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In the Bulletin issue 1977/1—2, p.73. as well as in subsequent issues, I.K.S. Members were informed, that membership fees cover the calendar year. All membership fees are to be paid by the 28th February, each year. We regret that from 1979 non-financial members are to be removed from the Bulletin mailing list.

ISSN 0133-8749

Published by the Executive Office of the International Kodály Society.  
Editors: László Eöszé and László Vikár.  
Printed in Hungary by Editio Musica. Manager Imre Kormány.



# BULLETIN OF THE INTERNATIONAL KODÁLY SOCIETY

1979/1



photo by István Harmath

*„Powerful sources of spiritual enrichment spring from music. We must spare no effort to have them opened for as many people as possible. What is to be done? Teach music and singing at school in such a way that it is not a torture but a joy for the pupil; instil a thirst for finer music in him, a thirst which will last for a lifetime.”*

(Children's Choirs, 1929. The Selected Writings of Zoltán Kodály, Corvina Press, Budapest, 1974. p.120.)

**THE IVth INTERNATIONAL KODÁLY SYMPOSIUM, 5—11 AUGUST, 1979, IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, IS FOCUSED ON THE THEME, THE CHILD'S WORLD OF MUSIC.**

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR THE I.K.S.**

The election of officers for the I.K.S. will be held at the General Assembly Session taking place on Thursday, 9th August at 4 p.m. The nominating committee headed by Dr. Florence Caylor, U.S.A., assisted by Brita K. Helenius, Finland and Patricia M. Rohl, Australia, would appreciate receiving the names of candidates you wish to recommend. The names of candidates should be forwarded to

Dr. Florence Caylor  
191 Orange Drive  
San Luis Obispo, California, 93401

by 15, June 1979. U.S.A.

Deanna B. Hoermann  
President

## KODÁLY AS I KNEW HIM

by Lajos Vargyas

When I think of Kodály, I always remember him as a scientist which in my mind, is what he was: I think of the *personality* who led me towards science and *the way* in which he did it.

He educated me, and never "taught" me, in the everyday sense of the word. He never "lectured" me on any subject even though I was one of his students at the university for two years. In my first and fourth years he led workshops in music folklore; I was almost his only student from beginning to end. The lessons took the form of free discussion. He didn't expound his knowledge but probed into mine. When upon his first question it turned out that I had already noted down some melodies in the country, he made me write them on the blackboard one after the other and tell him what I knew about the song, the system of the melodies and the results of research. Whenever my knowledge proved to be insufficient or wrong, he corrected me. If he had to add a lot, or if I didn't know all the available data—more exactly, all that *had* to be known, as it was already laid down in writing—he refused to carry on talking to me until I had read the necessary literature. I was well versed in the literature available at the time: Bartók's book and some fundamental studies by Bartók and Kodály. (What is more: I knew every single note of Bartók's book by heart.) Therefore we were able to discuss matters so far never disclosed by anybody, as well as various problems he was brooding over or which were occupying his thoughts.

The "discussion" of my thesis was a typical example of how strongly he felt about material once written down not being explained. The subject of the thesis was an investigation into music life in villages, the tasks and necessity of which he had already laid down as a preface to the first edition of his large study on folk music. When giving me this task his only scientific guidance was, "Put into practice what I put into writing." But his practical advice was more forthcoming. He advised me to take along torchlight as people disliked having to burn their expensive paraffin lamps for too long, and preferred talking in the dark; to take a pencil with rubber-end so as to be able to make faster corrections during the many recordings. He even lent me his own pendulum-metronome devised particularly for collecting: a tape-measure to be wound off a drum on which the metronome units corresponding to the length of the pendulum were indicated. As it made no noise, it didn't disturb the singer. In short, he assisted me in everything I couldn't have known, but what I could otherwise have known, I *had* to know. There, he left me alone. This could of course be regarded as his esteem which spurred me on to further achievements.

As a matter of fact, the high standard which he required of his students was in itself a considerable incentive. Once he brought along the proofsheets of the musical examples for the study he was preparing, entitled Hungarian Folk Music, and made me sing them. In one of the examples different C-clefs occurred: soprano, alto, and tenor clefs. I admitted that I was not familiar with them. (It was only the next year that I went to the Academy of Music.) "There is nothing difficult about it"—he answered—"the clef marks where C is. Off you go, then." Overcome by fear I concentrated so intensively that I managed to get through it without any mistakes. His only reaction was a la-

conic "that's right". In his eyes, this kind of thing was a matter of course, a basic requirement. He always put special emphasis on consequent thinking and the verification of facts. This gradually became obvious in the course of discussions, on a great variety of topics. These discussions started in my fourth year. After one of the first classes of the year, while we were waiting for him to leave the faculty room he stopped quite unexpectedly in front of me and asked: "What have you been working on *since then*, Mr. Vargyas?" (At that time we were addressed in this way at the university.) "Since then", represented the three years since I had attended his classes in the first year. I started to relate something, during which he started for home, and I accompanied him then and several times after that. Later, after having graduated, and even got a job, I still attended his folk song classes at the Music Academy. There was always something new. On these occasions I used to walk home with him. Sometimes we parted at the gate; sometimes he invited me in to continue the conversation inside.

