

Populism and Folklorism in Central European Music Pedagogy of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

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Introduction

Folk music of varying provenance has long played a central role in music education in the West. In the formal teaching of basic principles of art music, straightforward folksong arrangements are often used to illustrate some of the simpler aspects of tonality and rhythm, perhaps as a stepping stone for younger children who are not yet ready to appreciate or understand such matters as manifest in longer artworks. While folksong may be used in conjunction with short, specially-composed music examples for such teaching purposes,¹ priority tends to be given to folksong as the more natural and immediate embodiment of the precepts involved. In a twenty-first-century educational context, folk music examples are often associated with the promulgation of multiculturalism,² but it is well known that folk music as an educational tool had its roots in the folk ideologies, particularly nationalism, that coloured European and especially Central European cultural thought for over 150 years, until at least the 1960s.

On the other hand, the idea of folk art as a teaching device was also associated with cultural populism amongst certain sections of Europe's intelligentsia in the mid-twentieth century, who wished to make art music available and appreciable to the people—in contradiction of the artistic elitism that predominated at that time. Composers such as Aaron Copland, Benjamin Britten, Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály and Carl Orff turned to the folk music traditions of their countries as a source of inspiration for

¹ The juxtaposition of folksong settings with short, folksong-like compositions is an integral element of the Kodály concept: see Zoltán Kodály, *The Kodály Choral Method*, a series of volumes edited by Percy M. Young, revised by Geoffrey Russell-Smith (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1960–69), Kodály's graded series of short solo vocal and choral compositions interspersing Hungarian folksong settings with original pieces.

² In, for instance, the United Kingdom's GCSE and A-level music curricula.

their compositions, partly as a nationalist statement and partly as an attempt to introduce the complexities of high art to a greater public. By utilizing the down-to-earth idiom of folk music, they sought to mediate the more difficult aspects of the avant-garde and modernist experiments that prevailed in art music of the mid-twentieth century.

Of particular interest to this article, then, are the innovative pedagogical methods developed by Orff and Kodály as part of their populist and nationalist convictions. These methods, heavily based on folk-derived material, prioritized musical appreciation for all, over and above the elitist promotion of technical virtuosity in the talented few, and were hugely influential on the development of primary-level music curricula in the West in the latter part of the twentieth century. The development of systematic folk-based pedagogical methods such as those instigated by Orff and Kodály (and Shinichi Suzuki's later development of an instrumental pedagogical method may also be relevant in this context) marked a culmination of the ongoing dialogue between *völkisch* ideology and populist ideas on education for the masses that were integral to Central European cultural thought of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The democratic roots of Volk nationalism and its implications for nineteenth-century music pedagogy

The use of folk art as teaching material was of course not always a truism before the mid-twentieth century. The cultural value placed (by educated elites) on folk art and the working-class populace from whom it emanated was wildly contested during the extended period between the French Revolution and the Second World War. It is pertinent at this point to examine the idealized Romantic ideas about folk culture that developed during the nineteenth century which eventually made it possible, and even imperative, for folk art to be incorporated into music education systems as well as individual pieces composed for children in the early to mid-twentieth century.

For folk art to be admitted into formal education, it was first necessary for it to be accepted within intellectually accepted definitions of what constituted culture. Prior to the evolution of democratic thought and action during the Enlightenment, the ruling aristocratic elites that held political, financial and cultural power held little regard for folk culture, generally taken as the non-literate, orally transmitted cultural forms of the rural and urban lower classes. Such disregard continued among 'progressive' liberal factions in the nineteenth century, who saw the persistence of folk traditions (particularly folk superstitions) as symptomatic of a developmental stasis interrupting the necessary process of modernization and industrialization for national

advancement.³ On the other hand, the trend for *völkisch* nationalism was set off when Enlightenment writers such as Rousseau and Herder, in seeking to develop classical notions of democracy and republicanism as the new, rational future for government, turned to promoting and elevating the ordinary people, the *peuple* or *Volk*, and their simple way of life as the most desirable and moral lifestyle for all men, in contrast to the decadence and moral corruption of the aristocratic classes.

In the first instance, Rousseau posited, in his *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (*Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 1749) and later again, in his *Discourse on Inequality* (*Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, 1755), that Nature was inherently rational, but that civilisation on the other hand was artificial and served only to corrupt man's natural moral purity.⁴ The closer man lived to Nature, as the rural peasantry did, the more noble, dignified and authentic his state of being. Later on, the German philosopher Herder took this exalted image of the peasantry even further in his writings on democratic nationalism, famously suggesting that the true spirit of a Nation lived in its uneducated peasantry, uncorrupted by urban cosmopolitan influences or by the artificial excesses of education and literacy. In his *Fragments on Recent German Literature* (*Über die neuere deutsche Literatur: Fragmente*, 1767), Herder criticized the ways in which German identity had been diluted by fashionable imitation of foreign cultures,⁵ and advised that the educated German-speaking classes could learn much about true German identity from the peasant working class, the authentic German *Volk*. He suggested that the spirit of a nation was reified in its cultural products, and especially its language, and that such national 'essence' could be observed in its purest state in the language, customs and cultural production of the peasant *Volk*, the bastions of national tradition and identity. Herder declared that 'A nation that neither knows nor honours nor loves its own language, has deprived itself of its tongue and its brain, i.e. of its organ [needed] for its own education and for the noblest honour of the nation'.⁶ In order to teach authentic German folk culture to the

³ See Eugene Lunn, 'Cultural Populism and Egalitarian Democracy: Herder and Michelet in the Nineteenth Century', *Theory and Society*, 15/4 (July 1986), 479–517.

