

“THE HUNGARIAN FOLK-SONG ... ECHO OF THE ENTIRE HUNGARIAN SOUL” – THOUGHTS UPON A QUOTATION FROM ZOLTÁN KODÁLY¹

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SUMMARY. “... it is false method to start out from the diatonicism and then later turn back to the pentatony as if to an exceptional oddity.” Zoltán Kodály writes these lines in 1943, after he ascertains that pentatonic tunes constitute the Hungarians most ancient music. Thus the pentatonic scale is very important in Hungarian music in general. The pentatonic scale mirrors the Hungarian characteristic: the pentatony is that which receives into, and accepts. It is open to foreign elements (and the pent notes which are often very characteristic of the Hungarian pentatony, represent the foreign elements). It models that spirit, in which he lives his life in its entirety. However, that entirety is formed from many tiny little parts. Therefore it receives the foreign elements without changing its own pentatonic character. Nevertheless the diatonic scales are closed. In them, folk-songs only very rarely use the foreign notes in their system. They represent a spirit which takes itself out of unity, and in most cases it is unable to accept the strange difference, the mentality and the world view in which it finds itself quite foreign. The pentatonic scale is a separate system, independent of the heptatonic. There is no direct kinship between the pentatony and the diatonicism. In the same way as there is no kinship amongst the people who use these two different systems basically. The only people are the Hungarians who use both scales in an exceptional way.

Keywords: pentatonic, diatonic, folk-song, Hungarian, nations, ethnic groups, mentality, spirituality

Our pentatonic folk-songs are several thousands of years old. This fact, widely known and accepted in our days, was thus supported by Kodály

¹ Transcription of the lecture held at the scientific conference organized by the Hungarian Kodály Society in respect of the anniversary of 130 years of Zoltán Kodály's birth (Budapest, 15th-16th December 2012).

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in 1939: “If ... from the songs of our nation we select and put aside all the tunes that are common with the songs of the neighbouring nations, or those that originate in the art music of our own or another country’s, or those traceable back to any other European influence, what we will be left with can hardly be anything other than the ancient and natural music of the early Hungarian settlement.

A direct proof is that in the regions inhabited by Magyars before the settlement, whose ancestors they were in touch with or perhaps even with whom they mixed, we always find similar music.”³

Furthermore: “But just as the unified language had been formed, so might have the unified music, perhaps with the reconciling of originally contradictory formal principles. Two such principles are a living reality in our folk-songs, either regarded separately or together: the principle of pentatony and the principle of the parallel structure”⁴

Both principles reflect such a mentality and spirituality, such forgotten frames of mind that – if we stir just a little bit the dormant embers of our folk music – present us with an ancient message from old times: The Hungarians have been lost on their way to complete their divine mission! It can function as a torch lighting the way to lead us out from the spiritual crisis for today’s Hungarian society. In 1943 Kodály expressed his opinion as follows: “If we want our monumental folk-song to cast its ancient light upon the whole nation we have to prepare our children for it in the structure and spirit of that ... Otherwise, growing up on the music material used today, he will experience the most ancient music of the nation with some strange peculiarity. Not to mention that there are still schoolbooks in use that do not even acknowledge the pentatonic scale. This could be only our natural foundation.”⁵

Pentatonic and diatonic scales are two completely separate musical tonal systems. In the music of the different people there is no direct evolutionary route from the pentatony to the diatonicism.⁶ It is possible to distinguish the people or groups of people whose fundamental scale is the pentatonic, from those whose music is based on the diatonic scale. The Encyclopedia of Music defines the pentatony as follows: “The ~’s ancient

³ Kodály Zoltán: *Néphagyomány és zenekultúra (Folk customs and musical culture)*, Selected, provided with foreword and footnotes: Ádám Katona, Kriterion, Bucharest, 1974, 76.

⁴ Kodály Zoltán: *Néphagyomány és zenekultúra (Folk customs and musical culture)*, Selected, provided with foreword and footnotes: Ádám Katona, Kriterion, Bucharest, 1974, 77.

⁵ Kodály Zoltán: *333 Olvasógyakorlat. Bevezető a magyar népzenebe (333 Reading practice. Introduction to Hungarian folk music)*, Editio Musica, Budapest, 1943, 63.

⁶ There are theories that presume an evolutionary continuity between the anhemitonic pentatonic scale and the diatonic scales.

river-head was probably Middle and Eastern Asia (Tibet and ancient China) before written history; from there it radiated around on the one hand to Indo-China and the East Indies, Indonesia, Melanesia and Micronesia, as well as towards Western Polynesia, on the other hand to Eastern- and Middle Europe, its preserver is in fact the old style of the Hungarian folk music. The other territory of radiation is on the coast of the Mediterranean region: its remnants can be found in the Berber music, in the South-Italian and Sardinian folk music and in the music of Celtic ethnic groups. The ~ also dispersed among the African planters (as a matter of fact Bantus) and also the American Indian peasants. The fact that the ~ got through to different hunter and pastoral groups of people (e.g. to the Lapps, the Turkish tribes, the Mongols, the Middle Californian gatherers and the Mid-Australian primitive hunter tribes), in all conscience owes its origins to the existence of secondary pervasion with the coverage of the cultural contacts.”⁷ Many other nations use the pentatony in addition to the above mentioned, but the importance of this is much less significant for them.

