

Bartók and the German Music Tradition

– Heritage and Impact

SIMONE HOHMAIER

Though a lot has been written so far on the question of German music, it still remains unclear what exactly we have to understand as ‘the German’ in music. Further: Musical nationalism in general still seems to be a quite nebulous thing. Therefore a few considerations about nationalism in music and the notion of German music seem to be appropriate for the beginning. In the following, I will give a short review of the most convincing concepts of national music on the whole and German music in particular. Then I will highlight Bartók’s early contact with German music during his musical upbringing and how those German composers were reflected in his compositions, who were understood as paradigmatic representatives of what is claimed to be ‘the German’ in music. In addition, I will consider Bartók’s own understanding of German music as it can be deduced from his writings. The second part of this article will deal with Bartók’s impact on the German musical scene after World War II, where the question of what exactly constitutes ‘Germanness’ in music becomes even more difficult to answer.

Among the numerous answers to the question of nationalism in music,¹ Carl Dahlhaus’ contribution seems to be the most fundamental.² Dahlhaus firmly distinguished between national styles in music and musical nationalism. In his opinion, ‘nationalism as the conviction of the effective and productive power of the “Volksgeist” (the people’s spirit) is an idea whose way of existence and whose function will be missed if one identifies it directly with the phenomenon of national styles,³ that is if one wants to put it behind bars by a description of concrete musical features. While national styles are to be found in polyphonic music from the thirteenth century on, nationalism has only in the nineteenth century become the ruling way of thinking and structure of feeling. The last two expressions – musical nationalism as a ‘way of thinking’ and ‘a structure of feeling’ – already point to Dahlhaus’ conviction that musical nationalism cannot be tied to specific musical structures. Instead, ‘the national meaning or colouring of a musical phenomenon is mainly a matter of opinion and

¹ See among others Harry White and Michael Murphy (eds.), *Musical Constructions of Nationalism* (Cork, 2001); Tomi Mäkelä (ed.), *Music and Nationalism in 20th-Century Great Britain and Finland* (Hamburg, 1997); and Helga de la Motte-Haber (ed.), *Nationaler Stil und europäische Dimension in der Musik der Jahrhundertwende* (Darmstadt, 1991).

² Carl Dahlhaus, ‘Die Idee des Nationalismus in der Musik’, in *Gesammelte Schriften in 10 Bänden*, ed. Hermann Danuser, vi: 19. *Jahrhundert III* (Laaber, 2003), 474–89. Initially published in Carl Dahlhaus, *Zwischen Romantik und Moderne* (München, 1974).

³ Ibid. 478. All German quotes are translated by Simone Hohmaier except otherwise stated.

agreement, of the way of reception, which nevertheless belongs to “the thing itself”.⁴ The historian has to accept the circumstance that the national character of a piece was intended and believed in by its audience as an aesthetic fact even if a stylistic analysis will give no further insight. On the other hand, in Dahlhaus’ opinion a musical national style ‘cannot be categorized coherently as the epitome of the common properties of all those works produced by a nation’s composers – additionally, musical nationality is in some cases (one might take as prominent examples Liszt or Händel) disputed and it does not need to be identical with the ethnic nationality’.⁵ Dahlhaus uses Hungarian music as an example: As long as the Hungarians felt the gypsy music to be an authentic expression of Hungarianness it *was* authentic Hungarian: ‘The historical error has to be taken at its word as an aesthetic truth, because the national imprinting depends upon a collective decision’⁶ and not upon historical or structural facts and it does not adhere to single factors but to the context in which it is to be found.

Bernd Sponheuer follows Dahlhaus in his opinion that nationalism in music is primarily a category of function and of attribution by people.⁷ In his attempt to extract what was and maybe still is perceived as ‘the typically German’ in music he analyses numerous historical sources to construct two ideal types of ‘Germanness’ in music.

Sponheuer has stated that the everlasting discourse about the German in music was accompanied by ideas and patterns that were generally conceived as similarly – at least from Beethoven to Schoenberg. He extracted two patterns as ideal types in the sense of Max Weber: The first image of the specifically German in music is captured by the terms ‘profundity’, ‘effort’ and ‘thoroughness’. Claiming these qualities as German, all non-German music is thereby excluded. Several opposite concepts refer to these binary fundamental terms, for example the opposition of sensuality and intellect, of melody and harmony, mechanic–organic, civilization–culture etc. In the second ideal type German music is comprehended as universal, a grand synthesis and it matches with Dahlhaus’ observation that the term ‘national school’ secretly stamps the denoted thing as a peripheral phenomenon as compared to the universal German music of which interestingly enough only very seldom has been spoken of as a national school.⁸

The notion of a German special path can be followed up to the eighteenth century, when German thoroughness and solid craftsmanship were contrasted with foreign thoughtlessness and cheap showmanship, and when the paradigm of German instrumental music replaced that of vocal music. But the milestones in the history of defining and establishing Germanness in music were Forkel’s biography of Bach (1802)⁹ with its definition of Bach’s *oeuvre* as an ‘inestimable national

⁴ Ibid. 479.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. 482.

