

THE PROPORTION AND IMPORTANCE OF FOLK MUSIC IN PIANO METHOD VOLUME 1 AND 2¹

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SUMMARY. The study focuses on the folk music aspect of Piano Method Volume 1 and 2, which are still widely used in Hungarian piano teaching. It examines the proportion and function of Hungarian folk songs in the volumes. It sheds light on folk songs appearing in different phases of piano teaching and their methodological possibilities of use.

Keywords: Hungarian folk music, Piano Method, piano teaching, piano methodology

In Hungary, folk music has traditionally played an important role in classroom music education such as in instrumental education. *‘The work of Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Hungarian music education. We can find the bases of this revolution in the folk music collections of 1905-1906. Kodály and Bartók realised that by discovering authentic rural folk music, they had acquired national treasure.’*³ Besides music education in schools, this vocal-inspired teaching method based on Hungarian folk music also appeared in instrumental education over time. **Piano Method Volume 1** (Arranged by: *Mária Fantóné Kassai, Lajosné Hernádi, Aladárné Komjáthy, Miklósné Máthé, Katalin V. Inzelt*) and **Piano**

¹ This study was first published in Hungary in Parlando 2016/6.

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³ Krisztina, Várady. Dobszay László: A hangok világa szolfézs-könyv-sorozat megjelenésének korabeli időszerűsége (VI/1) A “kodályi elvek” megjelenése a korabeli szolfézs-kiadványokban. (László Dobszay: *The World of Tones Solfége Book Series and the timeliness of the contemporary edition (VI/1) The appearance of Kodály principles in contemporary solfége books*) In: Parlando, 2017/2.

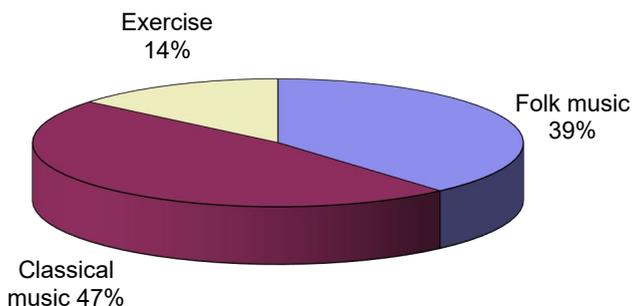


Method Volume 2 (*Arranged by: Aladárné Komjáthy, Zsuzsa Hernádi, Katalin Inselt, Mária Fantóné Kassai*) were published in 1966-67, and they are still popular with the majority of piano teachers.⁴ This study examines the proportion of folk music in these volumes and the role of folk songs and folk-inspired pieces in the different phases of piano teaching.

Piano Method Volume 1

Pieces in the first volume of *Piano Method* can be divided into three main groups: *folk songs* or their arrangements; *classical music*⁵; and *exercises*. These three groups are not equally represented in the volume. Classical music is the most common (85 pcs), but there is also a high proportion of folk music citations (69 pcs). The exercises form the smallest part of the volume (25 pcs). The ratio is illustrated by the following diagram.

E. g. 1



The proportion of folk music in Piano Method Volume 1

At the beginning of the book, exercises⁶ were written in the keys of the following folk songs, preparing the way for the trouble-free learning and performance of the folk song. The song *Láttál-e már valaha...* (Have you ever seen...) and the preceding exercise are great example for this method.

⁴ The revised editions of Piano Method Volume 1 and 2 were published with colour drawings and digital sound materials in 2022.

⁵ *Classical music* refers to pieces that were not composed based on of folk music inspirations.

⁶ In this study, we have included examples of exercises which are closely related to piano technique only. In addition to this, you can find some rhythm exercises.

E. g. 2

Musical score for 'Folk Láttál-e már valaha...'. It consists of two staves in 2/4 time. The melody is in the upper staff, and the accompaniment is in the lower staff. The lyrics are: Láttál-e már va-la- ha csipke-bo-kor ró-zsát? Csipke-bo-kor ró-zsa közt két szül ma-jo- rán- nát?

**Folk Láttál-e már valaha... (Have you ever seen...)
and the preceding exercise (1. 2.)⁷**

These exercises appear later as a small print at the bottom of the page. Their function is to provide a preliminary practice for a particular technical problem of certain pieces. The next example and the two recommended exercises require fast playing with alternating hands.

E. g. 3

Musical score for 'Játék - Spiel' by Rubbach. It is in 2/4 time and marked 'Vivo'. The score includes two main systems of staves. The first system has a right-hand part starting with 'mf staccato' and a left-hand part with fingerings 2, 3, 2, 3. The second system has a right-hand part with dynamics 'p', 'cresc.', 'mf', and 'p', and a left-hand part with fingerings 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 4, 1, 2, 5, 3, 4. Below the main score are two smaller exercises: '1.' with a 3/2 time signature and '2.' with a 2/4 time signature. The piece number 'Z. 5229' is printed at the bottom.

Rubbach: Play (73.)

⁷ Examples are indicated with their numbers in Piano Method series (Original edition.)

The recommended exercises will make the piano teacher's work easier; however, it is also essential to use their own ideas, concerning that only a relatively small number of examples are available.