The music of other nations and ethnic groups is determined by the diatonic scales. These are the Indo-Europeans, the Semites, partially the Arabs⁸ etc. As well as the people who use the pentatonic scale, in this group the above mentioned musical particularities mirror certain spiritual and mental characteristics which – if I can say it in this way – are totally contradictory to the earlier, above mentioned groups’. I am going to come back to these topics later.

In an interesting way those groups of people, in whose folk music pentatony plays an essential role, are linked not only by the tonal system of their music. Other research domains show a kind of kinship between them. For example genetic research and palaeontology can show similarities.

⁷ Brockhaus – Riemann: *Zenei Lexikon III. (The Encyclopedia of Music III.)*, Redacted by Carl Dahlhaus and Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, The editor of the Hungarian issue: Antal Boronkay, Editio Musica, Budapest, 1985, 97. In my lecture I presented audio materials, recording pentatonic melodies from these regions. (in order: Hungarian folk song from Gyimes, American Indian folk song, Cheremis soldiers’ song, Uighur lullaby, Irish folk song) Thus the feeling of the different pentatonic songs, the similarities and differences could be well sensed. (Unfortunately I haven’t yet found any recorded pentatonic material from Central Africa).

⁸ In Arabian and Indian music there are diatonic melodies as well, which differ from the European. These tonalities are different from the classical diatonic scales that can be derived from the circle of fifth.

László Árkay points to the relationship between certain nations and ethnic groups.⁹ He tells us about the research of the excellent professor of the McGill University of Montreal, Wilder Penfield and his work group. Interestingly, genetic research points out certain geographical regions as the home of genetically related nations. These spots, “quite mystically” are identical with the regions, where the pentatony can be found on Earth. Árkay also quotes from his telephone conversation with Professor Tibor Baráth: “And then Tibor tells me: he does not know folk-songs, not being a musician. He has a world map where he marked the places, where any kinds of decipherable inscriptions in ancient Hungarian or in other language were found since the Prehistory. But he admits that he does not understand this because these inscriptions are completely dispersed in 5 places on Earth. I perked up at this: ‘Which five places?’ I asked. ‘Well, Tibor said:

1. In Hungary and the Ural region of Middle Asia but not in the Slavic areas,
2. In the Far East in China and Japan
3. In Middle Africa
4. In the American Indian regions and
5. In Scotland.’

Well, I almost had to sit down! As these places are precisely identical with the 5 major places of pentatonic music and the blood group places of The Penfield Committee! This information brings the data proof of three perfectly distinct research fields: that of folk music, that of the ethnic group research and palaeontology under one common denominator!”¹⁰

Linguistics are also of help in proving the above mentioned relationship. Linguistic examples tell us that – with a few exceptions – all

⁹ Árkay László: *Monográfork no. 5. (Monographs no. 5.)*, <http://www.magtudin.org/Arkay%20Laszlo.htm> (looked up on 7th December 2013). László Árkay was born on 12th April 1921 in Budapest. He was an ordained priest, later he quit the priesthood. Probably in 1949 he emigrated to Canada and settled in Montreal. In March, 1990 he moved home to Hungary and died on 26th February 1992 in Budapest. He cared deeply for the Hungarian cause. He gave lectures, left manuscripts behind that dealt mainly with Hungarian cultural science.

¹⁰ As a matter of fact we should talk of 6 such “patches” (places): of The Carpathian Basin, Middle Asia (more precisely of the regions inhabited by the people related to us), The Far East, Middle Africa, The American Indian Regions, The Region of The Mediterranean Sea and The regions of The Celtic people in Europe. Although the Encyclopedia of Music mentions other regions where pentatony was primarily spread (Indo-China and the East Indies, Indonesia, Melanesia and Micronesia and Western-Polynesia), in Árkay’s report they are not mentioned from the point of view of genetic research and archeology.

the nations and ethnic groups in whose music the pentatony has a determining role speak an agglutinative language (Hungarian in the Carpathian Basin, the Altaic languages in Middle Asia, the Uighur¹¹ and Japanese in the Far East, The Bantu languages in Middle Africa, Maya, Dakota, Quechua etc. in the American continent. Though perhaps none of the Celtic languages is agglutinative, there are theories that the Basques are of Celtic origin. Who, in turn, are our close relatives, regarding their culture and the structures and inherent regularities of their language.¹²

See, the results of four different research areas coinciding with these people. True, that the pentatony can also be found in other ethnic groups and that people speaking agglutinative languages are present in larger proportions than the people using the pentatony on a basic level, but in our study the emphasis falls on who are the nations where both are together. I would like to note that among the areas where the pentatony is secondarily spread we can also find agglutinative languages: the Dravida or Tamil in India, the Mali in Indonesia and Polynesia. The latter geographical areas are not mentioned in Árkay's writing. It may be that from the aspect of genetic research and palaeontology these "patches" don't show relationships with the others, though we cannot be completely sure.