⁴ See Robert Wokler, *Rousseau: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, second edition 2001) for a useful summary of these essays, and also in translation, Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, trans. and annotated by Maurice Cranston (London: Penguin Books, 1984).

⁵ See 'Johann Gottfried Herder: Bibliographical note', in David Williams (ed.), *The Enlightenment*, Cambridge Readings in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 193.

⁶ Herder's 'Letters for the Advancement of Humanity (1793–7)' (edited in German by Wilhelm Dobbek in 1964) as cited in English translation in Williams, *The Enlightenment*, 212.

educated classes, he set about rediscovering old German folk poetry as preserved in medieval manuscripts and as supposedly best preserved in the living oral tradition of the peasantry of that time, publishing his anthology of folk poems in 1778.⁷ Herder's ideas awakened a sense of national pride in German cultural forms amongst the intelligentsia in the German-speaking regions of Central Europe, and they paved the way for the important philological and folklorist work of the Brothers Grimm a generation later.

Following Herder's precepts, the philologists Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm dedicated their lives to investigating the history and evolution of the German language, and to collecting and publishing living folk poetry and folk tales. They began systematically collecting folk tales from local informants in 1806, under commission from the writer Clemens von Brentano, who had been involved in editing the renowned *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* anthology of folksongs and poetry the previous year. Having initially published their collection of tales in two scholarly volumes with annotations in 1812 and 1815, they then embarked on re-editing and subtly reformulating their tales in order to market them to a growing bourgeois audience. From about 1819, Wilhelm Grimm set about 'cleaning up' the tales in order to render them appropriate for children, removing erotic elements and adding Christian expressions and reference to a quintessentially German Protestant work ethic, in effect creating morality tales intended to consolidate an idealized, moral image of the clean-living, humble German peasant for bourgeois consumption.⁸ This fitted a conservative tendency of nineteenth-century German folk nationalism to polarize the image of the wholesome, morally dignified peasant against the artificial, capitalist lifestyle of the urban industrial classes (as sometimes embodied in anti-Semitic images of the Jew and other urban minorities).

The Grimms labelled their folktales *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* ('Children's and Household Tales'), and their treatment of folktales as a cultural product suitable for teaching children about their nation suited emergent Biedermeier sensibilities, and set a precedent for the use of folk art as teaching material, inextricably linking the idea of folk themes with children's edifying entertainment in the minds of many. The Grimms' project of introducing folk nationalism into the schoolroom was successful enough that their tales were incorporated into the teaching curriculum in Prussia and other German principalities by the 1870s.⁹

⁷ *Volkslieder* (Leipzig: 1778).

⁸ See Jack Zipes, 'Once There Were Two Brothers Named Grimm', the foreword to *Brothers Grimm: The Complete Fairytales*, ed. Jack Zipes (London: Vintage, 2007), xxviii–xlix: xlii.

⁹ Zipes, xliii.

The linking of the *Volk* with the edification of children had an influence on the development of a musical pedagogical repertoire very early on in the nineteenth century. Folksongs notated in a simple form had been considered suitable material for beginning instrumental students even in earlier centuries. But in the nineteenth century, collections of beginners' pieces with a folk tone took on a Herderian nationalist significance. Settings of folk songs were thought to embody and illustrate a national or ethnic essence in concise musical form. The compulsory inclusion of nationalistic subtitles and commentaries demonstrates that such settings had more at stake than the mere teaching of abstract technical principles; like the Grimm fairytales, they attempted to impart holistically a highly idealistic, moral overview of the supposedly righteous and wholesome lifestyle of the peasant *Volk* for the edification of middle-class children (and adults).

Schumann and Volk Nationalism for the Young

Perhaps the clearest example of moralistic cultural nationalism of this kind within the context of musical pedagogy may be observed in Schumann's *Album for the Young* (*Album für die Jugend*), Op. 68, composed in 1848. This was intended to present systematically several historically significant musical styles and forms within the context of short, technically approachable, child-friendly pieces of gradually increasing difficulty. Schumann's wife, Clara, wrote in her diary entry of 1 September 1848 that Schumann composed the *Album* because, at that time, 'The pieces which children usually have to learn are so bad that Robert conceived the idea of composing and publishing a kind of album of pieces simply for children'.¹⁰ Schumann initially planned the *Album* as a present for their daughter Marie on her seventh birthday (1 September, 1848), but quickly had the work published in the same year. Extant sketchbooks reveal that he had intended his forty-three original pieces to form part of a much larger project that also incorporated pieces by Handel, Mozart, Schubert, Spohr and Beethoven.¹¹ It is worth noting that his selected composers were all German, or at least from German-speaking territories. Moreover, in his original pieces, Schumann strategically placed samples of Baroque forms and styles typically associated with Lutheran Church music and in particular Bach, including two chorales, a canon, and a simple fugue. In order to attract a child's interest, he gave a short, colourful title to each individual piece. Besides the more serious pieces evoking abstract Germanic

¹⁰ Cited in the 'Concluding Remarks' (editorial notes) in Robert Schumann, *Album für die Jugend*, ed. Hans Joachim Köhler (Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Peters, 1974), 63.