Pieces belonging to the group of *classical music* make up almost half of the volume (47%). The short pieces are mainly composed by Hungarian artists from the 20th century, but we can also find the works of Renaissance and Baroque masters, as well as Viennese classics⁸ and pieces for children by *D. Kabalevsky*. Regardless of the chronology of music history, pieces appear in a certain order of technical difficulty, which may vary individually.

The number of *folk songs* and their arrangements in the book is 69, representing the 39% of the total, which is a significant proportion. The volume contains only Hungarian folk music, no other nation is represented. This reflects the Kodály method. '*One of the most important basic ideas of the Kodály method is that first, children should be familiar with the music of their own nation, and after that they can taste the world of European music (...)*'.⁹ It is important to mention that these initial principles of piano teaching are fully in line with *The World of Tones* solfege book series by László Dobszay. Hungarian folk songs are highly represented here, as well. '*The first volume of The World of Tones is rich in melodies. It contains a total of 107 different melodies, from which 87 pieces represent folk music. The entire folk music material is made up of Hungarian folk songs exclusively (...)*'.¹⁰ Piano Method Volume 1 suggests that we should always encourage children to sing the songs when they learn.

According to their piano methodological role, the appearing folk songs can be divided into several categories. Connected to the main characteristics of the folk songs, several major skills and abilities are developed within each category. Each type reinforces a certain phase in piano teaching. We should consider which skills and abilities they develop, and which pieces can we use for teaching. Let's see some music examples to illustrate the characteristics of each category.¹¹

⁸ Neusiedler, Sperontes, Lambert, Hofe, Türk, L. Mozart, Beethoven

⁹ Krisztina, Várady. *Kötöttség és szabadság. Kodály: Gyermektáncok, 24 kis kánon a fekete billentyűkön (Constraint and Freedom. Kodály: Children's Dances and 24 Little Canons on the Black Keys)*. In.: In the memory of Kodály. Collection of Studies of Vocal Music Department of Eszterházy Károly University. Edited by.: Judit Csüllög, Krisztina Várady. Líceum Publisher, Eger, 2020.

¹⁰ Krisztina, Várady. *Dobszay László: A hangok világa c. sorozat kötetének általános felépítése és tartalma (General Structure and Content of László Dobszay: The World of Tones series)*. In.: Parlando, 2017/3.

¹¹ For each piece, we have only listed those areas for improvement that are clear from the structure and technical elements of the musical work. The development of *memorization* is not listed separately since it can be assigned to all of pieces.

a.) *nursery rhymes in bichord, ditonic, trichord and tritonic keys* (3 pieces on p. 2, 3 pieces on p. 5)

- ◆ orientation on the keyboard
- ◆ laying the foundation of playing with the whole arm
- ◆ playing with one hand at a time
- ◆ learning treble clef and bass clef
- ◆ developing music reading skills
- ◆ improving rhythmic skills
- ◆ perceiving musical forms

E. g. 4



A folk song in bichord key played with one hand at a time (p. 5)

b.) *pentachord, pentatonic folk songs* (4 pieces on p. 6, and pieces No. 2, 4, 6, 8, 16, 18, 20, 22)

- ◆ finger names
- ◆ creating touch
- ◆ preparing legato playing
- ◆ increasing rhythmic knowledge
- ◆ practicing reading music
- ◆ phrasing
- ◆ later on, laying the foundation of playing with hands together (improvising musical accompaniment, pipe accompaniment)

E. g. 5



Legato playing with the help of a pentachord folk song (No. 8)

c.) *folk songs in keys with more than 5 notes, arranged for playing with alternating hands, one hand at a time* (pieces No. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28)

- ◆ improving the ability of playing with alternating hands
- ◆ implementation of sight reading, the relation of hands
- ◆ learning the basics of music (e.g., bar, double barline, repetition sign)
- ◆ practicing legato playing

E. g. 6



Folk song in a major key, arranged for playing with alternating hands, one hand at a time (No. 12)

d.) *folk songs with simple, one-part accompaniment containing only a few notes* (pieces No. 32, 33, 34)

- ◆ making the hands independent
- ◆ learning playing hands together
- ◆ key concepts of dynamics and their application in practice

E. g. 7



Folk song with simple, one-part accompaniment containing only a few notes (No. 32)

e.) *playing in mirror-reflection* (No. 37)

- ◆ learning playing hands together
- ◆ practicing playing in mirror-reflection
- ◆ improving legato play

E. g. 8

Kék se-lyem ken-dő...
mp legato
cresc.

