

KODÁLY AND IMPRESSIONISM. THE INFLUENCE OF DEBUSSY

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SUMMARY. The paper examines Debussy's influence on the young Kodály. First, it enumerates those historical events, that link Kodály to Debussy's music, then it compares his newly developed style with that of his earlier and later works. By analyzing the piano works *Méditation, sur un motif de Claude Debussy* and *Épitaphe (Seven pieces for piano, Op. 11, No. 4)* the paper highlights a few impressionistic compositional techniques that appear in these works, then examines those ones, which Kodály takes on and fits in his latter, predominant neoclassical-folkloric style.

Keywords: Kodály, Impressionism, Debussy, style, compositional techniques, analysis

Zoltán Kodály's early compositional style was strongly influenced by the French impressionists, particularly by Claude Debussy. This was initiated by a study trip to Paris, where Kodály discovered for himself the essential compositions of Debussy. He had the opportunity to listen to a few of Debussy's works in concerts, and he visited the music department of the *Bibliothèque Nationale* to examine and analyze the scores of the composer's instrumental, chamber and orchestral compositions. As a result, techniques, that originate from Debussy will appear both in early and in later compositions of Kodály.

The paper summarizes the major music-historical events that link Kodály to the oeuvre and style of Debussy and examines a few compositions that highlight some of the most important stylistic elements and compositional techniques that either appear as influences of Impressionist composers, or

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that lead to similar results after the process of developing the individual compositional path. Many of the so-called impressionistic techniques used by Kodály derive from the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic structures and patterns of the newly discovered authentic Hungarian folk music.

Kodály and Debussy. Historical perspective

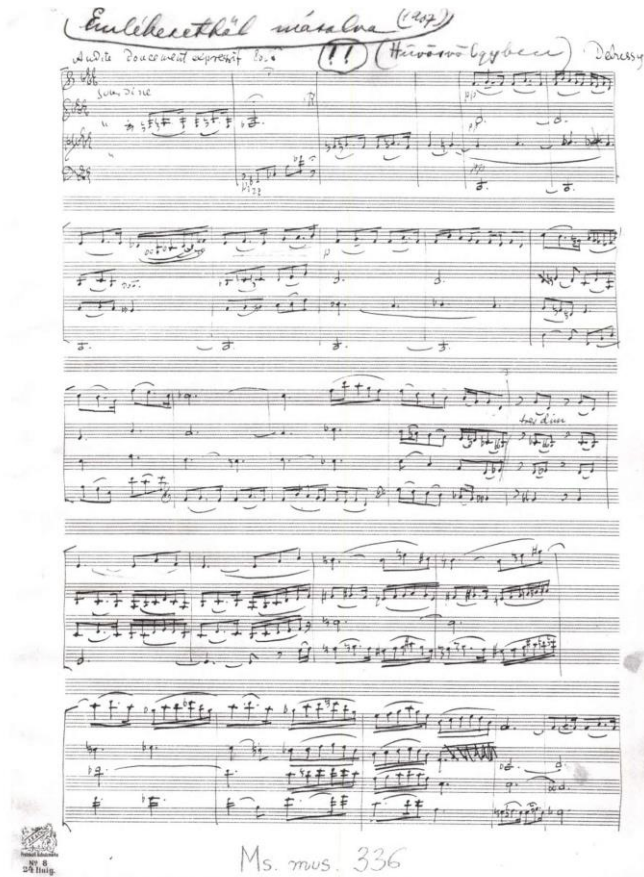
Between the end of 1906 and the summer of 1907 Zoltán Kodály went on a study trip to Berlin and Paris with his friend and colleague Béla Balázs with the aim of getting an insight into the prevailing German music (in Berlin), and to meet and discover the characteristics of the newly emerging French music (in Paris).

Let us put this journey in the context of Kodály's biography. In 1904, Kodály finished his four-year composition studies at the Academy of Music in Budapest, but remained for a further year to deepen his experiences as a composer. He gained his degree in composition even later, in 1906, composing the orchestral piece *Nyári este (Summer Evening)*. The year 1905 was important from several aspects. After finishing his studies at the Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences, Kodály earns a degree as a Hungarian-German teacher. In March he meets and forms a lifelong friendship with Béla Bartók, and in August he sets off on his first folk song collecting trip to Csallóköz. And so, we come to 1906, when he was awarded the Ph.D. for his thesis *A Magyar népdal strófaszervezete (The Stanzaic Structure of Hungarian Folk Song)*, in which he analyses earlier folk song recordings by Béla Vikár and summarizes his own experiences of collecting folk songs. His orchestral piece *Nyári este (Summer Evening)* was premiered in the autumn of 1906. Together with Bartók, Kodály published their historically significant folk music arrangement *Hungarian Folk Songs for Voice with Piano Accompaniment* (10-10 arrangements). By the time it was published in December 1906, Kodály and Balázs travelled to Berlin and Paris.