⁷ Bernd Sponheuer, ‘Über das “Deutsche” in der Musik. Versuch einer idealtypischen Rekonstruktion’, in Hermann Danuser and Herfried Münkler (eds.), *Deutsche Meister – böse Geister? Nationale Selbstfindung in der Musik* (Schliengen, 2001), 123–50.

⁸ Dahlhaus, ‘Die Idee des Nationalismus’, 480.

⁹ Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Über Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke* (Leipzig, 1802; repr. Kassel, 1999).

legacy' (unschätzbares National-Erbgut)¹⁰ and Franz Brendel's *Geschichte der Musik* (1852)¹¹ with its depiction of the German as a kind of world music in which the different styles are melting together.¹² This view is mirrored in Alban Berg's statement about music, which is 'German and therefore – like no other – universally applicable'.¹³ Even Adorno uses the same dichotomy of terms in 'Die Meisterschaft des Maestro' where he plays Furtwängler off against Toscanini as intellect against technocracy. Regarding Toscanini's recording of Beethoven's first symphony, he claims: 'Either the Italian theatre-bandleader stirs up the orchestra and transfers applause inviting Verdian stretto slightly indiscriminately on the symphonic tradition. Or he obeys, with a drastic lack of taste, a primitive joy of sound, revels in so-called nice passages and enjoys them sensually to the full ...'.¹⁴ And in a sketch for a project on the history of music he suggests that the outline of the project shall concentrate essentially on German and Austrian music according to the fact that real radical movements in music nearly without exception originated in Germany and Austria.¹⁵

Though it is, as Dahlhaus has conceded, not quite clear whether an individual style grows out of the national substance or whether the national stems from a generalizing interpretation of the individual, for the time being there is no other way to deal with Bartók's relation to the German music tradition than to examine his reference to German composers. I will give an overview of Bartók's occupation with Bach who has been regarded as the founder of the age of German music, deeply connected with the quality of profundity and a representative of fugal technique, and of Beethoven as the epitome of the sublime, representing the developed sonata style. A third aspect of a specifically German tradition, the so-called Neudeutsche Schule, a term introduced by Brendel to denote 'the entire post-Beethoven development',¹⁶ will be touched on in respect to Bartók's early years as a composer. In the following, I will treat the issue of Bartók's occupation with the German music tradition by analysing his relation to single composers. I feel authorized to do so according to his own opinion: A genuine and valuable art for Bartók is only imaginable as a national art. But the distinction of characteristic elements in each country for him is

¹⁰ Ibid. p. v.

¹¹ Franz Brendel, *Geschichte der Musik* (6th edn., Leipzig, 1878).

¹² Ibid. 129: 'Während die übrigen Nationen allein ihre gesonderte Individualität ausbildeten und in dieser verharren, war es der Beruf Deutschlands, auf dem Grunde seiner Eigenthümlichkeit sich zu einer weithin schauenden Universalität zu erheben, die Individualität der anderen Völker in sich aufzunehmen und zu einem grossen Ganzen zusammenzufassen. ... Deutschland besitzt nicht bloß eine nationale Tonkunst im engeren Sinne; es hat, die Stile Frankreichs, Italiens mit seiner Eigenthümlichkeit verschmelzend, eine Weltmusik geschaffen, und zunächst dadurch schon den Gipfel der gesammten musikalischen Entwicklung erstiegen.'

¹³ Alban Berg in a letter to Joseph Haas, 17 May 1933, in Rosemary Hilmar and Günter Brosche (eds.), *Alban Berg 1885-1935* (Ausstellung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek 1985; Wien, 1985), 188.

¹⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, 'Die Meisterschaft des Maestro', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, xvi: *Musikalische Schriften I-III* (2nd edn., Frankfurt am Main, 1990), 52-67, here 58.

¹⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, 'Die Geschichte der deutschen Musik von 1908 bis 1933', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, xix: *Musikalische Schriften VI* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), 620-29.

¹⁶ Franz Brendel, 'Zur Anbahnung einer Verständigung', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 50 (1859), 265-73.

solely possible if the creative power of a true artistic personality is revealed spontaneously in the single works of art.¹⁷ Thus, even if nationalism in music cannot be understood as the total amount of individual styles in a country, there is still currently no other way to deal with it than to examine individual but paradigmatic composers.

