment music will erase the unique nature of Hungarian music and lead to a dull conformity, has also proved to be well-grounded.

---

<sup>182</sup> „A szép művészeteket értjük különösen a zene terét, melynek kiváló művelésére a magyar – mintegy hivatva, s a természettől utasítva van”. (ZL I, 1860, 2)

<sup>183</sup> „A magyar zene iránti közérdek megmaradt ugyan, de a művészet magasabb céljához vezető utról lassankint lekezdettek maradozni az illetők, miglen – nemzeti zenénk nagy hátrányára – bekövetkezett a *csárdás* gyártók siralmas korszaka, melyekkel betűszerint elárasztott a szegény haza, s a mindennapi közönséges vastag érzékiségnek hizelgő tivornyás zeneizlés, leszorítá a nemesbb s magasabb művészi ösztönöket. (...) S midőn a cigány zenetársulatok francia négyesek, polkák, keringők, s olasz operai egyvelegek előadásaival is kezdtek foglalkozni, a magyar zenének ős eredetiségei mindinkább elhanyagolva lettek, s – legalább fővárosi körökben – lassankint enyészetnek indultak elannyira, hogy azon méltóságos kellem s határozott lovagias pathos melyek a magyar zenét kiválólag jellemzik, alig bírnak többé hatással a mai nemzedékre”. (ZL I, 1860, 5)

The metaphors used when talking about Hungarian music showed themselves resilient. Mosonyi might have got ready 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”.<sup>184</sup> 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 spent his life with us and did not learn to feel and think with us (sic!) – will never be able to create a Hungarian masterpiece.”<sup>185</sup> 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. Note that he refers to a “feeling and thinking together”, a process of learning. According to Mosonyi, a nation was not a genetic formation, but a community with a common cultural heritage. Mosonyi connects language with the spirit of the language community, and argues that “Hungarian music, just as the whole Hungarian nation, is isolated in the middle of Europe as a magical Promised Land”.<sup>186</sup> In another writing he uses the metaphor “hieroglyph” when talking about Hungarian music.

Gyula Rózsavölgyi complained in his *The Necessity of a Hungarian Music History* (Egy Magyar zenetörténelmi mű szükségességéről) that the Hungarian musical knowledge and culture lags behind the development of Hungarian music.<sup>187</sup> Hence the need to write Hungarian music histories and to spread musical culture in the country.

Mosonyi also lamented often over 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.<sup>188</sup> However “exotic” and “unique”,

---

<sup>184</sup> Legány, 149.

<sup>185</sup> „a magyar zeneirő mindenkor képes leend utánozni az olasz, francia s német irmodorokat, de egy külföldi – ki nem tölté nálunk s velünk élte napjait, s ki nem tanult velünk együtt érezni és gondolkozni – soha sem fog oda jutni, hogy képes legyen a magyar zene terén valami kitünő művet teremteni” (ZL I, 1860, 6).

<sup>186</sup> “a magyar zene, valamint maga az egész magyar nemzet is, elszigetelve áll eredetiségénél fogva mint egy varázs ígéretföld Európa közepén” (ZL I, 1861, 190).

<sup>187</sup> “A mai zeneművészet kifejlett fokával nem áll egyenlő színvonalon az általános zenei műveltség” (ZL I, 1860, 7)

<sup>188</sup> “A magyar zene jelenleg, hasonló egy forró égöv alatti őserdőhöz, melyet a vándor csak kívülről láthat, bámulhat, s melynek – belülről föltáruló – pompáját és nagyszerűségét, csak a képzelődés s

Hungarian music has to be cultivated and adapted to the European standards, according to the general principles of Western music theory. Trying to elevate the general musical taste and knowledge of the Hungarians, Mosonyi published in the *Zenészeti Lapok* fictitious letters to a Miss Pauline (*Levelek Pauline kisasszonyhoz*) about music theory.

In another article Mosonyi asserted: “As drama elevates the language and develops a national feeling and spirit, opera elevates Hungarian music”.<sup>189</sup> Joining the “opera war”, Mosonyi gave in *The opera and the Hungarian national Theatre* (A dalmű s Magyar nemzeti színház) some guidelines for Hungarian operas: 1) he emphasised the importance of the *Sparchgesang*; 2) suggested that the arias should follow Hungarian speech; 3) postulated that the melodies ought to be original Hungarian; and 4) plead that the choruses be carefully composed since they are the focal points of the opera and they can instigate feelings and a national spirit. The Hungarian opera should not be content with the cheap *csárdás* and *verbunkos* “experts”, but should be a musical historical tableau.<sup>190</sup> 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 the European standards and they should not be stuck into the “folk idioms”. Mosonyi objected to a letter written by a Hungarian reader living in Paris to the *Zenészeti Lapok*, which opted for the re-introduction and use of the *tárogató*, an ancient Hungarian blast instrument, (**Image 13**) in the Hungarian orchestras. He compared

---

költészet szemüvegén át sejtheti. (...) Igyekezünk közös erővel ezen lerhatatlan pompájú s gazdagságu őserdőből, egy rendezett szépségű, s mü-becsü nagy parkot alakítani” (ZL I, 1860, 11).