Appearance of playing in mirror-reflection (first 4 bars of No 37)

f.) *pieces with imitation* (pieces No. 39, 47, 95, 97)

- ◆ learning canon and imitation
- ◆ emphasizing the equality of left hand
- ◆ making the hands independent
- ◆ developing musical ear

E. g. 9

Allegretto
 Viski János
 A bür-gez-di bi-ró...
mf
f

Imitation (No. 95)

g.) *counterpoint in the accompaniment* (pieces No. 46, 106, 108)

- ◆ making the hands independent
- ◆ developing polyphonic musical ear
- ◆ improving rhythmic skills

E. g. 10

Counterpoint in the accompaniment (No. 46)

h.) *accompaniment containing dyads* (pieces No. 48, 49, 50, 84, 86)

- ◆ making the hands independent
- ◆ preparing and laying the foundation of playing chords

E. g. 11

Accompaniment containing dyads (No. 48)

i.) *folk songs with 3/4 time signature* (pieces No. 58, 99)

- ◆ practicing uneven beats
- ◆ phrasing, performing more complex, two-part pieces

E. g. 12

Folk song arrangement with 3/4 time signature (No. 58)

j.) *folk songs with moving bass* (pieces No. 62, 63)

- ◆ preparing Alberti bass
- ◆ laying the foundation of playing broken chords

E. g. 13

Allegro Bartók Béla

f

3 4 5

Folk song with moving bass (No. 62)

k.) folk songs with $2/2$ time signature (piece No. 76)

- ◆ familiarization with less frequent time signatures
- ◆ phrasing, performing more complex pieces

E. g. 14

Andante Soproni József

mf É - des - - a - nyám ró - zsa - fá - ja...

3 5

2 4 3

Folk song with $2/2$ -time signature (No. 76)

l.) *divided melodies between the two hands* (pieces No.83, 97)

- ◆ making the hands independent
- ◆ establishing the role of left hand in forming a melody

E. g. 15

Andante cantabile Soproni József

Harcsa van a vízben...

f *mf* *mp*

Divided melodies between the two hands in *Harcsa van a vízben...*
(Catfish in the water...) No. 83

m.) folk songs in scherzando style (pieces No. 39, 87, 88)

- ◆ establishment of subtle playing and subtle movement
- ◆ practicing staccato playing

E. g. 16

Scherzando Kadosa Pál

Figyau é-des ko-mám-asszony...

f *p*

Folk song in scherzando style (No. 87)

n.) *folk songs with alternating time signature* (pieces No. 100, 101, 107, 108)

- ◆ familiarizing with alternating time signatures
- ◆ phrasing

E. g. 17

Folk song with alternating time signature (No. 100)

o.) *pieces for four hands* (p. 12-13 – folk song with pipe accompaniment, p. 54/4, p. 58/6, p. 58/7, p. 60/9)

- ◆ establishment of playing music together
- ◆ developing musical ear
- ◆ building adaptability
- ◆ developing the ability to share attention
- ◆ improvisation (improvising pipe accompaniment)

The numbers of pieces in each category show that in certain types, teachers have a wide choice. This is quite advantageous, as the pieces can be adapted to the talent, ability, and individuality of each child. Hungarian nursery rhymes form an ancient part of our folk music. These songs can be characterized by small sound range, and time signatures with even beats. They also have simple lyrics, which are easy for childish mind. Nursery rhymes can be used effectively in early piano lessons because children can recall these songs from pre-school ages. There is no need to memorize the melody as they already know it, so they can focus on playing the piano.

Songs with small sound range support learning piano keys gradually. Thus, these types of melodies occur in large quantities from pentatonic to pentachord ranges. Their importance is mainly to learn and navigate on the

keyboard. In category *a.* we can find 6 and in category *b.* we can find 12 nursery rhymes. Folk songs learned in early piano lessons will later be suitable for establishing the knowledge of playing hands together by adding simple, one-note accompaniment or pipe accompaniment.

Some of the Hungarian folk songs can be perfect for playing one melody line divided in the two hands. This is the reason why we can find folk songs in category *c.* The most important role of these songs is to help to align hands at the beginning through playing with alternating hands. Moreover, they secure the adaptation of score to the piano, and they also aid to understand the relation of left and right hand in the score.

Since there is no need to *change the position*, folk songs with smaller sound range including maximum five notes and a simple accompaniment added to it, establish the technique of playing hands together (category *d.*). They are very useful since the students already know the song, so they can pay full attention to the accompaniment rather than concentrating on the melody. As a result, it will be easier for students to develop the ability to focus on polyphonic songs. Pieces in this category emphasize the melody playing role of the right hand. The left hand is the accompaniment in all the pieces.

Only a few Hungarian folk songs are suitable for playing in mirror-reflection (category *e.*), as it is important that the accompanying mirror part should not reduce music experience. An example of this appears in the score. It doesn't follow this technique all the way through, but it can be seen as a fundamental point.¹² (E. g. 8, *Kék selyem kendő...* [Blue silk shawl...])

Applying *imitation* using folk songs is an important milestone for teaching beginners (category *f.*). This is where octave imitation appears. In order to confidently interpret such pieces, students have to be highly qualified in this technique. In the beginning, it is also practical to use folk songs since it is easier to follow a well-known melody with time delay. The possibilities of practicing are also multiplied using folk songs. It is beneficial to make students sing one part with piano accompaniment, then with changing parts. There is a potential in varying the singing part to divide attention. We can do this with solmisation, using musical alphabet or with singing lyrics. When we talk about developing memorization skills, we should emphasize the importance of imitation. Memorising a folk song allows us to play a canon off by heart from the very first moment.