¹¹ See Köhler's 'Concluding Remarks' (as note 10) and also Ian Sharp, '150 years of learning from Schumann: Wasted on Play?', *The Musical Times*, 140 (Autumn, 1999), 42–7.

forms, such as 'A Little Song in Canon-form' and 'A Little Fugue', the collection frequently gives picturesque titles that evoke an idyllic peasant lifestyle across the seasons, such as the well-known 'Merry Peasant' ('Fröhlicher Landmann', better known today from its setting in Suzuki repertoire books as 'The Happy Farmer') and 'A Little Harvest-Song' ('Ernteliedchen'). Thus, although he did not directly quote authentic folk melody in the piano album, by amalgamating traditional German church-music forms with references to peasant life Schumann seems nonetheless to have assembled a tribute to the German national spirit across class divides.

Moreover, Schumann included in his sketches for the Album a series of sixty-eight maxims, or pieces of advice, originally intended to be placed in between each piece of music. These were included only later as an appendix to the second edition of the Album in 1851, under the title *Musikalische Haus- und Lebensregel* ('Musical Rules for Home and Life'), in which Schumann, much like the Grimms, extols the moral value of learning about and appreciating one's music and culture as a way to improving the mind and soul. He states this explicitly in maxim no. 60: 'The laws of morals and the laws of art are the same'. Elsewhere he extols the wholesomeness of the simple peasant lifestyle, telling the young musician to 'Walk often in the open air' and to take appropriate cultural nourishment:

With sweets and candy one cannot rear healthy people. The food of the soul should also be simple and strength-giving. The masters have provided plenty of such nourishment. Feed on this.

Tellingly, he also states, in accordance with Herder's ideas, that one should 'Listen to all folksongs attentively, for they are the treasure trove of the most beautiful melodies and through them, you can learn the characteristics of the different nations'.¹²

According to Jon W. Finson, a similar folk nationalism is manifest in a related work by Schumann, the *Lieder-Album für die Jugend* (1849), composed only a matter of months after the publication of the piano album.¹³ Schumann composed this set of songs during the months of the Dresden uprising (May–June 1849), pointedly setting poetry by the outlawed republican August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben (author of *Das Lied der Deutschen* that would in 1922 become the German national

¹² Zoltán Kodály provides a comprehensive list of Schumann's *Musical Rules* in an essay, 'Who is a Good Musician' (1953), available in *The Selected Writings of Zoltán Kodály*, ed. Ferenc Bónis, trans. Lili Halápy and Fred Macnicol (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1974), 185–99. The quotations in English adopted here are taken from this edition.

¹³ Jon W. Finson, 'Schumann's Mature Style and the "Album of Songs for the Young"', *The Journal of Musicology*, 8/2 (Spring, 1990), 227–50.

anthem) as well as several examples of folk poetry from broadsheets and from Arnim's and Brentano's anthology *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, all within the context of an ostensibly pedagogic sequence of songs of graded difficulty aimed at the edification of the young. Thus, the *Lieder-Album* taught children their singing while subtly pointing them toward a republican cultural vision of a united Germany.

Volk Nationalism and Music Pedagogy in a broader Central European context: Hungary and the 'Kodály Concept'

Schumann's *Album for the Young*, as an exemplar of German wholesomeness and a folk ideal embodied in children's piano pieces, inspired similar endeavours almost immediately and continued to provide a model of nationalist pedagogy for twentieth-century composers of children's piano music such as Bartók, Prokofiev and Kabalevsky. Notable works that adopted Schumann's model of folk-inspired pedagogical artwork and which still remain in the repertory today, are Tchaikovsky's *Children's Album*, Op. 39 (*Album pour enfants: 24 pièces faciles (à la Schumann)*, 1878), comprising twenty-four titled piano pieces that draw on well-known dance types such as the mazurka and the waltz to evoke nationality, and of course Bartók's *For Children* (*Gyermekeknek*, 1909), a sizeable anthology of some eighty settings of authentic Hungarian and Slovak folk melodies which Bartók assembled with the purpose of illustrating for the chauvinistically nationalist Hungarian middle classes the multi-ethnic character of the Hungarian *Volk*.¹⁴ Precursors to these works emerged as early as 1852, when the well-known German piano pedagogue Louis Köhler (1820–86) issued a six-volume pedagogical piano collection entitled 'Folk Melodies of All the Nations of the World, as Exercise Pieces for the Piano' (*Volksmelodien aller Nationen der Erde als Uebungsstücke für das Pianoforte*).¹⁵ In his preface, Köhler articulated a Herderian populism and trust in the moral quality of folk music as a pedagogical aid: 'Music containing real melody and breathing forth a native simplicity of heart and manners can alone have a good influence on beginners and especially on the feelings of children'.¹⁶ As James Parakilas notes, Köhler went on to arrange four volumes of folk

¹⁴ See James Parakilas, 'Folk Song as Musical Wet Nurse: The Prehistory of Bartók's "For Children"', *The Musical Quarterly*, 79/3 (Autumn, 1995), 476–99, for a contextualization of the nationalism inherent in nineteenth-century Hungary piano pedagogy. Also, Judit Frigyesi provides a useful outline of the complex political situation of the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian empire at the turn of the twentieth century, in 'Béla Bartók and the Concept of Nation and *Volk* in Modern Hungary', *The Musical Quarterly*, 78/2 (Summer, 1994), 255–87.