“At the turn of 1906 and 1907, Kodály travelled to Berlin and Paris for a half a year to listen to *new* music, to visit the Humboldt University and the Sorbonne, to visit theatres and museums, to compare German and French music teaching methods – in short: to discover those horizons of art and life, which could be revealed to him only by these great intellectual centers. One of the most determinate memories and increments of the travelling is the discovery of Debussy for himself and for Bartók. Without getting entirely under its influence, this music has propelled them significantly in their careers: they were freed and disengaged from the constraints of the laws of musical composition, that seemed to be everlasting, and they could set new directions

for their compositional imagination. Bartók later emphasized that the roots of their music were twofold: the ancient folk song and the new French music.”² The influence and impact of Debussy's music on Kodály was decisive. After his return to Budapest in the summer of 1907, for lack of the score, at Emma's request he puts on paper from memory the complete beginning of the 3rd movement of Debussy's String Quartet³.

E.g. 1



Beginning of the 3rd movement of Debussy's Quartet, written down from memory by Kodály, in summer 1907⁴

- ² Bónis, Ferenc (ed.). *Kodály Zoltán – Visszatekintés 3 (In Retrospect 3)*. Argumentum, Budapest, 2007, p. 7.
- ³ Bónis, Ferenc. (ed.). *Élet-pálya: Kodály Zoltán (Course of Life: Zoltán Kodály)*. Balassi Kiadó – Kodály Archívum, Budapest, 2011, p. 125.
- ⁴ Bónis, Ferenc (ed.). *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

In September 1907, he was appointed professor of Music Theory, and in 1908 professor of Composition at the Academy of Music. One of its consequences was that Kodály had considerably less time for composing. Although he returned from Paris full of plans and sketches, he had to admit that the planned compositions will have to wait in their realization. On the way returning from Paris, Kodály complained about it in a letter to Emma, written from Bratislava in July 1907: “It is annoying that neither the quartet, nor the cello sonata, nor some mixed choirs, nor the symphonic sketch *Éjjel az erdőn* (*At Night in the Forest*) for orchestra and choir without words will be completed this summer”⁵. If we jump forward a few decades, we see, that some of the planned compositions will be realized: an example is *Mountain Nights I*, an *a cappella* choral work from 1923, written for female choir without words, very possibly due to the inspiration of Debussy’s *Sirènes* [from *Trois Nocturnes*]⁶.

The first major composition that reflects Debussy’s influence is the piano piece *Méditation*, written in the year of the study trip, 1907, after his return home. In addition to its French title, the subtitle is a clear reference to the source of inspiration: “*sur un motif de Claude Debussy*”. Besides the title and the adopted–elaborated thematic motif from Debussy’s String Quartet, Kodály also adopts in the piece many of the compositional techniques of the French composer. The direct and strong influence are evident. In an interview, the 82-year-old Kodály points out that “I only spent a few months in Paris, but it was a great experience. Everything. A life-defining experience, for the rest of my life”⁷. Kodály even highlights in 1947, that he was the first Hungarian musician and composer, who discovered Debussy for the musical life in Hungary: “When I first came to Paris, I was captivated by Debussy’s revolutionary Impressionism. [...] Even today I am still proud and emotionally touched to think that I was the first to present his works in Hungary. I showed them to Béla Bartók, who was as astonished as I was. It was at that time, under the influence of Debussy’s music, that we began our struggle against the hegemony of German music, and that we tried to make the music of Debussy and Ravel triumph”⁸. And, as Kodály notes, it seems, that several members of the younger generation of composers followed their example: Sándor Veress, Pál Kadosa, Ferenc Szabó and János Viski [and Kodály

⁵ Bónis, Ferenc (ed.). *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

⁶ Kodály was also familiar with the English Impressionism of Delius, which might also influence the composition.

⁷ Interview by Mária Nyékiné Kőrösi in Paris, September 1965 – In Bónis, Ferenc (ed.) *Kodály Zoltán – Visszatekintés 3* (*In Retrospect 3*), p. 576.

⁸ Interview by Théodore Beregi in Paris, March 1947 – In Bónis, Ferenc (ed.). *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

omitted the most important representative, László Lajtha] turned away substantially from the cluttered, complicated style of German music, and focused – besides Hungarian folk music – on the refined French style.⁹

Another direct reference to Debussy and his style can be found in the piano piece *Építaphé* (*Seven pieces for piano, Op. 11, No. 4*), written in 1918. This impressionistic piece, again full of “Debussysms”, is a musical commemoration of the great French innovator, who died that year. The importance of Debussy is reflected by Kodály also in words, namely in an obituary, written in April 1918, three weeks after Debussy’s death.

The impact of Debussy’s music and style on Kodály’s music will be determinative also for later compositions, even though many of the compositional techniques – similar to those of the impressionist composers – will not be just adoptions from Debussy or Ravel, but also derivations of the musical characteristics of the authentic Hungarian folk music.

