GERMAN AND FRENCH COMPOSITIONAL INFLUENCES IN
BÉLA BARTÓK’S ORCHESTRAL WORKS 1903-1924:
CASE STUDIES IN A METHODOLOGY OF APPROPRIATION

A Thesis in
Musicology
by
Paul A. Sommerfeld

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The thesis of Paul A. Sommerfeld was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Charles D. Youmans  
Associate Professor of Musicology  
Thesis Adviser

Marica S. Tacconi  
Professor of Musicology

Sue E. Haug  
Professor of Music  
Director, School of Music

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

Attending the Budapest premiere of Richard Strauss’s tone poem Also sprach Zarathustra in February 1902 profoundly influenced the subsequent trajectory of the young Béla Bartók’s musical endeavors. Afterward, the budding composer, who at the moment stood at a creative impasse, immersed himself in Strauss’s orchestral works—Ein Heldenleben in particular—and thereafter resumed his compositional studies. In Strauss, Bartók discovered “the seeds of a new life,” a means with which he could create complex, serious music that he would unite with Hungarian characteristics—at least those elements that Europe as a whole associated with Hungarian identity at the time, meaning gypsy music and the verbunkos. Only with these “authentic” elements did Bartók believe he could craft a musical embodiment of the Hungarian ethos. Yet like many artists of the period, Bartók viewed Straussian modernism as a means to imbue his music with renewed vitality. Thus, he plunged into the tone poems of the world’s leading Teutonic composer.

This thesis offers a fresh, interdisciplinary perspective on Bartók’s compositional development, focusing particularly on the relationship between artistic nationalism and the European mainstream. Although early critics acclaimed Bartók’s first orchestral works as hallmarks of Hungarian nationalism, the music of Strauss, the most famous Germanic composer of the era, roused Bartók “as by a lightning stroke.” Moreover, Bartók’s subsequent orchestral compositions bespeak the influence of other non-Hungarian composers, particularly Debussy, Wagner, and the honorary “New German,” Liszt. Bartók’s appropriation of these specific composers’ stylistic tendencies foreshadows his rich engagement with European peasant music. Study of his early works
from this perspective traces the complete origins and manifestation—both nationalistic and otherwise—of his developing musical aesthetic and methodology of appropriation.

Three chapters, each focused on a few of Bartók’s major orchestral works between the years 1903-24, comprise my research. I analyze each orchestral work with respect to orchestrational technique, melodic development and transformation, harmonic language and function, and early emergences of peasant music. Chapter One centers on Strauss’s blatant appearance in Bartók’s symphonic poem Kossuth during his embrace of a chauvinistic nationalist ideology.

Chapter Two addresses Strauss’s continued presence in the music as well as the reintroduction of Wagner and Liszt in Suite No. 1, Suite No. 2, Two Portraits, and Two Pictures. Nationalist politics in early twentieth-century Hungary provides a philosophical and cultural context, especially as to why Bartók continued to use Strauss, the period’s leading Teutonic composer, as a compositional model. His gradual shift in political ideology away from the most fanatical forms of nationalism during this time provides a framework for exploring the meaning behind such shifts in his musical development.

Chapter Three addresses the complete internalization of the styles of the aforementioned composers as well as the appearance of Debussy in Four Orchestral Pieces (1912), The Wooden Prince (1917), and The Miraculous Mandarin (1919-24).
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Introduction

The Budapest premiere of Richard Strauss’s tone poem Also sprach Zarathustra in February 1902 profoundly influenced the young Béla Bartók. “Roused as by a lightning stroke,” Bartók rededicated himself to a serious, complex, and most importantly, a Hungarian musical aesthetic that embodied the Magyar ethos.¹ Thus, he plunged into Strauss’s modernist tone poems to reinvigorate his own music.

Despite Bartók’s obsession with Strauss, however, and his deep familiarity with other composers of the western European mainstream, scholars have largely overlooked this influence. Instead, commentators on Bartók’s early career focus on nineteenth-century Hungarian figures such as the composer Ernő Dohnányi and philosopher Georg Lukács, the politics of early twentieth-century Hungary, or Bartók’s later work with central European peasant music. Judit Frigyesi, Lynn Hooker, Malcolm Gillies, and Günter Weiss-Aigner have all addressed Straussian elements within some orchestral works from Bartók’s early period, but their work rarely explores the musical content beyond general statements of musical similarity, thus neglecting the broader continuities between these earlier works themselves as well as with Bartók’s later compositions.²

Although each of these perspectives provides valuable insight into Bartók’s compositional development and style, the lack of research on Austro-German and subsequent French influences severely limits our understanding of his entire compositional output. An essential aspect of his artistic personality remains unexplored. Indeed, throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries, Bartók’s music has remained an integral part of the standard concert repertoire of the world’s major orchestras. Listeners have accepted the scholarly conclusion that Bartók made a clean break from the Austro-German and French musical traditions of Strauss, Franz Liszt, and Claude Debussy, even though the composer himself admitted the profound influence of the European mainstream on his compositional development. This misjudgment has far-reaching implications for our reading of Bartók as a central figure of nationalism in European cultural history.

To be sure, Bartók’s Straussschwärmerei cooled by the end of 1904, but the remnants of the German composer’s influence clung to his subsequent orchestral works. His passion for Strauss—first made manifest in his symphonic poem *Kossuth* (1903)—thereafter transformed itself into a compositional process that stamped his mature aesthetic: a consistent methodology of internalization of pre-existing musical sources, by which they were subsumed into his compositional language and used to express the essence of Hungarian identity. The sustained appearance of Straussian techniques and melodies in Bartók’s ensuing orchestral works through *The Miraculous Mandarin* (1918-24) bridges its early beginnings in *Kossuth*. Their prominence fades, but the process

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continued, and by Bartók’s own admission allowed him to reconsider the music of Liszt and Richard Wagner. Moreover, the continued presence of these foreign influences—even as Bartók’s underlying ideology definitively shifted—contributed to the interaction of this new array of techniques with not only the works of other Western composers such as Debussy, but also a musical source that would be one of the defining elements in his life and musical career: rural peasant music. The present understanding of Bartók’s aesthetic—his quest to craft music that elevates Hungarian society—thus overlooks the continuity embodied in this methodology of appropriation.

This thesis offers a fresh, interdisciplinary perspective on Bartók’s compositional development, focusing particularly on the relationship between artistic nationalism and the European mainstream. Although early critics acclaimed Bartók’s first orchestral works as hallmarks of Hungarian nationalism, the music of Strauss, the most famous Germanic composer of the era, roused Bartók “as by a lightning stroke.” Moreover, Bartók’s major orchestral compositions in the following decade—Suite No. 1 (1905), Suite No. 2 (1905-07), Two Portraits (1907), Two Pictures (1910), Four Orchestral Pieces (1912), The Wooden Prince (1914-17), and The Miraculous Mandarin—bespeak the influence of other non-Hungarian composers, particularly Debussy, Wagner, and the honorary “New German,” Liszt. Bartók’s appropriation of these specific composers’ stylistic tendencies foreshadows his rich engagement with European peasant music. Study of his early works from this perspective traces the complete origins and manifestation—both nationalist and otherwise—of his developing musical aesthetic and methodology of appropriation.
Three chapters, each focused on a few of Bartók’s major orchestral works between the years 1903-24, comprise my research. The complex nature of Bartók’s compositional style necessitates the study of a sufficient number of orchestral works to trace both the continuities with and stark divergences from the past. I analyze each of the works with respect to orchestrational techniques, melodic development and transformation, harmonic language and function, and early emergences of peasant music. I then compare each piece with an obvious model, using orchestral works by Strauss, Debussy, Wagner, and Liszt. Thereafter, I will address the meaning and significance of Bartók’s appropriation of these musical techniques within the broader context of his identification with the Hungarian nationalist movement, including their manifestation in his music as well as the implications for his works post 1924.

Chapter One centers on Strauss’s blatant appearance in the symphonic poem *Kossuth* during Bartók’s embrace of a chauvinistic nationalist ideology. Chapter Two addresses Strauss’s continued presence in the music as well as the reintroduction of Wagner and Liszt in Suite No. 1, Suite No. 2, *Two Portraits*, and *Two Pictures*. Nationalist politics in early twentieth-century Hungary provides a philosophical and cultural context, especially as to why Bartók continued to use Strauss, the period’s leading Teutonic composer, as a compositional model. His gradual shift in political ideology away from the most fanatical forms of nationalism during this time provides a framework for exploring the meaning behind such shifts in his musical development.

Chapter Three addresses the complete internalization of the styles of the aforementioned composers as well as the appearance of Debussy in *Four Orchestral Pieces* (1912), *The Wooden Prince* (1917), and *The Miraculous Mandarin*. By 1912,
Bartók had immersed himself in Hungarian peasant music. The integration of this new element within a still decidedly Straussian compositional language marks the earliest emergence of his mature compositional language, demonstrating the *Four Orchestral Pieces*’ importance in Bartók’s musical development. Finally, most scholars classify *The Wooden Prince* as the last work before Bartók’s full-fledged artistic maturity. The accepted view of this work as the conclusion of his developmental period indicates its centrality to the development of his musical language and independent voice. Likewise, the philosophical undertones of this amalgamation should not be underestimated; from this perspective, *The Wooden Prince* serves as a musical representation of Bartók’s evolving philosophical views on nationalism within the context of twentieth-century Europe. The continued appearance of these elements within *The Miraculous Mandarin*, a work fundamentally different in construction and conception from *The Wooden Prince*, re-emphasizes this newfound direction that simultaneously retains continuities with the past.

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Chapter 1

Straussian Allusion in Béla Bartók’s Kossuth

Attending the Budapest premiere of Richard Strauss’s symphonic poem *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1896) in February 1902 profoundly influenced the subsequent trajectory of the young Béla Bartók’s musical endeavors. Afterward, the budding composer, who at the moment stood at a creative impasse, immersed himself in Strauss’s orchestral works—*Ein Heldenleben* (1898) in particular—and, thereafter, resumed his compositional studies. Paradoxically, however, this *Strausschwärmeriei* accompanied Bartók’s positive reception of a decidedly chauvinistic nationalist ideology that eschewed all things non-Hungarian. In a letter dated 18 September 1903, Bartók railed against his mother’s use of German as her primary means of communication, demanding that she use the Hungarian diminutive of Elizabeth, Böske, rather than the German, Beth, for his younger sister.\(^4\) Much to the chagrin of his piano instructor, Bartók even wore traditional Hungarian dress to his own final recital.\(^5\) Such attitudes reflect the young Bartók’s culture shock upon his arrival in Budapest in 1899. Indeed, Judit Frigyesi asserts that his upbringing in provincial Hungary did not prepare him for this intellectual atmosphere, in which German dominated both the city’s linguistic and cultural orientation.\(^6\) Alienated from most social circles during these student years in Budapest, Bartók initially rejected the perceived German and Jewish bourgeois hegemony that dictated the aesthetics of the

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city’s cultural milieu.\textsuperscript{7}

In voicing such pronounced anti-German sentiments, Bartók aligned himself with the official nationalism promoted by the Hungarian government.\textsuperscript{8} Magyar nobles considered themselves the embodiment of the national ideal. These aristocrats had dominated the government since the Compromise of 1867 that created the Dual Monarchy—the legitimacy of which both the government and the general Magyar populace fully accepted by the 1890s.\textsuperscript{9} Thus, many politicians’ focus shifted from pursuing outright independence to achieving greater Hungarian power within the empire itself. They hoped to eventually relocate the center of power and influence from Vienna to Budapest. Consequently, the conservative government attempted to consolidate its power base within the Hungarian realm of the Dual Monarchy. The legislature enacted a policy of forced Magyarization: Magyar became the sole language of school instruction and government operation, even in Romanian-dominated eastern Hungary, while government officials and laymen alike caviled against the use of German command words in Hungarian military units.

Tensions and controversy brewed, however, over this desire for transformation.

\textsuperscript{7} The Jewish population in Budapest largely adopted the Magyar language and culture. Considered by the Magyar government a religion rather than an ethnic group, they played a prominent role in Hungarian urbanization. Growing chauvinistic nationalist sentiment in reaction to calls for reform and modernism—frequently voiced by the Jewish population—however, fueled anti-Semitic prejudices in Budapest at the turn of the century. See Géza Jeszenszky, “Hungary through World War I and the End of the Dual Monarchy,” in A History of Hungary (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990) 274-5; and Hooker, “The Political and Cultural Climate in Hungary,” 15. For a thorough description of Bartók’s sense of isolation, see Frigyesi, “Béla Bartók and Hungarian Nationalism,” 23-6.


\textsuperscript{9} Jeszenszky, “Hungary through World War I,” 269.
Many questioned whether Hungary should turn to this idealized past or continue with the cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic society toward which Budapest was already shifting. This progressive, modernist movement, soon dominated by intellectuals such as Endre Ady and György Lukács, also yearned for the creation of a national Hungarian identity, but one rooted in social progress and modernism rather than the oppressive power structure of a government dominated by the aristocracy.

Bartók’s immersion in the tone poems of the world’s leading Teutonic composer during this clash of ideals forms a seeming incongruity with his protestations against Germanic cultural dominance in Hungary, mirroring the broader polarities between the government and the modernist movement. Producing his own piano reduction of *Ein Heldenleben*, and undeterred by his composition professor János Koessler’s disparaging opinion of the piece itself, Bartók traveled to Vienna in January 1903 to perform the work from memory at the *Tonkünstlerverein*. Nevertheless, his prolonged sense of isolation contributed to his embrace of the only characteristics regarded at the time as expressive of Hungarian identity: gypsy music, the *verbunkos*, and the attitudes of the government’s official nationalism. Only with these “authentic” elements did Bartók believe he could craft a musical embodiment of the Hungarian ethos. As Frigyesi and others affirm, the underlying question of music’s—and more broadly, art’s—purpose in turn-of-the-century Hungarian society frequently centered on its ability to elevate and enlighten the public at large, to express their collective Magyar identity, offering a plausible explanation for

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12 Although Bartók in all likelihood refers to the *Musikverein*, in the letter he uses this alternate term. See letter to Mrs. Béla Bartók, 17 January 1903, in *Béla Bartók Letters*, 20.
Bartók’s youthful embrace of these principles. In expressing this identity, Bartók desired a Hungarian music that was both serious and complex. For this he turned to Austro-German modernism. Regarding much of the Hungarian romantic compositions from the nineteenth century with contempt, Bartók viewed them as inferior; the Hungarian elements—rhythmic patterns, melodic ornamentation—only appeared in lighter, non-serious music. He later wrote:

[Until a few years ago] there was no valuable, distinctive and characteristically Hungarian art music. The music of Bihari, Lavotta, and a few foreigners—Csermák, Rózsavölgyi, Pecsenyánszki, etc.—that is to say, nothing but more or less dilettante musicians all under the influence of Gypsy music and unworthy of the admiration of people of good taste, cannot be taken as a basis [for Hungarian art music]. Only dilettante musicologists can discuss these dilettante works in a serious tone of voice.

This 1911 passage admittedly reflects Bartók’s post-1905 expeditions that presaged his obsession with rural peasant music, but it nevertheless demonstrates his general distaste for the work of nineteenth-century Hungarian composers.

Likewise, the more conservative Brahmsian compositional school dominated the basic musical aesthetics of not merely Hungary, but much of Western Europe. Indeed, Koessler and the majority of the music faculty at the Budapest Royal Academy remained committed to Brahms’s “conservative” style (i.e. the Germanic school), laying the groundwork for Bartók’s infatuation with Strauss rather than a non-German composer.