¹¹ A few years ago Duna Television broadcast a documentary of a Hungarian expedition made in the Land of the Uyghurs (in the North-West of China). The film pointed out the close relationship between the Hungarians and the Uighurs. This relationship manifests itself in the structure of the spoken language, words identical in meaning and sound, but the kinship is shown also in the folk music, the folk customs, the ornamental motives, in architecture, and gastronomy.

¹² I had two occasions to visit the Basque Country. First, in 2005 a Basque dance group in Spain invited my wife and I, to Bilbao to teach Hungarian dances. Later, in 2010 through the exchange partnership of our Borsika youth dance group we were the guests of Basques in France. It turned out that there are many linking points between the Hungarians and the Basques. Their language is agglutinative like Hungarian. They use the possessive suffix as we do. Root words are followed by: suffixes, affixes, signifiers. In the sentence structure of the Basque language the most important words come in the front, just as in Hungarian and the signifier of the plural is *k*, just like in Hungarian. True, that the words are different and the two people would hardly understand one another's language, but the structure and the system are identical. There is a theory according to which they also came to Europe from Asia. Before converting to Christianity they also used to believe in one Mother God who later was replaced with Mary, Jesus's mother. See the Boldogasszony – Blissful Mother – belief of Hungarians. The Basques also kept their Catholic belief as with the more traditional Hungarian regions (e.g. the inhabitants of Csík, Gyergyó, Gyimes and the Csángó's of Moldavia). In their capital on French territory, in the Basque museum of Bayonne we watched a documentary made in the 1930's about the Basques. We discovered customs, melodies, and shepherd-hoops similar to those of our Eastern regions. Finally: curious that the colours of their national flag are red, white and green.

Comparing the two tonal systems certain differences will show. Let us first look at these sequences composed of descending musical cells of 3 notes in a diatonic and a pentatonic scale (*1st score example*):

Ex. 1

The image shows two pairs of musical staves. Each pair consists of a diatonic system (top staff) and a pentatonic system (bottom staff). The diatonic systems show a sequence of seven notes with a descending interval of a third between the first and second notes, and a descending interval of a second between the second and third notes. The pentatonic systems show a sequence of five notes with a descending interval of a second between the first and second notes, and a descending interval of a third between the second and third notes. The notes are written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

Sequences in diatonic and pentatonic systems

An outstanding difference is the register manifested in the two systems. The same musical phenomenon requires a larger space in the pentatonic scale. The melodic lines that use all the seven notes of the diatonic scales, can only be displayed in a register that exceeds an octave in the case of pentatonic scales. We often meet such melodies in the ancient pentatonic strata of Hungarian music and the songs of our related nations in Asia. See one example from the Cheremis ethnic group, where we can see the omission of the second sequence in a row of precise repetition of sequences (*2nd score example*,¹³ below you have the complete queue of the notes of the sequences).

Ex. 2

The image shows two staves of musical notation for a Cheremis folk-song. The top staff includes a tempo marking of quarter note = 120, the title 'csereuisz, R. Iach', and the lyrics 'Oj Kropina, Oj Kropina...'. The melody is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The bottom staff shows a simplified version of the melody, consisting of a single line of notes.

Cheremis folk-song

¹³ Lükő Gábor: *A magyar lélek formái (The shapes of the Hungarian soul)*, Exodus, Budapest 1942, 285.

We find similar sequences among the old Hungarian folk tunes. In the song from Kászonimpér collected by Kodály the sequences are not strict (see *score example no. 3*,¹⁴ below you have the full and exact line of sequences), here we do not see the omission of the repetition of a full sequence but in the second line the melody combines the first and the second repetition. In the third line the last note slips one note down (the penultimate note brings a strict sequence only in the variation), in the second half of the last line two notes (G and F) switch places (thus the last note slips one step up) and the penultimate note changes.

Ex. 3

Poco rubato. $\text{♩} = 63$. Fo. 252b) Kászonimpér, (Csík vm.) 1912. K

Az - hol én el - mē - győk, Még az fák és sír - nak.
Gyēn - ge já - ga - i - ról Le - ve - lek le - hull - nak.