Before Paris – Kodály’s early compositional style

Kodály was a student of Hans Koessler at the Academy of Music (as were Bartók and Dohnányi). The German-born Koessler studied organ with Rheinberger in Munich, and later became professional and personal friends with Brahms. Thus, his career as a composer and composition teacher was deeply embedded in German Romanticism. Due to these impulses, Brahms’ music and compositional style was important in the development of Kodály, as a composer. The cult of Wagner, which reached Budapest, also left its mark on Kodály’s music. Eternal idols were and remained Mozart, Palestrina, and Bach. And also, the music of Liszt influenced both Kodály and Bartók, and from 1905 on, the role of the Hungarian authentic folk music became increasingly important to them. These together represent the root of Kodály’s music in his first compositions.

Kodály composed *Nyári este* (*Summer Evening*) in 1906, as his graduation composition (revised in 1929). It is a romantic orchestral piece, a symphonic poem, a real *nature poetry* in music. Kodály loved nature and spent a lot of time there. The experiences, feelings and impressions he gained, were reflected in his music – let just have as example the cycle *Hegyi éjszakák* (*Mountain Nights*), where the female choir expresses without words the sound of the mountains by night. It is Liszt – but it could have been also Kodály – who wrote in the *Preface* of his *Album d’un voyageur* the followings:

⁹ *Ibidem.*

“I have latterly travelled through many new countries, have seen many different places, and visited many a spot hallowed by history and poetry; I have felt that the varied aspects of nature, and the different incidents associated with them, did not pass before my eyes like meaningless pictures, but that they evoked profound emotions within my soul; that a vague but direct affinity was established betwixt them and myself, a real, though indefinable understanding, a sure but inexplicable means of communication, and I have tried to give musical utterance to some of my strongest sensations, some of my liveliest impressions.”¹⁰

The early *nature poetry* of Kodály, as musical representations of his *impressions* are, like Liszt’s, romantic. But even Liszt reached in a specific way musical Impressionism with *Les jeux d’eaux à la Villa d’Este* or *Sursum corda*, and also the early pieces of impressionists outgrew from French Romanticism, moreover, for both Debussy and Ravel Liszt was a source of inspiration.

There is another image of nature by Kodály, from 1904 (revised in 1931). It is the choral work *Este (Evening)*, on a poem by Pál Gyulai. Kodály was the student of Gyulai at Eötvös Loránd University, and he composed the piece during his study years. It is again a romantic–impressionistic nature poetry. We find already in the poem such expressions as “breeze”, “moon”, “dream”, “harmony of heaven” etc. For highlighting the text, Kodály applies a very dense harmonic texture, and therefore he divides the choir into up to 9-10 voices. Kodály – similarly to Liszt – even before having the chance to meet the music of the impressionists –, transforms in multiple segments the romantic musical context into impressionistic ones. He experiments as a student with parallel harmonic structures and chord progressions (mixtures), and builds up harmonies, which include almost all the notes of the whole-tone scale. In the first quoted example (see m. 43) we find chords built up from a series of major seconds (C-D-E-F#-G#), over the pedal tone A. Due to the pedal, Kodály introduces the tension of an augmented fifth between the two soprano parts (C-G#), and a major seventh between the bass/alto and first soprano (A-G#):

¹⁰ Preface of Franz Liszt (transl. by Fanny Copeland, revised by Mevanwy Roberts) to score *Album d’un voyageur*. Breitkopf & Härtel, 1916, p. XVII.

E.g. 2

pp

S El - né - mult a föld lár - má - ja, ppp

A föld lár - má

T (föld) lár - má

B. I. má - - - - - pp

B. II. El - né - mult a föld,

Kodály: *Este (Evening)*, m. 40–43.

The second quote presents a succession of parallel six-four chords in the soprano and two alto voices over the pedal of the bass, and with a melodic line in the solo soprano. If we focus just on the beginning (m. 60-61), we can see the three different melodic-harmonic layers, merged in a massive dissonance: the progression of the six-four chords represents a strange and unusual harmonic texture, “enriched” with the dissonance (major seventh, augmented octave) between the pedal note of the bass (D) and the melody notes of the soprano (C#, D#):

E.g. 3

dim.

S S hall - - - - - ja,

S (ja)

A (ja)

T (ja)

B (ja)

Kodály: *Este (Evening)*, m. 63–66.

These original impressionistic-like fragments of the early compositions are always embedded in romantic harmonic-melodic textures. And even more early pieces, which do not experiment with similar modern techniques, show an approach to the tone or tint of the Impressionism. Such examples are the *Sonata for Cello and Piano* (1909-1910), or the first *String Quartet* (1908-1909), where Kodály seeks after new intonations, new timbres and harmonic colors.