After a simple accompaniment, the next phase is to introduce a more complex „counterpoint” (category *g.*) There is a reason for the use of the quotation mark. This counterpoint is not the term, which is commonly used in music theory, however it is the forerunner of it in a simpler form. The

¹² For playing in mirror-reflection, we can find some examples other than folk songs.

accompanying part also plays an important role often with melody fragments easy to remember, thus making it difficult to coordinate the two hands. Moreover, the two hands often play different articulation, so the task is to coordinate and solve them precisely. Even after six month or one year of studying, beginner pianists still find this very difficult. Folk songs are great help in solving this problem. First, singing is very important here, later it can be followed by a vocal-instrumental practicing. If the students can follow both parts, it makes them easier to reach the goal of playing both hands more confidently.

An accompaniment with dyads is not very different from a simple accompaniment with a few notes. The essential difference is that we have to play two notes at the same time in one hand. It is difficult to play more than one note at the same time, that is why this technique requires a lot of practice. Category *h*. consists of simple folk songs. Here we concentrate on polyphonic accompaniment.

The next three categories, *i.j.* and *k.*, contain a noticeably smaller number of folk songs. The reason for this is that there are only a small number of Hungarian folk songs with 3/4- or 2/2-time signatures. For the preliminary study of the Alberti bass, the use of classical pieces is more recommended. This form of movement is a characteristic of this style period. As a preparation for learning the basics of the movement, there are two folk song arrangements (Figures 63, 69).

The division of melodies between two hands (category *l.*) is a continuation of playing with one hand at a time. The hand that is not playing the melody does not rest but takes on the role of accompaniment. The singing while playing practice is also a useful and colourful, creative activity by constantly alternating the hands.

Laying the foundations for *subtle playing* is crucial for beginner pianists. Arrangements of folk songs with a more upbeat tempo are a good way to develop this skill. The tempo marking of most of the folk songs of this type in the sheet music is *scherzando*, which is why the term is included in the definition of category *m*).

Among the Hungarian folk songs, we find a significant number of melodies with alternating time signatures (category *n.*). These are essential in the process of learning music. This can be achieved through the already well-known folk songs, which are perhaps not even consciously called alternating time signature-songs. Singing the melody with beat makes it easier to map the bars.

The basics of chamber music, of playing together should be learned from the very beginning of music education. Folk song arrangements are also produced for this purpose. These four-hand pieces are extremely important, as they give children a sound experience, they cannot yet produce on their own. They also develop the ability to share attention, adaptability, listening

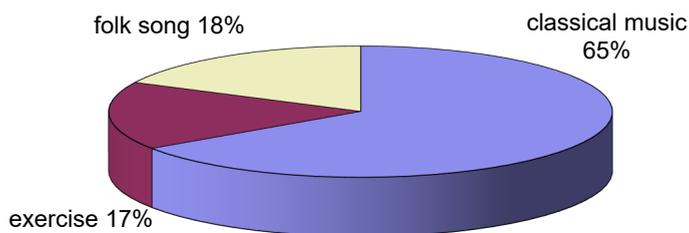
and rhythmic skills. Right from the start, it is possible to improvise a four-hand bagpipe accompaniment to a folk song. This introduces a simple form of improvisation very early when playing music together.

In addition to these aspects, folk music also has a role in helping children learn to play the piano through melodies and lyrics that are close to the child's soul. Familiar tunes give a sense of security, making it easier and simpler to focus attention on the specific technical elements of piano playing.

Piano Method Volume 2

As in the first volume, there are also folk song arrangements, which are technically and musically superior to the first. The pieces in the second volume also fall into three groups. However, the proportion of each type is already different from the first volume. In addition to the 20 folk song arrangements¹³ there are 19 exercises¹⁴ and 74 pieces of classical music. The proportion has therefore changed significantly, and the percentage distribution is illustrated in the following graph.

E. g. 18



The proportion of folk songs in Piano Method Volume 2

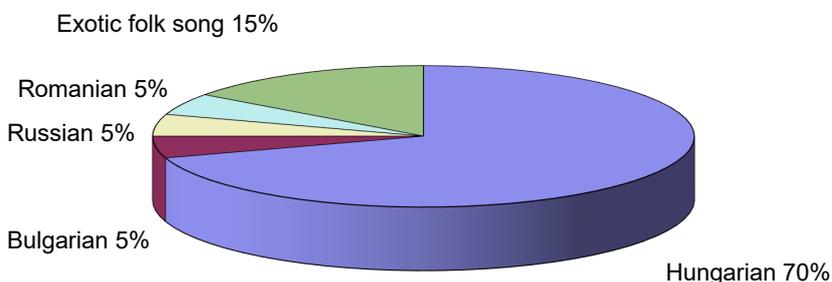
Folk song arrangements account for 18% of the total book. Classical music is significantly over-represented, at 65% to be precise. The percentage of exercises differs slightly from the first volume, at 17%.¹⁵ In addition to Hungarian folk music, songs from other nations also appear.

¹³ Three exotic folk music inspired pieces by György Ránki (Polynesian Lullaby, Lao Flute, African nursery rhyme) are included in the folk song arrangements.

¹⁴ As in the first volume, we have not included rhythm exercises in category *exercises*.

¹⁵ The first volume contains 15% of exercises.

