Zoltán Kodály

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'It was said [remarked Mr. Justice Peterson, in giving judgment] that quotation was permissible if it was fair and reasonable. No doubt an author might not object to quotation for certain purposes; but there was no right to take a substantial part without the author's consent, and he [the learned judge] saw no reason why an author should permit the use of a quotation for the purpose of pushing the goods of an advertiser.'

Now it is frankly for the purpose of pushing their goods that composers and performers reprint the remarks of critics; and the critics have at least the right to ask that in this process of unauthorised reprinting they shall not be made to seem to say something quite different from what they really said—either by pure falsification on the advertiser's part or by manipulations of, or omissions from, the original text. These people and their agents have too long assumed that a critic's articles are theirs to do what they like with. I suggest that it be impressed upon them that if they wish to reprint an article, or part of one, for advertisement purposes of their own, they should first submit to the critic or the newspaper, for his or its approval, the summary or the paraphrase they propose to make of it: and that every such reprint shall bear the date of the original article. This is sometimes of the first importance to the critic. I myself have had the annoyance of seeing some many-years-old references of mine to a certain composer—about whom my opinion has largely changed in the interval—circulated without their date being given, and so made to convey a wholly false impression of my present views upon him.

Some day, I think, the courts will have to be asked to decide as to whether these traditional practices of artists and agents are permissible. Within the last few months an American author, Mr. W. F. McCaleb, brought an action—and, I believe, won it—against the exhibitors of an 'historical' film for misquoting on the screen from an historical treatise of his. He

'... alleged in his pleading that the purported quotation is erroneous, and that it expresses a view diametrically opposed to the opinion in fact expressed by him in his book, and that it is injurious to him in his reputation and standing as an author and historian.'

Commenting on the case, the *Author* (the journal of the [British] Incorporated Society of Authors) says that

'... it would seem, on the principle of the British cases,* that Mr. McCaleb is right, and that he ought to succeed in his action if he can prove that the quotation attributes to him an opinion which, in fact, he never expressed.'

* Cases decided by English courts in the author's favour on the ground of 'misrepresentation of facts as to what the author had written, thereby falsely imputing to him the authorship of work inferior to his own standard of work in the same class.' Some of the perversions I have seen of a critic's words for advertisement purposes would certainly come under this category.

I hope that the people who are in the habit of manipulating Press notices for their own purposes will take note of these legal opinions. The majority of these good people are not consciously dishonourable; they are simply doing blindly or semi-humorously what it has become the practice in the profession to do. Now they know how the critics resent it, they will no doubt see that it is not cricket, and give it up. To the others—who are impervious to any appeal to their honour—the friendly warning may be given that they are playing a dangerous game.

ZOLTÁN KODÁLY

BY CECIL GRAY

While the name of Kodály is already vaguely familiar to a few, his work remains almost entirely unknown for the very good reason that, with the exception of two early works, none of it has hitherto been published. This omission, we are glad to note, is now being speedily made good, and the recent simultaneous issue by the Universal Edition of several of his latest works affords ample opportunity to everyone who is interested in contemporary developments for making the acquaintance of a singularly talented and original personality.

The fact that he already enjoys a certain legendary and shadowy reputation among *cognoscenti* without his works being known is in great measure due to the constant association of his name with that of his compatriot and contemporary, Béla Bartók, whose works are relatively familiar. This association, though doubtless inevitable, is not at all to Kodály's advantage, all the less so because there are at first sight sufficient superficial resemblances between them to justify it, and even to warrant the inference that Kodály is only a follower or imitator of Bartók. Nothing could be further from the truth. Such stylistic similarities as do undoubtedly exist are not the result of the influence of either composer upon the other, but are simply the outcome of wholly impersonal and extraneous influences to which both have equally been subject. Their respective talents have been nurtured by identically the same conditions, and have reacted to precisely the same artistic stimuli, particularly that afforded by the distinctive idiomatic peculiarities of Hungarian folk-music. But there the resemblance ends. Although both speak the same language to a certain extent, they express a totally different order of ideas and emotions. Their personalities are quite distinct from each other, and this, after all, is the only thing that really matters. It is not, ultimately, the national element which Borodin and Moussorgsky share in common that imparts significance to their music, but their individual genius. They merely happened to make use of certain hitherto neglected modes of expression for their own very good purposes. The reason why the music of

Rimsky-Korsakov, on the other hand, does not exhibit the same genuine and lasting qualities lies precisely in his utter lack of personality, in his almost entire reliance upon novel and exotic colouring and idiomatic piquancies which fail to retain our attention once the charm of their novelty and unfamiliarity has worn off. Although Kodály's utterance is highly coloured by national peculiarities, the quality of his thought is markedly personal, and a comparison of his music with that of Bartók reveals more contrasts than of similarities, more points of divergence than contact.