It is a well-known fact that both Bartók's family and cultural background were partly German. His mother was of German birth and spoke German, and especially in his musical upbringing the German classics played – besides the early contact with gypsy music – an outstanding role as can be seen in Dille's description of Bartók's early musical experience.¹⁸ His teacher Koessler and his model Ernő Dohnányi were following the tradition of Brahms. One of the first outbursts of Hungarian national feelings of the young Bartók can be found in his early letters which contain complaints about the use of the German language, and his discomfort with the predominance of German culture in Budapest's musical life was one reason for his sharp turn in 1903 towards chauvinist nationalism. However, for the musical expression of his nationalist feelings in the symphonic poem *Kossuth* he turned to the German Richard Strauss as a model.¹⁹ But because of the fact that in Hungary the symphonic poem was regarded as less characteristically German than the symphony itself the critics hailed to *Kossuth* as an expression of genuine Hungarianness. The composition was contrasted with the music of Dohnányi, as a critic of the *Budapesti Hírlap* wrote: '... Dohnányi proceeds in the footsteps and forms of the German masters Beethoven and Brahms, in these he produces perhaps a more refined and mature art, but [Bartók] creates form according to Hungarian feeling: wild luxuriant, rhapsodic, not so sober and symmetrical that it requires the rules of the German symphony'.²⁰ *Kossuth* is thus an example for quite a complex situation: On the level of programmatic structure and on a purely musical level – especially in respect of the handling of motives and instrumentation – it is standing in a German tradition while content and meaning of its program are national Hungarian. How deep the impact of Strauss on Bartók was might be observed in the many activities Bartók developed around Strauss' music in 1902-4. To cite only a few, he wrote a piano transcription of *Ein Heldenleben* and a version for violin of *Don Quichote*, he analysed the *Symphonia Domestica* and gave performances of Strauss' music.²¹

¹⁷ Béla Bartók, 'Staat und Kunst' (1934), *Arion*, 13 (1982), 104-6. See also László Somfai's article in the present volume of *Danish Yearbook of Musicology*.

¹⁸ Denis Dille, *Thematisches Verzeichnis der Jugendwerke Béla Bartóks 1890-1904* (Kassel, 1974).

¹⁹ Cf. Roswitha Schlöterer-Trainer, 'Béla Bartók und die Tondichtungen von Richard Strauss', *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift*, 36/5 (1981), 311-18.

²⁰ Quoted according to David E. Schneider, 'Hungarian Nationalism and the Reception of Bartók's Music, 1904-1940', in Amanda Bayley (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bartók* (Cambridge, 2001) 177-87, here 179.

²¹ On Bartók's occupation with Strauss see Ingeborg Pechotsch-Feichtinger, 'Am Samstag gehe ich zu Frau Gruber mit dem "Heldenleben": Der Beginn der Auseinandersetzung mit den Werken von Richard Strauss in Ungarn durch Béla Bartók unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Opernerstaufführungen in Budapest', in Josef Gmeiner (ed.), *Musica conservata. For Gunter Brosche on his 60th birthday* (Tutzing, 1999), 295-311.

In contrast with Bartók's only temporal occupation with Strauss' music which began like a 'lightening strike' while he was attending a performance of *Also sprach Zarathustra* and ended the latest with the first performance of *Elektra* in Budapest in 1910, the composer's occupation with the music of Bach can be said to have lasted a whole life. Even in his youth Bartók has studied Bach more thoroughly than other composers, his Bach activities range from editing the *Well-tempered Piano* in which he reordered the pieces according to technical difficulty or another edition of thirteen pieces from *Anna Magdalenas Notenbüchlein* over performances of Bach's compositions at the piano to obvious quotation, examples of which are well known. To cite only the most prominent one: In *Bluebeard's Castle* we find besides BACH-formulas a quotation of the *Matthäus Passion* at the climax of the opera.²²

Also in his writings Bartók conferred to Bach, but more important seems to be the productive reception of Bach's compositional technique, which can easily be observed on a more simple level in the *Hommage à J.S.B.*, No. 79 of Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* and in respect of hidden polyphony in his *Sonata for Violin solo* from 1944. Bartók's contrapuntal style was influenced by the study of Bach's scores, of which the fugue from the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* (1936) is an impressive example. According to Serge Moreux, Bartók thought of himself to be initiated into the high sense of counterpoint by Bach.²³