Artists of the period generally viewed modernism as a means to imbue their national

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patriotism with renewed vitality. In the modernist Strauss, Bartók witnessed “the seeds of a new life,” a means with which he could create complex, serious music that he would unite with Hungarian characteristics—at least those elements that Europe as a whole associated with Magyar identity at the time.17 Although present listeners may hasten to label Strauss a “Late Romantic,” Bartók, like his contemporaries, regarded the German composer’s work as the pinnacle of modernity. Indeed, Carl Dahlhaus notes:

It is absurd to yoke Strauss, Mahler, and the young Schönberg, composers who represented modernism in the minds of their turn-of-the-century contemporaries, with the self-proclaimed antimodernist Pfitzner, calling them all “late romantics” in order to supply a veneer of internal unity to an age fraught with stylistic contradictions and conflicts. This veneer has nothing to do with reality but is merely the logical upshot of a methodology fixated on a notion from intellectual history: the “zeitgeist.”[…] Turn-of-the-century modernism, as the term Jugendstil implies, saw itself as a fresh start in a new direction.18

This swirl of ideas manifested in Bartók’s first completed orchestral work, Kossuth. By August of 1903 he finished orchestrating the symphonic poem, which narrated the failed 1848 Revolution led by Lajos Kossuth against the Hapsburg monarchy.19 A hero embedded in national memory and identity, Kossuth had only died in 1894. The subsequent decade witnessed attempts from both the conservatives and modernists to appropriate his memory for their own political agendas amidst growing partisan antagonisms.20 The 1904 premiere of Bartók’s composition thus coincided perfectly with the emerging bureaucratic storm, a display of political acumen rarely

20 For a detailed analysis of this struggle, see Martha Lampland, “Death of a Hero: Hungarian National Identity and the Funeral of Lajos Kossuth” Hungarian Studies 8/1 (1993): 34.
Unsurprisingly, given Bartók’s early obsession with Strauss and especially his study of *Ein Heldenleben*, critics have noted elements reminiscent of Strauss’s tone poem in *Kossuth*, especially the similarity of their subject matter. Divided into ten sections, *Kossuth’s* program closely follows that of *Ein Heldenleben*, minus an ending filled with contented resignation (Figure 1). The first section introduces the hero, Kossuth. Thereafter, the threat of danger (the Austrian army) enters, paralleling the critic’s music section in *Ein Heldenleben*. A remembrance of the life that was and a longing to revive it follows, much like the feminine love theme that trails the critic’s music in Strauss’s tone poem. Battle scenes followed by a dénouement occur in both works, at which point the similarities in form starkly diverge to their own conclusions: Strauss’s hero achieves fulfillment while *Kossuth’s* funeral march reflects the revolution’s historical failure. Despite these similarities, *Ein Heldenleben* remains considerably more expansive than Bartók’s work, especially in light of Strauss’s complex weaving of a multitude of themes and motives.

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21 For a full English translation of Bartók’s original Hungarian program, see Frigyesi, “Béla Bartók and Hungarian Nationalism,” 270-77.
22 Bartók did not receive another broadly positive reaction to his music in his native country until the enthusiastic praise heaped upon *A fából faragott királyfi*, Op. 13 [The Wooden Prince] in 1917.
23 In his discussion of Richard Wagner, Christopher Reynolds underscores the importance of similarity in text and wording that supplements musical allusion. See Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion: Context and Content in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 67.
Further instances of Strauss’s influence on Bartók’s composition have not escaped notice. But contemporary critics passed over the Strauss-isms they heard in the work—usually nothing more than vague assertions of chromatic, dissonant harmonies—in order to praise its blatantly nationalist overtones, such as the musical bastardization of the Austrian national anthem.24 Later commentators on Bartók’s early career focus on nineteenth-century Hungarian figures such as the composer Ernő Dohnányi and philosopher Georg Lukács, the politics of early twentieth-century Hungary, or Bartók’s later work with central European peasant music.25 Modern scholars such as Frigyesi discuss broad similarities to Strauss in one or two instances of melodic contour, and others mistakenly attribute the few Strauss-isms identified to Franz Liszt, a composer whose music Bartók also studied in the early 1900s.26

24 For an English translation of a full review of the premiere by a contemporary critic, Pongrácz Kacshoh, see Ferenc Bónis, notes to Béla Bartók: Kossuth Symphonic Poem and Quintet for Piano and Strings (Performed by the Budapest Symphony and Tátrai Quartet), CD, Hungaroton HCD 31179, 1989. Also see the collected reviews in Documenta Bartókiana, vol 1, ed. Denijs Dille (Budapest: Ungarische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1964), 30-63.


26 This assumption, at best a distorted generalization, ignores the chronology of Kossuth’s genesis. Although he knew and performed many of Liszt’s works as early as 1899, Bartók did not shed his infatuation with Strauss in favor of Liszt until well into 1904, pointing to a greater Straussian, rather than exclusively Lisztian, influence in Kossuth. Bartók later emphasized this point in his brief 1921 autobiography, stating that the study of Strauss allowed him to truly understand both Liszt’s and Wagner’s music. Although Frigyesi, among others, identify the similarity of Bartók’s hero theme to a theme in Liszt’s B-minor Sonata, the panoply of techniques and melodies derived from Strauss presented here indicates the latter’s far greater influence on this work and occludes extensive discussion of the former. See András Batta, “Gemeinsames Nietzsche-Symbol bei Bartók und bei R. Strauss,” Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae 24/3-4 (1982): 275-82 and László Vikárius, “The Expression of National and Personal Identity in Béla Bartók’s Music,” Dansk årbog for musikforskning 32 (2005): 43-64. For the autobiography, see “Autobiography,” in Béla Bartók Essays, 409. Malcolm Gillies also identifies some Straussian elements in Bartók’s Suite No.1 (1905) and Suite No. 2 (1905-07), but he overlooks many
Deeper analysis, however, demonstrates a plethora of previously unidentified Straussian allusions and quotations in addition to compositional techniques embedded in Kossuth. These elements reflect Bartók’s commitment to a serious, complex music—“modern” in construction—that at the same time expressed Hungarian identity. In particular, numerous connections to Strauss in Bartók’s treatment of orchestration and melody remain unexplored in Kossuth, leaving the full extent of Strauss's influence on Bartók's developing compositional language unknown. This dual nature in Kossuth—the synthesis of Western, German practice with what Bartók considered at the time as Hungarian in character—deepens our understanding of his chauvinistic early temperament. His first completed orchestral composition reflects an internalization and appropriation of Strauss’s own musical style and techniques; a similar treatment of peasant music in the following years indicates the development of a broader methodology of appropriation. A fundamental tendency of his mature compositional aesthetic thus developed far earlier and more systematically than has been previously recognized.


27 The complexity of this process becomes apparent in Reynolds’s analysis. He states: “the intricate and complementary acts of concealment and interpretation bring artist and audience together in an intellectual game of symbolic hide-and-seek.” Reynolds, Motives for Allusion, 21.

28 Schneider discusses Kossuth’s derivation from nineteenth-century Hungarian rhapsodies. Together with the emphasis on the Straussian connection presented here, we see an early example of an intersection with modernity, of Bartók subsuming various elements into his own musical language. See Schneider, Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition, 54.

29 Karol Berger notes: “While what a quotation or allusion refers to may be by itself outside the world of the work, the quotation or allusion induct it, so to speak, into the world of the work. If in interpreting this world we do not notice, or disregard, the quotation or allusion, we miss a feature of the world we interpret, not something external to it.” See Berger, A Theory of Art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 180; quoted in Reynolds, Motives for Allusion, 181.
Orchestration

This chapter addresses three categories of compositional influence in Kossuth—orchestration, texture, and melody—each one treated separately for clarity. Strauss’s characteristic orchestrational practices in particular saturate Bartók’s technique in Kossuth. Indeed, such techniques proved to hold the most lasting impact on his compositional development. The Straussian Steigerung, or intensification of musical energy through harmonic, rhythmic, and dynamic processes, especially permeates Kossuth. A prime example of Strauss’s technique appears in the transition to “Von den Freuden und Leidenschaften” [Of the Joys and Passions] in Also sprach Zarathustra. Strauss creates an ascending, largely chromatic gesture that percolates up into the full orchestra (Example 1). With a brisk tempo and colorful doubling by the woodwinds, the

Example 1. Richard Strauss, Also sprach Zarathustra, mm. 105-14

For a thorough discussion of the Straussian Steigerung, see Walter Werbeck, Die Tondichtungen von Richard Strauss (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1996), 323-86. Batta identifies this Straussian technique in Kossuth, but he suggests it only occurs briefly, provides no specific examples, and does not present it within the broader continuity of influence. See “Bartók und die Programm-musik,” Hamburger Jahrbruch für Musikwissenschaft 6 (1982): 171.
exact pitches become lost in a wave of extended pure sound and force that propels the music toward a melodic statement.

Chromatic *Steigerungen* permeate multiple sections of *Kossuth*, creating washes of sound and color. The opening of Section 3 (“Danger threatens the fatherland”), mm. 53-4 and 58-9, features ascending chromatic lines in the first and second violin (Example 2). On both occasions ascending triplets surrender to quintuplet figures, creating a haze of sound colored with woodwind doubling in a much higher tessitura that swells to a new statement of the hero theme. A similar effect occurs toward the end of Section 8, the battle. Ascending scalar passages in the strings (m. 408) layered with sextuplet figures in the winds enter in m. 414, near the close of the section (Example 3). A quick tempo,

Example 2. Béla Bartók, *Kossuth*, mm. 53-5

Example 3. Bartók, *Kossuth*, mm. 413-18
crescendo markings, and slurs in both instrumental families blur the texture, propelling the music toward a dramatic climax. Just as in Strauss’s tone poems, Bartók places the murmuring texture in the background; the listener is not meant to hear all the minute details.

Many intensifications in Kossuth likewise resemble those in Don Juan, a work Bartók plausibly would have explored after his obsessive study of Ein Heldenleben and Also sprach Zarathustra. This is not to suggest, however, that Strauss does not extensively use Steigerungen in both Ein Heldenleben and Also sprach Zarathustra. Both tone poems include many examples; but intensifications with more overt connections to Kossuth appear in Don Juan. For example, in mm. 479-85 of Don Juan, mere measures into the recapitulation, Strauss inserts scalar triplet figures in the strings that quickly ascend and descend, consummating a Steigerung (Example 4). Shortly thereafter, in mm. 484-85, a similar figure only ascends. With a brisk tempo, the exact pitches lose their definition in a ripple of sound that alternates with the tone poem’s primary melody—the theme of Don Juan himself.

Example 4. Strauss, Don Juan, mm. 479-85

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This particular manifestation of a Steigerung appears in mm. 80-1 and 84-5 of Kossuth. In both instances the cello, viola, and second violin ascend, arpeggiating an E-major triad (Example 5). The sixteenth-note triplets marked with a crescendo deflect focus from the individual pitches themselves. The inclusion of neighbor tones in the triplets creates the smoother ascending motion of the Don Juan example. Moreover, as in Don Juan, these swells alternate with statements of a melody, in the case of Kossuth a new figure derived from the hero theme. Finally, it is not insignificant that Bartók places the swells in E major. The section of Kossuth in which these swells appear, Section 4 (“A better fate than was ours”), depicts the Magyar people asserting their desire for control over their collective fate. The key of E major, long associated with sexuality and dominance in Strauss’s music, bolsters the Magyar people’s aggressive stance. Bartók may not have known of the sexual connotation of E major in Strauss’s music, but he likely would have recognized the assertive, masculine tone Strauss evokes while using the key. Appropriating the technique for his own musical purposes suggests a deliberate compositional choice.

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32 Frigyesi offers a thorough dissection of Bartók’s thematic development of his hero theme solely within the composition itself in Frigyesi, “Béla Bartók and Hungarian Nationalism,” 118-26.

Chromatic scalar passages in *Kossuth* functioning as *Steigerungen* also parallel the “enemies/critics” music in *Ein Heldenleben* (m. 118). In the latter work, Strauss layers the woodwind’s chromatic lines such that one can scarcely distinguish individual pitches from one another. In mm. 17-8 of *Kossuth*, three flutes outline diminished triads and chromatic scales in contrasting ascending and descending patterns (Example 6). The effect, however, evokes a flash of color rather than the more extended cacophony of the critic’s music in *Ein Heldenleben*. Although this particular passage lacks programmatic similarity to that in Strauss’s work beyond a possible foreshadowing of the woodwind-dominated texture of Section 2, which depicts the Magyar people’s sorrowful oppression by the hated Austrian Empire, its abstract musical connection reflects Bartók’s straightforward appropriation of a Straussian orchestral technique. His interest lies far more with the actual sounds that Strauss creates. Moreover, the more direct, literal nature of imitation in this instance of manipulation betrays Bartók’s youth, his modeling of Strauss. He veers toward near quotation on numerous occasions in *Kossuth*, demonstrating the lack of systematic application and maturity that characterizes his later
treatment of peasant music. Indeed, such palpable examples reveal themselves even more forcefully in Bartók’s treatment of melodic figures.\textsuperscript{34}

**Texture**

Specific motivic figures from *Ein Heldenleben* appear in multiple sections of *Kossuth.* Several may appear more melodic in nature, but Bartók, like Strauss, uses them largely as textural devices. After the initial statement of the hero theme in *Ein Heldenleben*, Strauss accompanies its repetition with steadily pulsating eighth notes in the trumpet, trombone, second violin, and viola (Example 7). With this device he creates an aura of grandeur and stateliness suitable for a hero. In *Kossuth*, Bartók layers the second statement of his hero theme with a similar figure (Example 8). The oboe, clarinet, and bassoon pulsate in

Example 7. Strauss, *Ein Heldenleben*, mm. 17-20

\textsuperscript{34} No definitive evidence exists as to whether Bartók intended listeners to hear these passages as Straussian imitation or even quotation. Ferenc Bónis asserts, however, that Bartók frequently inserted quotations from other compositions within his own music. See Ferenc Bónis, “Quotations in Bartók’s Music: A Contribution to Bartók’s Psychology of Composition,” *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 5/1-4 (1963): 355. The implications of this in regards to *Kossuth* are discussed at the close of the chapter. Furthermore, although one may question claims of intentional allusion without direct evidence of intent from Bartók himself, Reynolds reminds us that “composers were no more or less vocal about their debts and biographical tendencies than writers of the period, and literary critics long ago realized that despite the fact that nineteenth-century writers said nothing of their allusions, and neither interpreted their symbolism nor discussed their use of irony, these writers alluded, developed personal symbols, and wrote ironically.” See Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion*, 155 and 169. Indeed, because of Bartók’s extensive formal education in Hungary, we can easily extend this practice into the long nineteenth century.
triplets, forming a C-major triad, a key traditionally associated with pomp and grandeur.

Bartók employs the figure far longer than Strauss, however, by passing it to the first violin and viola in mm. 18-22. Rhythmically transforming the figure into triplets, maintaining a quicker tempo, and creating a lighter texture by placing the figure in the flute limits the aura of triumph and stateliness, but audible traces of the effect nonetheless linger in the woodwinds’ lighthearted tone.

Overt references to Ein Heldenleben regarding this figure become more apparent in Section 6 of Kossuth. The horns begin the section with pulsating eighth notes rhythmically identical to those in Ein Heldenleben. Bartók alters Strauss’s orchestration, but placing the figure in the horn recalls the resonant brass sound representative of the triumphant masculinity inherent to the figure’s original appearance in Ein Heldenleben (Example 9). Moreover, Bartók layers the eighth-note figure with the hero theme, just as
Strauss does in mm. 17-20 of *Ein Heldenleben*. The C#-minor tonality as well as the *vivace* tempo likewise reflect the drama: Kossuth and the army prepare to retake their homeland from the Austrian oppressors (Section 6, “To the battlefield!”). Consequently, although Bartók never uses the eighth-note figure in precisely the same manner as Strauss, its pairing with the hero theme in both occurrences in *Kossuth* denotes the Germanic composer’s influence. One must register the manipulative aspect of Bartók’s allusion: even when lifting something fairly directly from Strauss, Bartók introduces his own modifications. Although somewhat crude and obvious in nature—especially when compared to Bartók’s later compositions—they prove the inherent methodology behind the practice, a methodology that perfected itself with each new musical source he encountered.  

Another technique derived from Strauss that appears in *Kossuth*, succinctly described as an abrupt harmonic or textural shift, prominently emerges in m. 10 of *Ein Heldenleben* (Example 10). The A♭ in the violin, still in the opening key of E♭ major, unexpectedly ascends to an A♮ and proceeds to outline an A-major tonality—a tritone away from the opening key. Bartók uses this very procedure in *Kossuth*. In mm. 20-1 of the symphonic poem, the second violin and horn descend to a G# rather than the expected G♮.