Kodály has written very few works—surprisingly few, in fact; but it would be a great mistake to assume that this is due to any lack of invention. As a matter of fact, sterility in art is far more frequently characterised by excessive than by restricted production; in any case, a few good works constitute a surer earnest of virility than a multitude of bad ones. The exiguity of Kodály's output, like that of many other fine artists, is due rather to a deliberate restraint and self-control than to any lack of invention. He is the possessor of an unsparing critical sense, and a laudable distaste for encumbering the already

groaning earth with even one more unnecessary or imperfectly realised work.

This aristocratic reserve and sensibility reveals itself also in his choice of *media*. He does not appear to be greatly attracted to the orchestra, but prefers to confine himself almost entirely to the comparatively restricted domain of chamber music. Two songs with orchestral accompaniment are his sole contribution to the larger forms. It is this curious and possibly unique combination of a popular and idiomatic mode of expression with refinement and delicacy of feeling, which constitutes the peculiar charm and appeal of Kodály's art.

In the earlier works the popular element tends to preponderate, and in some of the pianoforte pieces (Op. 3) can be found traces of an exasperated sensibility and a less restrained emotion than his later works exhibit. Particularly interesting is the group of sixteen songs with pianoforte accompaniment, settings of traditional words to music which embodies to such a remarkable degree the idiomatic characteristics of the Hungarian folk-songs on which they are modelled that they are almost indistinguishable from the originals. Here is a typical passage from No. 4:

SIXTEEN SONGS, OP. 1, NO. 4. KODÁLY.

Ex. 1. *mp cres.*

It - tá - na nem já - rok, vé - le nem gon-do-lók, Mindenkor szebbnél szebb. Sze re-tőt ta-lá - lok.

mp cres. *accel.*

Bva... *Molto allegro.* *ff*

Indeed, Kodály is much more uncompromisingly national from the very beginning than Bartók. The latter in his early works shows evident traces of the influence of Wagner and Strauss; but the former seems always to have evinced a decided hostility to German music, and to have altogether escaped its influence, for better or for worse. But in the course of time, while Bartók becomes more Beethovenian, Kodály falls to a certain extent under the influence of the modern French school, to certain members of which he reveals a marked affinity—although, unlike them, he neither falls into a bath of tonal impressionism nor makes use of any programmatic implications, literary or pictorial.

B

But while his style becomes more cosmopolitan and eclectic, the quality of his thought becomes increasingly personal. This is generally found to be the case with nationalist composers, unless they are content to write a few works, or, alternatively, to go on repeating *ad infinitum* what they have already said. It is no mere coincidence that Borodin, to use his own words, was only a *Sonntags-musiker*, who nevertheless found time to say all that he had to say in the intervals between his chemistry lectures at a girls' school (or was it experimental physics, like Dr. Pangloss in *Candide*?); that Moussorgsky similarly wrote very little, and seems to have spent most of his time in trying to supplement

the somewhat poor yield of the national soil by means of too copious libations to local deities; that Sygne had already begun to repeat himself before his untimely death; that Mr. Yeats, not being a professor of chemistry nor a *Sonntags-dichter*, nor yet a dipsomaniac, and still very much alive, came to an end of his limited, if exquisite, vein many years ago; or that Sibelius, Bartók, Stravinsky even, have all to a very large extent abandoned nationalism, or have, at any rate, mixed so many extraneous elements with it that it is no longer pure and undefiled. The fact is that although nationalism is a fertile field for musical exploitation, it is one which is quickly exhausted. Its many and indisputable riches lie near the surface, and its soil needs the constant enrichment of the more fecund, though probably more corrupt, loam of cosmopolitanism. The deeper and more profound an artist's utterance, the more universal in style, the more individual in conception it tends to become. Nationalism is a *via media*, a middle term, neither one thing nor another, neutralising complete individuality of thought and inhibiting a large and impersonal utterance of it.

And so we find that in his later and maturer works Kodály adopts a slightly broader and more eclectic style, although, as with Bartók or Sibelius, his thought is still recognisably coloured by racial proclivities.

It is difficult to think of any work for a solo instrument other than the pianoforte since the time of Bach which is able to awaken and maintain our interest except possibly Paganini's Violin *Capricci*. Stravinsky's clarinet pieces, for example, short though they be, succeed in outlasting our even shorter patience. To write an unaccompanied 'Cello Sonata in three movements, as

Kodály has done, demands considerable courage, but his musicianship is more than equal to the test. Our attention is held from first to last, as much by the abstract musical interest of each movement as by the wealth of resource and ingenuity of treatment which so eloquently testify to the intimate understanding of the nature and capabilities of the instrument for which the work is written. It is all the more worthy of serious attention in view of the scarcity of interesting modern 'cello music. It must be admitted, however, that it demands a virtuoso to perform it, the last movement in particular being of exceptional difficulty.