György Kurtág's famous sentence about his relationship to Bartók is telling in respect to the reception of Bartók by contemporary composers. 'My mother tongue is Bartók and Bartók's mother tongue was ...' – 'the Hungarian peasant music' one would expect as the natural continuation. Surprisingly enough, instead it reads 'and Bartók's mother tongue was Beethoven'.²⁴ Kurtág thus places Bartók in a line with German tradition. I will return to this conspicuous pattern of Bartók-reception later. A few hints on Bartók's productive reception of Beethoven's work might suffice, it is a subject already dealt with in several papers.²⁵ In a famous quotation given by Edmund von der Nüll, Bartók claimed that in his youth his ideal of beauty was rather Beethoven than Bach – the beginning of a lifelong friendship.²⁶

As with Bach, Bartók's productive reception of Beethoven's music can be followed on different levels. For the Hungarian editors Rozsnyai and Rózsavölgyi he

²² See László Somfai, 'Bartók's Transcriptions of J.S. Bach', in Annegrit Laubenthal (ed.), *Studien zur Musikgeschichte. Festschrift für Ludwig Finscher* (Kassel, 1995), 689-96; Wolf Frobenius, 'Bartók und Bach', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 41/1 (1984), 54-67; János Breuer, 'Bach und Bartók', in F. Werner (ed.), *Bericht über die wissenschaftliche Konferenz zum III. Internationalen Bach-Fest der DDR* (Leipzig, 1977), 307-13.

²³ Serge Moreux, *Béla Bartók, Leben – Werk – Stil* (2nd edn., Zürich, 1952), 14.

²⁴ Quoted according to Hartmut Lück, 'Künstlerische Evidenz durch unbedingte Subjektivität', in *Komponistenportrait György Kurtág, Programmbroschüre der Berliner Festwochen 1988*, ed. Berliner Festspiele (Berlin, 1988), 9.

²⁵ Among others: Mark Radice, 'Bartók's Parodies of Beethoven: The Relationship Between op. 131, 132, and 133 and Bartók's Sixth String Quartet and Third Piano Concerto', *The Music Review*, 42/3-4 (1981), 252-60; John A. Meyer, 'Beethoven and Bartók: a Structural Parallel', *The Music Review*, 31/4 (1970), 315-21.

²⁶ Edmund von der Nüll, *Béla Bartók. Ein Beitrag zur Morphologie der neuen Musik* (Halle a. d. Saale, 1930), 88.

worked out revisions e.g. of Beethoven's *Bagatellen* op. 33 and op. 119, of the *Variations in F-Major* op. 34 and of several sonatas for piano. Beethoven's compositions of course were also a part of his piano repertoire, as is the case with Bach, even a few recordings have survived.²⁷ Regarding his own compositions, one reference is especially famous: In the second movement of his late Third Piano Concerto Bartók points with the *Adagio religioso* to Beethoven's 'Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen' from the string quartet op. 132 by taking over the central motive, its working out and the formal construction by contrasting choral-like homophonic passages with imitative ones. More extensive is Bartók's adoption of Beethoven's principles of composition in his string quartets. Ludwig Finscher has stated that in Bartók's quartets 'a sixfold examination of Beethoven's last string quartets has taken shape': a Beethovenian formal and textural esotericism in conjunction with folk music models.²⁸

For Bartók's classification by later composers in one line with a German tradition of at least two Bs (Bach and Beethoven), another idea seems even more important than technical devices. Already Franz Brendel has stated in his *Geschichte der Musik* that German music achieved its hegemony with Beethoven because of this composer's return to the spirit ('Rückwendung zum Geist'). According to him, Beethoven was filled with a striving for freedom understood as the highest aim of humanity.²⁹ Bartók himself has been considered as a model exactly because of his personification of a *musica humana* in an ethical sense.

As can be drawn from his writings, Bartók's own idea of Germanness in music is not very original. For Bartók, too, a national character in music is not so much determined by structural or technical means but by the *spirit* of the compositions. In some of his remarks, the well-known binary stereotypes reappear. In the 'Harvard Lectures', Bartók reports of some young Hungarian composers (speaking of himself) who 'eagerly studied the classics first in order to acquire the necessary technique in composition. The German Romantic styles of the nineteenth century, however, were not very well suited to their feelings and purposes. Especially Wagner's music was too heavy in its structure, too German in its spirit for them. ... Much more impulse could be drawn from Liszt's original works, whose transparency was absolute non-German and then, of course, from French Impressionistic music'.³⁰ German heavy structures are contrasted with French transparency, and Brahms was too German in character, too. In a paper about Liszt's music, the pattern is repeated: 'One can say anything of it [Liszt's music] rather than that it is German. His art is the antithesis of *the excessive density and laboriousness* so characteristic of the works of the outstanding German composers of the nineteenth century; it is rather the *clarity and transparency* of French music that manifests itself in every measure of Liszt's works'.³¹ Bartók

²⁷ Bartók – *Recordings from Private Collections*, Hungaroton HCD 12334-37 (1995).