Folk-song from Kászonimpér

Let us examine the register of the above tunes: the Cheremis song which expands to an eleventh while the melody from Kászon expands to a tenth.¹⁵

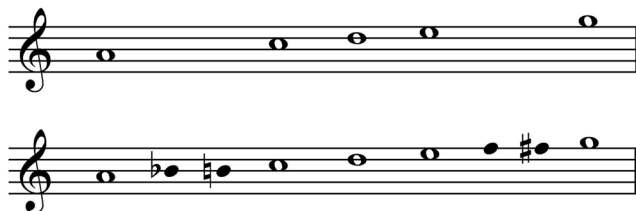
Let us study further the scales of Hungarian pentatonic songs. Most of them is in minor scale. In the anhemitonic pentatonic scales this is the only one that shows perfect symmetry: the *C D E* pentatonic core is situated in the middle, the larger distances of a minor third are on the two sides. The register of the pentatonic Hungarian melodies often exceeds the octave, however. These generally show the following row: *g, a, c¹, d¹, e¹, g¹, a¹* (and their register is of a ninth). On the scheme of the pentatonic scale emerging in the melody we often find *pien* notes as well (the ones filling up the gaps) in addition to the pillar notes. By means of these the pentatonic scale may be completed to a six, seven, eight or nine tonic

¹⁴ Kodály Zoltán: *A magyar népzene (The Hungarian folk music)*, 8th edition, The collection of examples compiled by Lajos Vargyas, Editio Musica, Budapest, 1981, 109.

¹⁵ From the audio examples in my talk (c.f. the 6th note) the Cheremis soldier song's register is twelfth, the Uyghur lullaby's is eleventh.

scale. Here between the *E* and *G* an *F* or *F sharp* or both, and between the *A* and *C* the *B* and/or *B flat* (see *score example no. 4.*).

Ex. 4



Minor pentatonic scale and piens

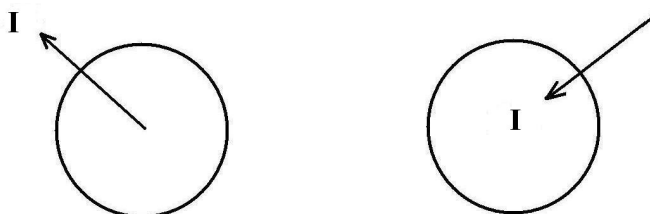
It occurs many times that a pentatonic scale is completed by two piens so it becomes a seven tonic scale. However, as I already mentioned, pentatonic and diatonic are two completely different musical tonal systems. In the music of different nations there is not a straight evolutionary way from one to another. This also means that a pentatonic scale completed with two piens does not become diatonic. In such melodies we can almost always find the pentatonic scheme of the melody where the notes of the pentatonic scale have a determinative role. The pien notes in turn mostly play a secondary role, they act as gap fillers (short notes at the unimportant parts of the melody, they turn up only a few times during the song, mostly at upbeat places). When a gap is filled by two piens (see the second line of the 4th score example), this indicates that the pentatonic structure is still very strong and the gap fillers have not yet become independent.

To understand the significance of the above presented phenomena from the aspect of Hungarian thinking or rather to see the spirituality, mentality and approach they represent (see the quotation in the title of the lecture), let us first review certain linguistic properties. Csaba Varga analyzes the psychological features of Hungarian based on linguistic investigation¹⁶ and reaches the conclusion that the Hungarians have a holistic view of the world, their way of thinking is synthetic and to them the completeness, the unified wholeness is the most important thing. In their way of thinking they always start from the whole towards the details. Conversely the Indo-European people who think analytically, emphasize the details from where they start and thus approach the whole. In the language this manifests as follows: we, Hungarians, when we identify ourselves, first we say our family name and only then our Christian name. If a locality is part of our name then first we denominate our larger environment

¹⁶ Varga Csaba: *A kőkor élő nyelve (The living language of the Stone Age)*, Ed. Frig, Pilisszentiván, 2003, 22 to 26.

and so we gradually approach the smallest unit, that we ourselves are. Such an example is Kőrösi Csoma Sándor (in English, Alexander Csoma de Kőrös). In the Indo-European languages this is exactly the other way round. They start off from themselves and thus they expand the circle until their widest environment that can be the name of their settlement. This way the settlement falls the furthest from themselves (for example the Romanian writer Barbu Ștefănescu Delavrancea). The same way the Hungarians mark the date. First they name the widest frame, the year, then the month and only then the day. The Indo-Europeans reverse this: start off from today which is the closest to them and then they spread the circle towards plenitude. In *figure no.1.*, I am trying to present the two contradictory approaches: a Hungarian places himself into the unified wholeness. He lives his particular life as a part of the whole (see on the right). As opposed to this the Indo-Europeans (at least according to the linguistic analysis) bring themselves into prominence from the unified wholeness and live their existence as independent from the whole (on the left).