<sup>189</sup> “Valamint a dráma emeli a nyelvet s fejleszti a nemzeti szellemet s érzületet; úgy a dalmű is nemesíti a magyar zenét s annak befolyását” (ZL I. 1860, 51).

<sup>190</sup> „Egy magyar dalműnek valóságos nemzeties jellemzéséhez mindenek felett szükséges 1-ször: az ének-beszéd (recitativ) részeknek különös műgonddal való kezelése; mert azoknak – nem levén egyebek mint szabályos szavatok – már a magyar rythmus minden elágazásai jellemét, magukon kell hordaniuk. De ez esetben, a szereplő énekesnek értenie kell mind azt, mit elszaval; 2-szor szükséges a hosszabb, szenvedélyesebb, s mesterséges előadást igénylő magány dallam-részeket is, a magyar zene sajátosságai s elemei szerint alkotni. 3-szor: ugyan csak ily modorban kell a kettős, hármas, négyes, sat. Dalműszerkezeteket is kezelni. 4-szer: különös műgond forditassék a kardalokra, mert egy magyar dalműben, azoknak kell valódi fénypontokat képezni. (...) A magyar dalműnek célja, ne csak pillanatnyi üres hatásadászat, de magasabb művészi kötelességek betöltése legyen: szóval valóságos zenészeti történetképpé kell átalakulnia. Ezt, pusztán népdalokkal s *csárdás*sokkal, soha sem fogjuk elérhetni” (ZL I, 1860, 66).



this proposal to the idea of re-introducing ancient Hungarian tents instead of using the new, comfortable and beautiful buildings.<sup>191</sup>

The *Zenészet* stimulated the elevation of Hungarian music through fashioning it to the European standards, while emphasising the importance of the national characteristics. Ábrányi when talking about Chopin's music, wrote that "a composer can become famous, only if he is able to elevate his nation's music to a world-famous level".<sup>192</sup> The *Zenészet* became a central forum of the Hungarian musical life by creating during its fifteen years of existence a language for the discourse about music in general and national music in particular.

To sum it up: Music played an important role in nineteenth-century culture and discourses in general. Music was a recurrent element in political, literary and aesthetic discourse, and it became a marker of national identity, playing a vital role in the development of cultural nationalism. Nationalism also influenced nineteenth-century music. In Hungary, there was a flourishing musical culture at aristocratic courts in the eighteenth century, where the masterpieces of European music were regularly performed. This musical practice allowed a European exportation and popularisation of Hungarian music. In the nineteenth century, discourse on music expanded also through the emerging journals and publishing industry. With the building of the first public concert halls and opera houses, music acquired new public spaces for its performance. Musical practice, together with the discourses about music, shaped the image of Hungarian music in Hungary and abroad.

In Romania, music meant mainly folk music, due to the still rural character of the country. Performances of art music were relatively rare and did not reach the masses until the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Public discourses about art music were also rare, and could not achieve such an identity and canon-shaping role as in Hungary or Germany, where urbanization processes began earlier.

Dynamic interactions between cultural memory, practice and discourse made a certain style *national*. My comparison of the practices of music's institutionalisation in Hungary and Romania shows that Hungarian music had been greatly influenced by discourses, while the absence for such a discursive practice in the Romanian lands limited music to a form of entertainment for the boyars or left it in the realm of the

---

<sup>191</sup> "Miért nem maradt meg hát a magyar ősi sátrainál, s nomádszerű életénél" (ZL I, 1860, 148).

<sup>192</sup> "Csak az által lesz nagy egy zeneíró, ha nemzeti zenéjét világművészeti érvényre képes emelni" (ZL I, 1860, 155).

folk. The absence of theoretical discourse about music may well be a reason why Romanian art music remained in the realm of the folk culture until the twentieth century.

A discourse about national music is a narrative that first tries to define itself, and approaches music through continuous self-identification acts, music being both the object it talks about and the object it creates. National music was born as a result of the interplay between different national narratives, such as general history, literary history, and music history. Therefore the *histoire croisée* or *entangled histories*, a scholarly approach to history that has been developing in the last two years as a result of a debate between French and German historians would be a suitable model for understanding and interpreting the phenomena of national music. The methods of *histoire croisée* are meant to replace the traditional *histoire comparée*: instead of comparing two separate entities (most of the times enclosed in a national framework) the *histoire croisée* accentuates the constant dynamic transfer and interaction between the different cultures, disciplines and traditions. It focuses on the empirical intercrossings consubstantial with the object of study. National styles and national music are perfectly suitable for such an intercultural and interdisciplinary study of the *histoire croisée*.