Example 10. Strauss, *Ein Heldenleben*, mm. 9-12

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35 As Reynolds argues “it is unreasonable to demand that motives be identical in every respect in order to talk about purposeful musical connections between them. Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion*, 7.

36 Similarities in harmonic function and progression remain noticeably absent in *Kossuth*, though crunching dissonances throughout the work—noticeably in Section 8—point to the influence of Strauss’s modernist language. Bartók also utilizes third relationships for keys as Strauss does in his tone poem, but Bartók’s are usually major thirds (A minor, F minor, and C# minor for major sections) while Strauss’s are minor thirds (E major, G♭ major, and C minor for principal sections).
Example 11. Bartók, Kossuth, mm. 19-22

Example 12. Bartók, Kossuth, mm. 37-40

G♯, shifting the harmonic focus to that of a possible C-minor tonal center in the next measure, though at the very least not the anticipated A minor (Example 11). Likewise, in mm. 37-8 of Kossuth, the hero theme begins in B♭ minor, as expected from the preceding cadence (Example 12). The C♭ neighbor tone in m. 38, however, shifts the melody’s expected direction with a dotted rhythmic figure that leads to a cadence in B major (m. 41). Neither of these abrupt shifts constitutes as jarring a harmonic shift as the example from Ein Heldenleben. Bartók may not have created as stark a contrast as Strauss, but he nonetheless exercises the same fundamental technique in both instances. These unexpected developments impel the music’s forward direction, precisely the function of the chromaticism in m. 10 of Ein Heldenleben. They unearth Bartók’s manipulation of a quintessential Straussian technique in his own oeuvre, anticipating his treatment of peasant music. He incorporates fresh elements into his music that, although more noticeably imitated in Kossuth, still lose much of their original flavor.

Throughout Kossuth, Bartók uses another decidedly Straussian orchestral technique for a similar effect, an example of which occurs in m. 24. Although the ascending chromatic line in the first violin resolves to the expected A-minor tonality, the cello and bass emphasize a C#, briefly forming a first-inversion A-major triad (Example 13). Additionally, the dynamic on the downbeat of m. 25 shifts to piano, while the brass
fade out of the texture in favor of divisi woodwinds and strings. Together, these musical elements, counter-intuitive in relation to the crescendo and rising intensity of the preceding material, emphasize the abrupt shift. Bartók’s placement likely rests in programmatic intent, but the narrative pictorial element in Strauss’s own tone poems, swirling in Bartók’s mind at the time, suggests a plausible continuity of influence.

Bartók uses in Kossuth one other textural procedure derivative of Strauss: the layering of multiple melodic ideas in one section. Johannes Brahms famously once scolded the young Strauss for building melodies and their variations from triads, but the technique appears in Strauss’s music throughout his entire lengthy career.37 Ein Heldenleben proves no exception to this practice. The effect arises most prominently in the final sections of the work (mm. 678-920), in which Strauss ingeniously superimposes dozens of melodies from his previous compositions. To a lesser extent, the practice of layering melodies occurs in Kossuth. First, in mm. 24-6, Bartók places a melody derived from the hero theme in the first violin, cello, and flute in A-minor (Example 13). A countermelody, characterized by an ascending chromatic passage that starts on an A♯, appears in the viola and partially in the English horn. An ascending chromatic figure in


the cello, bass, and bassoon ornamenting C oscillates between A major and A minor. The violin melody maintains dominance through dynamic contrast, but the other figures are still audible. Second, in mm. 33-5, the descending melody in the flute and oboe contrasts the ascending variation of the hero theme in the cello (Example 14). The E♭ clarinet includes a melodic figure that saturates the overall texture. All three melodic figures still derive their pitch content primarily from a G-major triad (with chromatic embellishments), demonstrating Bartók’s use of a decidedly Straussian technique: contrapuntal transparency. Although one could argue for Wagner’s or even Liszt’s influence, the simple and straightforward nature of the music negates Wagnerian polyphony while the complexities of the texture point away from Liszt. Strauss, rather than these two, informed Bartók’s compositional decisions.

Bartók’s choices in the number of parts and instruments in *Kossuth* replicate Strauss’s nearly verbatim in *Ein Heldenleben*, heightening these orchestrational effects and strengthening the argument for intentionality. Although Bartók’s tone poem includes some common instrument ratios of the era (five-part strings and three trombones being two examples), it requires a relatively large orchestra, including eight horns and five trumpets, numbers atypical enough to cite the influence of *Ein Heldenleben*, which includes the same number of each. Moreover, Bartók’s orchestration of many of his melodies—similar in their innate construction to those in Strauss’s works—parallels that
in *Ein Heldenleben* and other Strauss tone poems. With the opening statement of the hero theme such a contention becomes immediately apparent: both composers associate their hero themes primarily with the horn (Examples 15a and 15b). More importantly, Bartók’s hero theme includes triplet arpeggiation of chords similar to, if not as expansive in range as, examples from *Ein Heldenleben*. Bartók places the theme in the bassoon and horn rather than the horn, cello, and bass, as Strauss does, but the prevailing timbre recalls that of *Ein Heldenleben*, although in *Kossuth* the sound arguably loses some of the warmth and richness of Strauss’s work.\(^{38}\) Nevertheless, the inclusion of the open fifth (A-E) in the cello and double bass alludes to Strauss’s original orchestration as

\(^{38}\) Frigyesi does cite the similarities between the two hero themes, but she neglects to address the affect of Bartók’s choice in orchestration. See “Béla Bartók and Hungarian Nationalism,” 117-19.
well as provides more resonance to the overall character. Once more, Bartók subsumes a Straussian technique into a composition that, at the time, he regarded as expressive of Hungarian identity.  

Melody

Ein Heldenleben

In subsequent sections of Kossuth Bartók also voices his hero theme similarly to Ein Heldenleben. At the close of Section 2 (“What sorrow lies so heavily on thy heart?”), mm. 47-8, he emphasizes the perceived masculinity of Strauss’s original doubling with horn, cello, and double bass (Example 16). He also expands the range so that it spans nearly two octaves, further recalling Strauss’s original. Beginning in Section 3 (“Danger threatens the fatherland!”), a similar doubling continues for multiple statements of the melody (Example 17). The inclusion of trumpets and trombones increases the militaristic overtones hinted in the section’s title, adding dramatic flair to the melody in the symphonic narrative style epitomized by Strauss.

The first appearance of Bartók’s hero theme may lack the wide range of Strauss’s, but its later appearances, as briefly mentioned above, increasingly reflect Strauss’s

Example 16. Bartók, Kossuth, mm. 47-8

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Indeed, in discussing the heritage of Ludwig van Beethoven, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms, Reynolds asserts that a composer’s skill rested on not only his originality but also his dexterity at allusion. See Reynolds, Motives for Allusion, 43.
In mm. 34-5, a truncated statement in the cello leaps a minor seventh, expanding the melody’s range to nearly two octaves (Example 14). In three more instances Bartók thickens the orchestral texture and expands the theme’s range. The beginning of Section 7 (“Come, oh come, ye haughty warriors, ye valiant heroes!”) features the hero theme in all eight horns, viola, and cello at the unison, spanning almost two octaves (Example 18). Sweeping in line and theatrical in effect, especially with the inclusion of multiple rests, the statement harks back to the drama and excitement of Strauss’s orchestration of his hero theme in *Ein Heldenleben*. The second two instances are nearly identical to one another. In mm. 78-9 and 87-9, Bartók places the theme in the cello and double bass in a three-octave span (Examples 19a and 19b). The range of the melody itself spans one and a half octaves. Furthermore, Bartók harmonizes the end of each statement with a C-major triad (in the second occurrence he increases the

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*See the analysis of Bartók’s development of his hero theme in Frigyesi, “Béla Bartók and Hungarian Nationalism,” 118-26.*
tension by adding a minor seventh), perhaps alluding to the piece's earlier heroic triumph.

Indeed, the title and programmatic content of Section 4, “A better fate than was ours,”
signify a golden era long past. Although Strauss does not harmonize the hero theme in *Ein Heldenleben* in this chorale-like fashion, Bartók’s sonorous doubling in the orchestration and expansion of the range nevertheless bear the German composer’s influence—that is, his portrayal of the hero’s masculinity and gravitas.

Strauss’s rhythmic manipulation of the hero theme in *Ein Heldenleben* likewise influences Bartók’s treatment of his own. By modifying the meter to 2/2 in Section 6, Bartók creates a more regimented, angular melody (Example 9), much like Strauss’s placement of the hero theme in a strict 3/4 in the battle scene of *Ein Heldenleben* (Example 20). The exact meters differ, but the musical effect nevertheless persists. Bartók evokes a similar impression in mm. 237-45, in which a rhythmically augmented variation of the hero theme, again solely in the horn, maintains a 6/8 metrical feel, or at the very least a meter felt in three rather than two (Example 21). The rhythm lacks the angular stridency of Strauss’s, but its placement specifically and solely in the battle scene strongly indicates a Straussian influence. Bartók subsumes the technique and alters it for his own compositional purposes, celebrating Hungarian patriotism steeped in the Kossuth heroic myth.

Example 20. Strauss, *Ein Heldenleben*, mm. 441-46


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Still other melodic references to *Ein Heldenleben*, all the more conspicuous through their similarity in orchestration, abound in *Kossuth*. One originates in mm. 145-52 of *Ein Heldenleben*, toward the close of the critics’ section (Example 22). Two meandering chromatic figures comprise the woodwinds and strings in these measures. Both figures consist of the manipulation of thirds and seconds, with the most distinct motion being an ascending major second followed by a descending minor second. A descending chromatic line then follows the figure (m. 147). The same musical elements occur at the close of Section 3 in *Kossuth*, which depicts imminent peril from the Magyar people’s enemies. Beginning with the anacrusis to m.68 in the clarinet and bassoon, an


Example 23. Bartók, *Kossuth*, mm. 67-70
ascending minor second follows a descending major second, an inversion of the figure from *Ein Heldenleben* (Example 23). This same figure then echoes in the flute before closing the section in the clarinet. Each statement of the figure overlaps with both ascending and descending chromatic lines in the other woodwind voices, analogous to the aforementioned m. 147 of *Ein Heldenleben*. In both cases, Bartók alters the rhythm: he augments the eighth notes to quarter notes in the former and uses three quarter notes rather than a half note flanked by two quarter notes in the latter. Yet one cannot overlook the similarity in programmatic subject matter—the critics in *Ein Heldenleben* and oppressive enemies in *Kossuth*—especially in light of the decided novelty of sound in the jarring cacophony of the critic's music.

In the final seven measures of Section 2 (mm. 43-9), Bartók develops a minute fragment of Strauss’s hero theme. A brief look at Strauss’s own use of the material more clearly demonstrates Bartók’s appropriation. The fragment, specifically from mm. 2-3 of *Ein Heldenleben*, consists of an ascending perfect fifth of which the second note is then rearticulated and followed by descending scalar motion (Example 24). Strauss himself alters this segment in the final measures of the triumphant, hero-centric exposition of *Ein Heldenleben* (mm. 100-17), expanding the ascending interval to a sixth, a ninth, and eventually a thirteenth—almost like an organic Brahmsian developing variation (Example 25). Most importantly, in mm. 101-2, a descending perfect fourth and scalar

Example 24. Strauss, *Ein Heldenleben*, mm. 2-4

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42 Frigyesi discusses Bartók’s use of this particular fragment in her dissertation, but overlooks its widespread presence as well as neglects the larger Straussian context. See “Béla Bartók and Hungarian Nationalism,” 120.
Example 25. Strauss, *Ein Heldenleben*, mm. 101-06

motion follow an ascending sixth in the strings. The same pattern subsequently repeats with the sixth expanding to the aforementioned intervals.

Bartók’s version of this figure originates in m. 44 in the second violin. Descending scalar motion follows an ascending sixth; it appears to be a hybrid of Strauss’s own variation from mm. 101-2 and the original from mm. 2-3 (Example 26). Bartók subsequently expands the interval to a seventh and an octave, maintaining the contour if not the exact intervals of Strauss’s original. Neither does Bartók include the dramatic rests Strauss inserts between each statement. *Verbunkos* rhythms in the winds also appear before each of these statements, reflecting the commonly held assumption, Bartók included, of their genuine Hungarian character. Structurally, Bartók’s

Example 26. Bartók, *Kossuth*, mm. 43-6

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43 One could argue that this particular element seems as if Bartók were filtering Brahmsian technique through Strauss. Indeed, Bartók later does as much in Suite No. 2 (1905-07) and his reaction to Claude Debussy’s music, the subject of Chapter Two. The evidence of such a possibility in this instance, however, rests in the Budapest Conservatory faculty’s bias toward Brahms. See n.13.

placement of the figure in the final measures of Section 2 parallels Strauss’s placement in *Ein Heldenleben*. Thus, regardless of Bartók’s minor divergences from Strauss, the nature of this figure’s location and its development strongly indicate Strauss’s influence.

On several occasions in *Kossuth*, melodic similarities to *Ein Heldenleben* appear on a subtler scale, suggesting an improving success at appropriating decidedly Straussian musical elements during the compositional process. Such figures demonstrate Bartók’s deeper internalization of the Straussian idiom. First, the repeating descending scalar passages spanning a perfect fourth in the closing measures of Section 6 of *Kossuth* echo the scalar passages in mm. 43-4 of *Ein Heldenleben* (Example 27). In Strauss’s work, the figure occurs directly before a new statement of the hero theme after a developmental section (though the incomplete thematic statement quickly digresses to new material). Bartók expands this idea in *Kossuth*; his use of the material lasts from mm. 154-65 (Example 28). He first bisects the pattern into two tetrachords spanning an octave before halving it to one tetrachord repeated for four measures (mm. 162-5). Furthermore, the opening of the next section—Section 7, “Come, oh come, ye haughty warriors, ye valiant

Example 27. Strauss, *Ein Heldenleben*, mm. 43-4

45 In his early compositional years Bartók not only made no effort to keep original sketches but also destroyed them, negating any chance of studying his compositional process in *Kossuth*. See László Somfai, *Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts, and Autograph Sources* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 35.
heroes!”—begins with a broad sonorous statement of the hero theme before the introduction of a new melody, paralleling the formal layout of Strauss’s tone poem.

A variation of the descending scalar pattern spanning a perfect fourth does appear in mm. 78-83 of *Ein Heldenleben* (Example 29). After the descent, the musical figure leaps up a minor seventh. The figure serves primarily a developmental function, escalating the tension as the first section drives to a close. In *Kossuth*, Bartók incorporates this same pattern as Section 8, the battle, reaches its dramatic conclusion (Example 30). Like Strauss, Bartók wields the figure for the briefest of moments. He increases the interval to a seventh and staggers its statements: initially in the first violin, second violin, flute, oboe, and clarinet and followed by the cello, bass, bassoon, and clarinet. Moreover, he adds an ascending sextuplet figure that replaces Strauss’s rearticulated pitch (compare m. 78 of *Ein Heldenleben* with m. 366 of *Kossuth*).
Although few Straussian influences exist in Section 7 of Kossuth, Bartók may have derived its prominent melodic figure from a fragment in the closing section of Ein Heldenleben. The figure, with a rhythmically distinctive descending perfect fourth, appears in m. 732 in the horn, cello, and bass (Example 31). Strauss incorporates a tie that blurs the figure’s rhythmic clarity. Bartók could easily have plucked this figure, discarded the tie, and used it as a basis for the melodic content of Section 7 (Example 32). The relationship remains at best a reminiscence or more obscure allusion, but it seems plausible given Bartók’s intrinsic knowledge of Ein Heldenleben and vast amount of derivative influence already discussed. Frigyesi convincingly argues in her analysis of Kossuth that the figure is related to the last segment of Bartók’s hero theme, and that Bartók simply expands the original descending minor third to a fourth. Nevertheless, Bartók seems at the very least to have had Strauss’s idiom in his head; he appropriates a Straussian element—minute in construction—at a far deeper level. Frigyesi's analysis thus underscores Bartók's use of thematic development and offers a parallel to the burgeoning intersections between the composer’s Magyar heritage and Austro-German modernism.

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46 This compositional layout adheres to the programmatic structure: the Magyar people rush to arms to defeat the loathsome Hapsburgs.