Fig. 1



The two contradictory mentalities

In the summary of József Agócs's theory of nature and system we have the detailed picture of two contradictory world views (*table no. 1.*):¹⁷

Tab. 1

Main differences between the secular and the sacred world views		
World views	Secular	Sacred
Dominant factor	material	spiritual
The view	analytical	synthetic
The system of concepts	formal, abstract	functional, concrete
The knowledge attainable	parts of the Whole	the UNIFIED whole
The method	searching for answers disassemble + alter searching for law	raising questions observe + assemble searching for life

¹⁷ Záhonyi András: *Ősi titkok nyomában (On the track of ancient secrets)*, Miskolci Bölcsész Egyesület, Miskolc, 2005, 66.

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The individual	conquer and convince	conditions, averting danger
The representative of the community	corruptible	self conviction
The leadership	uncontrollable, can't be recalled	incorruptible
	based on political grounds	controllable, can be recalled
	self-styled, appointed	based on knowledge
	specialist	qualified, charismatic
The real purpose	individual interest	versatile
	momentary welfare	public interest
	success	durable existence
		helping the needy, service of others
The strategy	detecting enemies	looking for co-workers
The system of values	equal rights	different duties
The measure of value	money	public utility
The period of planning	5-10 years (max. 100)	several million years
What it does with natural resources	use them up (destroys them)	reproduces (preserves them)

A short summary of József Agócs's theories of nature and system

Kodály was aware of all this. About the practice of solmization he writes: "One has to read globally. With one look to capture a whole word, then more, a whole sentence. To start from the whole towards the details. Let us get used to this, not to pick it up note by note, but scanning it through from the start to the end, as looking at a map. Let us sense it in the whole before we start to sing it out loud."¹⁸

If we draw a parallel between the two tonal systems and the above mentioned linguistic characteristics, we can see that the difference is manifested primarily in the contrasts on the mental and spiritual levels. We may say that the pentatony is accepting and receptive. Open to take in foreign elements (see: piens). Models the soul that lives its life as part of wholeness. Wholeness in turn is made up of many small parts. Therefore it accepts foreign elements without changing its pentatonic quality. In turn heptatonic systems are mostly closed. In such folk-songs it is very rare that foreign notes appears in the system. They represent a soul that pulls itself out from the unified whole and generally is unable to accept difference in spirituality and mentality.

It is just right if in our days we pose the question: where has the ancient wisdom of our people gone? If we look around a bit in contemporary Hungarian public life we see that almost everything bears the

¹⁸ Kodály Zoltán: *333 Olvasógyakorlat. Bevezető a magyar népzenebe (333 Reading practice. Introduction to Hungarian folk music)*, Editio Musica, Budapest, 1943, 61.

stamp of the foreign culture. It is enough switching on a commercial television station where you see the enlivening of the shadows. Kodály saw this more than 80 years ago: “[...] the spreading of musical literacy will make its way through the respective Hungarian circles and there will also find its way. Then the participants in Hungarian song will be greater in number. Today they are only a few and cannot balance what is happening on the other side where many thousand of rodents busily eating away at the remaining debris of the Hungarian song.”¹⁹ Still today we see that nothing has changed in eighty years or even if it had, not in the direction that Kodály had presumed. He urged that musical education should be done in terms of the pentatony. In spite of his monumental activity in education, Hungarian folk music (mainly the pentatonic songs) have become less well-known in our days. Few youths of these days know Hungarian music as they should and even less of them participate. We can witness a slow but certain change in the Hungarian folk tradition as well. We hear from these phenomenon from Bertalan Andrásfalvy: “For decades we have been living in a period where the traditional folk culture is breaking apart and vanishing. In some regions this disintegration started more than a hundred years ago.”²⁰

True, that many see the effects of this change nowadays but still less are aware of the real risk. If we start examining the most important components of a nation's sense of identity – (these are: language, culture, history, geography, religion and where, in my opinion, the most important are the language and the culture) – then we may state that in everyday life the language, though it is deteriorating is still just managing to survive. We cannot say the same thing about traditional culture. Though in everyday life the language is used to express thoughts (here I am not thinking of literary, poetical language, but more the informal) while culture is used to express emotions (here I am thinking, primarily, of the cultural demands and taste of the average person: favourite music, dances, clothing, habits, etc.). If however we accept the idea that both thinking and feeling in Hungarian, are an indispensable part of the Hungarian identity then we get the picture of an unfortunate split state: the contemporary Hungarian man even though he speaks Hungarian, he feels something of a stranger. We live under the effects of a foreign culture and are overwhelmed by a foreign mentality and way of thinking. Here I quote Bertalan Andrásfalvy again: “Obviously what Kodály

¹⁹ Kodály Zoltán: *Néphagyomány és zenekultúra (Folk customs and musical culture)*, Selected, provided with foreword and footnotes: Ádám Katona, Kriterion, Bucharest, 1974, 74.