The *Duo*, Op. 7, for violin and 'cello, is hardly so satisfactory, largely on account of the almost insoluble problem which the combination presents. The perfect balance and texture of the quartet or even of the trio are unattainable, while the compensating advantages of the free, rhapsodic, and improvisatory possibilities at the disposal of the solo instrument are similarly excluded. A duo is not an ensemble nor yet two solo instruments, and in a work of any considerable length the unsatisfactory nature of the combination is bound to manifest itself. The slow movement nevertheless is one of great charm and melodic beauty.

The second String Quartet, Op. 10, is stylistically akin to the Quartets of Debussy and Ravel, relying less upon melodic independence or intricacy in the part-writing than on harmonic or colouristic contrast. The second movement—a slow movement, *Scherzo*, and *Finale* in one—is characteristically national in the constant vivid alternation of emotional extremes which it exhibits, between a mood of tender and elegiac sorrow and one of exuberant, almost boisterous, gaiety. Here is an extract:

QUARTET NO. 2, OP. 10.

KODÁLY.

Ex. 2.

The musical score is for a string quartet. The first system (Ex. 2) is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a melody in the first violin part, with the first and second violins playing in unison. The viola and cello parts provide a harmonic accompaniment. The dynamics are marked 'pp molto dolce' and 'ppp'. The second system continues the melody, with the first violin part becoming more active. The dynamics are marked 'senza sord. f cres. con fuoco.' and 'allargando.'.

The *Serenade* for two violins and viola (Op. 12) is the most recent of Kodály's works and one of the most attractive, particularly the second movement—a dialogue between the first violin and viola, while the second violin sustains throughout a soft, murmuring accompaniment—

a conception full of charm and delicate ironic fantasy :

SERENADE, OP. 12.

KODÁLY.

Ex. 3.

Lento ma non troppo. (♩ = 92.)

Ex. 3.

Lento ma non troppo. (♩ = 92.)

1st V.

2nd V.

sempre p p
(tremolo con sordino.)

1st V. *p indifferente.*

p espress.

cres.

cres.

f

ff

p

&c.

In fact, Kodály's slow movements strike us as being on the whole his best ; they are certainly the most completely personal. He has a vein of wistful meditation, of searching melancholy and tenderness, which is peculiarly his own. With all his simplicity and directness we are nevertheless always conscious of a curious subtlety and refinement of style, a studious exactness and precision of touch underlying the somewhat deceptive appearance of candour and ingenuousness in his procedure.

Bartók touches greater heights and wider extremes than Kodály; his genius is of a more robust order. Kodály seems rather to avoid extremes, not necessarily because he is fundamentally incapable of them, nor because he subscribes to the anti-

emotionalist dogmas of a certain momentarily prominent group of composers, but simply out of a natural and instinctive reticence and a habit of emotional reserve.

There is a delicate and elusive fragrance about his music which it is impossible to define or analyse ; a subtle flavour and aroma not unlike that of his native Tokay, imperceptible no doubt to palates vitiated by the vodka of the modern Russians, or by the cocktails and Cocteaux of ' Les Six.' We may be indifferent to it at first, but in time we learn to appreciate it. If this brief and inadequate notice should be the means of introducing it to a few potential admirers, its modest purpose will have been achieved.

PLAYER-PIANO PROJECTS

By J. D. M. RORKE

Mr. Carroll Brent Chilton is an enthusiast for musical culture, and, in particular, for the player-piano. I understand he was in at the birth of that invention, and he has been its devoted exponent and advocate ever since. Mechanically, the player-piano has reached a limited perfection, and for a number of years the only improvements have been in points of detail. It is also in widespread use. Mr. Chilton, however, is disappointed with the results. It has not achieved, and does not promise to achieve, for the cause of music anything like so much as he had hoped. In particular, it is not leading to any increase of technical musical knowledge. Mr. Chilton believes that, to a large extent, the standard form of instrument used is responsible for this failure. He has evolved ideas of his own for developing its educational possibilities. Apparently he has been unable to get any manufacturer to carry them out, and he appeals to musical people generally for support and pressure.

Mr. Chilton presents his case with perhaps rather too much abundance and impetuosity for the average Englishman. He takes a big view, and is full of ideas, very sound and illuminating, but by the time his 'pen has gleaned his teeming brain' the reader is somewhat dazed. Yet this ought not to blind us to, what seems to me at least, the very real importance of his argument and the very great merits of his suggestions. His proposals are two.

I.

'Audiscript Score.' This is the name given to a roll, perforated in the ordinary way, on which appears also the printed score. It is to be used in combination with an instrument Mr. Chilton has planned, in which the tracker-bar, music-roll, and take-up spool are set perpendicularly; in operation the paper passes laterally across the tracker-box, from right to left, the natural motion for reading. In addition, a running analytical commentary is printed on the roll.