²⁸ Ludwig Finscher, 'Streichquartett', in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd edn., Sachteil viii (Kassel, 1998), 1966.

²⁹ Brendel, *Geschichte der Musik*, 303-4.

³⁰ Béla Bartók, 'Harvard Lectures', in Béla Bartók, *Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (London, 1976), 362.

³¹ Béla Bartók, 'Liszt Problems (1936)', in Bartók, *Essays*, 509; my italics.

conceived Hungarian music as a contradiction to German music. Wagnerian spirit for him was the ‘absolute antithesis of anything that could be conceived as Hungarianism in music.’³² And to quote another passage: ‘From the political and cultural viewpoint Hungary for four centuries has suffered the proximity of Germany’; ‘the absolute hegemony of German music prevailed for three centuries, until the end of the nineteenth century. It was then that a turn occurred: Debussy appeared and, from that time on, the hegemony of France was substituted for that of Germany.’³³ With respect of the ‘staff’ with which Bartók equips German music apart from Bach and Beethoven, he names Mozart in his question: ‘Who will stop the decline of the nation of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven? Schoenberg? He is still a puzzle’.³⁴ While doing so he follows the same line as Schoenberg himself in his article ‘National Music’ (1931),³⁵ where this composer links his own work to Bach, Mozart and Beethoven and adds to Bartók’s list only Wagner and Brahms. For Bartók, Schoenberg is a representative of German music, too, prolonging German hegemony in musical progress: ‘Before the war the Germans were on the forefront of the movement with Schoenberg, the expressionist. But after the war it was as if German music had stagnated’.³⁶

To sum up, in Bartók’s writings the notion of German music is connected with several characteristics well known from the history of the term itself and is something that had to be overcome by Hungarian music. Nevertheless, he relentlessly tied his own work back to at least two composers who were a prominent part of that German music tradition.

If there is any kind of national tradition in post-war twentieth-century music at all, it is much more difficult to determine such national trends. Of course there has been for example a Second Viennese School before the war or a New York School, but such regional characteristics, obviously more bound to cities or metropolises than to a broader national character, soon vanished with the internationalization of the new music scene and the festival culture. The Darmstadt International courses for new music and their more and more international attendants are a famous example.³⁷

Concerning the international post-war reception of Bartók’s music by composers, several general trends can be identified. Composers understood Bartók’s music as an alternative to the dominant dodecaphonic trend, they used his polymodal chromaticism as a structural model, they were indebted to Bartók’s string quartet style and followed his usage of folk music as well as they were inspired by the attention he

³² Béla Bartók, ‘Harvard Lectures’, in Bartók, *Essays*, 362.

³³ Béla Bartók, ‘The Influence of Debussy and Ravel in Hungary’, in Bartók, *Essays*, 518.

³⁴ According to Aladár Tóth, ‘Bartók külföldi útja’ (Bartók’s Foreign Tour), *Nyugat*, 15/12 (June 1922), 830–33, transl. by David E. Schneider and Klára Moricz, in Peter Laki, *Bartók and His World* (Princeton, 1995), 287.

³⁵ Arnold Schönberg, ‘Nationale Musik’, in *Stil und Gedanke*, ed. Ivan Vojtech (Frankfurt, 1976), 250–54. See also Constantin Floros, ‘Die Wiener Schule und das Problem der deutschen Musik’, in Otto Kolleritsch (ed.), *Die Wiener Schule und das Hakenkreuz* (Wien, 1990), 35–50.

³⁶ Interview with Dezső Kosztolányi, *Pesti Hírlap*, 31 May 1925.

³⁷ Cf. Gianmario Borio and Hermann Danuser (eds.), *Im Zenit der Moderne, Die Ferienkurse für Neue Musik Darmstadt 1946–1966* (Freiburg, 1997).

gave to pedagogical music.³⁸ Lots of German composers were their equals in almost every way. Still, some developments seem to be characteristic for the German musical scene. In the following, I will by and large concentrate on West Germany and exclude East Germany, where Bartók's folk-song arrangements were among others a model for musical realism.³⁹