²⁰ Andrásfalvy Bertalan: *A magyar nép magatartása éneklésben, táncban és a népszokásokban (The conduct of the Hungarian people in singing, dancing and folk customs)*, 1999, http://www.folkradio.hu/folkszemle/andrasfalvy_amagyarnepmagatartasa/index.php#_ftnref1 (looked up on 7th December 2013).

felt to be a purely human value in children's play was that this does not involve rivalry, the ambition that urges people to win over the others – is glory and happiness. Today the essence of play is clearly this: who is stronger, faster, who knocks or dirks the other down, who throws the ball further, who is more beautiful, who plays the violin or piano better, who sings nicer, etc. Everything has become a race – in economy, trade, politics, the battlefield, science, art... Competition taints a community, where there can be one winner there are many losers. In folk games there is no rivalry as there was no such thing in ancient societies. Competition is not a characteristic of a child's soul. It is when Jesus notices that his followers secretly rival each other for the first place in the Kingdom of Heaven. Then He tells them: unless you become as little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. He who wants to be the first must become the servant of everybody.”²¹

What made traditional culture change so much? Where should we look for the cause of it? I presume that first of all it starts in the soul since both the artistic and the cultural manifestations mirror the different states of the soul. If the cultural inquiry of the average contemporary Hungarian man, and thus the traditional culture itself, has changed so much then it is reasonable to suppose that this is the result of the change in the Hungarian soul. All this is evident and palpable in our own surroundings and day-to-day working. We live in the time of falsehood and deceit not only on the level of humanity but also amongst Hungarians. The human soul has completely congealed into matter and the dominant ways of conduct are egotistic ones: selfishness, individualism, individual interest, striving for the top, placing ourselves over others. Naturally this is accompanied by judging others, rejecting “otherness”, nonacceptance, the mentality of the “eye for an eye”. All competitions and quizzes help the strengthening of this mentality: how to become top-notch riding rough shod anybody else (see the Factor X, The Peacock Has Risen²² etc.). [*This is actually a contest of Hungarian*

²¹ Andrásfalvy Bertalan: *A művelődéspolitikai fő feladatai (The Main tasks of cultural politics)*, In: *** Magyar nemzetstratégia (*Hungarian National Strategy*), Magyar Konzervatív alapítvány, Püski, Budapest, 2008, 472.

²² After my talk more specialists expressed their opinion concerning that The Peacock Has Risen competition carries a lot of positive things for the Hungarian people. I don't dispute this. Nevertheless my opinion is that the positive aspects should be placed beside the negative ones and a proper balance be assessed. That from the point of view of the renewal of the Hungarian spirit have we made a truly positive progress? Here is a short story I would like to share with the reader which I received in an email. An anthropologist proposed to the children of an African tribe, a game: a basket of fruit is put near a tree by him after which he told them whoever reaches the basket first will have the fruit. To this all the children stood up, took each others' hands and ran together for the basket. When asked why they did not compete, they answered: Ubuntu. How could any of us be happy if one of us is sad? In the language of this tribe Ubuntu means: ***I am because we are.*** I looked up the

traditional folk culture (dance, singing, bands, etc.) – note of translator.]

Missing however, are virtues like: humility, acceptance, caring for others, compassion, forgiveness. Although with such an 180 degree turning of the soul the Hungarians will not be able to complete their divine mission: to build a bridge between the East and the West and to reconcile two contradictory world views and mentalities. “A country and people situated at the crossing point of East and West can have as a meaning of life, which can only be to belong to both sides reconciling and melting their antagonisms.”²³ “Can we not be a tumbling ferry but a bridge between Europe and Asia, possibly connecting with both? It would be a task for another thousand years!”²⁴

To undertake the mission mentioned by Kodály Hungarians can build only on their traditional culture because only this ancient heritage can enlighten for us the road to follow. Our language, just as our ancient melodies “remember” the past knowledge of the whole. It is perhaps today that humanity needs it the most. The state where the soul was not yet torn into two poles, where duality did not exist.

In Hungarian language 2 = 1 (or 1 = 2): two make the one, that means if we divide one into two the result is not two different wholes but halves where only two halves make a whole one. All of our double organs and clothes are one in pairs, divided they are halves. For example if a Hungarian says one-legged²⁵ then he means not the half of one leg of the man but one sound leg of his. Similarly: half-eyed, half a glove, etc. So someone is healthy and unimpaired if he has two of them. But Hungarians speak of the unity of two in singular. He asks: where is my shoe (meaning: where are my shoes, as in English)? Opposing this some Indo-European languages can identify certain clothes and objects that are made of one item only in the plural: (for ex: shorts for short trousers in English, “*pantaloni*” means trousers in Romanian; glasses are “*ochelari*” etc.²⁶

Remnants of the awareness of unity are found in our folk music too. Let us look back at the musical phenomenon I mentioned before: that the

word Ubuntu on the Internet. It was revealed that the origin of the word came from the Bantu languages (c.f. the agglutinative languages on the second page).