Because *Also sprach Zarathustra* introduced Bartók to Strauss’s tone poems, it should come as no surprise that *Kossuth* bears its influence as well. Specifically, Bartók’s references to Strauss’s famous ending to *Also sprach Zarathustra* immediately conjure images of Nietzschean philosophy. Strauss’s contrast of C♯ and B♮ pitch centers metaphorically represents the perpetual conflict between nature and the individual, with the latter specifically implying a preoccupation with the metaphysical. Bartók would not have missed the reference at the Budapest premiere of the work in November 1902; he and most educated Hungarians in Budapest at the time were well acquainted with the philosophies of Nietzsche and his Hungarian equivalent Georg Lukács. The image of a superior enlightened individual casting off the oppressive mores of society greatly appealed to the official nationalist fervor sweeping Budapest with which Bartók aligned himself in the early years of the twentieth century.

His appropriation of the technique in *Kossuth*, however, lacks Strauss’s philosophical subtlety and eloquence, demonstrating Bartók’s youthful inexperience as well as his greater interest in actual Straussian sounds than the philosophical discourse behind them. In mm. 166-73 of *Kossuth* the horn, viola, and cello state the hero theme, as discussed above, in C♯ minor (Example 18). The timpani and cello immediately follow with low C♯. Lost are the elegance and delicacy of Strauss’s orchestration after a

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50 Frigyesi’s more recent work provides the seminal explanation of this cultural context. Ibid., 43-60.
tenuous musical and philosophical argument. Bartók’s insertion perhaps programmatically refers to the Magyar people rising like the Übermensch to overthrow their Austrian oppressors. Indeed, his label of Section 7 as a call for warriors diminishes to merely one specific battle scene the layered complexity of the argument Strauss so richly explores in his own tone poem.

In Section 6, a melodic fragment curiously similar to a section of “Von der Wissenschaft” [Of Science] in Also sprach Zarathustra also appears. The fragment in Strauss’s work (mm. 240-49) consists of the first violins repeating a pattern emphasizing an E#-F# ascending chromaticism harmonized in parallel thirds before skipping to a G# (Example 33). Measures 143-46 of Kossuth mirror this texture and melodic movement. Rather than incorporating the G#, however, Bartók repeatedly states the E#-F# chromaticism before returning to a separate melodic figure unrelated to Strauss (Example 34). This musical tension corresponds to the programmatic content of Section 6, in which

Example 33. Strauss, Also sprach Zarathustra, mm. 241-46

Example 34. Bartók, Kossuth, mm. 143-47

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52 One should note that Schlötterer-Traimer overlooks the political context of the time and asserts that the reference bears little philosophical meaning. Although Bartók engaged in relatively little philosophical and existential discourse within the Hungarian cultural milieu, he read extensively and concerned himself primarily with its musical manifestation. See Frigyesi, Turn-of-the-Century Budapest, 96-108. For an explanation of the form of Also sprach Zarathustra, see Charles Youmans, Richard Strauss’s Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition: The Philosophical Roots of Musical Modernism (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2005), 190-201.
the Magyar army rushes to the battlefield. Although Bartók generally retains Strauss’s orchestration—flute doubling the strings (Bartók also includes the oboe)—and maintains the stacked third sonority, the context of the melody’s appearance evokes aggression and earthiness, rather than the soaring sublime of Strauss’s work. Once more Bartók appropriates Strauss’s melodies for his own compositional and programmatic purposes.

Another melodic figure from the same section of Also sprach Zarathustra appears in a much earlier section of Kossuth. One of the other few similarities noted in existing scholarship, the ornamental figure at the close of the melodic fragment discussed above (Example 33), appears in m. 35 of Kossuth. Although Bartók rhythmically alters the second beat to a verbunkos “short-long” rhythm rather than Strauss’s “long-short,” the contour remains the same: in both cases the voices ascend a perfect fourth or fifth before descending by a step (Example 35). Bartók’s own addition of the sextuplet still maintains the contour of the Zarathustra example; he has merely excised the descending material in between, truncating Strauss’s figure to fit his own compositional needs.

Don Juan

Although no definitive evidence exists proving that Bartók heard or saw the score to Don Juan before or while composing Kossuth, melodies from this tone poem also appear in Ein Heldenleben—specifically, in mm. 681-2 of “Des Helden Friedenswerke” [The

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Hero’s Works of Peace]—allowing their plausible quotation in Kossuth. The first Don Juan melody quoted is the Don’s first seduction of a young maiden (Example 36). Bartók uses the melody’s most salient feature, an ascending major sixth to a rearticulated pitch, in Section 5 of Kossuth. Like Strauss, he places the melody in the oboe (Example 37). Bartók places the rearticulated pitch, E♭, on both beats of the 2/4 measure and eliminates the eighth rest. The sixteenth notes in the following measure are a variation of the triplets in Strauss’s melody: both gracefully descend to the downbeat of the next measure. The contour differs slightly, but the musical effect nonetheless does not change because of the descending stepwise motion. The subsequent ascending major sixth (B♭ to A♭) also recalls Strauss’s melody; Bartók rearticulates the A♭, constituting another statement of the melody, incorporating the familiar ascending leap from Strauss’s original.

Bartók, however, harmonizes the melody strikingly different from Strauss. The first statement (mm. 90-3) is in C minor while the second statement shifts to a C half-

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diminished sonority. Rather than evoking the art of seduction and masculine assertiveness as in *Don Juan* and *Ein Heldenleben*, here the melody projects longing, an almost maudlin desire for what was or may have been. Indeed, the title of Section 5 states, “Yet this brief happiness soon disappeared.” Bartók may not have known the melody’s original function and meaning, but the musical reference itself remains salient. Moreover, the juxtaposition of this melody with another melodic figure in mm. 90-100 of *Kossuth* underscores the Straussian connection.

This figure appears in “The Hero’s Works of Peace” section of *Ein Heldenleben* in conjunction with another melody originally from *Don Juan*, itself not in *Kossuth*. The figure’s angular contour and dissonance, representing the Hero’s critics in *Ein Heldenleben*, interrupt the sublime love theme from *Don Juan*. Strauss places the chromatic, garish figure in the clarinet, elevating the dissonance to a nearly comic level (Example 38). In *Ein Heldenleben*, the dissonance represents the critics, that is, those who criticize the Hero (Strauss) for his actions. Bartók juxtaposes this figure with the melody derived from *Don Juan* discussed above. The fragment first appears in m. 93 and generally follows the contour of Strauss’s figure in m. 724 of *Ein Heldenleben*: a descending third followed by a scalar passage (Bartók inverts it to ascending) and a descending leap (Example 37). The statements thereafter follow a similar contour. The importance, however, lies not in Bartók having precisely the same figure as Strauss;

Example 38. Strauss, *Ein Heldenleben*, mm. 722-27
rather, the extreme ugliness in the sound is enough to hark back to Strauss’s prior
composition. Consequently, in Kossuth, these intrusions function much the same as in
Ein Heldenleben. Placed in the woodwinds—first the flute and followed by the
clarinet—the figures brashly interrupt the Magyar nation’s nostalgia and longing for an
independent homeland. Bartók’s more abstract manipulation of Strauss signals his
deeper appropriation of the German’s compositional language and subsequent ability to
apply it for his own compositional purposes. In the words of Christopher Reynolds, “the
finished allusion is both an image of the earlier texts (now infinitely active and
inaccessible) and a new entity of its own.”

**Till Eulenspiegel**

Surprisingly, one brief reference to Till Eulenspiegel occurs in Section 7 of Kossuth.
Beginning in m. 231, ascending scalar passages, the last four notes of which are
chromatic, appear in the low brass. In only one instance, however, does the figure
blatantly recall the opening theme from Till Eulenspiegel (Examples 39a and 39b). On
the downbeat of m. 236, the trombone ascends to D# before “resolving” upward to an E♯.
In all other appearances in the brass the melodic fragment does not add this accented

![Example 39a. Strauss, Till Eulenspiegel, mm. 6-7](image)

![Example 39b. Bartók, Kossuth, mm. 235-6](image)

55 Reynolds, Motives for Allusion, 180.
chromaticism and resolution, making the reference to *Till Eulenspiegel* all the more audible. Although Strauss places his theme in the horn in his own work, in *Kossuth* the trombone plays the melody in the same tessitura, further suggesting an intentional allusion. Programmatically, Bartók’s invocation of the theme perhaps refers to the Magyar people disrupting the carefully laid plans of the Austrian Empire through their call for warriors in Section 7, but such conjecture cannot be fully substantiated.\(^{56}\)

**Conclusion**

Allusions to Strauss’s tone poems occur throughout *Kossuth*, but the above examples demonstrate that the vast majority appear in the first half of the piece. A mere twenty-three years old, Bartók used Strauss as a model from which to develop his own music. Bartók implemented the techniques, melodies, and ideas of Strauss, developing them for his own unique compositional vision of evoking and stimulating Magyar identity and patriotism.\(^{57}\) He may have detected some of these elements in the music of other composers, but Strauss’s tone poems—moreso than anything else—encircled his mind while composing *Kossuth*. His is a methodology of appropriation. Like the composers before him, Bartók grasped the known and journeyed onward in his own direction.

Still, one is left with the dichotomy of a nationalist-tinged composition bearing a decidedly Germanic influence. While immersed in the chauvinistic nationalist ideology

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\(^{56}\) The motive itself, however, figures prominently in Bartók’s Suite No. 1 (1905), an aspect addressed in Chapter Two.

\(^{57}\) The allusions likewise imbue his works with a level of imagery and intertextual symbolism that enters the dialogue and more personal musical code created in the works of Beethoven and Schumann and continued in the music of Strauss, Liszt, and Wagner. See Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion*, 178. These continuities underscore Bartók’s desire for a serious, yet modern music for the Magyar people, yet simultaneously denote continuities with the nineteenth-century that Schneider overlooks in *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition*. 

of a reactionary government, Bartók turned to modernism to create a complex, serious music representative of Hungarian identity. Perhaps Strauss, although inspirational for such a creation, paradoxically served as a means for Bartók to thumb his nose at the Austrian Empire and thus the pan-Germanic world by subsuming the composer’s idiom into Hungarian nationalism. To the youthful, overweening composer, appropriating these complex methods demonstrated that the Magyar people harbored the capacity for such technical achievement—made especially powerful in the service of a nascent political agenda. For his first completed orchestral work, dedicated to a national hero, Bartók may have intentionally appropriated and alluded to elements from Strauss in an effort to musically ennoble the Magyar people, to symbolize them asserting themselves over their Austrian (i.e. pan-German) oppressors. Frigyesi conclusively argues that the primary continuity of Bartók’s early ideology with his newfound aesthetic in the following years is his desire to elevate the Hungarian people, to communicate this broad message within serious art. Moreover, as Ferenc Bónis has extensively documented, Bartók frequently quotes other composers in his own music, often for personal reasons, stating:

In the work of a very conscientious composer like Bartók very little can be attributed to accident. There is an essential difference between the musical quotations of Bartók and those of Stravinsky, Orff, and Britten. Bartók’s purpose in adopting the themes of other composers was not to reinforce his inventiveness, and, with a few exceptions, he did not even quote for his audience. […] Therefore it is not surprising to find that his musical quotations generally have a “personal” nature, they are not conspicuous and can often be traced only by thorough analysis. Nevertheless, most of them are unambiguous and unequivocal.

58 Frigyesi asserts as much in delineating the continuities to Bartók’s new aesthetic and ideology circa 1907. See Frigyesi, “Béla Bartók and Hungarian Nationalism,” 250.  
59 Ibid., 251.  
60 Bónis, “Quotations in Bartók’s Music,” 356.
Thus, Bartók’s intentional quotation of Straussian melodies and techniques seems even more plausible, indeed truly personal. If some of the quotations and imitations in Kossuth as a whole seem decidedly more palpable than Bónis would suggest, we can attribute their lack of finesse to Bartók’s youthful inexperience. We see its earliest fruition in the composer’s well-documented grotesque parody of the Austrian anthem during the final battle scene in the symphonic poem. In mocking the Hapsburg tune Bartók elevates the Hungarian people to status of the victor above their Germanic oppressors, even though they lose the 1848 Revolution and remain subservient to Austria. Bartók’s later decision to publish only the final section of the work (“A hopeless silence reigns…”) for solo piano as well as his destruction of the compositional sketches further indicate his desire to distance himself from his early attempts with this methodology.

What we must affix to this understanding, however, is its continuity with the muddled aftermath following Kossuth’s premiere. To be sure, Bartók’s Strausseschwärmerei cooled by the end of 1904, but the remnants of the German composer’s influence clung to Bartók’s subsequent orchestral works. He possibly began the methodology as a means to thumb his nose at the pan-Germanic world—or even in his youthful inexperience, unintentionally—but the process itself forever altered his artistic viewpoint. Bartók’s passion for Strauss, first made manifest in his symphonic poem Kossuth (1903), thereafter transformed itself into a compositional process that

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stamped his mature aesthetic: a consistent methodology of internalization of pre-existing musical sources, in which they were subsumed into his compositional language and used to express the essence of Hungarian identity. The sustained appearance of Straussian techniques and melodies in Bartók’s ensuing orchestral works through The Miraculous Mandarin (1918-24) bridges its early beginnings in Kossuth. As Chapter Two will illustrate, their prominence fades to evocations of mood, idiom, or sound, but the process itself continued, and by Bartók’s own admission allowed him to reconsider the music of Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner. Moreover, the continued presence of these foreign influences—even as Bartók’s underlying ideology definitively shifted—contributed to his interaction of this new array of techniques with not only the works of other Western composers such as Claude Debussy, but also a musical source that would be one of the defining elements in his life and musical career: rural peasant music. Indeed, Bartók’s appropriation of Strauss presages the very method that evolved in his treatment of rural peasant music. The present narrative in understanding of Bartók’s aesthetic—his quest to craft music that elevates Hungarian society—simply overlooks this continuity embodied in Bartók’s methodology of appropriation.

64 Bartók addresses his varied approaches to incorporating elements of peasant music in Bartók, “Hungarian Music (1944),” in Béla Bartók Essays, 395-96.
Chapter 2

Mediating Among Influences: The Absorption of Strauss, Reemergence of Liszt, and Introduction to Debussy

Bartók’s discovery of and subsequent immersion in the study of rural peasant music—stemming from his preliminary interest during a country vacation in the summer of 1904—has been well documented and oft recited in comprehensive readings of his musical output. Nevertheless, between the years of 1904 and 1907, its emergence as the focal point of his compositional language did not rule out the continuing influence of Strauss, a resurgent interest in Liszt, and a newfound fascination with Debussy.

Although Kossuth received critical acclaim in the press, reception of Bartók’s subsequent works in Budapest remained decidedly lukewarm. In responding to the Scherzo Burlesque for Piano and Orchestra (1904) and Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra (1905), critics and the official nationalist government no longer turned a blind eye to modern harmonies and brash orchestral effects in consideration of blatantly nationalist programmatic content. They and the Hungarian public desired more “traditional” music in the vein of Hungarian Romanticism, the very style Bartók regarded as inferior.\(^1\)

Bartók’s chauvinist nationalist ideology thereafter slowly dissipated. He involved himself in social circles sympathetic to the modernisms in his music: the “Jewish-German bourgeoisie”—particularly the salon of Emma Gruber—whom he had earlier avoided.\(^2\)

Within this environment Strauss remained a powerful influence in Bartók’s conceptualization of a serious and complex Hungarian music. Consequently, the vantage

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point—the time-period from which we trace and interpret Bartók’s developing compositional technique—must include the 1903 inception of Kossuth, for its importance to his enduring compositional methodology of appropriation.