¹⁵ Braunschweig: G. M. Meyer, 1852.

¹⁶ Parakilas, 485.

melodies for piano duet and then several sets of 'Folk Dances of All the Nations of the World' (1854).¹⁷

Parakilas also identifies a notable feature of Köhler's initial collection (1852): its German bias despite the purported internationalism implicit in the title and preface. The first volume is entirely comprised of German folk melodies, with non-German tunes being introduced gradually in subsequent volumes.¹⁸ This interestingly anticipates the sequencing of folk melodies used by proponents of the Kodály teaching method in present-day Hungary. In the Hungarian 'Kodály schools' (specialist primary schools that teach children music intensively according to the 'Kodály concept'), 90% of the teaching material is based on Hungarian folk music for the first few years, with folk music of other traditions and classical pieces being introduced into the children's repertoire only gradually.¹⁹ This is in accordance with Kodály's stated belief that young children should be taught music using only their local folk musical vernacular for the first few years in order to avoid 'cultural confusion'. In a paper on Hungarian music education of 1945, Kodály had stated that:

Frequently and for a long time, I have professed how the soul of the child should be nursed on the mother's milk of the ancient Magyar musical phenomenon; how the Hungarian way of musical thinking could be built and strengthened in it. For the time being *only* that. In the same way as a child should not be allowed to learn any other language apart from his mother-tongue until he has consciously mastered this latter, that is to say, not before the age of ten...a multilingual child will not know any language really well. A child nurtured on mixed music will not feel musically at home anywhere, Hungarian music being the most alien of all to him.²⁰

At this point, Kodály speaks of folk music as if it were literally a language, embodying an ineffable ethnic meaning or essence that can be fully appreciated and understood in all its nuances only by someone brought up natively immersed in it, much as the best understanding of a verbal language occurs in the native speaker. This was an inevitable extension of Herder's idea that culture embodied ethnic essence, and it was an idea that achieved a peculiar currency in Central and Eastern European nationalism (particularly among the Polish, Czech, Hungarian and, of course, Russian intelligentsias). The idea of music as a language of ethnicity—or indeed, music as a 'foreign

¹⁷ *Volks-Tänze aller Nationen der Erde als bildende Uebungs- und Unterhaltungsstücke für das Pianoforte* (Braunschweig: G. M. Meyer, 1854). Parakilas, 485.

¹⁸ Parakilas, 485.

¹⁹ This figure was cited by Sarolta Platthy in a lecture (attended by the present writer) on the history of the Kodály Method given on 12 February 2007 at the Kodály Institute, Kecskemét, Hungary.

²⁰ Kodály, 'Hungarian Music Education' (1945), *Selected Writings*, 153.

language’—formed the basis of influential polemical prose by Wagner and Liszt,²¹ and the idea was seminal in the evolution of ethnomusicology as a discipline towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The idea had a particular resonance in Hungary, as Kodály’s writings were later to demonstrate. Hungary was subsumed into the Austrian empire from the early eighteenth century until 1918, and, under Hapsburg rule, the official language of imperial bureaucracy and education was German. While the Austro-Hungarian Empire comprised numerous ethnic minorities and languages, the largest minority were the Hungarian speakers, and Hungarian became the language of resistance among anti-imperialist intelligentsia in Pest and other Hungarian cities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Naturally, Hungarian folk music became a central tenet in linguistically-focussed Hungarian nationalism as well. While in the nineteenth century, considerable confusion surrounded the definition of what constituted Hungarian folk music,²² pedagogical works in the mould of Schumann’s *Album* nonetheless emerged early on, in this case utilizing folksongs not only to impart moralistic folk nationalism but also to teach the Hungarian child the true essence of Hungarianness. The folklorist István Bartalus published such a work in 1860, entitled *Gyermek Lant* (‘Children’s Lyre

²¹ Wagner famously posited the idea of music as a foreign language in his notorious article, *Das Judenthum in der Musik*, published in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (1850), in English in Richard Wagner, *The Theatre*, trans. and ed. William Ashton Ellis (Richard Wagner’s Prose Works, vol. 3. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1894), 79–100. In this article, Wagner had bitterly castigated Jewish composers for their attempts and many public successes at writing European art music, declaring that to them, as only newly emancipated citizens of Europe, European art music must be a foreign language (or ‘second language’ at best); and how no poet could create true art in a language that was not their ‘mother tongue’—therefore Jewish attempts at composition were empty of meaning and true feeling. Franz Liszt, perhaps as an answer to Wagner’s polemic, wrote a full-scale study of Hungarian Gypsy music, *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1859; revised edition Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1881), agreeing with Wagner’s sentiment about the musicality of the Jews, and positing the Gypsy musician as the musically-gifted inverse of the Jew.