The importance of Debussy

Deeply moved by Debussy's death on 25 March 1918, Kodály wrote an obituary on April 16, 1918, in *Nyugat* (*West*), one of the leading Hungarian literary journals. In this commemorative writing Kodály expressed the importance of the French composer's influence. Just at the beginning Kodály presents very concisely Debussy, the composer: "He died at the age of fifty-six, perhaps too soon, for he showed himself to be still progressive in his late works; he was the most distinctive and influential musician of his generation"¹¹. Kodály emphasizes, that they cannot have at that moment a complete picture of him, because many of his works are unpublished, or unknown for them, but one of the reasons why he was one of the most influential composers of his time was, that he got strongly linked to the French spirit¹². This is the reason, why his genie could free the French music from the domination of the German and Italian music. For Kodály and Bartók, Debussy's point of view became more and more important. Even more important than his progressive, modernist style. This is why Kodály also tried to renew the Hungarian music with help of the authentic folk music. Kodály specifically points out that one of the greatest achievements of Debussy was the reform of the language of French dramatic music, the re-creation of the recitative, with the help of which he succeeded to convert the French declamation into music¹³. In an interview by Théodore Beregi in Paris, March 1947, Kodály was asked, which were the newest trends and problems in Hungarian music at that time. Kodály expressed in his answer, that many young composers have realized, that authentic and valuable music cannot be created without national spirit and character; so, they seemed to be increasingly attracted by the particular musical language and rhythm of the folk song.¹⁴

¹¹ Bónis, Ferenc (ed.). *Kodály Zoltán – Visszatekintés 2 (In Retrospect 2)*. Argumentum, Budapest, 2007, p. 379.

¹² *Idem*, pp. 379-380.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 380.

¹⁴ Bónis, Ferenc (ed.). *Kodály Zoltán – Visszatekintés 3 (In Retrospect 3)*, p. 69.

In the obituary, Kodály deals also with Debussy's revolutionary and progressive compositional style: his unique melodic and harmonic language, motivic development, formal perception and orchestration. He concludes: "To capture a mood in a precise, suggestive way, to follow the evolution of an emotion, [...] that is what he wanted and knew. Certainly, it is something like impressionism in painting. [...] The course he set out on is one of freedom and beauty."¹⁵

After Paris – the influence of the Impressionism on Kodály

The piano piece *Méditation, sur un motif de Claude Debussy* (1907) is a reverence for Debussy and his innovative musical style. Kodály, strongly impressed by this kind of music, experiments with these techniques. In this overview we try to identify those compositional solutions, which Kodály adopts in this piece.

The formal structure of the composition is ternary, as many of Debussy's (and Liszt's). The first 28 measures (first main section) start with the quote of Debussy's motif in *unisono*, after which Kodály places it in the bass. Due, on the one hand, to the unmelodic character of the motif, and its repetitive and sequential use, and, on the other hand, to its rubato-like counterpoint in the right hand, the whole segment seems to be mainly improvisatory. This is why in contrast to the pulsation of the quarter notes in 3/4, Kodály introduces irregular time divisions: eighth note triplets, quarter note quadruplets, sixteenth note septuplets (further on also duplets, and quintuplets); changes of the time signature; quick and frequent exploitations of the registers; dense chromaticism. In contrast to the first, the second main formal section (m. 30–70) start with a diatonic musical theme in the lower register with the arpeggios of the D-minor chord, completed with *sixte ajoutée* (m. 30–35). Although the harmonic and melodic layers are diatonic, Kodály suggest a tonal instability.

¹⁵ Bónis, Ferenc (ed). *Kodály Zoltán – Visszatekintés 2 (In Retrospect 2)*, pp. 380-381.

E.g. 4

Kodály: *Méditation, sur un motif de Claude Debussy*, m. 29–35.

This instability turns into a sudden tonal shift in m. 36, and again in m. 42. The next elaborative segment (from m. 43) will be a continuous gradation based on melodic and harmonic sequences. The climax (*fff*, *sfff*, *con moto*, *sempre agitato*) – similar to Liszt’s *Sursum corda* – will represent the cease of the tonal gravitation. Kodály will use both vertically and horizontally the notes of the hexachord system (different types of omega-chords). In addition, Kodály shifts the rhythmic layers between the two hands due to a continuous syncopation in the right hand (see starting from m. 43), and exploits also the succession of perfect fifth in the bass, as a non-conventional acoustic sonority:

E.g. 5

Kodály: *Méditation, sur un motif de Claude Debussy*, m. 43–44., m. 47.

The third section starts in m. 71, and brings back Tempo I (Lento) and the *pp*. In contrast with the tempo, the harmonic texture gets more and more denser. M. 81–82 highlights the hexachord system both melodically (due to the shifted–syncopated rhythm the whole-tone scale is formed, in the discant voices, by the alternation of the two hands) and harmonically (a pedal tone and dense chord blocks). This full omega-chord (term used by Ernő Lendvai), this whole-tone scale chord is a specific novelty of the Impressionism, and

its impact on Kodály is so big, that he names it “his dearest friend”, and writes on the sketch of this piano piece next to the hexatonic chord: “Ah! c’est toi, mon ami!”¹⁶:

E.g. 6

Kodály: *Méditation, sur un motif de Claude Debussy*, m. 81–82.