In aligning himself with this cultural milieu, Bartók ideologically converted once more. He discarded chauvinistic nationalism in favor of modernist philosophy, in which concerns of organicism and the pursuit of Truth dominated. Devouring Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Human, All too Human*, Bartók frequently returned to Nietzsche’s assertion that one must step outside oneself—that is, detach oneself from society—to truly comprehend and participate in reality.3 Indeed, he heavily underlined the following in his own copy of Nietzsche’s text:

> It is the mark of a higher culture to value the little unpretentious truths which have been discovered by means of rigorous method more highly than the errors handed down by metaphysical and artistic ages and men, which blind us and make us happy…. That which has been attained by laborious struggle, the certain, enduring and thus of significance for any further development of knowledge is nonetheless the higher; to adhere to it is manly and demonstrates courage, simplicity, and abstemiousness…. Formerly the spirit was not engaged in rigorous thinking, its serious occupation was the spinning out of forms and symbols. That has now changed; serious occupation with the symbolic has become a mark of lower culture. As our arts grow ever more intellectual, our senses more spiritual, and as for example we now adjudge what is pleasant sounding quite differently from the way we did a hundred years ago; so the forms of our life will grow ever more spiritual, perhaps to the eye of earlier ages uglier, but only because it is incapable of seeing how the realms of inner spiritual beauty is continually growing deeper and wider, and to what extent we may all now accord the eye of insight greater value than the fairest structure or the sublimest edifice.4

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3 Bartók concerned himself largely with the musical implications of this philosophy. He remained aloof from the more esoteric aspects of the philosophical debates within the Hungarian modernist circle. For a thorough discussion of their debates, see Judit Frigyesi, *Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the-Century Budapest* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 89-118.

Within this context, Bartók and those in the Hungarian modernist community attempted to discover and represent this “Essence,” as they frequently referred to it, through a variety of artistic media. Although superficially similar to the parallel artistic crisis in fin-de-siècle Vienna, the movement in Budapest differed in one key aspect: the primacy of art’s communal purpose. To these artists, art that embodied this Essence shouldered the responsibility of communal engagement with the public; it had to help elevate and improve society. Of course, Viennese culture did not entirely lack this element. In Budapest, however, it assumed a more prominent role, largely because of historical precedent. First, the Hungarian nation preserved in collective memory a perceived oppression at the hands of the Hapsburg monarchy, which they had battled for centuries. Second, the poverty that the modernists witnessed within an increasingly urban and industrialized Budapest spurred them onward in their quest.\(^5\) Traces of Bartók’s initial alignment with official nationalism link with his new ideology; in both he maintained a desire to elevate the Hungarian people and musically represent their collective national identity.\(^6\) Indeed, such staunch beliefs, along with his fervent conviction that his music simultaneously expressed his own feelings and identity, hark back to the nineteenth-century musical image of a great artist wielding the power of music.\(^7\)


\(^6\) Frigyesi, “Béla Bartók and Hungarian Nationalism, 000.

\(^7\) Indeed, Bartók’s conception of his music as a simultaneous expression of his personal identity draws deeply on common nineteenth-century views of composers and their output. Bartók’s numerous letters to Stefi Geyer from 1907, in which he provided musical fragments and descriptions of the concerto he was writing for her (discussed below in “Two Portraits and Two Pictures”), readily indicate his obsession in crafting music under the guise of this aesthetic. See Béla Bartók, *Béla Bartók Letters*, ed. János Demény, trans. Péter Balabán and István Farkas, revised trans. Elisabeth West and Colin Mason (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1971), 75-88.
Bartók nevertheless did not shed his previous affinity for the modernist musical language of Strauss, though this influence becomes a far subtler, methodical approach. Although he later stated that Strauss’s influence began to wane by the close of 1904, when the German composer’s music reawakened Bartók’s interest in and understanding of Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner, Bartók still drew upon Straussian techniques and musical figures in his Suite No. 1, Suite No. 2, Two Portraits, and Two Pictures. Moreover, his inclusion of melodic fragments and techniques from both Liszt and Wagner demonstrates a widening study and appropriation of the modern Germanic (read: Western) musical aesthetic in his fixation on complex, modern Hungarian music. Their continued, widespread appearance in the aforementioned works demonstrates his commitment to a synthesis of East and West—the current scholarly analysis of which in general largely minimizes the Western aspect in favor of rural peasant music.

The introduction of rural peasant music in Suite No. 2 further illustrates Bartók’s compositional absorption of these influences. The oft-cited pentatonic folk melody derivative of rural peasant music in the final movement of the work parallels Bartók’s treatment of Strauss in Kossuth, in its blatantly imitative quality. Moreover, rather than demonstrating a clean break with the past, this movement includes distant allusions to Strauss, Liszt, and Wagner. Palpable imitation softens to a “mere” evocation of style in sound, color, orchestration, and compositional techniques. The core principle of the methodology—compositional appropriation—remains intact, if chaotic in its implementation.

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9 Although Bartók published ten songs with an arrangement piano accompaniment with Kodály in 1906, this marks the first appearance of his new discoveries in his orchestral music.
Bartók’s subsequent introduction to the music of Claude Debussy in 1907 follows the same path toward appropriation. If Debussy’s overt influence seems markedly short-lived when compared to that of Strauss, that might be because Bartók had refined his skills of appropriation. It is also significant that Bartók drew on the Frenchman’s music even after his own immersion in rural peasant music. He still grounded his ideology in the Essence of rural peasant music, but the compositional approach remained intact. Peasant music may have provided the Essence, but these composers’ collective output supplied the actual techniques and style. Indeed, the intersections between Debussy’s modernity and rural peasant music provided for Bartók traces of the Essence within the Western idiom, a discovery that paralleled his ongoing internalization of Strauss, Liszt, and Wagner.10 Ultimately, Bartók’s dissection of their music allowed him to perfect the methodology for its application in rural peasant music. The importance of that influence cannot be overestimated.

**Suite No. 1 (1905)**
To trace this chaotic evolution, we must first consider the Straussian techniques and melodies in Suite No. 1, which Bartók wrote in 1905 while briefly residing in Vienna.11 Suite No. 1 serves as Bartók’s last orchestral composition in which Strauss’s influence remains particularly resonant throughout the entire work; moreover, the influence manifests itself not through direct imitation, which radically decreases in comparison to Kossuth, but through orchestrational techniques and broader evocations of style. The

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11 I have chosen not to discuss the Scherzo and Rhapsody to avoid redundancy in comparison.
Suite thus marks a transition for Bartók, revealing a greater internalization of Strauss’s compositional idiom into his own developing musical style.

Multiple orchestrational techniques that Bartók implements in Kossuth appear throughout Suite No. 1. The size of the orchestra remains quite large: two harps and three to four parts for woodwind and brass instruments in addition to a frequently divided string section. As in Kossuth, Bartók includes a series of Steigerungen, prolonged waves of sound in which individual pitches are nearly indistinguishable, in the second movement of the Suite (Example 1). After each swell, the music continues with statements of the primary melodic material. Likewise, we find the steadily pulsating eighth-note textural figure drawn from Ein Heldenleben. But in this case no programmatic connection exists; Bartók’s interest lies with the sounds themselves. In the first appearance, Bartók places one statement of the four-measure melody in the solo trumpet while the entire woodwind section repeatedly articulates a C-major triad, with a

Example 1. Béla Bartók, Suite No. 1, Movement 2, mm. 69-73
dominant chord added in m. 307 (Example 2). He juxtaposes this statement with a *tutti* descending minor third emphasizing C# before returning to the same melody and instrumentation as before. The technique strongly echoes the beginning of Section 6, “To the battlefield,” in *Kossuth* (Chapter 1, Example 9). Bartók alters the doubling, but he achieves a strikingly similar effect. In the second appearance, the woodwinds, violin, and horn pulsate in E major a series of steady eighth notes (Example 3). Bartók contrasts this with a buoyant, jocular melody in the cello, bass, bassoon, trombone, and tuba. With a faster tempo than in *Ein Heldenleben*, the crisp articulation separating each eighth note slightly wavers. Although one may negate these features as generic musical markers rather than indicators of Strauss’s continued influence, the similarity to both *Ein Heldenleben* and *Kossuth*, the juxtaposition of the figure with the movement’s melody in
E major, and the temporal proximity in composition to *Kossuth*, suggest a relationship—albeit more distant—to the Straussian original. In other words, the chain of continuity underscores the references. Indeed, in the fifth movement the flute and piccolo pulsate a series of triads oscillating between G minor and D major against the primary theme in the woodwinds and horn (Example 4). The brisk tempo and altered instrumentation from Strauss’s composition blur the articulations into a sheen of sound. Precisely this point, however, demonstrates Bartók’s growing independence as a composer from Strauss’s influence: aspects of Strauss’s original sound device remain evident, but Bartók subsumes them to a greater extent than in *Kossuth*.

Parallel third harmonizations (see Chapter 1, Example 33) of an ascending melodic figure appear in abundance throughout Suite No.1. In contrast to *Kossuth*, the manipulations in the Suite do not dominate the entire musical soundscape; rather, they function as colorful inclusions that indicate a continual distillation of Strauss’s idiom. A few examples suffice to confirm their salience. In the second movement, Bartók alternates pulsating E-minor triads with a melodic fragment richly harmonized in divided strings that suggests A♭ major (Example 5). Rhythmically, the passage draws upon the *verbunkos*, but the actual sonority and *rubato* character epitomize Strauss’s lush expressivity. Likewise, in the third movement, the first and second violins harmonize a
melodic figure in parallel thirds (Example 6). With an ascending contour greatly similar to sections of *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Chapter 1, Examples 33 & 35), the reference suggests once more a Bartókian interest in Strauss’s orchestral sounds. The additional character of a bombastic, at times garish, waltz in this particular movement further underscores a Straussian connection through the quintessential Viennese dance. Bartók subsumes these musical strengths into his own language.

Characteristics from *Kossuth* bordering on the grotesque (Chapter 1, Examples 37 & 38) also appear in the third and fourth movements of the Suite. In the third movement, a garish melodic fragment appears with leaping, dissonant intervals (Example 7). Unison doubling creates a shrill, piercing tone that borders on the humorous. A

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Example 7. Bartók, Suite No. 1, Movement 3, mm. 240-55

rhythmically augmented variation of a melody from Section 5, “Yet this brief-lived happiness soon disappeared,” in *Kossuth* appears—and by extension recalls the critics’ music in *Ein Heldenleben*. Moreover, in the melodic fragments of both the Suite and *Kossuth*, E♭ serves as a weakly defined tonic. Both presentations occur in woodwind instrumentation over a dreamy, continuous stream of sound. The contrast in orchestration, and the intimacy of the two harps in *Kossuth*, accentuate Bartók’s developing, and thus inconsistent, use of the Straussian idiom. He reverses the process of subsuming Strauss by infusing a musical idea excised from *Kossuth* with an even fuller Straussian orchestral sound.

The sections of shrill, brassy music in the fourth movement likewise suggest a precedent in the critics’ music in *Ein Heldenleben*. At rehearsal Nos. 4 and 11 Bartók parodies the first movement’s primary theme by altering the original descending perfect fourth to an ascending tritone (Example 8). The doubled woodwinds, played in a clipped, staccato manner with numerous grace notes, recall the contour of the staccato scalar runs of the critics’ music, especially because the strings’ material is delegated to the

Example 8. Bartók, Suite No. 1, Movement 4, mm. 74-7

Example 10. Bartók, Suite No. 1, Movement 1, mm. 179-91

background. Again, the influence appears more as a distillation of Strauss; the inverted contour personalizes the appropriation, toning down its Straussian character in comparison to *Kossuth*. Yet the number of Straussian connections throughout the rest of the Suite—and the absence of allusions to Berlioz or Liszt—suggest that Strauss’s idiom still held sway in Bartók’s ear. The “magic [may have] evaporated,” but the residue of Strauss still marked Bartók’s musical language and style.\(^{13}\)

Strauss’s characteristic treatment of texture also continues to pervade the Suite, though Bartók incorporates more distantly related variations. For example, in *Till Eulenspiegel*, Strauss places a short progression in the lower registers of the woodwinds that begins in F major (Example 9). Bartók, in the first movement of the Suite, creates a similar affect in E major (Example 10). He emphasizes the resolution of the dominant to the tonic chord, paralleling Strauss’s own harmonic rhythm. Although the two composers’ precise rhythmic values differ from each other, the minor variations do not

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hamper the audible connection. Similarly, Bartók continues his practice of using sudden, unexpected shifts in texture and/or harmony. Two striking examples occur in the fifth movement. First, Bartók abruptly ends a section seemingly mid-phrase with a fermata (Example 11). He thereafter continues with a completely unrelated melodic fragment from the second movement. Next, the second statement of the melodic sequence within the movement’s primary theme is a perfect fourth above the first, while the third is only a minor second (G♮ to A#) above the second (Example 12). The shift creates a sense of imbalance and hesitancy in the overall theme—a technique frequently employed by Strauss and well-used throughout Kossuth (Chapter 1, Examples 11, 12, 15b). Contrastingly, at the close of the first variation of the fourth movement, the melody appears by itself to be in A minor (Example 13). The underlying harmony that Bartók
employs in mm. 62-4 in the woodwinds, however, suggests an unexpected Straussian slip to G# minor and clashes with the D♮ in m. 63 of the first violin. Bartók defies this “expectation of the unexpected,” and reverts to A minor at the phrase’s end. Having internalized Strauss’s technique, he deftly manipulates expectations with its implementation.

The presence of multiple melodies blatantly imitated from Strauss’s tone poems within all five movements of the Suite likewise shows Bartók’s continued distillation of Strauss’s music. As Günter Weiss argues in his analysis of the finale of Bartók’s discarded symphony, the compositional techniques Bartók employed in treating the melody in his early career—creating thematic variants, splitting-up of motifs, and overlapping and imitation of entries—are derived from Strauss.\footnote{Günter Weiss-Aigner, “Youthful Orchestral Works,” in \textit{The Bartók Companion}, ed. Malcolm Gillies (Portland, Oregon, Amadeus Press, 1994), 444.} Bartók thematically unifies the Suite through one theme common to each of the five movements. The variants of this theme, however, all bear a striking resemblance to the primary theme of Strauss’s \textit{Till Eulenspiegel}, as if he found a kernel of the Essence in the German composer’s original.\footnote{The same theme briefly appears in \textit{Kossuth}. See Chapter 1, Examples 39a & 39b.} In the first movement, the theme appears as an ascending major seventh that does not resolve upwards until the following measure, paralleling the resolution in \textit{Till Eulenspiegel} (Example 14). Bartók also places the initial statement in the horn, further referencing Strauss’s tone poem. The connection becomes even more pronounced toward the end of the movement: Bartók alters the theme to an ascending running spanning a perfect fifth, a variant that more closely resembles the original contour of \textit{Till Eulenspiegel} (Example 15). With the horn joining the bassoon and
clarinet for the final, all-important upward resolution in the following measure, the reference becomes all the more palatable.

More expansive versions of this theme less directly related to the original appear in the subsequent movements. Both the second and fifth movements open with an ascending run in the strings that widens to an octave, as if filling in the major seventh from the theme’s first appearance (Example 16). For the thematic variant in the third movement Bartók inverts the theme, thus altering the final resolution to that of descent rather than ascent (Example 17). Moreover, the contour bears a resemblance to the second Till theme in *Till Eulenspiegel*, especially with its placement in the piercing woodwind instrumentation (Example 18). The thematic variant in the fourth movement consists of an ascending scalar figure in the first violin that oscillates between an E♭ and F# (Example 19). Placing the E♭ on the downbeat creates the same contour as in the
original theme, but the desire for upward resolution is less emphatic because of the quick tempo, lack of rearticulation, and whole step interval. Finally, in the closing section of the fifth movement, the horns articulate a scalar run spanning a perfect fifth (Example 20). Bartók simply fills in the leaps of Strauss’s original. The raised fourth is articulated on the downbeat of the following measure before resolving upwards, as if it were a harmonization of Strauss’s melody.