²² In the nineteenth century, much Hungarian nationalist debate centred on whether the hugely popular (and eclectic) Hungarian Gypsy music genre (*cigányzene*) could be accepted as representative of Hungarian folk identity. Strict adherents of *völkisch* nationalism argued that Gypsy music was culturally ambivalent, and that Hungarian peasant folksong, although little known in an urban context, should instead be adopted as the purest embodiment of the ‘Magyar spirit’. The search for a ‘pure’ Hungarian folk identity formed the ideological basis of Bartók’s and Kodály’s ethnomusicological investigations among Hungarian rural communities in the early twentieth century. For a comprehensive account of the fluctuating role played by Hungarian Gypsy music in the formation of Hungarian national identity in the nineteenth century, see Bálint Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, trans. Fred Macnicol (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1978).

for Students of the Piano, (transcribed) from Hungarian folk songs').²³ This consists of six simple settings of more or less authentic Hungarian folksongs, for the beginner piano student, and Bartalus writes tellingly in his preface:

Because the chief task of music is the ennoblement of the spirit, the teacher needs to begin the development of the spirit as soon as possible. There are things that a child learns more easily from his wet nurse than later from his learned master, such as the correct accent of his mother tongue and, likewise, the interpretation of our national music in Magyar Spirit.²⁴

Some twenty years later, the Hungarian folklorist Áron Kiss, a contemporary of Bartalus, called for a nationwide collection of children's folksong and games by Hungarian schoolteachers, and a national meeting of primary school teachers in Hungary for the discussion of that project in 1883 came to the conclusion that

Games and the songs that may go together with them are to serve the cause of Hungarian national education and therefore the Hungarian character of the games is to be preserved.... Children's games and their tunes are to be collected in all regions of this country.²⁵

This proposition led to the publication of *Magyar Gyermekjáték gyűjtemény* ('Collection of Hungarian Children's Games', Budapest, 1891), with contributions by 214 teachers in total from across Hungarian territory.

An underlying fear of Germanic cultural pollution is implicit in both projects described above. Although the Hungarian bureaucrat József Eötvös passed a law in 1868 that made elementary schooling through the mother tongue compulsory, nonetheless German, the Empire's official language, and German culture had an inevitable impact on Hungarian children's education in the nineteenth century, particularly in the area of formal music education. Middle- and upper-class children were taught art music very often by German-speaking immigrant musicians, typically using pedagogic musical exercises in German 'folk tone'—hence Bartalus's idea that the child would learn more about being Hungarian from his uneducated wet nurse rather than his learned German master, and also Kiss's concern that autochthonous Hungarian children's games might be lost without intervention and preservation. Much later, in essays on music education in the kindergarten, Kodály articulated similar sentiments, stating that

²³ As cited in Parakilas, 482.

²⁴ Parakilas, 482.

²⁵ Cited in Kodály, 'Children's Games: Preface to the First Volume of "Corpus Musicae Popularis Hungaricae"', *Selected Writings*, 50.

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Folk traditions, first of all with their singing games and children's songs, are the best foundations for subconscious national features. There are among them some that we share with other peoples of Europe, but there are also differences. We can see the difference if we see on spring days in public parks how a foreign-born governess hammers into Hungarian children's heads the subconscious elements of her own language and music. Such children will have changed souls and will be unable all through their lives to speak and feel Hungarian.... The basic layer of the soul cannot be made from two different substances. A person can have only one mother-tongue—musically too.²⁶

The preservation and promotion of the Hungarian 'national spirit' in musical form, together with the concept that Hungarian folk music was in itself a language with unique ethnic markers, were fundamental principles in the formation of a characteristic Hungarian tradition of *völkisch* music pedagogy. *Volk* ideology in Hungarian music pedagogy was less concerned with promoting a utopian, Christian rural ideal in the manner of German *völkisch* nationalism (though elements of this were indeed present), but rather sought to revivify an apparently faltering Hungarian folk identity in the face of an ubiquitous Austro-German hegemony. Kodály's development of a systematic music educational method was at least partly an attempt to redress the fear of cultural subjugation once and for all, in a new and independent Hungary.

The Volk and evolutionism in early twentieth-century pedagogy

Nationalism was not the only *völkisch* ideology to influence the emergence of musical pedagogies in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Central Europe. Carl Orff (1895–1982), a German composer based in Munich, developed his renowned *Schulwerk* classroom method through assembling children's and adult folk music material into a graded sequence that implicitly concurred with an evolutionist theory of music. Cultural evolutionism, a prominent paradigm in Central European comparative musicology, theorized that Western art music was the pinnacle of musical development in the world, and that other music cultures of the world—including the folk musics of European rural communities—existed in relatively less developed states of cultural maturity comparable to chronologically earlier stages of European music history. Cultural evolutionism, or social Darwinism, was the product of the generally positivistic (and potentially racist) mindset of late nineteenth-century cultural studies, which drew on Darwin's revolutionary theory of the evolution of species through natural selection, and freely applied biological principles to socio-cultural studies, resulting in the generation of cultural and racial hierarchies.

²⁶ Kodály, 'Music in the Kindergarten' (1941, 1957), *Selected Writings*, 131.

A particular corollary of cultural evolutionism that had direct implications for Orff's teaching method (and, to a lesser extent, Kodály's method) was the application of the anatomist Ernst Haeckel's insidious recapitulation theory to cultural analysis. Recapitulation theory, rapidly discredited even by biologists very early on in the twentieth century, suggested that the maturation of an individual being from conception through to adulthood (ontogeny) reiterated or 'recapitulated' the entire evolution of the species (phylogeny) at every developmental stage of the individual. Haeckel himself directly linked the physical evolution of man to human psychic development, as evidenced in cultural production—that is, the more highly evolved the man (or race), the more sophisticated his culture.²⁷ To its advocates, recapitulation theory helped justify the common universalist belief that cultures (and 'races') throughout the world existed at unequal stages of development that would eventually evolve to the 'supreme' level of European culture, with 'primitive' cultures 'recapitulating' earlier stages of European cultural history in their contemporary cultural production.