During one of these walks I raised the question of whether Tinódi's "Egervár summája" was not really a melody in the minor but which ended on the third as if the fundamental had been given by the lute accompaniment. He did not answer immediately but considered the question for a minute. Finally he merely remarked that it was probably just a misprint, which occurred quite frequently at that time — notes got put on higher lines or staves, especially at the cadences.

Some time later, one of his colleagues brought up the matter again: "Mr. Vargyas claims that the "Egervár summája" is a melody in the minor." He put an end to the conversation by saying: "Well, if he brings a further twenty melodies of the same age where this phenomenon can be seen, he may be right." I broke into laughter: "There are altogether about forty melodies that have come down to us from that age." He smiled, too, because he realized that I understood: it was a matter that could not be proved and was thus not worth dealing with until some further evidence came to light to decide the question.

The lesson to be learnt was that one should learn to *wait* to find a proper solution to problems. As he did, with the Cheremiss tunes at the time when just a few recordings were available at the Ethnographical Museum. Even when he got to know the style from various publications, and compiled a study entitled "Specific melody structure in Cheremiss folk music", he did not mention the relationship between Hungarian and Cheremiss music as he had not yet come upon direct parallelism in the melodies. Only when he could make reference to a number of parallel melodies did he involve his concept on the relationship between Eastern and the pre-conquest Hungarian folk music style.

It was this "capacity for waiting" which he urged me to develop concerning another attempt of mine in writing about Cheremiss melodies. Encouraged by the parallelism indicated in his study I scrutinized a Cheremiss collection I happened to come across, and I was struck by the number of pentatonic tunes that had a different position on the pentatonic scale from ours: their final is one note lower which gives a different key effect (ending on *sol* instead of *la*). Several of them are reminiscent of our melodies of recent origin which end with a downward leap.

But the new melodies could only have inherited such turns from the old ones. So I searched for them among the old melodies where in all probability the heptatonic form was only disguising the underlying pentatonic scale based on *sol*. I was encouraged to do so as Kodály himself made reference in his study to two such songs, and in a number of his melody parallels, the Hungarian example ends on *la*, while its eastern counterpart ends on *sol*. Only the reference to the new type of melodies was somewhat daring. Nevertheless, I wrote the article.



I took the manuscript to him. He studied it for a long time, as usual, without saying a word and then said: "Let's wait with it yet; just in case some better data turns up." So I put aside my first attempt; it has never appeared anywhere.

One or two years later he remarked in the course of a conversation: "it seems more and more likely that we had songs ending in *sol*." I immediately knew that he was referring to my attempt, and was continuing the discussion where we had left it. The second edition of his study came out soon afterwards and I found further parallels where the Oriental melodies ended one tone lower. Here he had inserted a new sentence into the text: "It is very possible that many of our melodies now ending in G<sup>1</sup> once had a final F<sup>1</sup>."

Thanks to Zoltán Kallós, a great number of such *sol* pentatonic tunes with lower endings have recently come to light from Gyimes, Moldva and sometimes even Mezőség.

Our conjecture proved true. But what a good thing I followed his advice and did not publish that article. By going through the old manuscript I realize how differently I interpret a number of melodies now and how completely differently it can be written on the basis of this new rich material and the latest data for comparison. What a good thing that I don't have to take back and modify my assertions! I learned from him that it is less important to be *first* to assert something than to be the one who words it *last*, for good.

It is well known that he almost never praised, but even so he was able to give expression to his appreciation. When the Ethnographical Museum first sent me to prepare a recording I went to him to discuss the place we should go to. He took out a map and said: "I once planned to go all along our language boundary. I only got as far as Rozsnyó. You should continue from there." For me, this was not only a task but a great honour as well. In this way I went to the villages of Kiskovácsvágása, Barka and Lucska in the county of Gömör and to Áj in the county of Abauj.