Through these variations indicative of Strauss and the New German School, Bartók motivically unites the Suite. He develops Strauss’s *Till Eulenspiegel* theme with the same approach, but crafts his own variants, patiently evolving in his independence. Nevertheless, the appearance of other elements that bear a remarkable likeness to *Till Eulenspiegel* in both character and placement suggests a continuing dependence on his Straussian inspiration. Both occur in the first movement. At the close of the first major section after the introduction, Bartók inserts an ascending sequence consisting of dotted quarter and eighth notes, a variation of the dotted quarter-note ascending sequence in a parallel section in *Till Eulenspiegel* (Examples 21 and 22). Slight rhythmic differences
Example 21. Bartók, Suite No. 1, Movement 1, mm. 148-52

Example 22. Strauss, *Till Eulenspiegel*, mm. 271-80

Example 23. Bartók, Suite No. 1, Movement 1, mm. 358-60

aside, Bartók’s heavy doubling in the brass and woodwinds (not shown) further recalls Strauss’s tone poem. Likewise, in the final section of the movement, Bartók’s brief but prominent insertion of a figure in doubled bassoon, clarinet, and English horn resembles the second theme in *Till Eulenspiegel* (Example 23). The precise notes may differ, but the overall contour remains quite similar (Example 18). Moreover, the figure’s placement directly before an inverted variant of the first movement’s primary theme—its relation to *Eulenspiegel*—draws a more secure connection.
Example 24. Bartók, Suite No. 1, Movement 1, mm. 192-208

Bartók also includes the battle theme from Section 7 of Kossuth, “Come oh come ye haughty warriors ye valiant heroes,” throughout the Suite. Derived from the opening hero theme, and in turn related to Strauss’s hero theme in Ein Heldenleben (Chapter 1, Example 15a), its inclusion underscores a specific tendency of Bartók’s methodology of appropriation: reusing past appropriations in new compositions, perfecting them as the original traces grow ever more faint. For example, in the first movement of the Suite, Bartók introduces a variation of this melody that includes the same descending and ascending fourth followed by a stepwise ascent (Example 24). Regardless of the markedly tranquil tempo, the reference is unmistakable. Likewise, the opening movement of the second theme fills in the perfect fourths with stepwise scalar motion. The opening theme of the third movement includes multiple repetitions of the perfect fourth oscillation but eventually ascends with stepwise motion. In the fourth movement the opening theme follows the same contour, with minor alterations. Consequently, although this particular theme and its variants possess a minimal connection to Strauss, the steps represented by the theme’s varied appearances clarify Bartók’s maturing technique in appropriation.

We can achieve a richer understanding of what Ferenc Bónis has called Bartók’s search for “perfection” by reading it as a methodology of appropriation. With each subsequent use of the theme or compositional technique, Bartók further internalized the source-material, until the original connection barely registered. A kind of perfection is achieved by Bartók’s subsuming of the musical kernel, its Essence, into his own compositional language. The process becomes a musical analogue, arguably the most tangible realization, of the humanitarian goals sought by the Hungarian modernists.

This growing subtlety in approach manifests itself in the raucous, chromatically descending horn line present throughout the third movement (Example 25). The tune deeply recalls the Straussian idiom in its instrumentation and playful mood, especially when seen in the context of the abundant Straussisms throughout the entire work. The motive is not a quotation, but rather an evocation of Strauss’s manner. Indeed, aside from the multitude of connections to Eulenspiegel, the entirety of the Suite calls to mind a playful and almost mischievous quality, much like Strauss’s tone poem. Similarly, a melody in the first movement, harmonized in E major, sweeps an octave upward on a dotted rhythmic figure (Example 26). The phrase markings in the violins indicate an

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18 Frigyesi, Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the-Century Budapest, 164-67.
aggressive articulation, emphasizing the sweep. Heavily articulated ascending leaps further contribute to its Straussian character.

These Straussian orchestral, textural, and melodic techniques all reveal Bartók’s continued but ever more strictly musical appropriation of Strauss’s idiom, even after his avowed dismissal of Strauss and his first tentative exploration of peasant music in the summer of 1904. Overall, Suite No. 1 shows a rich weightiness much like the style of Strauss, with its large, blended orchestral sound and decidedly tonal—though chromatic and often dissonant—harmonic orientation. These evocations of style and mood, though difficult to trace, ultimately demonstrate through a chain of continuity a Bartók still composing orchestral works in Strauss’s shadow.\(^\text{19}\)

**Suite No. 2 (1905-07)**

The complete Suite No. 2 in many ways constitutes a break with Bartók’s style up to and through Suite No. 1. Flagrant imitation of Straussian passages disappears, but moments that epitomize the German composer’s sound and approach to thematic development continue, indicating Bartók’s heightened skill at incorporating them into his own style. Bartók also embraced Liszt’s compositions with renewed vigor—perhaps in search of something fresh and new in his creation of serious, complex music. Although scholars may negate Strauss’s primary influence in the Suite, after the initial inspiration to resume composition, Strauss, by Bartók’s own admission, opened his eyes to Liszt and Wagner, pointing to an original Straussian influence that subsequently widened. Regardless, at their core, Strauss’s principles remain integral to the Germanic school of composition and

\(^{19}\) Although Bartók composed the decidedly modern Bagatelles for piano in 1908, a disconnect in implementation within his orchestral music seemed to exist. Indeed, Gillies asserts that the composer frequently struggled with orchestral composition. See Malcolm Gillies, “Stylistic Integrity and Influence in Bartók’s Works: The Case of Szymanowski” *International Journal of Musicology* 1 (1992): 143.
characterize Bartók’s later orchestral works. The two-year hiatus between the composition of the first three movements and the finale illuminates these developments even further, so that the fourth movement requires a separate mode of discussion and analysis. Nevertheless, increasingly distant variations upon both Strauss’s and Liszt’s styles enter the compositional framework—even in the final movement, notwithstanding the definitive shift in ideology represented by his advancing interest in rural peasant music. These nineteenth-century techniques provided him first with an array of techniques for his subsequent appropriation of the peasant music idiom, and second with an instance of an intersection with modernity, underscoring his fixation upon musical expression of the Essence.

The orchestration throughout Suite No. 2, far sparser in texture, hints at Bartók’s increased distance from Strauss. Although the opening of the first movement evokes the sound of a whimsical serenade in the manner of Johannes Brahms, the texture and color thereafter expand into the rich, lush orchestral sound of Strauss typical of Suite No. 1. Indeed, Bartók originally conceived the work as a Serenade, perhaps itself a reference to Brahms. He heavily divides each of the string parts. Moreover, Bartók ends the opening passage with shimmering strings and harp on a D-major triad, suggesting an ethereal translucency and delicacy that bespeaks Strauss—specifically the end of Also sprach Zarathustra—or even the Lisztian celestial, such as the end of Les préludes (1848) (Example 27).

The Straussian allusions, however, appear momentarily—a typical pattern throughout the Suite. Directly after this opening passage, Bartók dramatically thins the texture to two harps with flute, oboe, and clarinet on a slight variation of the opening
Example 27. Bartók, Suite No. 2, Movement 1, mm. 37-9

Example 28. Bartók, Suite No. 2, Movement 1, mm. 70-6

melody. But then he gradually thickens the orchestration once again until reaching a climax with another statement of the melody, at which point the sound of Strauss reappears once more with sweeping melodic lines that border on the hyper-expressivity of late Romanticism (Example 28). References to Liszt’s manner of orchestration also
appear in Suite No. 2. The second movement includes a number of striking similarities to the third movement of Liszt’s *Faust Symphony*. Bartók’s own assertion of the genius in Liszt’s *Faust Symphony* (1857) bespeaks his familiarity with the piece and plausible allusion. Liszt opens the movement, “Mephistopheles,” with a series of marcato chords with grace notes in the flute, clarinet, and bassoon (Example 29). Although at first separated from one another by a number of rests, by m. 8 they are continuously rearticulated for five measures. In the opening of the second movement of Bartók’s Suite, the oboe and clarinet create the same effect, though without the rests from Liszt’s work (Example 30). Also, Bartók crafts an actual melody with these figures rather than constantly rearticulating the same pitches. Nevertheless, his juxtaposition of the melody with a descending chromatic run in the strings constitutes an inverse of Liszt’s piece—in which an ascending chromatic run opens the movement—further highlighting the connection.

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An overall simpler orchestral texture in the second movement also indicates a Lisztian rather than Straussian influence. Throughout the movement Bartók requires many instances of both unison and octave tutti from the orchestra. For example, at the close of the movement, the entire string section, flute, oboe, and clarinet articulate a shrill, high-pitched figure four times before ending with an abrupt G-major triad (Example 31). The strident, harsh sound typifies Liszt rather than Strauss. Again, widens his net to a greater circle of influences as the appropriation of Strauss, the original progenitor, diminishes in the foreground.

Bartók’s orchestration in the third movement likewise betrays a third influence: Richard Wagner. The opening bass clarinet solo bears a strong resemblance to the English horn solo at the beginning of Act III of Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde, a music drama with which he would have been deeply familiar, having traveled on multiple occasions to Bayreuth (Examples 32 and 33). Moreover, the strings’ entrance—almost like a Brahmsian chamber work, pointing to Bartók’s original intent to compose a serenade—simultaneously parallels the dark and lush yet intimate tone of the orchestra’s entrance in Act III of Tristan. The final phrase in the third movement, a synthesis of Tristan and Tod und Verklärung, also suggests Bartók’s renewed interest in Wagner (Example 34). The sonorous and lush sound contains the richness of Strauss’s technique,

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21 Letter to Kálmán Harsányi, 18 September 1904, in Béla Bartók Letters, 42.
22 Indeed, Bartók’s allusions to both Brahms and Wagner creates an interesting parallel with Arnold Schoenberg, who drew on both composers in his break with traditional tonality.
Example 33. Bartók, Suite No. 2, Movement 3, mm. 1-38
yet its delicacy and translucency at the very least suggest the ennobling power, or high seriousness, of the transformational in Wagner’s philosophical music dramas.

Although David Schneider cites the similarity of the opening solo to the târogató, a traditional Hungarian instrument of the nineteenth century, as well as brief similarities to Ernő Dohnányi’s composition, the obvious connection to Wagner suggests an example of an intersection between the Hungarian influence and the Western tradition, a nexus that Bartók would further explore upon his introduction to Debussy’s music.23 Still unfamiliar with “pure” examples of rural peasant music, Bartók attempted to create serious, complex music with what he at the time still regarded as Hungarian material,

23 For Schneider’s observations, see Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition, 94-101.
thus explaining his allusion to a Hungarian instrument typical of the national romanticism of the nineteenth century. Moreover, such intersections point to a growing refinement in his methodology; his manipulated intersections fuse seemingly incongruous influences. This blending and simultaneous internalization—the reference to Wagner is not nearly as obvious Bartók’s earlier practices with Strauss, and even with Liszt in the preceding movement—illustrate Bartók’s continued growth as a composer as he draws on a variety of influences, foreshadowing his interaction with rural peasant music.

Throughout the Suite Bartók continues to use Straussian textures, often within an entirely different harmonic context. Two examples from the first movement suffice to demonstrate. First, at the close of the movement Bartók builds in intensity and thickness to the previously discussed Straussian orchestral sound swell, but unexpectedly pauses with a fermata (Example 35). The texture dissipates to a solo English horn and viola, a

Example 35. Bartók, Suite No. 2, Movement 1, mm. 215-24
decidedly sparse and delicate quality. Second, the opening statement of the melody, though incorporating a number of chromatic colorations of B♭ major, is spurred on by the cello’s sudden chromatic shift from one whole tone subset (E♭-B♭-D) to another (A-C♯-E♭) (Example 36). Bartók’s increasing use of non-functional, non-triadic harmony further obscures the connective tissue in Strauss’s orchestral techniques—most audibly in his frequent use of a minor seventh chord throughout the third movement, especially in the final chord. Fundamental changes in harmonic principle suggest a growing fascination with the newfound peasant music that bloomed during the composition of the fourth movement in 1907, even as melodic influences from both Strauss and Liszt remained perceptible.

Bartók likewise employs thematic variation in the Suite, though on a lesser scale than in Suite No. 1. A prime example occurs in the first movement’s opening theme. Placed in the cello, it remains solidly in B♭ major, though Bartók colors that key with

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24 The whole tone subset likewise suggests Liszt’s influence, as Bartók was unaware of Debussy’s music until 1907.
25 Schneider argues that Bartók derives the chord from the second movement of Dohnányi’s Symphony in D minor (1901), but his evidence relies on the brief sounding of a minor seventh at the close of Dohnányi’s work that subsequently moves to a triad. A complete minor seventh chord never appears, constituting the greater likelihood of a connection to Liszt. See Schneider, *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition*, 108-10.
frequent chromatic inflections (Example 36). When a fragment of the melody reappears in the coda, however, it oscillates between B and B♭ (A#) pitch centers (Example 37).

The increased use of chromatic inflections colors the tonal implications, so that thematic variation collaborates with a newly adventurous harmonic language while departing from previous influences.

Nevertheless, Bartók still quotes a melody from Liszt nearly verbatim in the fugal section of the second movement of the Suite, perhaps a reflection of his renewed interest in, and thus less familiarity in the appropriation of, Liszt’s orchestral works. The subject comes from “Mephistopheles” in Liszt’s Faust Symphony, although some scholars have observed that Bartók could also have derived it from the B-minor Sonata, a work that he frequently performed at the time (Example 38). Bartók includes more rests and slightly alters the contour of his subject, but the Lisztian provenance in character and articulation is unmistakable (Example 39). Consequently, although references to Strauss become more distanced, Bartók’s renewed fascination with Liszt—whom he admitted he more deeply understood after immersing himself in Strauss—reiterates the inherent methodology of outright imitation that develops into full appropriation. No doubt Liszt’s aesthetic of musical transcendence resonated with Bartók’s newfound ideology that centered on the musical encapsulation of the “Essence.”

Example 38. Liszt. “Mephistopheles.” Faust. mm. 212-19

Example 39. Bartók, Suite No. 2, Movement 2, mm. 139-46

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Likewise, Bartók includes two other effects from *Kossuth*—and originally *Ein Heldenleben*—in the Suite, both of which are more distantly related to the originals. First, at No. 11 in the first movement, a series of chromatic, oscillating figures that parallel the critics’ music from *Ein Heldenleben* appear in the flute and oboe (Example 40). The cacophonous, jarring sonority as well as the gradually descending contour augment the connection. Second, the original eighth-note pulsating figure from *Ein Heldenleben* makes an appearance in the third movement. Beginning at No. 3, the divided woodwind section pulsates a series of triplet eighth notes with ties while the melody appears in solo horn, followed by doubling in the trumpet and strings (Example 41). Indeed, here the technique resembles the figure’s first appearance in *Kossuth*. Although the required articulation that allows each note to be heard creates the pulsating effect analogous to *Heldenleben*, the rhythmic ties as well as the relatively quick tempo
distort the connection. Again, traces of previous influences manifest themselves in situations increasingly distanced from the original.

The reappearance of the *Kossuth* battle theme in the Suite further underscores Bartók’s methodology as one of appropriation and internalization. The most obvious allusion occurs in the second movement, in which it appears three times as an independent melodic statement. Octave strings provide prominent aural placement. Bartók rhythmically augments the end of each phrase and excises the second perfect fourth (Example 42). An added ascending perfect fifth constitutes a further digression. The fragment first appears, however, in the coda of the first movement within a longer melodic figure (Example 43). Bartók modifies the statement by expanding the upward ascent by two more half steps. The lack of repetition of the statement elsewhere as well as its increasing distance from the original suggest a purely musical (and scarcely recognizable) connection. Another permutation appears in the third movement (Example 44), prominently voiced in the first violin with the perfect fourth inverted. As in the first

Example 42. Bartók, Suite No. 2, Movement 2, mm. 75-80

Example 43. Bartók, Suite No. 2, Movement 2, mm. 165-69

Example 44. Bartók, Suite No. 2, Movement 3, mm. 45-9
movement, he places the fragment within a larger motivic unit. The tempo, markedly slower than in the original, further distorts the original connection.