Haeckel's theory was hugely influential on two emerging disciplines at the turn of the twentieth century: psychology and ethnomusicology (comparative musicology). Where these two disciplines met was in their comparison of the spontaneous cultural expression of the Western European child at play with the cultural production of 'primitive' peoples (including isolated European rural communities), with the purpose of illustrating how the European child ontogenetically passed through stages of cultural expressive ability comparable to either earlier stages of European cultural history or to the living 'primitive' cultural expression of non-European peoples and the uneducated European peasantry (in these people's apparent state of arrested development). Granville Stanley Hall (1842–1924), the pioneering American psychologist, popularized the idea of recapitulation theory as a valid psychological paradigm which could be tested through the extensive empirical observation of children's behaviour and play, and which knowledge thence could be practically employed radically to overhaul outdated pedagogical methodologies. Hall believed that recapitulation theory provided a rational, natural explanation of man's psychological development, and that this should be reflected in a pedagogy that acknowledged the

²⁷ See Ernst Haeckel, *Anthropogonie oder Entwicklungsgeschichte des Menschen* (Leipzig: N. Engelmann, 1903), 354, cited in translation in Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 289.

growing child's changing, increasingly complex needs for cultural expression.²⁸ His pedagogical theories were helped by the concomitant adoption of recapitulation theory by anthropologists and comparative musicologists at the turn of the twentieth century, resulting in the categorization of world cultures according to levels of technical sophistication. For example, as Peter G. Toner has shown, the Berlin-based comparative musicologist Erich Moritz von Hornbostel suggested early in the last century that the tendency in some music cultures to use repetitive melodies of a few notes less than a fourth apart was indicative of what Hornbostel called 'an early stage of development' reflecting 'a narrow range of consciousness'.²⁹ In 1917, marrying Hall's pedagogical ideas with comparative musicology's cultural hierarchies, Heinz Werner published a psychology article outlining the stages of musical development of pre-school children, based on observations of the improvised play-singing of children aged between two and five, and presented a summary of the order in which various stylistic traits of increasing complexity appeared in the spontaneous music-making of the growing child.³⁰ According to Werner, children's spontaneous vocal improvisations mapped the chronological course of European art-music development, moving from the repetition of simple short phrases of a limited range (often comprising only two notes, forming a descending major second or minor third) towards longer musical phrases, or 'strophes', of greater tonal range.³¹ The comparative musicologist Curt Sachs later made much of the apparent parallels between supposedly less developed 'primitive' music-making in non-Western cultures and the improvisations of the developing Western European child, as 'proof' of the validity of the evolutionist construct of Western art-music history:

It is [an] exciting experience to learn that the earliest known stage of music reappears in the babble songs of small children in European countries. For once, the ontogenetic law is fully confirmed: the individual summarizes the evolution of mankind.... These children could not be suspected to have been influenced by a single trait of our own music. Thus, we cannot but accept

²⁸ For an account of G. Stanley Hall's promulgation of recapitulation theory as the basis for pedagogical method, see R. R. Rideout, 'On Early Applications of Psychology in Music Education', *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 30/3 (Autumn, 1982), 141–50.

²⁹ Peter G. Toner, 'The Gestation of Cross-Cultural Music Research and the Birth of Ethnomusicology', *Humanities Research*, 14/1 (2007), http://epress.anu.edu.au/hrj/2007_01/mobile_devices/ch06s03.html, last accessed 1 July 2009.

³⁰ Heinz Werner, 'Die melodische Erfindung im frühen Kindesalter', *Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte*, 182 no. 4 (Vienna: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1917), cited and trans. in Bruno Nettl, 'Infant Musical Development and Primitive Music', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 12/1 (Spring, 1956), 87–91: 87.

³¹ Nettl, 88.

their babbling as an ontogenetic reiteration of man's earliest music and, inversely, conclude that the music of today's most primitive peoples is indeed the first music that ever existed.³²

It was in Carl Orff's development of his innovative pedagogical method integrating music and movement that Hall's and Sachs's ideas on recapitulation theory in children's education first became fully realized. Orff had, in his earlier years as a professional musician, worked as a répétiteur for opera and theatre in Mannheim and Darmstadt, and was there struck by 'a surprising lack of rhythmic awareness, a total absence of proper training' in the singers, dancers and musicians with whom he worked.³³ Following this experience, Orff began studying composition and musicology privately, under the guidance of Heinrich Kaminski and Curt Sachs, respectively. Sachs, with his own evolutionist interest in the atavistic, had a considerable influence in shaping Orff's interest in primitivism, both from an educational and compositional point of view. Orff became fascinated by the combined music and dance forms that characterized the 'exotic' musics currently being revealed at that time by the work of comparative musicologists, and he was also influenced by Jacques Dalcroze's experimental integration of rhythm and movement in the teaching of art-music appreciation. Recalling Rousseau, Orff became convinced that an inherent, natural musicality could only be learned by 'natural' means—by adopting within European classroom pedagogy the model of the integrated dance and music forms associated with the 'primitive' cultures that were supposedly closest to nature. These interests were manifested in the experimental educational work in the integration of music and movement that took place in the Güntherschule in Munich, a school for gymnastics, dance and movement set up in the 1920s by Orff and the dance teacher, Dorothee Günther. In the loosely formulated music pedagogy that evolved from this, Orff encouraged children to perform sound and movement together, beginning with simple folksong and game-songs of the child's local music tradition, and moving towards improvisatory dance-singing that emulated 'primitive' integrations of dance and singing in ancient Greece, medieval Europe and contemporary tribal cultures as the most natural, instinctive form of music-making.³⁴ Orff defined this kind of natural music-making as 'elemental music':

³² Curt Sachs, *The Rise of Music in the Ancient World, East and West* (New York: Norton, 1943), 43, as quoted in Nettl, 87.