E. g. 19



Distribution of folk songs by nation in Piano Method Volume 2

The figure shows that Bulgarian, Russian and Romanian folk songs are equally represented, one of each. A speciality is the three exotic folk music inspired Ránki pieces. The volume contains 14 arrangements of Hungarian folk songs. A brief analysis of each piece highlights the role of folk music in this volume.

Román népdal (Romanian Folk Song)¹⁶ was composed by *Zoltán Gárdonyi*.¹⁷ Its most remarkable feature is that it moves in small rhythm values. The semiquaver scale of the right hand and alternate cross hand arpeggios are each a technical challenge. The semiquaver sections often start with a quaver value, creating a colourful rhythmic palette.

E. g. 20



Quaver values starting the semiquaver sections (p.17./No. 21)

¹⁶ Piano Method 2. p.17./21.

¹⁷ Zoltán Gárdonyi, composer (1906-1986)

The next element, also linked to the rhythm, is the 3 semiquavers following the semiquaver rest. The solution for unaccented, accurate entry is a special task.

E. g. 21



Unaccented entry after a semiquaver rest (bar 2) - (p.17./No. 21)

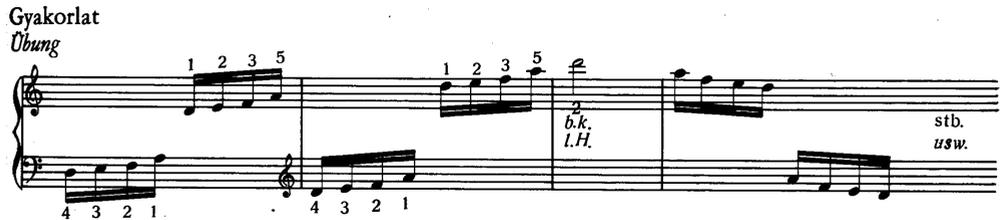
The smoothness and seamlessness of semiquaver sections played with alternating hands can be achieved with intensive practice. At the end of the piece, there is a related exercise, which practises a pattern like the part of the piece played with crossed hands.

E. g. 22



Crossed hand semiquaver arpeggio in the last two bars (p.17./No.21)

E. g. 23



Exercise to deepen crossed hand arpeggio

The role of the folk song is therefore first and foremost to practise the rhythm patterns that have been used less frequently, and through this to develop playing scales and subtle playing technique.

Bolgár népi tánc (Bulgarian Folk Dance)¹⁸ is the first and only appearance of the typical Bulgarian rhythms in these books. Children have not yet encountered an asymmetrical time signature type in these two volumes. Its primary role is therefore to introduce the special rhythmic pattern (2+3 quaver beats per bar). Since it is a Bulgarian folk song, the melodic material is also very different from what the pupils have experienced so far. The characteristic augmented second interval appears several times in both the right and left hands (Bb-C#, Eb-F#). The greatest technical difficulty of the piece is the precise play of this distance.

E. g. 24



Appearance of the augmented second step (bars 3, 4, 5) - (p.52 / No.10)

The next non-Hungarian folk arrangement is a composition by *Golubovszkoy* with the title *Orosz népdal* (Russian Folk Song)¹⁹. This is a piece for four hands, the 8-bar melody appears twice in the *Primo* part, the second time in a varied form.²⁰

E. g. 25



The beginning of the Primo (p.71 / No.9)

¹⁸ Composer: Stojanov. Piano Method 2. p.52 /10.

¹⁹ Piano Method 2. pp.70-71/9.

²⁰ The melodic figuration of the folk song can be found in the second 8 bars.

Its last appearance is in the *Secondo* part, *unison*, in octave doubling form and then the first part returns. The piece thus has a ternary form. From the music example above, it is clear that the piece begins with an upbeat, but only in the higher part. The pianist who plays the lower part must enter precisely after the upbeat. The rhythmic difficulty of the *Primo* part: the player has to interpret a quaver rest-quaver rhythm pattern throughout the second part, so following the melody of the other part is essential.

E. g. 26

Appearance of quaver rest- quaver rhythm pattern in the Primo after the double barline (p. 71 / No. 9)

The role of the *Orosz népdal* (Russian Folk Song) lies mainly in creating the experience of making music together. It is important that two students of the same ability can perform. In addition to laying the foundations for chamber music, it develops adaptability, rhythmic skills, musical listening, and the ability to share attention.

We conclude the series of non-Hungarian folk song arrangements with three pieces by György Ránki. All three pieces are interesting for their unique, distinctive, mood-painting sound, which is the result of exotic folk music influences. *Polinéziai altatódal* (Polynesian Lullaby) gives the opportunity to practice the rubato style. It is a serious rhythmic challenge that the triplet appears in several forms. The continuous entry of the accompanying left hand into an unaccented space also presents students with a new challenge. *Laoszi furulya* (Lao flute) piece is characterised by the appearance of the instrument in the right hand, as indicated in the title, and by a constantly moving left-hand accompaniment. After a while, the quaver movement is enriched by dyads, which represents a higher level of technical challenge. From the point of view of the development of piano technique, it is worth highlighting the presence of the acciaccaturas and the problem of the unaccented continuation following the tied note. *Afrikai varázsmondóka* (African nursery rhyme) is reminiscent of the chanting of rhymes, indeed. The

spread chord appears in it, and there are exercises in the sheet music to learn it. Repetition occurs in both the right and left hand, and different exercises should be used to help with this. The extremely tight, rhythmic piece is enriched by a short imitative section with a different character.