This early composition of Kodály summarizes the most common, but also the most interesting compositional techniques, which appear in the works of Debussy. Kodály uses in the piece side by side diatonic and chromatic textures; short thematic motifs (just one highlighted melody line); whole-tone scale and the hexachord system; tonal instability; *ajoutées* (predominantly *sixte ajoutée*); pedal tones; chord progressions (mixtures); dense harmonic textures; non-chords and eleventh-chords; resolving a dissonant chord on another dissonant one; tonal and harmonic shifts; loose formal structures; complex rhythms; irregular time divisions; frequent changing of time signature.

Kodály does not commemorate Debussy only through an obituary, but he composes in December 1918 the piano work *Építaph* (*Seven pieces for piano, Op. 11, No. 4*), which, without denominating Debussy, “is a symbolic farewell on Debussy’s grave”¹⁷. Another piece, that highlights in a way the impressionistic style, and its compositional techniques. In 1918, Kodály’s approach to Debussy was different: although he continued to use stylistic elements and techniques of the impressionists, the influence of Hungarian folk music became more and more dominant, alongside with a neoclassical melodic-harmonic musical language. As Anna Dalos concludes in her study, this work of Kodály closes a compositional period, in which he experimented with the modern use of harmony, marked by Debussy, after which he “returned to the classicist tradition of 19th century national romanticism”¹⁸.

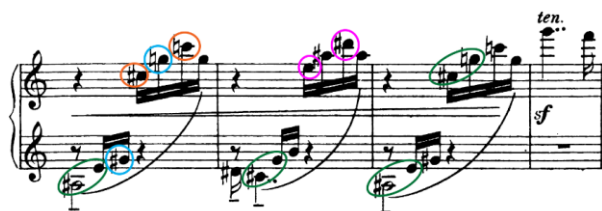
¹⁶ Dalos, Anna. *Forma, harmónia, ellenpont: Vázlatok Kodály Zoltán poétikájához* (*Form, Harmony, Counterpoint: Sketches of Zoltán Kodály’s Poetics*). Rózsavölgyi és Társa, Budapest, 2007, p. 197.

¹⁷ Breuer, János. *Kodály-kalauz* (*A Guide to Kodály*). Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1982, p. 341.

¹⁸ Dalos, Anna. *Op. cit.*, p. 210.

In the *Épitaph* we can also detect many of Debussy's writing techniques. To exemplify, we try to enumerate some of them. The piece starts in *Rubato*, with a repetitive tritonic figure (*E_b-D_b-B_b*), developed from a single *E_b* note and its octave higher variant. The technique of motoric repetition of little figures and motifs will become dominant for the entire piece. In contrast to this *E_b*-centered accompaniment, in m. 4 appears a simple, tetratonic recitative melody (again based on the repetition of a single note) with its geometrical center on note *A*. This contrast (augmented forth between *E_b* and *A*) will be continued with the opposition of the melodic and accompaniment layers, amplified with dynamic contrasts and the indication of *appassionato*. In addition to this improvisatory *Rubato* fragment, Kodály uses the frequent changing of different time signatures (2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, 9/4). From m. 9 the arpeggiated figures highlight even more the dissonant texture with the presence of augmented fourth, major seventh and diminished octave (diatonic and chromatic variant of the same note), creating a harmonic texture, that ceases the feeling of tonality:

E.g. 7



Kodály: *Épitaph* (Seven pieces for piano, Op. 11, No. 4), m. 13-16.

M. 17–30 continues tonal instability with dense and dissonant arpeggiated chords, and without any recitative melodic line. The fragment is improvisatory, with a repetitive rhythmical and a chromatically descending harmonic profile. Starting at m. 31, Kodály completely ceases the feeling of tonality. A new repetitive motif, formed by major seconds, introduces an augmented tetrachord, which at first can be interpreted as a fragment of Lydian scale. From m. 37 it will be clear, that it is the complete hexatonic scale, formed by two disjunctive augmented tetrachords, played in octaves:

E.g. 8

Kodály: *Épitaphe* (Seven pieces for piano, Op. 11, No. 4), m. 37-42.

We can also detect the technique of duplication (see m. 39-40 and 41-42), frequently used by Debussy and especially Ravel.

As a contrast, at the beginning of the second major section (from m. 46) Kodály exploits the technique of chord progressions (mixtures). At first, we see consonant chord progressions, formed by successive major and minor six-four chords (m. 47-54), then a progression of dense and dissonant chords (m. 62-81), with *ajoutées*, formed by a chord progression of sixth chords at the left hand, and by chords built up from perfect and augmented fourth, at the right. Like the hexachord system, these passages also contribute more and more to the weakening or sometimes even to the suspension of the tonal-functional system.

E.g. 9

Kodály: *Épitaphe* (Seven pieces for piano, Op. 11, No. 4), m. 46-51.