While Bartók's importance in the national concert repertoire grew steadily, his impact on Western German avant-garde composers decreased. For the special way the Western German musical scene has developed in respect to the reception of Bartók's music political or ethical reasons might be relevant, too. Dodecaphonic composition was apparently the only tradition in 'serious' music that had not been used by the Nazis for propaganda; on the other hand, the propagandists of the Third Reich had misused folk music to such a degree that Bartók's reference to folk music might have been somehow suspicious. As Gesa Kordes has shown,⁴⁰ postwar composers rejected any association with the music of Germany's past, which in their opinion had allowed itself to be abused for exaggerated nationalist aims. Cutting off all relationships with the music from the nineteenth century on, they attended to the Viennese School. Bartók – as situated by Adorno between the extremes represented by Schoenberg and Stravinsky and as an 'extraterritorial'⁴¹ – soon became a classic. After being accused of compromise by the French René Leibowitz and Pierre Boulez⁴² who both had an impressive influence on the German scene, Bartók lost any significance for avant-garde composition: In 1963, Wolfgang Fortner could state that Bartók was a great composer of the recent past. His work has its place in history, but it has no answers to the fervent questions of contemporary music.⁴³

On the other hand, few composers who participated in the Western German avant-garde scene like Herbert Eimert found in Bartók's music – with its focus on new sounds embedded in older forms – a vibrant renewal of the German symphonic tradition.⁴⁴ And mentioning Bartók's affinity with German traditions, the critic Kurt Zimmerreimer emphasized that Bartók's music was one of the most fruitful models for new German music to follow: 'What Bartók can teach us, is the precise filling out of the smallest form with all its possibilities, the equal attention to home, school, and concert, and finally the synthesis of openness and conscience, that were once a part of the German tradition.'⁴⁵

³⁸ See Simone Hohmaier, *Ein zweiter Pfad der Tradition – Kompositorische Bartók-Rezeption* (Saarbrücken, 2003).

³⁹ See for example Hanns Eisler, 'Über das Volkslied', in id., *Materialien zu einer Dialektik der Musik*, ed. Manfred Grabs (Berlin, 1987), 248–50.

⁴⁰ Gesa Kordes, 'Darmstadt, Postwar Experimentation, and the West German Search for a New Musical Identity', in Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (eds.), *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago, 2002), 205–17.

⁴¹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1975), 41.

⁴² René Leibowitz, 'Béla Bartók ou la possibilité du compromis dans la musique contemporaine', *Les temps modernes*, 1947, 705f.; Pierre Boulez, 'Bartók Béla', in id., *Anhaltspunkte* (Kassel, 1979), 133–40.

⁴³ Wolfgang Fortner, quoted from Hans Vogt, *Neue Musik seit 1945* (Stuttgart, 1972), 73.

⁴⁴ See Danielle Fosler-Lussier, 'Bartók-Reception in Cold War Europe', in Amanda Bayley (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bartók* (Cambridge, 2001), 202–14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 205.

The demanded equal attention to home, school, and concert seems to be a key to the understanding of the most obvious patterns in the Western German reception of Bartók's music, which is – with exceptions – a phenomenon not so much of the peak of the avant-garde or of composers belonging to the canon of contemporary music, but more of composers less prominent.

A characteristic trend both in number and quality is the reference to Bartók's pedagogical music, especially to the *Mikrokosmos*. While two of the most prominent Hungarian composers, Sándor Veress and György Kurtág have taken Bartók as a model for their own collection of easy pieces for the piano,⁴⁶ and while Bernd Alois Zimmermann's piano collection *Enchiridion* (1949–52) also clearly refers to Bartók's, several other German composers have taken parts of the *Mikrokosmos* as a starting point for other instrumental compositions. Works of Walter Steffens, Reinhard Pfundt, Fritz Gerhardt or of the Austrian Peter Suitner⁴⁷ are paradigmatic examples for this kind of productive reception while Rainer Kuismas *Hommage à Béla Bartók* for percussion (1990) takes a non-pedagogical work of Bartók (the *Sonata for two pianos and percussion*) as a starting point for a percussion study.

That Bartók attracted contemporary composers of the German *Kulturkreis* in its widest sense in respect to his folk music research is a real exception, though one case is especially interesting. For the Swiss composer Klaus Huber, who has studied with Stefi Geyer and has become acquainted with Bartók's compositions through performances of the Végh Quartet, the string quartets of the middle period have been of special relevance – an opinion, which is not surprising and very common in avant-garde circles (just recall the appraisal of these compositions even in the writings of Leibowitz and Boulez). Of his own compositions, Huber picks out two as influenced by Bartók: the *Partita* for Violoncello and cembalo (1954), and the string quartet *Moteti Cantiones* (1962/63, dedicated to Stefi Geyer) in respect of the sound of the quartet. But for him Bartók is most important in respect to the fact that Bartók was not eurocentric; a characteristic, which has become the more important to Huber the older he got. Since the beginning of the 1990s Huber was occupied with Arabian music. In a conversation I had with the composer he explicitly mentioned the exemplary function of Bartók who had argued strictly against the levelling of micro intervals. Bartók, as Huber confessed, felt full respect and love for this kind of music and this is one reason why he is an example for him.⁴⁸

Another instance of the reception of Bartók's utilization of folk music is the East German composer Kurt Schwaen who has occupied himself among others with Vietnamese music. An easy example is his *Bulgarian Dance* for accordion from 1960, where he simply uses Bulgarian rhythm in a quite tonal context. In his *Concertino*

⁴⁶ Sándor Veress, *Fingerlarks* (1947), György Kurtág, *Játékok* (1973f.).