The first of the Hungarian folk songs is *A pilisi tiszta búza...* (The pure wheat of Pilis...)²¹ The rhythmic composition of the folk song is suitable for practising and deepening the quaver-dotted crochet rhythm pattern. However, playing the syncopations (crochet+minim+crochet) appearing in the accompaniment makes the task difficult.

E. g. 27



**Syncopation of the accompanying part in the first 4 bars of the piece
(p.5./ No.1)**

The first note value of the left hand's syncopations is always a semibreve, resulting in two parts, which is a serious technical challenge to interpret with one hand. When accenting, it is important that the crochet - following the quaver-dotted crochet rhythm pattern of the folk song - is unaccented in the left hand. The role of the folk song is therefore twofold: on the one hand, to develop certain rhythmic skills, and on the other hand, to solve the problem of polyphony in the same hand.

The following folk song arrangement was based on the melody *Haragszik a gazda...* (The farmer is angry...)²². Two verses appear in *József Soproni's*²³ composition. The melody appears in the same form both times. The nature of the accompaniment is similar, with long, tied, dyads. The harmonic structure, however, is significantly different the second time. This is clear from a comparison of the two verses.

²¹ Piano Method 2. p. 5 /1. József Soproni

²² Piano Method 2. p.6 /2.

²³ József Soproni, composer (1930 - 2021)

E. g. 28

Harmonic differences in the accompaniment of the two verses (p.6./No. 2)

The smallest units of the folk song are three-bar sections. This kind of building is special in Hungarian folk music, unusual number of bars belong to one unit. In addition, the three-bar units are further connected, with 2x3 bars forming a phrase. The main role of the folk song having a special structure is therefore to practice the interpretation of the non-even parts. In addition, the next problem is the technical solution to the left hand's tied notes.

The folk song arrangement *Szántottam gyöpöt...* (I ploughed the grass...) ²⁴ was composed by *Mihály Hajdu* ²⁵. The melody appears three times throughout the piece. First in the right hand, then in the left, then in the right hand again. The primary role of the folk song comes from its rhythmical characteristics. The aim is to properly accentuate and melodically bridge the syncopations that run through the piece.

E. g. 29

Syncopated melody with ostinato, legato accompaniment (p.6./No.3)

²⁴ Piano Method 2. p. 6 / 3.

²⁵ Mihály Hajdu, composer (1909-1990)

The rhythmic pattern of the folk song requires a two-bar accentuation, which is indicated in the sheet music. The accompaniment is also new, introducing students to the *ostinato technique*, which appears in the left hand in the first 6 bars. This accompaniment is also built in a two-bar structure, like the melody. The second verse, in which the melody is placed in the left hand, starts the melody from a different note. Instead of A, the initial sound is E. Then the last melody line returns to the original key, repeating the first line exactly (without the left-hand introduction).

The arrangement of the giusto folk song *Megismerni a kanászt...* (*Recognize the swineherd by...*)²⁶ contains an important new technical element. The composer adapts the first half of the melody so that it is always played at the top of a dyad.

E. g. 30

The musical score for 'Giusto' (E. g. 30) is presented in two systems. The first system shows the right hand playing a melody with fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and dynamics (f, leggiero). The left hand plays a bass line with dyads. The second system continues the melody and bass line, with dynamics (mp) and fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

Melody in dyads (p. 7 / No. 4)

The intervals are: sixth, third and second. Playing repeated sixths prepares for the playing octaves the same way later. The essence of this technique is that the fingers themselves do not work separately, instead *'the hand always works as a unit'*.²⁷ The fast tempo of the folk song is particularly well suited to laying the groundwork for playing dyad *repetition*.²⁸ The biggest advantage is that it does not put a prolonged strain on the hand. The second

²⁶ Piano Method 2. p. 7 /4. Endre Szervánszky

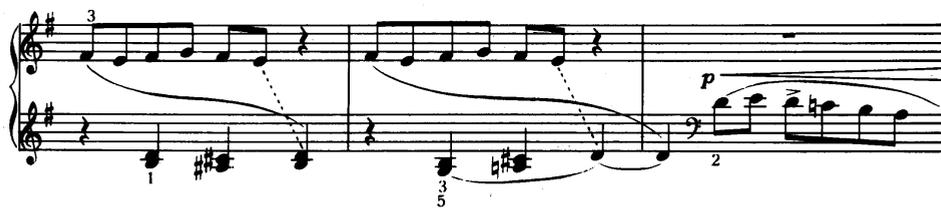
²⁷ József, Gát. *Zongoramethodika (Piano Methodology)*. Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1978. p.115.