Starting at m. 83, the third major section recalls the musical material of the first. The recitative appears in m. 87. Full of inner fragmentations (expression of lamentation), Kodály highlights the bitterness of the loss and resignation through two dissonant (atonal) chords. The chords are led up by an *unisono* melodic fragment, consisting of a succession of two perfect fourth, and are led down with a short *unisono* recitative melody. The chords include all of the notes of the scale, avoiding diatonicism: its first appearance build of from notes Gb-Ab-Bb-Cb-Ebb-F, the second from C-D-E-F-G-Ab-B.

The composition uses many impressionistic techniques which is related on the one hand to Debussy, on the other hand to folk music.

In the future, these direct stylistic experiments with impressionistic techniques will fade out. Kodály will rather build on the symbiosis of the neoclassicism and folklorism, but as reminiscences, he will also use some techniques, which fit into his neoclassical–folkloric style, or – and more important – which can be derived also from folklorism. His aim will be to create a Hungarian compositional style, and not to directly adopt the French one.

A specific perspective

For Kodály Debussy was an example, not a model. Kodály emphasizes his conviction, that the Hungarian folk song can be “the only solid basis for the development of the Hungarian style”¹⁹. László Lajtha also states, that a composer, “even though he wishes to create only national, but is not lost in the details, and is a true man, a true artist, a genius of the highest level, will create something of universal significance”²⁰.

The main common stylistic elements between Debussy and Kodály are the national spirit and character, individual declamation, improvisatory character, pentatonicism, diatonicism, modality (the modal scale – both horizontally and vertically), tonal-modal ambiguity, *ajoutées/piens* (as coloring elements), chords derived from the horizontal structures/scales, Lydian scale or chord (sometimes even chords of the hexatonic scale), fourth chords (chords made up of perfect fourth) or melodic structures developed as a succession of perfect fourth, pedal notes, motif duplication, rhythmic-melodic *ostinato* repetition, varied rhythms, rhythmic freedom (incl. *rubato*), the use of asymmetrical measures, special orchestration, “color”-chords, etc.

The *oeuvre* of Kodály, beginning from the 1920s will include a few of Debussy’s techniques, amongst the most important will be the whole-tone scale (most of the time as a coloristic element, rather than a drawing-away from tonality), and many of those techniques which derive from folk music, amongst the most important will be pentatonicism, modality, particular meter, and rhythm. As a conclusion, let’s see a few examples.

Kodály composed a cycle of five choral pieces for female choir with the title *Hegyi éjszakák (Mountain Nights)*. The first was composed in 1923, the rest in 1955-56 and 1962. All of the pieces are *a cappella*, without words, imitating the sounds of the mountains by night. In a television interview from 1956, Kodály pointed out, that “in my whole life I have walked much among

¹⁹ Bónis, Ferenc (ed). *Kodály Zoltán – Visszatekintés 3 (In Retrospect 3)*, p. 6.

²⁰ Berlász, Melinda (ed). *Lajtha László összegyűjtött írásai II. (László Lajtha – Collected Writings)*. Rózsavölgyi és Társa, Budapest, 2021, p. 667.

high mountains, I spent nights out there, and I have noticed that mountains have their own sound. A wonderful sound, that I could hear many times, and of which I have tried to recall a few fragments”²¹. We already mentioned Kodály’s compositional plans from 1907, among which the symphonic sketch *At Night in the Forest* for orchestra and choir without words. This was not realized at that time, but in 1923 Kodály presented the *Mountain Nights I*, which can be interpreted as a variant of the original plan. The beginning of the piece shows the ethereal, elusive character of the mountains by night, highlighted with the Lydian beginning (F-G-A-H) as a melodic line and harmonic structure. This section of the whole-tone scale is a painting and coloring tool in Kodály’s hand. The impressionistic ending of the piece is even more suggestive: Kodály uses a pedal tone (B), and builds on it a whole-tone chord formed from five major seconds (F-G-A-B-C#):

E.g. 10

The image shows a musical score for three vocal parts: Soprano (S), Mezzo (M), and Alto (A). The Soprano part is marked 'S solo: A' and features a melodic line with a whole-tone chord (F-G-A-B-C#) highlighted in a pink box. The Mezzo and Alto parts are marked 'rallentando e morendo' and feature a whole-tone chord (F-G-A-B-C#) highlighted in a pink box. The Alto part has a pedal point (B) marked with a purple symbol and the word 'pedal' in orange. The score includes dynamics like 'ppp' and 'rallentando e morendo'. A note at the bottom indicates '(5 notes: F-G-A-B-C#)'.

Kodály: *Hegyi éjszakák I. (Mountain Night I.)*, m. 55-58.

Kodály combines in *Hegyi éjszakák I. (Mountain Nights I.)* the characteristics of the whole-tone scale with the diatonicism of the folk music. The introduced folk music inspired melodic fragments are marked by the interval of perfect fourth:

E.g. 11

The image shows a musical score for a single melodic line. The score includes dynamics like 'p cresc.' and 'A'. A blue circle highlights a perfect fourth interval between two notes.

Kodály: *Hegyi éjszakák I. (Mountain Night I.)*, m. 17-20.