[http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_\(ideológia\)](http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_(ideológia)) (looked up on 7th December 2013).

²³ Kodály Zoltán: *Néphagyomány és zenekultúra (Folk customs and musical culture)*, Selected, provided with foreword and footnotes: Ádám Katona, Kriterion, Bucharest, 1974, 82.

²⁴ Kodály is quoted by Andrásfalvy Bertalan: *A művelődéspolitika fő feladatai (The Main tasks of cultural politics)*, In: *** Magyar nemzetstratégia (*Hungarian National Strategy*), Magyar Konzervatív Alapítvány, Püski, Budapest, 2008, 472.

²⁵ He actually says: “half-legged” (translator’s note).

²⁶ Even the more correct name “spectacles” comes as a plural in English. Glasses can refer to two or more tumblers as well (translator’s note).

same phenomenon (e.g. the sequence used in the melody line) needs a larger register in pentatonic scale. We might say that the pentatony moves in larger spaces therefore it has a broader view of unity than the diatonic scales. This reminds me of the 7 league boots in our folk tales. If the hero puts them on he can get to the other side of the world in seconds. The melody line extending beyond the octave might suggest that man is able to reach higher spaces mainly if his view and thinking is determined by the sense of unity.

Our traditional culture bears evidence of the fact that for our ancestors not only space was infinite,²⁷ but time itself: “For the Hungarian man space is limitless and time is timeless and the Hungarian painting (picture) and song makes sense only in this frame.” – writes Gábor Lükő²⁸ and supports his statement with: “The Hungarian man is never in a hurry because he doesn’t notice the passing of time and doesn’t measure time in his art, either. ... only the Hungarian man dares openly admit that he is only ‘making time pass’. Because he can afford it. He can afford it so much that he is not even interested whether his time would be enough or not. If we take music, similarly, the Hungarian man does not divide music into equal intervals but makes it flow without hindrance, occasionally lengthening certain notes for a change. At such times he enjoys the infinite abundance of time. Where only one note, one syllable is given so much time that you could sing the whole song itself, well there is no need to rush at all in such a case. However this is how I say it. Let us read the score of ‘A little bird’ ... The melody lines of the song are of six syllables each. The first 5 syllables of the first line run down in 3/8 of the whole time, while the sixth syllable takes 17/8. This is followed by 2/8 pause and then the song goes to the second line.”²⁹ See the melody below, of the “Little bird” collected by Kodály (5th score example).³⁰

²⁷ See also Lükő Gábor: *A magyar lélek formái (The shapes of the Hungarian soul)*, Exodus, Budapest 1942, Chapter called: A magyar térszemlélet (The Hungarian approach to Space), 165 to 282.

²⁸ Lükő Gábor: *A magyar lélek formái (The shapes of the Hungarian soul)*, Exodus, Budapest 1942, 283.

²⁹ Idem, p. 284.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 285.

Ex. 5

Hallgató ♩=184 Kászonimpér, Kodály Z.

Egy kicsi madarka Hozzám kez - de jár - ni,
Virá - gos ker - temben Fészket kez - de rak - ni.

Little bird

Now we are going to discuss the other formative principle Kodály mentioned, an other determinative phenomenon of our ancient folk-songs: the parallel structure. This in folk music terms is the quintshifting structure. We have very many quintshifting melodies among both our old and new style songs. This phenomenon goes together with the register extending beyond the octave. The second part of "Haj Dunáról fúj a szél" (*The Wind blows from the Danube*) is the perfect (lower) fifth repetition of the first part (6th score example).³¹

Ex. 6

Haj Duná-rol fúj a szél, Feküdj mellém, majd nem ér! Duná- rol fúj a szél.
Ha Du- ná-rol nem fulna, Akko hi-deg nem volna, Du-ná- rol fúj a szél.

Haj Dunáról fúj a szél

It is not accidental that in tonic solfa system we use as follows:

rrdl,rrd rrdl,rrd rl, sz, l,l,l, /
 rrdl,rrd rrdl,rrd rl, sz, l,l,l, (that's mean:
 DDCADDC DDCADDC DA GAAA/
 DDCADDC DDCADDC DA GAAA).

³¹ Vargyas Lajos: *A magyarság népzeneje (Hungarian Folk Music)*, Editio Musica, Budapest, 1981, 395.