²⁸ Although it is not a folk song arrangement, it is worth mentioning Béla Bartók's Minuetto (p.10/11.), which also uses the sixth repetition, but it appears in both right and left hands there. Thus, the two pieces are technically related.

part already contains a monophonic *repetition* (as can be seen from the music example above). This is another type of repetition where the fingers are given a prominent role. Considering the technical difficulty of the right hand, the accompaniment is relatively simple. It moves in long note values in the first part, then follows the crochet rest + crochet rhythm pattern. The second part is repeated by the author.

Volume 2 of the Piano Method contains two folk song arrangements by Béla Bartók. The first *Hol jártál, báránykám?* (Where have you been little lamb...) appears with 3 verses. The first and third verses' tonic note is G, while the middle one's is D. The melody remains in the right hand throughout, except for the final note of the last two melody lines of the middle verse, which are taken over by the left hand.

E. g. 31



The distribution of the melody in the two hands (p.8./No. 9)

These bars embody the problem of crossed hands melody playing. From the perspective of the piano performance, smooth hand changes are crucial. The technical problems arise in the accompaniment of the folk song. In the first and second verse, melodies are accompanied by sigh-motives in the left hand. The crochet rest at the beginning of each bar makes the accuracy of the accenting more difficult, as the accompaniment appears in an unaccented section.

E. g. 32



Sigh-motive accompaniment starting with a rest (p.8./No.9)

Additionally, the right and left hands phrase at different sections. In the sigh-motive of the left hand three crochet notes belong together, while the melody is divided into 2+2 crochets.

The final verse and its extension (3 beats) accompanied by a continuously moving quaver accompaniment.

E. g. 33



Constantly moving quaver accompaniment in the final verse (p.8./No.9)

This constantly moving quaver accompaniment plays an important role in the development of the *rotation technique* and the further establishment of the *Alberti-bass*²⁹. The example above shows the three-bar extension. The quaver rest at its inception, followed by the accentuated final note of the bar, requires special practice.

The other Bartók piece is the folk song with the beginning *Tisza partján...* (On the bank of the River Tisza...)³⁰ The melody appears with one verse. In the accompaniment of the left hand the implementation of the sigh-motive *note-pairs* is particularly difficult, since the first member of the pairs is always a dyad or a chord. To accomplish the *legato* line of the melody playing above the *note-pairs* and playing together with the *note pairs* is a challenge to be solved.

²⁹ In Piano Method Volume 1 (*Zongoraiskola*) we have already encountered arrangements of folk songs with this purpose (pieces 62, 63).

³⁰ Piano Method Volume 2. p. 9/No.10

E. g. 34

Note pairs accompanying the legato melody (p.9/No.10)

Examples of moving bass accompaniment have already been seen. The folk song arrangement *Lánc, lánc...* (Chain, Chain...) by Leó Weiner also follows this technique³¹. The quaver accompaniment in the left hand is only softened to a half note for the last four bars. Like in the folk song arrangement of *Hol jártál báránykám...* (Where have you been little lamb...), the technical challenge here is also the rotational technique, what is the preparation of the Alberti-bass.

Composition number 19 by Pál Kadosa³² is an arrangement of the folk song *Úgy tetszik...* (It feels like...)³³. Its *Vivo* tempo plays a major role in the establishment of subtle playing. In addition, an interesting technical solution is the *crossed hands* at the end of the piece.

E. g. 35

Crossed hands (4th bar) - (p.9/ No.10)

The following folk song arrangement is called *Azt üzente a likitlakatos...* (The locksmith said...)³⁴. At the beginning of the piece, playing with one hand at a time is presented and then the interpretation of the melody is taken over by the left hand. The *scherzando* style of the folk song, its fast tempo and *staccato* crochets define the character of the piece.

³¹ Piano Method Volume 2. p. 15/No.18

³² Pál Kadosa, composer (1903-1983)

³³ Piano Method Volume 2. p. 15/No.19

³⁴ Piano Method Volume 2. p. 16/No.20

The folk song *Két szál pünkösdrózsa...* (Two peonies) has already appeared twice in Volume 1 of the Piano Method, in alternated hands version at first and then in four hands version at the end of the book. In Volume 2 an arrangement of the melody appears again, a composition³⁵ by *Rezső Sugár*.³⁶ Like in case of the previous folk song arrangement, the melody is also divided between the left and right hand. The melody-forming role of the left hand is usually subordinate, which gives significant importance to this type of composition. The difficulty of shaping the melody presented in the lower part is that the right hand usually plays the accompanying chords on unaccented places. These chords are carried over with ties into the next bar, thus creating a syncopating part.

E. g. 36

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff (right hand) and a bass clef staff (left hand). The tempo is marked 'Moderato' and the dynamics are 'pp'. The right hand plays a melody with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The left hand plays a syncopating accompaniment with notes G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2. The right hand has fingerings 2, 1, 3, 2, 1. The left hand has fingerings 1, 4, 3, 4.