²¹ Szabó, Miklós. “Kodály Zoltán A ‘Hegyi éjszakák’-ból” (“Zoltán Kodály about ‘Mountain Nights’”). In *Élet és mű – Zenatudományi tanulmányok. Emlékkönyv Eöszé László tiszteletére (Life and Work - Studies in Musicology in honour of László Eöszé)*; ed. Mihály Iltzész), Editio Musica, Budapest, 2013, p. 149.

The significance of the perfect fourth (alongside the melodic *unisono*) is present also in the *Mountain Nights III.*, where, for an example, the melodic profile starts with the juxtaposition of two ascending perfect fourth. In the beginning of the second piece of the cycle (*Mountain Nights II.*) Kodály recalls the murmurs of the mountains and the whistling of the winds by alternation of dissonant acoustic sonorities with chromatinized melodic motifs, and chords formed of notes of the whole-tone scale (see m. 1-7).

Another example of the presence of the whole-tone scale is *Sirató ének (Dirge)*, composed in 1947. In the first part of the choral composition Kodály, through the poem of Pál Bodrogh, commemorates the suffering and sacrifice of the World War II, in the second he emphasizes power of art, which could lead humanity to a better world. The composition is tonal, but for expressing the verses “Until the mad scare came / And tore everything apart”, Kodály breaks out temporary from tonal stability using augmented chords (both vertically and horizontally) without tonal resolution, and the ending chord made up of major seconds (using five of the six notes of the whole-tone scale):

E.g. 12

augmented triads
Ω
(5 notes: B-Db-Eb-F-G)

Kodály: *Sirató ének (Dirge)*, m. 13-14.

As a last example for the whole-tone scale we quote the vocal imitation of the bellringing from the work *Fancy*, written in 1959, for female choir. Beside multiple common compositional solutions to Debussy’s (recitative, the highlighted interval of perfect fourth), the most impressive is the ending, where Kodály uses the full whole-tone scale as a chord (full omega-chord), imitating the floating and blurring of the bell’s sound:

Kodály: *Fancy*, m. 33-36.

Kodály composes the choral piece *Norvég leányok* (*Norwegian Girls*) for mixed choir in 1940, on a poem by Sándor Weöres. Due to the meaning and character of the verses, it is one of Kodály's most poetic compositions. The poem contains many symbolist (impressionist) elements, and the music also. It is an impressionistic landscape, and some of the elements of the nature presented in the poem and choral piece (mist, rain, fog, wind, sea, mountains, etc.) are sensitively painted with pastel colors. Weöres makes it even more poetic with alliterations or synonymic pairs of words as "puha pára" (soft haze), "könnyű ködök" (light fog), "szürke szikla" (grey cliff), "csúcsos csulya" (peaked hood), "fehér faház" (white house), "esik eső" (the rain falls), or "csillog-villog" (glistens-sparkles), "zöldes-borzas" (greeny-rumpled), "mosolyognak-nevetnek" (smiling-laughing), evidenced also in music. Kodály places the piece in tonal system, but uses a few important impressionistic compositional techniques as the ascension of perfect fourth (m. 23, Bass: two consecutive perfect fourth); Lydian melody with its highlighted augmented fourth (m. 45-48, Soprano: a melodic line built up from the notes A-B-C#-D#); progression (mixtures) of the six-four chords (m. 22-24 or m. 58-60 in Soprano, Alto and Tenor voices), harmonic structure made up of perfect fourth (m. 19-22):

E.g. 14

re. E-sik e-ső, e-sik e-ső, e-sik, e-sik, e-ső, e-sik, e-sik e-ső, e-sik, e-sik e-ső.

re. E-sik e-ső, e-sik e-ső, e-sik, e-sik, e-ső, e-sik, e-sik e-ső, e-sik, e-sik e-ső.

re. E-sik e-ső, e-sik e-ső, e-sik, e-sik, e-ső, e-sik, e-sik e-ső, e-sik, e-sik e-ső.

re. E-sik e-ső, e-sik e-ső, e-sik, e-sik e-ső, e-sik, e-sik e-ső, e-sik, e-sik e-ső.

Kodály: *Norvég leányok (Norwegian Girls)*, m. 19-22.

The importance of the perfect fourth, present in many compositions, is also highlighted in *Budavári Te Deum*, composed in 1936. First, we exemplify the beginning of the fugato *Pleni sunt caeli*: the theme is Dorian, and it includes all of the notes of the scale. The first segment of the theme is characterized by descending melodic profile, realized by the opening two descending perfect fourths: $Eb-Bb$ and $Db-Ab$ (the second interval has a passing note C), and by the final descending perfect fifth ($Bb-Eb$). After a rest of a quarter note, the second segment of the fugue theme has an ascending melodic profile, dominated by the two consecutive perfect fourth ($Ab-Eb-Gb$), through which the melody rises a minor seventh. The theme ends again with two descending perfect fourth, $Gb-D$ (with a passing note) and $Eb-Bb$:

E.g. 15

Ple - ni sunt coe - li et ter - ra, ma - je - sta - tis glo - ri - ae tu - ae, coe -

Ple - ni sunt coe - li et

Kodály: *Budavári Te Deum*, m. 43-47.