This underlines that the two parts of the melody are identical. The difference appears only in pitch. Several thousands of years ago in Egypt Hermes Trismegistus taught this: “As above – so below, as below – so above, this is how you understand the magic of the one ... And as all things come from the one, the one thought, in nature all things were created through transference from the one.” (See *Béla’s Hamvas translation*.)³² The quintshifting structure in our folk-songs models exactly this ancient truth. The transit to higher spaces is even more palpable in the above example, mainly if the fifth change goes together with the so called dual pentatony³³ (these two formative principles often meet in our folk-songs). The principle of the parallel structure is more important here than pentatony. This may be the explanation for the fact that in these songs the melody line steps over the narrow limits of the pentatonic system as the two parallel pentatonic scales, situated at a perfect fifth from one another are built into one (*7th score example*).³⁴

Ex. 7



The two pentatonic scales

In the *8th score example* we can see such a melody.³⁵ In both structures the pentatony is ornamented with *pien* notes, but this completion does not weaken the pentatonic system of the song at all. This is also a good example of the large register mentioned earlier, since the melody expands until a twelfth is reached.

Ex. 8

1. (hn) Járd ki, lá-bom, jár' ki most, nem pa-ran-csel sen-ki most, (é)

³² <http://www.tabulas.hu/triszm.html> (looked up on 7th December 2013).

³³ See Kodály Zoltán: *A magyar népzene (The Hungarian folk music)*, 8th edition, The collection of examples compiled by Lajos Vargyas, Editio Musica, Budapest, 1981, no. 4., 109.

³⁴ Amongst the (descending) tunes of people related to Hungarians and living in Asia we can find threefold quintshifting as well. This means that the same line sounds four times one after the other lower and lower in perfect fifth. Naturally the register of these tunes is much greater than the register of our “largest” tunes – it goes over two octaves.

³⁵ Jagamas János – Faragó József: *Romániai magyar népdalok (Hungarian folk-songs from Romania)*, Kriterion, Bucharest, 1974, no. 241., 243 to 244.

THE HUNGARIAN FOLK-SONG ... ECHO OF THE ENTIRE HUNGARIAN SOUL ...

Sem a né-mel, sem a tót, nyis' ki, ba- bám, az aj- tót. (a)

Jaj de las- san nyi- tod ki, mint- ha nem tud- nád, hogy ki, (de)

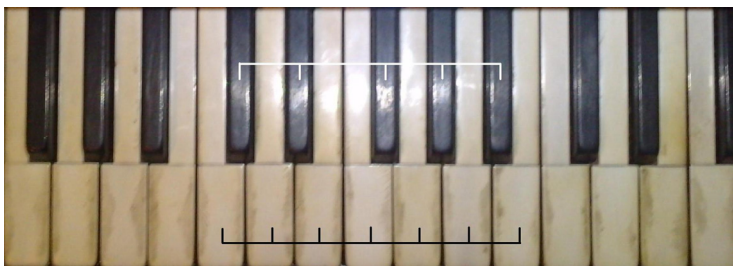
Jaj de las- san nyi- tod ki, mint- ha nem tud- nád, hogy ki.

Járd ki lábam

We have seen that the musical and linguistic characteristics mirror the mentality and the way of thinking of different nations and ethnic groups, however these are contradictory. At first we can easily categorize people into groups of good and bad, right and wrong. But we have to accept that our human existence is based on a dual system from the very beginning (see the story of Adam and Eve), and this system does function only with two poles, whatever names we give them: good-bad, beautiful-ugly, sublime-low, black-white, left-right, light-dark, heaven-hell, up-down etc. Just as electricity or magnetism doesn't work if we take one of the poles out, so the unity is only complete if both poles are present. Only he, who sees and accepts this can live the wholeness.

If we look at the keys of a piano, the two poles clearly differentiate (themselves): the black keys constitute the pentatonic and the white ones the diatonic system (see figure no. 2.).

Fig. 2



The piano keys

The piano helps us understand how the two systems, as a matter of fact, complete each other: $5 + 7 = 12$. Twelve is the symbol of the whole, of unity. Twelve is the number of the star signs, the months and the hours. Twelve is one dozen, that is itself the unity. One half of whole is made of pentatony and the other half of diatonicism. Through the centuries Hungarians have built in the other half in their music: among our folk-songs we find very many diatonic melodies. It is a beautiful example of accepting others, otherness, which is a natural attitude of a soul that lives in the sense of unity. If we cannot stir up this glow in our souls in our days, when it is needed most, then the Hungarians can not complete their divine mission – as Kodály says their task for the next one thousand years –, but they have a strong chance of disappearing down the sink of history.

I trust that the attitudes and specific mentality encoded in tradition will newly embrace soul and conscience and will be strong enough and effective enough to let Hungarians rediscover themselves and preserve their original spiritual characteristics created in God's Image in the coming thousands of years.

Translator: Tünde Juhász-Boylan and Joe Boylan

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