Syncopating right hand part above the melody (p.21/No.26)

The folk song *Erdő, erdő...* (Forest, forest...)³⁷ is an arrangement by *Rezső Sugár*. It requires high level of preparedness for a second-grade student. The challenge of the work is very complex. On the one hand this is due to the original characteristics of the folk song, and on the other hand it is due to the nature of the accompanying parts composed for it. Students have already met songs with alternating time signature from their first year. Folk song *Erdő, erdő...* (Forest, forest...) belongs to this category, which consists of alternating 4/4 and 2/4 beats. Due to the relatively large range (one octave), a change of position is necessary. The piece is written with imitation, starting as a canon with *octave imitation*, and then the accompanying part differs slightly from the melody both rhythmically and vocally. However, the challenges don't end there. The accompanying imitative left hand leads not one, but two parts from the third bar. The same issue arises in the right-hand part of the second half of the piece, which is playing the melody.³⁸ After a three-bar postlude, the work ends with a *pp* dynamic.

³⁵ Piano Method Volume 2. p. 21/No.26

³⁶ Rezső Sugár, composer (1919-1988)

³⁷ Piano Method Volume 2. p. 22/No.27

³⁸ The composer also offers a variant on this piece, written in the *ossia* in small notation at the bottom of the page. The left hand can play the sustained notes originally written for the right hand.

The folk song *Hej, Vargáné...* (Hey, Mrs Varga...) is also the arrangement of *Rezső Sugár*. It is one of the rare Hungarian folk songs with a time signature 3/4. The melody appears with two verses, first in the right hand, then in the left. Even the performance of the folk song itself is not easy, since in the 2nd and 3rd melody lines another part joins in the same hand. In the second verse, when the left hand interprets the folk song, the melody remains one-part to the end. As a new technical element, we can mention the jump bass of the accompaniment, followed by the dyad sequence. This is accompanied by using the pedal, which is indicated in the sheet music.³⁹ The right-hand accompaniment in the second verse recalls the former harmonies but does not cover such large distances as the left hand did earlier. The four-bar introduction at the beginning of the piece is also included in the second part. The piece ends with a four-bar postlude. The role of the folk song in this piano piece is also complex. On the one hand, its 3/4 character deepens the performance of this type of time signature that is less frequent in Hungarian folk music. On the other hand, the distinctive nature of the accompaniment, which covers great distances, assist in quick and confident orientation on the piano.

The folk song *Cintányéron jó a cukros pogácsa...* (Sugary scone is tasty served on cymbal) swells the ranks of melodies with alternating time signature.⁴⁰ All the appearing time signatures are listed at the beginning of the staff. The melody is divided between the two hands, the accompaniment consists of descending thirds and then sixths.

E. g. 37



**Alternating time signature and distribution of melody between the two hands
(p.24./No.29)**

The primary role is based on the alternating time signature, which comes from the original character of the folk song.

³⁹ This type of bass accompaniment prepares playing the left-hand part in romantic pieces (e.g., waltz, mazurka).

⁴⁰ Piano Method Volume 2. p. 24./No.29 Erzsébet Szőnyi

The last Hungarian folk song arrangement in the book is a folk song for four hands, *Nincsen szebb a magyar lánynál...* (There is no girl more beautiful than the Hungarian girl)⁴¹. The melody is divided between the Primo and Secondo, and technically, it does not introduce anything new, the position always remains the same after the hand has been moved. The *Primo* part is easier due to playing in *unison*, but the level of difficulty does not differ much from the *Secondo*. Taking this into account, it is recommended for children of the same skill level. It is excellent for developing adaptability, the ability to share attention and polyphonic listening.

Conclusion

The two volumes of the Piano Method differ in folk music not only quantitatively, but also in terms of the use of folk songs. In the first volume, folk songs predominate as the teaching material for the initial phase of piano playing. There are methodological and pedagogical reasons for this. The Hungarian folk songs and children's songs - due to their keys starting from the two-tone range - are suitable for learning the basic technical elements of piano playing. The compilation of the teaching material based on folk songs allows a gradual learning of the keys, thus making it possible to gradually acquire mastery of the piano. The use of folk songs allows for vocal instrumental training. Piano playing combined with singing develops listening skills, the skill to combine different musical areas (singing, playing the piano), rhythmic skills, memorisation, and proper articulation to a greater extent. *Piano Method Volume 1* contains suggestions for singing folk songs. Both volumes contain the lyrics of the folk songs, which is facilitating singing and the formation of the character fitting to the lyrics. Volume 2 contains a smaller percentage of folk songs. This is not a negative factor. At this stage of piano learning, it is important that students become familiar with pieces from different periods of music history and establish a stylistically appropriate piano playing. Volume 1 contains only Hungarian folk songs and does not include music of other nations. The only drawback is the late introduction of the time signatures with three beats per bar. This needs to be compensated by the inclusion of other pieces of this kind in the teaching material. Volume 2 contains arrangements of songs from other nations. This is important both from the point of view of cultural openness and because of the different nature of these melodies compared to Hungarian folk songs. Widening the familiar sound range and forms facilitates a more colourful and stylish performance.

⁴¹ Piano Method Volume 2. p. 55/No.1 Erzsébet Szőnyi

The volumes of Piano Method enable instrument instruction based on folk music, including singing. However, it is essential to personalise the teaching material and make it as diverse as possible, so the exclusive use of one set of books may not always be appropriate. A review of these volumes from a folk music perspective may help piano teachers in the process of piece selection and in developing the teaching material.

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