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Index: 26843

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## *The New Hungarian Quarterly*

- The Spirit of Helsinki — *János Nagy*
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# 64



# MUSICAL LIFE

## FOLK-SONGS OF HUNGARIANS IN RUMANIA

JÁNOS JAGAMAS and JÓZSEF FARAGÓ: *Romániai magyar népdalok* (Folk-Songs of Hungarians in Rumania), (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1974). 475 pp. In Hungarian.

The Hungarian reading public has just been presented with a book that has been anxiously awaited since work began on it in 1954 by the then Kolozsvár (Cluj) division of the Bucharest Folklore Institute. Today the institute is an independent body of high academic standing, known as the Ethnographic and Folklore Division, and the book presents part of a project that will eventually provide a complete collection of the folk-songs of Hungarians living in Rumania. Those who know the work of Bartók and Kodály will understand what such an undertaking means to folk music research, especially since the present work covers the music of the wealthiest but most backward regions of all Hungarian-speaking peoples.

Besides the Székely regions explored by Bartók and Kodály, the collection includes songs from the middle section of Transylvania, known as Mezőség, and from Moldavia which is here explored in more depth and detail than at any time since the 30s. The publication includes over 10,000 pieces and brings together material that was relatively inaccessible to Hungarian research. No wonder we have been waiting impatiently for the work, and without appearing to be unappreciative, we must say that, since col-

lecting stopped in 1955 (when the Institute's doors were closed to the public) the book would have had that much more of an impact had it been published by the end of the 50s. Nevertheless, individual initiative, official exchanges and joint collecting projects did make it possible over the years to remain in touch with the folk-songs and dances of the Hungarians in Rumania. Even more important, this same period produced the extremely important book of Zoltán Kallós.\*

Thus, song material which in the 50s would have been quite sensational is today for the most part already known and accepted as an integral part of Hungarian culture—this is especially true of the songs of the Hungarians living in the high valleys of the Gyimes region in the Transylvanian Carpathian mountains. Individual research is always quicker, and this project suffered from particular institutional hazards including the musical editor János Jagamas's decision to leave the institute during the time of preparation, while the institute itself was reorganized—and renamed—three times.

Still, 20 years' delay has not made the collection superfluous. Though late, the volume is meticulously done and provides important information about the traditions of folk music and folk poetry of the Hungarians in Rumania. It contains 350 songs all carefully recorded, which was not an easy

\* See the same author's "Zoltán Kallós, Ballad Collector," No. 59.

undertaking with the songs from Transylvania and Moldavia where the characteristic free, rubato style has a richly ornamented effect that requires work of great skill and immense patience to provide detailed and accurate recording. This work can hardly be appreciated by any but the Hungarian experts in the field, for (since Bartók) work of such detail is rarely done by anyone but Hungarian folklorists.

The volume is of great significance, not only for the choice of songs, but also for the attempt to indicate the complete material from which it was chosen. The most important types of songs were selected—those that are either variations on a very rare song or, on the basis of new research, are considered relatively well-known in a region but were not part of the earlier collections of Bartók, Kodály and Lajtha. For the most part the volume is comprised of these types of songs, not the widely known "Székely songs."

Perhaps even more important are the footnotes detailing the range covered by each type of song, as well as such detailed information as the number of versions in the archives, the range, and the differences that can be described without reference to the musical scores. The footnotes also provide information as to the specific "function" of a melody: whether it is sung at a wedding or used for ballads, or perhaps for only a single ballad.

There are also separate notes about the texts, for which József Faragó, the director of research in Hungarian balladry in Transylvania, was responsible. In this area, since folk poetry cannot claim any outstanding researchers of the likes of Bartók and Kodály, the editors were forced to find their own way. Whereas musical notes can be condensed almost to a formula for clear and precise information for musicians, Faragó was forced to give only general information. He was able to rely, though, upon some previous ballad studies, which proved to be very important, since the Transylvanian and Moldavian treasure house of contemporary

### BÓG A BARÁNY A NAGY HEGYEN Lakodalmas

*Rubato* ♩ 192

! (m) Bóg a bá-rány a nagy hē-gyēn, (m)  
Bóg a bá-rány a nagy hē-gyēn, (hej de)  
Vi-szik a ró-zsá-mát kēd-dén, (m)  
Vi-szik a ró-zsá-mát kēd-dén,  
1/A 2 vez-ben:  
(de) Bú-csúzzak el u-tá-já-ra.

2. S megyek a siratójába,  
Megyek a siratójába,  
(hej de) Búcsúzzak el utójára,  
(de) Búcsúzzak el utójára.

Magyarlapid, Mg 113c. Ez.: B. Sipos Márton 31 éves.  
1955. V. Szl.

"The lamb cries on the mountain"—  
wedding song

Hungarian ballads includes numerous, important versions of classical ballads. The descriptions of the range and variations of such works are essential information on the history of the ballads.

The main advantage of this publication compared to other collections of folk music is that it elaborates melody and text together and with the same emphasis. Another advantage is that there are various kinds of musical signs (according to form and meter, cadenza, scale) with the help of which the musically inclined folklorist can find and identify any type of song within minutes. It is indeed a volume of the old and new folk music of the Hungarians in Rumania that is both comprehensive and convenient.

Furthermore, comparing it with similar