He himself never said a word of praise to me neither in connection with my collections there, nor concerning my work written about the musical life of the village Áj. Others once wrung some out of him. My thesis was to be published from a so-called dean's fund, and Kodály's opinion and assessment was needed. The dean's secretary telephoned him, presented the case and asked: "Professor Kodály, you've read it, haven't you. Do you consider it good?" The whole was not so short, of course. From the other end of the line came only as much as: "I've read it. It's good." These words "I've read" and "good" were enough to enable me to receive the sum which was originally intended for the publication of four theses; were enough, that the ceremony where I was conferred the doctor's degree, the dean of the Faculty of Arts—once a fellow-student of Kodály's at the Eötvös College—should smile at me when shaking hands and that the dean's secretary should write a whole page article about my book in the Sunday issue of "Magyar Nemzet". In short, he was able to give immeasurable assistance.

Once I visited him and when taking leave he gave me a copy of "Mi a magyar a zenében" (What is Hungarian in music?). I looked at him and asked shyly: "Won't you write anything in it?" He took a pen and still standing and resting the book on his other palm he wrote something in it. I didn't dare to look at it until I got into the street. It said: "To Lajos Vargyas"—then followed a word I couldn't decipher—and finally "for his zeal". I lost heart. Zeal is in my opinion not a particular merit. At home I managed to read the rest of the text which said "further research". Thus it sounded "zeal in further research"! How different it was! That was something to be pleased about! It inspired me to continue working.

When I presented him the collection of songs related to laments published later under the title "Ugrian Stratum in Hungarian Folk Music", his obvious interest in the matter was for me the greatest acknowledgement. What is more, he even helped me to find additional examples; he expressed concern about some of my examples; but if I had scruples he encouraged me: "But look, the cadences and the rhythm all fit in." At that time he was working on the enlarged version of his folk music study which is commonly referred to as the "Kodály-Vargyas". He thought I wanted to include these results into that, into his study. Finally he turned to me, "Perhaps not here, not yet, I'd rather you published it as a separate article." I myself had the same in mind so what I heard from his sentence was not the "perhaps not here" part, but the encouragement to publish it. And this I accepted as the highest form of appreciation.

Sixteen years later the volume of laments appeared in the series "Népzene Tára". We all asked him to dedicate our copies. In my book he wrote: "To Lajos Vargyas for the discovery of lament-ballads". Here I had praise even expressed in words. These were my two works which he considered worth mentioning.

I discovered that he could be lenient too — in a big way! When compiling the mentioned collection of examples I complained that some very close variants had found their way into it, because I had overlooked them at the selection stage. He briefly inquired: "How many melodies?" "495" was my answer. "Well, I once failed to notice 150". He alluded to the fact that in the collection published under the title "The Magyars in Transylvania" the same tune occurs twice because in one variant the end of the first line leaps on the octave, while in the other it goes down to the fundamental. In the categorization according to line ending, they ended up very far distant from one another.

And now having mentioned this work bearing both our names let me recall one of his characteristic traits, namely his generosity in financial matters. The royalties fixed by the publisher were very low, both for me and, proportionally, for him, too. "It is out of the question" he exclaimed and fought for higher royalties on the basis of the fact that the work would be used as a textbook — which is what actually happened. As it was his study, the sum of the royalty was the highest possible. Having settled the whole matter, he got the whole sum allocated to me. Not only the part due to me for the examples but also the money for his own study, which was much higher. In 1952 that amount was considered as a real national bounty. When I tried to remonstrate, by stuttering my arguments into the phone he cut me short: "You have worked on it."

But I estimated his moral support even higher than his financial support. Perhaps it was greatest when he assisted me in my research of ballads. However my first recollection when working on this, was a rebuff aimed at my lack of knowledge. In his classes while still at university, we had to sing a collection of melodies where folk tunes were compared with old hymns. The text of the folk song went like this: "Így iszik, úgy iszik három hajdulegény Biró Zsigmondnének köztött kapujába" (look, how the three heyducks lads are drinking at the gate of Mrs. Zsigmondné Biró). I didn't know where this line was from — that it was the first line of the ballad of the beautiful Anna Biró who set out with the heyducks. "Haven't you read the latest edition of the folk ballads, either? Knowledge of Hungarian literature cannot be complete without knowing these masterpieces, the ballads." That edition soon went everywhere with me, even to the boat-house at the Danube and between dives I devoured ballads. When my study on the relationship

between Hungarian and French ballads appeared I heard the first and only praise consisting of a whole sentence. And finally, when I applied for the Academic Doctor's degree he insisted on putting a very high appreciation into the final justification.

I have felt the support of his guiding hand throughout my whole career. Even since his death I have submitted all my works to his judgement. I know his standard and I still keep myself to it.

## KODÁLY AS I KNEW HIM

by Tibor Serly

I have lived in New York since I was five years old; in 1922, at the age of twenty-one, I first visited Hungary. My late father, Lajos Serly, had been conductor at the Budapest *Népszínház* (People's Theatre) in the 1880s. He composed some successful operettas and songs, one of the most popular of the latter is about rabbit, and then *Kék nefelejcs* (Blue Forget-Me-Nots), a favourite to this very day. My father was my first music teacher; he started teaching me to play the violin and piano when I was eight. At the age of seventeen I became a professional violinist. At the age of 15, I had already composed, among other things, a violin concerto.