³³ Carl Orff and Arnold Walter, 'The Schulwerk: Its Origin and Aims', *Music Educators Journal*, 49/5 (April–May, 1963), 69–74: 69.

³⁴ In a speech he gave in 1963 at the opening of the Orff Institute in Salzburg, Orff emphasized his friendship with Curt Sachs: see Carl Orff, 'Orff-Schulwerk: Past and Future', trans. Margaret Murray, in Bonnie C. Kowall (ed.), *Perspectives in Music Education: Source Book III* (Washington, D.C.: Music

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What, then, is elemental music? Never music alone, but music connected with movement, dance, and speech—not to be listened to, meaningful only in active participation. Elemental music is pre-intellectual, it lacks great form, it contents itself with simple sequential structures, ostinatos, and miniature rondos. It is earthy, natural, almost a physical activity. It can be learned and enjoyed by anyone. It is fitting for children.³⁵

According to Orff's idea of music education, in terms of the ideal progression of musical material, Western art-music repertoire and tonality could only be introduced after the child had first of all progressed from 'primitive' vocalizations, moving on to pentatonic and modal forms related to European folk music; only after this could the 'intellectual' forms and harmonies of Western art music be gradually introduced via the simple rondo and dance forms and drone harmony associated with medieval dance music. The movement from 'instinctive' to 'intellectual' (and by corollary from 'primitive' to 'sophisticated') fits Hall's hypothetical model of a music education based on recapitulation theory. While Orff himself never went into great or explicit detail on the evolutionism that structured his pedagogy, nonetheless references to the 'child as primitive' idea do clearly occur in explanatory notes by his translator and advocate, the folklorist Arnold Walter. For example:

For the child (and for primitive man) speaking and singing are intimately connected; this is a connection which leads naturally and imperceptibly from speech patterns to rhythm, from rhythmical patterns to melody...³⁶

Maintaining an evolutionist model of music-making, Orff also introduced children to the idea of progressing from first making music orally to gradually adapting to improvisation on a graded sequence of instruments modelled on Eastern and medieval prototypes, beginning with specially constructed xylophones and metallophones modelled on the gamelan, and then progressing to recorders and lutes evocative of European medieval music. In an article about his 'Schulwerk' method of 1963,

Educators National Conference, 1966), 386–94: 387. That Orff was heavily influenced by Sachs's evolutionism is clear; moreover, the influence may have been reciprocal. Reflecting Orff's obsession with the 'elemental' fusion of dance and music, Sachs published in 1937 a book entitled *Eine Weltgeschichte des Tanzes* ('World History of Dance') in which he went into comprehensive detail about the intimate interconnection between music and dance throughout history; see Erich Hertzmann, 'Alfred Einstein and Curt Sachs', *The Musical Quarterly*, 27/3 (July, 1941), 263–79: 266.

³⁵ Orff and Walter, 'The Schulwerk', 72.

³⁶ Arnold Walter, 'Elementary Music Education: The European Approach', *Canadian Music Journal* (Spring, 1958), 16, cited in Janice M. Thresher, 'The Contributions of Carl Orff to Elementary Music Education', *Music Educators Journal*, 50/3 (January, 1964), 43–8: 44.

Orff reveals an overtly orientalist mindset behind the choice of ‘easy’ instruments for his teaching method:

Uppermost in my mind was the creation of a rhythmic education.... The accent was on rhythm. We had to find instruments that lent themselves to this approach.... [The choreographer Mary Wigman’s] experiments showed me the way; I still remember every detail of her sensational witchdance, accompanied only by African rattles.... I taught the students instruments that had rhythmical impact, primitive appeal—and were easy to handle. There was no shortage of percussion straight and simple, whether native or exotic; the current development of jazz had seen to that: we had only to choose what we wanted...we proceeded to build rhythm instruments.... Some were new, some influenced by medieval and exotic models.³⁷

In the scheduled progression from oral/bodily musical expression towards improvisation on ‘primitive’ instruments (and only eventually moving towards a more standard musical education on a Western art-music instrument), Orff’s implicit adherence to an evolutionist paradigm, in particular as outlined in recapitulation theory, is at its clearest.

Parallels between the Kodály and Orff teaching methods

Kodály also developed his music education method in conjunction with experienced primary school teachers and on the basis of his own extensive research on living and historical Hungarian folklore together with his collaborator, Béla Bartók. In accordance with his nationalist beliefs, Kodály developed his teaching method based on folksong largely with the intention of proselytizing what he considered to be true Hungarian music (that is, peasant folksong) amongst the urban working classes, who no longer knew this repertoire and who tended to prefer the Austrian-inflected popular music performed by gypsy bands. On a more general level, Kodály also wanted to make a classical music education freely available to all, through incorporation of his teaching method into the state educational curriculum, and this populist conviction was shared by his contemporary, Carl Orff.