To demonstrate the conscious use of the perfect fourths and the modal character of the section, we quote m. 70-76. For the musical expression of the text "majestatis", Kodály forms the section's height point through the successive entry of all of the voices, using exclusively this interval. In this fugato-episode the perfect fourths are linked together through the entries of the voices, and thus they form a chain of perfect fourth – $D-G-C / C-F-Bb / F-Bb-Eb$:

E.g. 16

ma - jes - ta - - - tis, ma - jes - ta

ma - jes - ta - - - tis, ma - jes - ta

ma - jes - ta - - - tis, ma - jes - ta

ma - jes - ta

Kodály: *Budavári Te Deum*, m. 70-76.

We conclude this summary with the symphonic variation *Fölszállott a páva* (*The Peacock*), which is a symbiosis of folk music, modal character, impressionistic and neoclassical (neoromantic) style and compositional techniques. Finished in 1939, Kodály exploits many of those techniques which derive from folk music and also Impressionism. The main theme (*The Peacock*) is a pentatonic folk melody, but its harmonization is partly modal and impressionistic, but mainly tonal and romantic. Kodály introduces into this harmonic and melodic texture impressionistic techniques. The beginning (the exposure of the theme) already shows us a few, which will be exploited through the sixteen variations and the Finale: *unisono* thematic presentation (m. 1-13); a sequence of successive harmonic progressions of minor and major chords in sixth position (m. 22-39) or root position (m. 65-75); the presence of pedal tone (both as tonal center and a tonality attenuator, m. 39-48, or m. 61-78); the Lydian tetrachord; the augmented triad and acoustic structures formed by the notes of the whole-tone scale (usually of 3-4-5 notes, starting from m. 63); pentatonic acoustic structures; dense harmonic structures (with major seventh, with *ajoutées*) etc. It is important to point out, that Kodály utilizes the melodic improvisation, as a folk music characteristic, predominant in variations no. 9 and 14. The harmonic chord progressions, as a specific harmonization procedure, will be dominant in many of the variations (for ex. in variations 12 and 16). And it is also important to highlight, that Kodály develops a special instrumentation and orchestration mechanism. We can observe, that his orchestration techniques generally root in German tradition (the core of the orchestra represent the strings, the brass and percussion ensembles are used for strong and powerful emphasis and accentuations, the woodwinds represent more a coloristic counterpoint, etc.), but in this composition we can also find examples, where he adopts many of Debussy's orchestration techniques. Such an example is the variation no. 9, where Kodály uses a

refined and subtle instrumentation. The core of the orchestra in this moment is the woodwind section: the dialog of the flutes and clarinets accompany with chord-appoggiaturas, in a virtuoso way and improvisatory manner the simple melodic profile of the main theme present on the strings. The variation is full of unexpected modulations or harmonic shifts, but also of tone-color shifts. Kodály sets the strings and the percussion section in the background and evidences the woodwind section. The brass instruments will also appear, but only at the end of the variation, and as a subtle background accompany of the woodwinds and strings. The orchestration of variation no. 11 is also impressionistic. The theme is first presented by a solo English horn with a thin and unobtrusive accompaniment of the French horns, then the English horn is dubbed by the oboe and clarinet. Again, woodwinds in focus. Variations no. 12 places the wind instruments in the middle of the orchestra. The theme will be played by the strings in *unisono*, and its accompaniment will be first realized by the bassoons, the horns, and the harp. This section will be expanded with three flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, respectively with the three trumpet and the three trombone part. This huge woodwind and brass ensemble will accompany the pentatonic thematic material with predominantly massive chord progressions (mixtures). The harp will add its specific tone color through the continuous *arpeggios* and *glissandi*. In variation no. 13 Kodály even excludes from the orchestra the strings (he will keep only the harp, and the bass section: celli and basses) and the oboes, and will put the spotlight on the winds and the harp. The variation is characterized by a frequent tone-color shifting. Variation no. 14 puts in the middle two of Debussy's favorite instruments, the harp and the flute: the flute (first one, then three) plays the melody in an improvisatory character, the harp accompanies with broken chords, and the strings also support the harmonic background with tremolos. The pastel colors of the harmonic plan reveal an authentic impressionistic acoustic world.

As we could see, Kodály adopts from Debussy many compositional techniques which refer to melodic, harmonic or rhythmic elaboration strategies, and also a few orchestration techniques.

In 1907, due to its novelty, Debussy's music had a powerful influence on Kodály, and the compositional techniques suddenly became predominant (see the analysis of *Méditation*). In time, putting the emphasis on the authentic folk music, Kodály kept those techniques which were compatible with the newly developed folkloristic-neoclassical compositional style, or which were both the derivation of Impressionism and folklorism.

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