⁴⁷ Fritz C. Gerhard, *Hommage à Béla Bartók* (1986); Reinhard Pfundt, *Bartók-Reflexionen* (1984), Walter Steffens, *Hommage à Béla Bartók, Präludium und Fuge für Klarinette in B und Klavier* op. 5 (1963); Peter Suitner, *Hommage à Bartók* (1984). For further information about these pieces, see Hohmaier, *Ein zweiter Pfad*.

⁴⁸ Interview with the composer, 14 Sept. 1999.

from 1991 – an overt *Hommage à Bartók* – Schwaen pays tribute to a style, which had been adopted by him and by other, mainly Eastern German composers quite often.

Example 1. Kurt Schwaen, *Concertino (Hommage à Bartók)*, 1st movement, bb. 1-8.

Let me now return to an issue only touched on before, to Bartók's reception as a worthy successor to Beethoven. On occasion of his return to Hungary in 1988 for his own second funeral, Bartók has been called an 'uncompromising pure, universalist humanitarian'.⁴⁹ Composers have related this strength of character to Beethoven. Lutoslawski connected Bartók's stylistic novelty to his grandness, which corresponded to the high standard of Beethoven.⁵⁰ For him Bartók was maybe the only composer among his contemporaries who had reached the 'Beethovenian heights of thinking and feeling'.⁵¹ Sándor Veress compares Beethoven and Bartók with respect to a certain human manner: 'In the area of humanity, both were fanatics of truth and human rights. And not only fanatics but most active fighters for their convictions up to the final consequences'.⁵² Veress' view is mirrored in a statement of the German conservative composer Helmut Bornefeld about Bartók: 'Each composer of significant importance – whether he's called Bach or Beethoven or Schoenberg [pay attention to the

⁴⁹ Susanne Gal, 'Bartók's Funeral: Representations of Europe in Hungarian Political Rhetoric', *American Ethnologist*, 28/3 (1991), 442.

⁵⁰ Witold Lutoslawski, *Új irás*, 5 (1965), 89.

⁵¹ Quoted according to Martina Homma, *Witold Lutoslawski* (Köln, 1995), 91-92.

⁵² Sándor Veress, 'Einführung in die Streichquartette von Béla Bartók', in id., *Aufsätze, Vorträge, Briefe*, ed. Andreas Traub (Hofheim, 1998), 63-75, here 68.

linear construction of a German canon] – first has built his freedom (and he is not guilty if this is afterwards capitalized as merchandise). I call my string quartet a “tribute to Béla Bartók” not because of stylistic, but because of moral reasons: Of all masters he gave the brightest example of a “freedom”, which unwavering follows its inner rules without failing to remember the distresses and the rights of his fellow men’.⁵³ Again, Bartók is associated with the worth and dignity of a ‘musica humana’. Of course, Bornefeld’s string quartet *Toccata* refers to Bartók also regarding compositional style.

Especially in the third movement, *Notturmo*, the wan sound is heavily associated with Bartók’s night music and the fifth movement reveals rhythmic and melodic allusions to an East European idiom one often comes across in fast Finali of Bartók’s compositions.

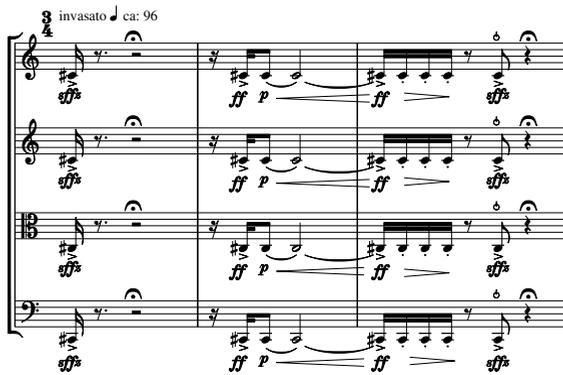
The image displays two systems of musical notation for a string quartet. The upper system consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and features a long, sustained melodic line starting with a *pppp* dynamic and a *v* (breath mark) above it. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a complex rhythmic pattern of triplets, marked with *p* and *pizz.* (pizzicato). Performance instructions in German are placed above and below the staves, including '(am Steg mit wenig Strich, wesenlos - fahl)' and '(„Verwehte Gitarrenklänge“) Bässe ein wenig hervor'. The lower system consists of four staves, all in treble clef. It is marked 'Schnell und kraftvoll (♩ = ca. 100)' and features a driving, rhythmic texture with frequent accents (*v*) and dynamic markings such as *sf* and *f*.