When Bartók returned to Suite No. 2 once more in 1907 to compose the fourth movement, his compositional language had changed markedly through his discovery, immersion, and study of true rural peasant music. Regardless of this transformation, however, the influences of Strauss and Liszt still resonate in the fourth movement, bringing yet another stage of Bartók’s ongoing internalization of their techniques, his pursuit of a musical Essence.28 Although Bartók uses sparser orchestration and focuses more on solo instruments in the fourth movement than in the previous three, moments that evoke Strauss and Liszt still manifest themselves.29 For example, at the close of the first thematic section, Bartók thickens the texture with divisi violas, two harps, and divisi woodwinds (Example 45). Once more the sound is full and rich, creating the lush,

Example 45. Bartók, Suite No. 2, Movement 4, mm. 24-6

28 Although many scholars, especially Schneider, Gillies, and Weiss-Aigner cite moments of Strauss’s and Liszt’s influence, they fail to incorporate the observations into the wider context: these practices prepared Bartók for his subsequent treatment of rural peasant music.
blended sound that immediately recalls Strauss. Second, in the recapitulation, Bartók places a soaring melody in the first violin with typical flute doubling (Example 46). The pentatonic harmony may differ greatly from Strauss, but the overall soundscape remains derivative of the German composer. Likewise, although the dotted figures relate to the dissipating *verbunkos* element in Bartók’s music, their placement as part of an ascending leap in this context recalls the melodic contour of *Ein Heldenleben* as well as the previously discussed Straussian melodies in *Kossuth* and Suite No. 1. Third, at No. 13 Bartók harmonizes the aggressive triplet melody with parallel thirds rather than an octave, as he did in its first appearance (Example 47). Although not a quotation of the *Also sprach Zarathustra* original, the line itself still consists of waves of ascending scalar motion with aggressive rhythmic clarity at its core that recall the melodies in *Kossuth* discussed above.

Two other instances striking in their evocation of the orchestrational practices of both Strauss and Liszt necessitate clarification. The immediate juxtaposition of the composers demonstrates Bartók’s appropriation of two separate orchestrational styles, as if with Liszt he is more rapidly moving through the steps first undergone in his reaction to Strauss. The first example stirs up the celestial nobility inherent to Liszt’s tone.
poems—such as *Les préludes* (1848) and *Prometheus* (1850) (Example 48). One could argue, however, that the steadily pulsating quarter notes in the woodwinds are an abstract derivation of the original *Heldenleben* figure. Indeed, a solo statement of the primary melody in the horn balances them. Whether consciously employed or not, the occurrence indicates a continuity with Bartók’s past. The second example is the movement’s final phrase (and thus of the entire Suite). Bartók places a soaring variation of the opening melody once more in the strings and harmonizes it with parallel thirds (Example 49). The stately tempo creates a richly sonorous texture recalling Strauss’s lush orchestration, especially with the final B♭-major triad. Liszt’s translucent texture from the earlier

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Example 50. Liszt, *Faust*, “Mephistopheles,” mm. 655-75

Example 51. Bartók, Suite No. 2, Movement 4, mm. 151-59

Example 52. Bartók, Suite No. 2, Movement 4, mm. 43-6

passage has disappeared. Indeed, in the preceding section, beginning at m. 151—directly after the Straussian passage—Bartók uses a variation of the same melody, but places it in an entirely different harmonic context, one that closely resembles the celestial harmonic progression that occurs toward the end of “Mephistopheles” (Examples 50 and 51). Both progressions manipulate the “otherworldly” nature of harmonic root motion at the tritone and third.

Sudden shifts in texture from the Straussian idiom likewise continue to appear throughout the fourth movement. At No. 3, Bartók introduces an aggressive triplet melody after a brief pause following the previous section, which itself contained no cadential gesture (Example 52). With a different rhythmic pulse, triplet figure, higher tessitura, and doubling with the woodwinds and horn, Bartók creates a markedly harsher sound than the strings-only texture of the preceding section. Each subsequent appearance
of this melody occurs with the same pause. Though the technique is originally rooted in Strauss, Bartók has internalized the concept. Moreover, he may have already noticed in his developing peasant music studies the abrupt shifts in sentiment or character within peasant melodies themselves.\textsuperscript{31} Constituting an intersection between modernity and folk practices, such a discovery likely encouraged Bartók to continue using the technique, its occurrence in both forms proving to him its grounding in the Essence, in musically capturing the Hungarian ethos.\textsuperscript{32} This is not to suggest that Bartók regarded the technique as part of the Essence itself, but merely that his discovery of it in both art forms lent it, for him, a greater resonance. In any case, although Bartók witnessed the technique in peasant music, in the course of his compositional maturation he first encountered it while immersed in Strauss’s orchestral oeuvre.

Similarly, the pentatonic melody that dominates the movement encapsulates Bartók’s new independence even as it bears Strauss’s influence. Although the source of the original tune remains ambiguous, the melody’s relatively simple, pentatonic structure suggests as much—thereby paralleling Bartók’s first step upon his immersion of Strauss: outright quotation, or at the very least, imitation. Bartók elaborates upon the melody, however, altering it and incorporating it into the fabric of his compositional language. Following years of previous experience studying Strauss, Liszt, and Wagner, Bartók’s appropriation runs more smoothly. Nevertheless, a musical connection between the melody and the \textit{Kossuth} battle theme exists. It opens with a descending fourth, followed

\textsuperscript{31} David Cooper discusses this technique in “Béla Bartók and the Question of Race Purity in Music,” in \textit{Musical Constructions of Nationalism: Essays in the History and Ideology of European Musical Culture 1800-1945,} eds. Harry White and Michael Murphy (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2001), 28-9.\textsuperscript{32} Schneider introduces the concept of intersections with modernity, but he restricts his argument to intersections of the official nationalist view on Hungarian music with Bartók’s compositions, even after his immersion in peasant music. See Schneider, \textit{Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition}, 81-118. Frigyesi, using the term synthesis, briefly explores this concept specifically in \textit{Bluebeard’s Castle} (1911) in \textit{Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the-Century Budapest}, 230-34.
Example 53. Bartók, Suite No. 2, Movement 4, mm. 3-6

by an ascending fifth and second—still following the general contour of the Kossuth original (Example 53). If Bartók derived the melody from an actual peasant tune, he may have viewed the similarity to the Kossuth battle theme as an intersection between modernity and the ancient, an example of the Essence that reflected in microcosm his appropriation of Western compositional techniques and practices. Although tenuous, the connection underscores Bartók’s continued internalization of techniques acquired pre-1905 alongside application of newly appropriated elements—the mingling of which appears throughout his entire compositional history.

**Two Portraits (1907-11) and Two Pictures (1910)**

Bartók’s deepening internalization of these Western compositional elements continued alongside his internalization of peasant music in his next two orchestral works, *Two Portraits* and *Two Pictures*. Traces of Strauss, Liszt, and to a lesser extent, Wagner, remain, but Bartók’s introduction to Debussy’s music by Kodály in 1907 unlocked another source of influence for the composer. Even within the first movement of *Two Portraits*—which Bartók originally intended as the first movement of a violin concerto written for Stefi Geyer, with whom he was infatuated at the time—traces of Strauss and Wagner abound. Weiss asserts that this movement contains the “idealistic spirit in the manner of Tristan.” Indeed, Bartók called it his “most direct music to date.”

Bartók begins the work with a fugue, and maintains a sparse orchestration throughout the first

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half. He gradually builds to a climax with soaring string lines (Example 54). The sound does not contain the sheer brilliance of Strauss, but suggests more the transformative ethereal of the close of Wagner’s *Tristan*.34

Melodically, the primary motive for the largely monothematic work, D-F#-A-C#—referred to by Bartók as Geyer’s motive—perhaps reflects the influence of *Till Eulenspiegel*. Throughout the movement Bartók emphasizes the ascending C#-D resolution, most notably with the plethora of reiterations at the end, in which Bartók places the C# on the downbeat of each measure. The motive’s octave span also relates to the variations of the unifying theme in Suite No. 1, further suggesting continuity with the original Strauss. Although the falling thirds in the motive constitute a (somewhat tepid) connection to peasant music and the minor seventh chord, the relationship to *Till*  

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Eulenspiegel presents at the very least another example of a point of intersection between modernity and peasant music. Moreover, even if Bartók did not consciously appropriate the motive from Strauss’s tone poem, the chain of continuity accounts for variations increasingly remote from the original. Finally, the motive’s placement in the solo violin expresses continuity with the tendency of Strauss—or at the very least, in the New German School—to place expressive solos associated with the feminine in the solo violin.\(^{35}\)

The second movement, for which Bartók orchestrated the Fourteenth Bagatelle in 1910, reflects New German orchestrational practices in expressing the grotesque.\(^{36}\) The appearance of the E♭ clarinet recalls works by Strauss, Liszt.\(^{37}\) Bartók also returns to a larger orchestral sound than the fourth movement of Suite No. 2. He employs the technique for a specific purpose, in this case the grotesque, a practice that suggests a deeper internalization of New German orchestral techniques. Nevertheless, the playful tone of the work conjures associations with Till Eulenspiegel.\(^{38}\) Bartók, however, outdoes Strauss in the piece’s opening measures: in a crude waltz, unison woodwinds in the extremities of their range state the Geyer motive.

The presence of other melodies derivative of Till Eulenspiegel solidifies the connection to Strauss’s tone poem. The second motive in the piece bears a resemblance to the second Till theme in Strauss’s tone poem (Examples 55 and 18). Bartók’s motive follows the general melodic contour as Strauss’s rather than the specific intervals, albeit

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\(^{35}\) A prime example is the second movement of Liszt’s Faust Symphony.

\(^{36}\) Bartók originally composed a separate second movement for the violin concerto, but he soon discarded it in favor of an orchestration of Bagatelle No. 8, perhaps to musically recreate his anger at Geyer after she spurned his romantic affections. For information of the original second movement, see Weiss-Aigner, “The ‘Lost’ Violin Concerto, in The Bartók Companion, 474-75.

\(^{37}\) And by extension, Berlioz’s Symphonie fantastique.

in a truncated form, but he also emphasizes the same final descending leap. Furthermore, his placement of the melody in the oboe, staccato articulation, and devious tone of the entire movement heighten the connection. Bartók may not resolve the motive’s final pitch upward as Strauss does, but such a difference demonstrates his methodology: the original is subsumed into his own musical language. Likewise, the continuous stream of eighth notes at No. 8 resembles a section of *Till Eulenspiegel* (Examples 56 & 57).
Bartók retains the same melodic contour. He also places the figure in full orchestra, paralleling Strauss’s orchestration: a large, homophonic sonority. Although Bartók blurs the connection to Strauss with a simultaneous inversion of the figure in the cello and bass, his own inclusion of the marcato and staccato articulations parallels Strauss’s notated accents. Perhaps Bartók’s conflicted feelings for Geyer as well as burgeoning exposure to Liszt (he wrote the Bagatelles in 1908 and orchestrated No. 8 shortly thereafter) caused a seeming rehash of an older approach in his methodology, one that underscores its natural development, conscious or otherwise.
Debussy’s undisguised influence appears first in *Two Pictures*. In their orchestration, both movements demonstrate Bartók’s newfound fascination with his French contemporary—notably, after his discovery of peasant music—along with continued employment of Straussian elements. For example, the opening of “In Full Flower” sounds very much like a paraphrase of Debussy’s “Nuages” (Examples 58 & 59). Bartók creates a delicate background texture in the oscillating eighth notes of the lower strings. In the foreground he places a melody in the clarinet that follows the same contour and evokes the almost stagnant atmosphere of mm. 6-7 in “Nuages.” He blurs the strings, however, by using eighth rather than quarter notes, paralleling his own minor deviations in his first experiences with Strauss. The ending of the movement also recalls
the delicacy of Debussy’s *Pelleas et Melisande*. In a harmonically static texture that continuously arpeggiates a whole-tone scale, Bartók creates picturesque waves of sound and color through flourishes in the harps, woodwinds, and string tremolos (Example 60). Light and ethereal, the moment evokes the fascination with sound colors and textures that epitomizes Debussy’s music. Such moments likewise occur in the second movement, “Village Dance.” At No. 17, Bartók superimposes over open fifths multiple statements of

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39 Citation. Gillies comments on the similarity but neglects the wider context. See “Portraits, Pictures, and Pieces,” in *The Bartók Companion*, 480.

Notwithstanding this new source of influence, Strauss’s influence makes cameo appearances in both pieces. The ascending arpeggiations and sound swells at the close of “In Full Flower” simultaneously reflect Strauss in their thickness of orchestration, but a Strauss filtered through the harmonic language and subtlety of Debussy (Example 59). Bartók also builds to moments of rich orchestral texture as in previous works. At No. 8

a variation of the melody from “In Full Flower”—and by extension, “Nuages” (Example 61). The static, yet colorful harmony evokes quiet tranquility.
in “In Full Flower,” as the strings swell, we see through a window Strauss’s famed brilliance, but somehow slightly muted, as if also filtered through Debussy (Example 62). Similar occurrences appear in “Village Dance.” In the piece’s final section, although Bartók separates the instrumental colors from one another with greater frequency, the strident color of Strauss bleeds through the music (Example 63). The subsequent

Example 62. Bartók, *Two Pictures*, “In Full Flower,” mm. 46-53

Example 63. Bartók, *Two Pictures*, “Village Dance,” mm. 402-10
Example 64. Bartók, Two Pictures, “Village Dance,” mm. 169-75

measures build in intensity until the ascending line reaches a triumphant G-major triad, spaced with a brilliant, almost metallic sheen. Likewise, parallel third harmonization occurs with the movement’s primary motive. Bartók harmonizes an ascending, more lyrical sequence of a fragment of the motive with parallel thirds (Example 64). The connection to Strauss may not be easily apparent, especially because of a Bartókian harmonic language steeped in modes and the whole-tone scale, but such deviations point to the composer’s deployment of Straussian techniques within a foreign framework. The core of the musical techniques, a musical analogue for the Essence, enters Bartók’s compositional arsenal.

Conclusion
Throughout the years 1905-10, spanning Bartók’s realignment with a more nuanced ideology and exposure to fresh compositional sources, Straussian, Lisztian, and even Wagnerian musical elements still pervade his orchestral works. But the appropriation becomes subtler, and thus takes on the character of a methodology—a reasoned creative approach—rather than a mere autodidactic technique. If Debussy’s—or even Liszt’s and Wagner’s—overt influence seems markedly short-lived when compared to that of Strauss, perhaps it is because Bartók had refined his methodology such that it no longer commenced with prolonged bouts of blatant imitation. Indeed, the moments in Two Pictures where elements of Strauss appear filtered through Bartók’s reaction to Debussy
bespeak sophistication in internalizing newly discovered compositional elements.

Moreover, beyond using the whole-tone scale, one could say that Bartók subsequently filtered both Strauss and Debussy through his growing internalization of peasant music, and the unique harmonic language he derived from it. His internalization, always in pursuit of the musical Essence in both foreign and “domestic” sources, reduces them to their bare elements, incorporating them such that they eventually become virtually unrecognizable.

Bartók’s almost seamless melding of these two Western schools in Two Pictures suggests a deeper level of internalization, which he continued in his subsequent works. Through the process, Bartók was able to develop a methodology that he could apply to his fascination with peasant music. Indeed, Bartók himself later outlined his treatment of rural peasant music as a process that began with quotation, but evolved into evocations of atmosphere or mood. Moreover, as Chapter Three will reveal, although the undigested Debussy influence continues in and beyond Four Orchestral Pieces (1912), Strauss’s presence—occasionally unfiltered—remains, especially in Bartók’s 1917 ballet The Wooden Prince. Indeed, not until after The Wooden Prince did Bartók fully subsume these German and French compositional influences, made evident in the pith and austerity in The Miraculous Mandarin.

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Chapter 3

Remnants of Strauss, Liszt, and Debussy in the “New Bartók”

Blatant imitations of Debussy continue to permeate Bartók’s orchestral works in the years following Two Portraits and Two Pictures.¹ Indeed, the outbreak of the First World War, which limited Bartók’s fieldwork in rural peasant music, seems to have increased his reliance upon the French composer.² The Four Orchestral Pieces, which Bartók composed in piano score in 1912, epitomize this influence. Although he postponed orchestrating the work until the early 1920s, it bears many similarities to his following stage works, The Wooden Prince (1917) and The Miraculous Mandarin (1918-24).³ Much of the melodic content and orchestration that comprise the Four Orchestral Pieces testifies to Bartók’s experimentation with Debussyan materials—orchestral practices, treatment of texture, and more relaxed melodies—that he would subsequently refine in The Wooden Prince, delineating a chain of continuity in the evolution of his compositional language. Yet both Strauss’s and Liszt’s shadows continue to loom in the musical background. Moreover, Bartók’s treatment of these elements in all three works suggests a final stage of internalization and crystallization of a musical essence, a representation of the Hungarian ethos and its communal engagement with the public. The Miraculous Mandarin stands in stark contrast with The Wooden Prince and all that preceded it, but nevertheless does so notwithstanding the appropriation of Strauss, Liszt,

and Debussy. In the pantomime, hailed by many as one of Bartók’s true masterpieces, the composer demonstrates his complete internalization of these compositional influences; the distant original becomes recognizable only through the lens of continuity.

