

THE RHETORIC OF BARTÓK'S MELODIC WORLD

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SUMMARY. As looking through an encyclopaedia, one come across the presentation of the Baroque and the way it influenced the work of Bartók as well the succinct presentation of the melodic world of the same composer. The next step would be to go to the practical examples of the same Bartók and to use as a first example, the world of metaphors that abounds in his work. After the theory, one come across the practical example in the form of the well-chosen examples, which are inserted in the text as if they are closely connected to the word that precedes them. As an example, we can remind of the “sigh” that follows everyone who hears it by his or her own will or by mistake and which is illustrated in an example that is very easy to remember. However, these are only a few lines, but these lines give a taste of the world of music of one wonderful composer.

Keywords: Baroque rhetoric, melodic world, Bartók, melos, simile, metaphors, reality and ideal, sigh.

In the construction of the Bartókian *melos* the presence of generalization is a value generating presence which, at the same time, determines the presence of the aesthetic message as well. The levels of this generalization surpass by far the premises of baroque rhetoric which only vaguely hinted at the essential content of the basic figurative forms, and which was content to emphasize only the ornamental character. Of course, the practice of baroque music, according to contemporary and present day views, irrespective of this idea, distinguished itself by its rich symbolism and cult of metaphors. For the premise of musical rhetoric discovered itself either in the vocal music of each age, taking for a starting point the comparison of texts and melodies, or in the instrumental genre which openly acknowledged its relatedness to the rhythmic relata of dance. In addition, for these relations the elegance of ornamentation was not sufficient.

Bartók's melodic world, due to the value system of its rhetoric, focuses mainly on the expressivity of contrastive figures. Its system of values suggested the systematization of present aesthetic categories in the grotesque–transcendent axis system, which proved to be a useful analytic instrument for our further

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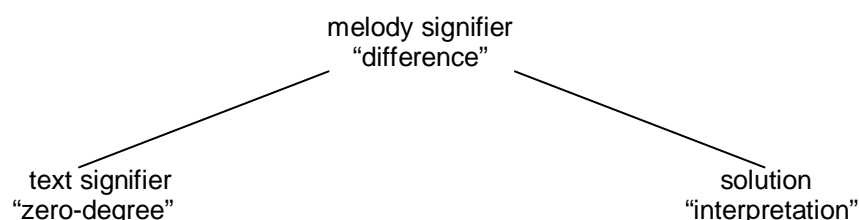
investigations as well. For the Bartókian relation systems created by the confrontation between reality and ideal, relocate each stylistic stage of the oeuvre to several variants of *the ideal and the deformed* as if emphasizing the continuity of unity. Because of this, Bartók used mainly *similes, metaphors, symbols, irony, and metamorphoses* as rhetorical devices when composing melodies. Let us add to each of these figures the attribute *contrast: contrast-simile, contrast-metaphor* and so on. We should mention that we have discovered stylistic analytic methods similar to the course and means of our rhetoric investigations – such as the expressive dynamism of alternating opposite planes – in Péter Szegő's PhD dissertation entitled *Kompozíciós technikák Bartók Mikrokozmoszában (Techniques of Composition in Bartók's Microcosm)*.

We are going to discuss one example of the rich collection's each characteristic paradigm.

The contrastive figures of Bartók's rhetoric are also created by means of the text–melody relationship. The texts of the *27 Choruses for Children's and Women's Voices* are of folkloric origin, their *melos* wells up, however, from Bartók's melodic inventions. Their text–melody relationship is always built on rhetorical generalizations, similes and metaphors in the first place.

The *melos* of the hardly one minute long *Senkim a világon (I Have No One in the World)* is built on similes and metaphors too. Its similes bear the tensions of the original *text signifier* and the *melody signifier* built upon it. The scheme of their generalization can be represented in this way:

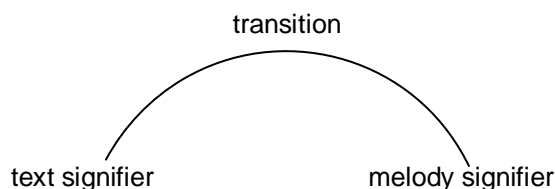
Fig. 1



There are musical similes that are accompanied by texts function in the same way as poetic similes, or as everyday similes. For example, in the complimentary simile *your cheeks are red as roses* the second signifier (roses) strengthens, enriches the content of the first meaning, which is zero-degree, neutral from a rhetorical point of view. Compared with the difference, the simple statement becomes a compliment: it pleases by recalling the soft petals, the scent and the fiery red colour of roses.