I may have been twenty when, in 1921, a Hungarian pianist visited me and introduced me for the first time to the works of Bartók and Kodály. If I remember rightly, he played Bartók's Roumanian Dances and Kodály's Seven Piano Pieces. That Hungarian music hit me like a thunderbolt. Until then Hungarian music for me meant my father's composed songs, Gipsy music and Liszt's Rhapsodies. At that very moment I decided that I would go to Hungary as soon as possible to study composition under Béla Bartók or Zoltán Kodály. I asked my father to write a letter to his old friend and colleague Jenő Hubay, who was then Director of the Budapest Academy of Music, and that is how in April, 1922 I came to present myself at professor Hubay's Budapest home. He received me most kindly and said he would gladly help me in my admittance to the Academy of Music, but told me that the final decision lay with Kodály, professor of composition. In this way through the intermediary of a relative, I first met Professor Kodály at his home on Rose Hill.

How well I remember that fateful day when terrified, I rang his bell. Kodály's wife, Mme. Emma answered it and I entered the ante-chamber. Soon Professor Kodály appeared, with his impressive red beard and Christ-like features. He asked me what I had brought along and at the same time handed me a sheet of manuscript paper with one part of a Bach chorale on it and told me to supply the three missing parts. He retired to another room to examine the compositions I had written around that time, and my counter-point exercises. I will never forget how embarrassed I was and what a nervous state I was in. What is more I only had a pencil with me and no rubber, but after scribbling and scrabbling a lot I somehow managed to complete the task. When Kodály returned with my works he had been looking through, he must have felt my confusion as he only glimpsed at the sheet with the chorale and said: "Your exercises in technique are acceptable but there are major deficiencies in your composition experiments, both in form

and technique." Well, I thought, have I travelled over seven thousand kilometres just to hear this? Despite that, he admitted me (and even exempted me from paying the tuition fees) to the second semester of the second year of the Academy, which meant that I could finish my studies at the Academy within two and a half years, instead of going on the usual four year course. He also advised me to get enrolled on the second semester of the first year course of the Academy as well. This was by no means an easy task — but I managed it. The course of my life changed from that time on.

As a foreign pupil, who had come from distant lands, I had no idea that Bartók's and Kodály's music was constantly attacked by the right-wing press, incited by certain political circles. Even less did I know that according to these papers Kodály was contaminating young musicians' way of thinking.

Now let me speak about Kodály's teaching in that "golden age" when I was fortunate enough to be his pupil. In my opinion Kodály was doubtlessly one of the greatest creative composer-teachers in the history of music. I shall not discuss his method — others must certainly have described that in detail. Instead I should like to recall some personal memories, quoting some of his significant and illuminating statements, which I shall never forget.

Once, speaking about melody structure, Kodály said: "If you succeed in composing a single inspired melodic phrase stick to it like a bulldog, and don't let go of it before the whole melody appears, lock, stock and barrel."

On another occasion when we studied contrapuntal canons he explained to us that in Bach's time composers had been able to visualize ten or even more bars in advance. But we, composers of our present time, were lucky if we could imagine two or three bars.

The première of Bartók's first sonata for violin was programmed for 1922 or 1923. Kodály could foresee that practically the whole press would flay Bartók's new composition. Therefore he brought along the manuscript and during the lesson, gave a thorough, in fact a sensational analysis of the composition. He proved that in spite of its dissonances it was not atonal and, as far as form was concerned, it almost completely followed the classic sonata principle.

Usually during classes we listened to the composition exercise of a designated pupil, then Kodály asked our opinion. In one case, the experiment of a pupil seemed like a triumphal march, with incessant sequences. When we told him our opinion, he added: "Yes, it is like a royal procession at which all the ministers, generals, princes and princesses as well as the queen and king have appeared several times. For Heaven's sake, when will a rustic appear?"

Our formidable master was sometimes capable of playing harmless practical jokes. On a snowy winter day, when we entered the classroom at the Academy, Kodály was standing at the open window, playing with a fairly large soft snowball. We pupils took our usual seats, but soon the door opened and a latecomer walked in. I think it was István Kovács. Kodály turned round and without saying a word dashed the snowball at him. Of course, the whole class burst out laughing. Only István Kovács did not laugh. On the verge of tears he said: "Thank you, Professor."

In 1924 I graduated from the Academy. That year, only two of us graduated with honours: Géza Frid and myself. I may be forgiven my pride if I point out that the concert programme put on by students graduating that year only comprised compositions by Frid and Serly. This is al-