There are many parallels between Kodály’s method, developed between the 1920s and 1950s, and that of Orff, who developed his teaching method in the early 1930s in Munich. Both Kodály and Orff wished to dispel the prevailing elitist notion that a complete classical music education was only for the very rich or very talented. They both strongly believed in the idea that music paralleled language and should be taught as such—and on this basis, any child of normal linguistic capacity was inherently capable of learning and expressing themselves through music. Their methods were

³⁷ Orff and Walter, ‘The Schulwerk’, 69–70.

based on instilling music appreciation and expressiveness in a child by natural processes, imitating both language acquisition and aspects of folk-music transmission, before introducing musical literacy. For this reason, their methods introduced children to music orally at first, using simple folksongs and children's games in the child's mother tongue and only later and very gradually introducing aspects of musical literacy, much as a child would only learn to read and understand grammar after first acquiring a basic oral fluency in their first-language skills. And it is the movement from 'instinctive' oral music-making in a folk style to the gradual introduction of the 'intellectual' structures of Western art music that indicates a common concept of evolutionism underlying the teaching methodologies of both composers.

Orff (probably under the influence of ethnomusicologist Curt Sachs) was in fact the first of the two to structure a music-teaching method according to an evolutionist idea of musical development. Kodály, himself an ethnomusicologist who used comparativist techniques, quickly followed with an evolutionist model for his own teaching method. In a chapter of his 1952 study *Folk Music of Hungary* dealing with Hungarian children's folksong, Kodály makes it clear that, in his capacity as an ethnomusicologist, he concurred with Hornbostel and Sachs on the evolutionary analogy between so-called 'primitive' musics and the developing musicality of the European child:

The endless repetition of pairs of bars, or of short motifs in general, is characteristic of the music of all primitive peoples, and even of Gregorian psalm-tunes. In their songs, as in their whole development, children re-enact the primitive life of man, and this is why they begin their musical life with the primitive form of repeating motifs.³⁸

And this stance carried into Kodály's educational work as well. Both Kodály and Orff mimicked the theory of tonal evolution in their teaching methods, suggesting that an organic pedagogy would involve teaching very young children the concept of melody using primitive two-tone descending melodies associated with children's games first of all, extending this to melodies of a tetrachordal range, moving on then to pentatonic tunes of the adult folksong repertory, and only after this introducing the child to the full extent of major/minor tonality. Orff suggested that this was the most natural and therefore logical way to teach children an understanding of tonality:

...the new [Orff 'Schulwerk' method] grew out of the work for and with children. The melodic starting point was the cuckoo call, the falling third, a melodic range of notes that was increased

³⁸ 'Children's Songs and "Regós" Songs' (pp. 77–84), in Zoltán Kodály, *Folk Music of Hungary*, trans. Donald Tempest and Cynthia Jolly (1952, revised edition New York: Praeger, 1971), 84.

step by step to the five note pentatonic scale that has no semitones.... This was an easily accessible world for all children.³⁹

The Orff and Kodály methods conformed to an evolutionary model of music history that implied a progression from primitive vocalizations to literacy and increasingly complex instrumental techniques. By absorbing an evolutionist concept of children's educational development into teaching methodology, the strong connection between folk art and educational music for children of the early twentieth century not only continued the standard nineteenth-century *völkisch* line of thought but now also at least implicitly took on an orientalist aspect inherited from the comparativism current in musical scholarship of that time.

Conclusion

The methods developed by Kodály and Orff spread to the West in the 1950s, and, while ideologically loaded, nonetheless had a huge impact on the development of musical pedagogy as we know it today, having the effect of democratizing music education and providing a prototype for the preparation of state-school music curricula. But with the wide dissemination of these Central European composers' seminal educational ideas and pedagogical repertoire across Western Europe and North America, some of the cultural ideology and political motivations that helped shape these works has been lost or diluted with the passing of time and the gradual shift in ideological priorities. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the use of folk material in simple pedagogical pieces had been part of a putative democratic tradition of artistic thought that simultaneously patronized and elevated its subject matter. Folk nationalist pedagogues attempted to codify a moral and cultural folk ideal for the masses by taking selected aspects of folk culture and mediating it through learned forms for the purpose of social enlightenment. In nineteenth-century Central Europe, reference to the *Volk* in educational material was most clearly attributable to a nationalist intention: of preserving and promoting a pure nationalist identity in the young. There is a clear ideological parallel between the Grimms' literary creations that purified collected folk tales for the cultural edification of German middle-class children and the early folklorist endeavours of Bartók and Kodály, little over a century later, in collecting and refining Hungarian peasant song for the cultural education of Hungarian urban communities and their children. The arrival and development of recapitulation theory towards the end of the nineteenth century sidelined the nationalist motivation to some extent while maintaining the fascination exerted by the

³⁹ Orff, 'Orff-Schulwerk: Past and Future', 389.

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idea of the *Volk*. Harking back to Enlightenment writers, evolutionists such as Hall and Orff promoted the wholesome naturalness of 'primitive' music-making as a way for modern children in the industrial age to find and stay in touch with their instinctive creative ability. Today, *Volk*-inspired pedagogical works taken together with their inevitably proselytizing commentaries provide us with a fascinating insight into the radical thought and sense of social mission that underlay Central European cultural scholarship and art from the early 1900s to the 1950s.

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