Example 2. Helmut Bornefeld, String Quartet ‘Huldigung an Béla Bartók’, 3rd movement, no. 6 and 4th movement, bb. 1-2.

⁵³ Helmut Bornefeld, ‘Huldigung an Béla Bartók’, printed with the score of Bornefeld’s String Quartet (1979), published by the composer.

One last case may illustrate the understanding of Bartók in terms of the binary concepts mentioned at the beginning, however not as belonging exclusively to one of them, but as a synthesis of both sides. The discovery of Bartók's music by the German composer Michael Denhoff, born 1955 in Ahaus, Westphalia, was quite typical for any musician trained with serious music. After first contacts with the *Mikrokosmos*, performances of Bartók's Fifth String Quartet and the *Music for strings, percussion and celesta* followed. The composition *Reflectioni* (hommage à Bartók) from 1972-73 for chamber orchestra reflects the fugal subject of the *Music for strings*. In a text written on the occasion of Bartók's centenary, Denhoff relates this composition to Bach and Beethoven, too.

For Denhoff, the most captivating in Bartók is not only the external impact – his rhythms – but rather the precision in his composing. In the construction of binary terms ascribed to Bartók, Denhoff puts concepts that appeared to be contradicting for centuries and that have been used to distinguish the German in music from the non-German in a nutshell: 'There is no note without a function in the context of the whole. Analysing Bartók, one is attracted by the logical, exactly planned structure of form and harmony. ... In Bartók, two apparently incompatible things are melted together: consideration [German: *Kalkül*] and expression; precision and intensity of feeling'.⁵⁴ In Denhoff's String Quartet op. 55 (1988), he seems to follow this path of the melting of consideration and intensity of feeling. The very expressive first movement is highly constructed and depends on symmetrical structures.



Example 3. Michael Denhoff, Fourth String Quartet op. 55, 1st movement, bb. 1-3.

Besides the rhythmical shape and the brute sound of the whole movement, some technical features of the quartet rely upon Bartók's model: the systematic organization of the form by means of alternating homorhythmic and polyphonic passages, the usage of more or less strict double and inversion canons, the unfolding of a

⁵⁴ Michael Denhoff, 'Was bedeutet mir Bartók?', www.denhoff.de/bartok.htm.

chromatic space in a Bartókian manner and the usage of specific pitch-class sets to create structural coherence, among them the famous Z-cell (pitch class set 4-9), which Bartók often used.⁵⁵ Thus, Denhoff follows Bartók in ‘the logical, exactly planned structure of form and harmony’ as well as in the intense expression of the piece.

SUMMARY

After a short review of concepts about national and German music, which concentrates upon Dahlhaus’ ideas and Sponheuer’s formation of two idealtypes, the article deals with Bartók’s understanding of German music and with the impact of representative German composers like Bach, Beethoven and the so-called ‘Neudeutsche Schule’ on Bartók’s music. In Bartók’s own understanding of German music historically grown ideas, especially the binary stereotypes by Sponheuer reappear, as can be deduced from his writings. Regarding Bartók’s influence on the German musical scene after World War II, the article at first recalls the supposed insignificance of Bartók’s compositional concepts for young German composers of that time and then names several trends to be observed nevertheless: composers pay attention to Bartók’s pedagogical compositions, to his exploitation of folk music and shares the opinion of Bartók as a worthy successor to Beethoven. It presents compositions by Kurt Schwaen, Helmut Bornefeld, and Michael Denhoff, as examples for the diverse field of the productive reception of Bartók’s works on the German contemporary music scene.

⁵⁵ Pitch class set 4-9 is a perfect fourth flanked by tritones, e.g. F[#]-c-f-b. For further information about the Z-cell see Leo Treitler, ‘Harmonic Procedures in the Fourth Quartet of Béla Bartók’, *Journal of Music Theory*, 3 (1959), 292-98; and Elliott Antokoletz, *The Music of Béla Bartók* (Berkeley, 1984). For an introduction into the pitch class set terminology see Allen Forte, *The Structure of Atonal Music* (New Haven and London, 1973).