At the same time, the metaphors grasp the moment of transition, mutation: the musical element *puts an end* to the signifier of the text by *elevating* it, as Hegel would have said it:

Fig. 2



In this example, the metaphors, always built on similarity, make perceptible the second meaning of the original Greek *analogon*, namely, proportion. In contrast with *plasticizing* external similes, they become internal *expressive* metaphors.

The simile transforms the verse “*hegyek közt lakásom*” (*my abode is in the mountains*) into a musical image in the line of the melody: we can almost see the winding ascent of the road leading to the mountains:

Ex. 1



At the same time figurative meaning is implied in metaphors; it is present *in absentia* to quote Saussure. For example in Faludy's *Kisztó ének* (Provocative Song), urged by competitive courtesy, the boy sings his lover's beauty in this way: “*Szeme kőkény, csillag fénye*” (*Her eyes are sloe, their light is star*). Although it is not expressed directly in the sentence, we can perceive the shining of her blue eyes. In Bartók's music, the creation of the musical metaphor becomes an internal, expressive figure in the transition between verse and melody. The unspoken charm is here the suggestion of the sigh:

Ex. 2



This is the metaphor of a resigned sigh, which will make the entire text more colourful, more intimate from this moment forward in the tension created by the unrest of loneliness.

Bartók composed the third line by combining the previously discussed simile and metaphor techniques. The “*Csendes folyóvíznek csak zúgását hallom*” (*I only hear the rumble of the silent river*) is an external musical image and an internal expression at the same time. The melody winding in its sinuous balance recalls the image of a silently gurgling mountain stream, and, at the same time, the hardly vibrating sentiments of the lonely listener:

Ex. 3



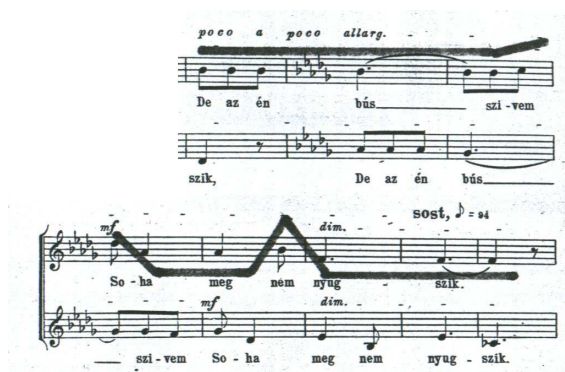
This is followed by a projective moment encompassing two lines. The internal expressive metaphor showing the kindling of languid restlessness is projected into an external simile-image: in the course of the double plasticisation, the verse “*A nyári folyóvíz télre megaluszik*” (*The summertime river by winter gets drowsy*) is at first turned into a glass-smooth musical simile:

Ex. 4



Then the second line (the fifth of the entire composition) synthesizes again between simile and metaphor. The criss-crossed line of the external, plastic, ill-boding electro-cardiogram covers the expressive metaphor of sorrow:

Ex. 5



The lyricism of the conclusion is enriched by symbolic content. The first two lines recur with renewed strength: “*Erdőben lakásom, senkim a világon*” (*My abode is in the woods, I have no one in the world*). Not only the slight modification – instead of mountains wood is the rhetorical topos –, but also the repetition, following the many intervening differences, confers symbolic surplus to the original meaning. For only we know the secrets hidden in these intermediate images, we, who have been initiated into this secret. For it is well known, the nature of symbol implies that its meaning is not only the cross-section of the story, it is not only glidingly swift, but also consensually mysterious. Bartók entrusted us, which are the performers and receivers of the work, with its revealing.

To convey the message of *Senkim a világon* (*I have no one in the world*) takes hardly a minute. However, how much it intends to say! Moreover, how much it says! The exciting question is whether we, the receivers are able to track this very rich message zone during a one-minute dialogue.

(Translated by Ágnes Korondi)

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