**Four Orchestral Pieces**

Debussy’s continued presence in the *Four Orchestral Pieces* warrants careful study. Perhaps Bartók himself recognized the composition’s indebtedness to the French composer, and attempted to deflect attention from the work by neglecting to orchestrate it for nearly a decade. Paralleling Bartók’s internalization of Strauss, the composer’s early experiences with Debussy’s music begin with allusion. The hazy, aimless sound created by the strings, piano, and harp in the Preludio is analogous to the cloudy, incessant repetition of chords at the beginning of “Nuages” (Example 1). Bartók’s orchestration of the seventh chords differs from Debussy, but he creates the same ethereal atmosphere. Both the opening and middle sections of Bartók’s composition consist of pentatonic scales continuously arpeggiated in the harp and piano while sounded harmonically in muted strings. The melodic fragments floating on top of the texture—a horn solo in the former and flute and oboe in the latter section—create an ethereal resonance.

Example 1. Béla Bartók, Preludio, *Four Orchestral Pieces*, mm. 1-6
unmistakably reminiscent of “Nuages”—as well as the first movement of the Two Pictures, itself influenced by Debussy. Although one may argue that the pentatonic harmonic language instead reflects Bartók’s fixation with rural peasant music, the translucent yet colorful orchestration points to Debussy, while simultaneously revealing Bartók’s coveted intersection between modernity and peasant music. Moreover, similar sonorities appear throughout the entire composition. In the Intermezzo, Bartók creates a series of parallel diminished triads with a whole step as the interval of motion (Example 2). The eerie sonority once more echoes the intimate and colorful, yet harmonically static Debussy.

Bartók’s imitation of Debussy becomes more palpable in his choice of melodic fragments. He places in the flute, oboe, and clarinet a figure that closely follows the contour of the Debussy original in “Nuages” (Examples 3 and 4). Bartók shortens his
figure by a few notes as well as expands the final interval, but he places it over a texture
dominated by hushed strings—almost a pseudo-gamelan sound. A flute melody
introduced in the Preludio also bears a striking resemblance to the fragment from
“Nuages” (Example 5). Bartók’s melody does not begin with an ascending fourth as
Debussy’s does, but it contains the same descending contour followed by a step up and
leap downward. Furthermore, he gives the tune to a solo flute, placing the melody above
a heavily divided string section, itself an indistinct wash of sound. The opening melody
of the Intermezzo solidifies the connection to “Nuages.” The first four notes of Bartók’s
melody follow the precise intervals of Debussy’s original (Example 6). Thereafter,
Bartók descends rather than ascends by a second. He also rhythmically alters his melody
and changes its underlying harmony. Nevertheless, he states the figure four times in a
row, just as Debussy does in “Nuages.” The subtlety of this technique serves Bartók’s
new compositional needs; the subsequent measures, with their unexpected harmonic shift,
are clearly not derived from Debussy. Bartók’s rapid internalization of Debussy thus
demonstrates a refinement in methodology; he subsumes the Frenchman’s aesthetic with
greater speed than the many years spent with Strauss and Liszt. The original connection more quickly sheds its explicit resonance.

Although Debussy’s compositional idiom dominates much of the *Four Orchestral Pieces*, his influence did not preclude continuing engagement with Strauss. The latter composer’s style colors the second and fourth movements—contrasting Debussy in the first and third—but also is tinctured by the remaining two, as if Bartók were filtering Strauss through Debussy. In the Preludio, Bartók doubles a melodic fragment placed in the first violin at the octave, supporting in the lower strings with richly spaced, full chords (Example 7). The music typifies the hyper-expressivity and richness of Strauss’s technique, like the grandeur in the opening section of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, especially through the subsequent repetitions and expanded statements with ever-widening leaps. In the Intermezzo, the melody in the first violin is characterized by a series of wide leaps tellingly marked *expressive molto* (Example 8). The distinctive ascending octave leap and the aggressive athleticism of the second theme of the Intermezzo, however, lose their

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4 Gillies argues that Bartók filters some of Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913) in the Scherzo through the juxtaposition of high and low instrument groupings as well as the brass chorus, but the continuity in the timeframe suggests the greater likelihood in Strauss’s influence. See Gillies, “Portraits, Pictures, and Pieces,” in *The Bartók Companion*, 482.
vitality when placed in the second violin and viola (Example 9). Together the lower strings’ resonance as well as the first violin’s coloring create a rich, lush moment that filters Strauss’s aesthetic through the elegance of Debussy. The countermelody in
the horn enriches the atmosphere, but its stepwise ascent and *dolce* tone once more imply Debussy.

Strauss’s approach to orchestration predominates in the Scherzo and Marcia Funebre. The cadential gesture at the end of the first phrase of the Marcia Funebre in particular recalls the German composer (Example 10). Harmonic connections notwithstanding, Bartók’s spacing of the chord itself evokes the brilliant resonance of Strauss’s tone poems, not least by its full, blended sound. The Scherzo likewise opens with a melodic fragment that, because Bartók places it in a high tessitura with unison full orchestra, immediately suggests the grotesque (Example 11). Moreover, Straussian *Steigerungen* accompany the fragment throughout the movement. At No. 20, Bartók creates tawdry swashes of color—mostly from the inclusion of the E♭ clarinet and heavy doubling in the other woodwinds—with a rapidly ascending arpeggio (Example 12).

Melodic connections to Strauss remain in the *Four Orchestral Pieces*, though more distantly related to the originals than with Debussy. The solo violin in the Scherzo bears a striking resemblance to the chromatic fragments Bartók uses in *Kossuth*, themselves derivative of *Ein Heldenleben* (Example 13; Chapter 1, Example 23). Bartók begins the sequence with a descending chromatic passage but then centers on a descending major second followed by an ascending minor second. He doubles the sequence with the piccolo, nearly overpowering the two solo violins and harking back to the woodwind orchestration in *Kossuth*. He also alters the rhythm from the straight quarter notes of the earlier occurrences, but the distinctness of the orchestration generates
a tangible reference. This subtle appearance of variations of the “Hungarian theme” from Kossuth in this same movement suggests that the previous work lingered in Bartók’s ear.

Connections to earlier orchestral works also prevail, suggesting that Bartók subsumed his earlier music into his own compositional bag of tricks. Indeed, Bartók’s mediation of these compositional influences within his own compositional language culminated in The Wooden Prince, suggesting a growing comfort in his methodology, a refinement in musically encapsulating the Essence. First, the opening horn melody of the
Example 14. Bartók, Scherzo, *Four Orchestral Pieces*, mm. 5-22

Example 15. Bartók, Scherzo, *Four Orchestral Pieces*, mm. 12-14

Scherzo—over a consistently rearticulated figure in the woodwinds and strings, a technique itself recalling the pulsating eighth notes underneath a melody from *Ein Heldenleben*—echoes the cantankerous melody from the final movement of Suite No. 1 (Example 14; Chapter 2, Example 25). Although the figure appears in the *Four Orchestral Pieces* briefly, its inclusion in microcosm in *The Wooden Prince*, to be discussed shortly, offers continuity to Bartók’s early influences. Second, the melodic figure in the oboe in the Marcia Funebre bears a striking resemblance to the fugal subject in “Mephistopheles” of Liszt’s *Faust Symphony* (Example 15; Chapter 2, Example 38). Bartók’s own melodic figure descends a tritone rather than the major seventh of Liszt’s original, but the familiarity of extreme dissonance and chain of continuity underscore the connection.

*The Wooden Prince*

*The Wooden Prince*, for which Bartók drafted preliminary sketches in 1914, completing the work in 1917, constitutes a new forging of his compositional influences. The ballet’s overall form, which Bartók himself described as “a symphonic poem to be danced to,”
immediately conjures images of narrative tone poems.\(^5\) Indeed, the very nature of the music itself suggests the pictorial atmosphere of both Strauss’s and Liszt’s symphonic works. Like these two composers, Bartók manipulates the musical framework to serve the needs of the drama, yet within it maintains thematic unity and cohesive musical structure.\(^6\)

The ballet’s orchestration solidifies its indebtedness to Strauss and the New German School. Most scholarship focuses on the similarities between the opening section and Wagner’s *Das Rheingold* (1869).\(^7\) Both works begin softly before transforming into rich, sumptuous washes of sound that evoke the purifying force of nature. Wagner’s is a four-minute E\(^b\)-major triad (with some passing tones). Bartók, however, demonstrates an internalization of this technique by placing it within his own harmonic language. Adding an F\(^\#\) into the opening C-major triad, followed by a B\(^b\), Bartók invokes the Mixolydian-Lydiann scale of rural Hungarian peasant music. Likewise, the close of the opening section consists of a massive swell of sound from the entire orchestra. The orchestral colors amalgamate into a wash of indistinguishable color, gradually dissipating to soft tremolos in the clarinet, violin, and cello. The harmonic language may be the polymodal chromaticism of Bartók’s mature aesthetic, but the pure force and brilliant sheen of sound owes a debt to Wagner.

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Bartók also continues to implement Straussian *Steigerungen* throughout the ballet. The opening of “The Prince Starts on his Way” typifies their occurrence. The section begins with the Prince’s theme in the lower strings. Bartók gradually thickens the orchestration in the strings and woodwinds and simultaneously quickens the rhythmic figures until they transform into a full-fledged *Steigerung* (Example 16). Rather than any direct quotation of previous works, we hear Bartók’s own thematic ideas, but within an orchestral framework bearing Strauss’s stamp. The passage’s half-cadential gesture and return to a melodic fragment recall Strauss’s aesthetic: the melodic figure descends a perfect fifth, but the clash of the B-major triad with the G♯ creates an unresolved sonority analogous to a half cadence. Similarly, the entirety of the Second Dance is characterized...
by huge, dramatic swells of sound underneath a variety of melodic fragments, creating a
dense cacophony analogous to the battle section in *Eine Heldenleben* or many of the
variations in *Don Quixote* (Example 17). Bartók’s harmonic language and lack of blatant
imitation indicate a greater independence from Strauss, presaging the more austere
character of *The Miraculous Mandarin*. Nevertheless, a hyper-expressivity of Romantic
proportions dominates musically and programmatically: a massive orchestra of over one
hundred players, heavily divided parts, melodies and swells covering wide leaps, frequent
use of the high tessitura, and a Prince desperately attempting to reach his beloved
Princess.
Moments foreshadowing the orchestrational and melodic terseness so characteristic of Bartók’s mature style materialize intermittently in the ballet. At the close of the Sixth Dance, the orchestration lightens to a simple melody doubled in the cello, horn, and English horn (Example 18). Steigerungen still arise, but in a severely limited soloistic texture in the flute and piccolo.\(^8\) Although Bartók subsequently intensifies the orchestration, elements of this style prevail in the soloistic “Despair and Comfort” section, in which the composer relies largely on solo statements of a melodic fragment in a fugue-like structure (Example 19). Such sparseness in orchestration—and texture—scarcely appeared in the entire ballet, providing a welcome contrast independent of outside influence.

\(^8\) Moreover, the meter shifts to \(\frac{3}{4}\), and is a recap of an earlier dance—the same format Bartók uses in the second movement of *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* (1937).
The celestial and ethereal transcendence typical of Liszt at his finest moments also makes an appearance in the ballet. In the closing section of the Apotheosis, the high tessitura of the melody, the arpeggios in the harp, and richly spaced E-major triads in the strings create a sweet, effervescent sound indicative of the drama: the Prince being crowned by Nature and invited to live as one with the Fairy within Nature (Example 20). The dramaturgical transcendence and stateliness of the music parallel the sound evoked from the final movement of Suite No. 2 discussed in Chapter Two (Chapter 2, Examples 48, 49, 51).

Reversing the trend in the *Four Orchestral Pieces*, Debussy’s influence appears far less in *The Wooden Prince*—and mostly filtered through Strauss in the Second Dance. Its title, “Dance of the Waves,” itself suggests Debussy as a model, inducing images of shimmering water. The Dance opens with glissandos in the harp, clarinet, and celesta, but they remain quiet and ethereal rather than climaxing in strident power more typical of Strauss (Example 21). Although in the subsequent measures the Steigerungen broaden in intensity and thicken in orchestration, their swashes of color span smaller ranges, creating a more intimate sound. The melodic figure, harmonized with non-functional major and
minor triads, likewise remains aimless, moving more slowly in straight quarter notes and with predominantly stepwise motion. Each phrase constitutes a repetition of the previous material, rather than organically developing. Bartók alternates the repetitions with a more tuneful melody. Paralleling Strauss’s own avant-garde predilection for welcoming new instruments into the orchestra, he places the tune in the alto and tenor saxophone (Example 22).\(^9\) It remains generally static, however, with repetitive phrasing and

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\(^9\) Strauss included the xylophone in *Salome* (1905).
stepwise motion. The strings maintain an airy backdrop for the melody, a wall of resonant harmonics that create a glistening, delicate sound. Only the flute retains the swells from before, adding to the delicate intimacy. The subsequent fuller orchestral sound for the remainder of the dance augments the Debussy-via-Strauss effect. The strings divide with more dramatic Steigerungen that include larger leaps. The melody itself remains unchanged, but seems more lustrous with its doubling by the horn, clarinet, and oboe. Indeed, Bartók crafts an ascending sequence out of the once aimless melody; he subsumes all that was Debussy into the New German School.

Straussian textural shifts continue in the ballet, but within Bartók’s own harmonic language. Although the following brief example may suggest their limited appearance, to include further instances would belabor the point; Bartók relies on much the same approach throughout the ballet. An early example occurs in the opening Prologue. The descending melody in the first violin, an arpeggiated F#-major triad, unexpectedly shifts to an F♮ (Example 23). One could argue that one hears the pitch as an E♯ leading tone, but the simultaneously prominent C♮ in the rest of the orchestra reshapes the aural context. Similarly, a sudden dynamic shift underlies a melodic change: Bartók replaces the two sequential descending melodies, richly doubled in the woodwinds and brass, respectively, with a series of mostly ascending seconds over a sparse but gradually thickening texture.

Example 23. Bartók, The Wooden Prince, mm. 94-8

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10 In the score see also mm. 200-04; 309-14; 426-28; and 784-88.
Although *The Wooden Prince* represents Bartók’s internalization of foreign compositional techniques on a level that transcends blatant imitation, instances of this earlier developmental stage still appear; Bartók is shedding its final vestiges. As has been previously documented, the love theme, the ballet’s primary theme, is related to the Prince’s theme. Generally overlooked, however, is the theme’s remarkable similarity to the secondary theme of the first movement of Liszt’s *Faust Symphony*. Liszt transforms this theme throughout the entire symphony; indeed, he even uses it as the basis for the diabolical fugue in the “Mephistopheles” movement (Example 24). Although in his own theme Bartók alters the first leap to a perfect fifth from Liszt’s original major seventh, his initial arpeggiations outline the seventh and include the subsequent major third and minor second (Example 25). The theme’s primacy throughout the entire work as basis for thematic transformation further solidifies a connection to Liszt and the New German School.

Example 24. Franz Liszt, “Faust,” *Faust Symphony*, mm. 66-70

![Example 24](image)

Example 25. Bartók, *The Wooden Prince*, mm. 603-05

![Example 25](image)

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13 Ibid., 71.
Nevertheless, Bartók asserts his compositional independence from Liszt’s monothematicism through his greater use of heterogeneous melodic material; he creates many melodies unrelated to the Love theme. One such example, the Prince theme, evokes the simplicity and earthiness of rural peasant music Bartók so admired. Consisting mainly of both stepwise motion and arpeggiated triads, the theme use subsets of the pentatonic scale (Example 26). Interestingly enough, it is not a quotation of an actual peasant melody, creating a paradox of sorts: Bartók seems to have already internalized the ethos of peasant music such that he could merely evoke its atmosphere while simultaneously including imitations of Strauss and Liszt. Bartók’s years of experience with appropriation by the time he began using rural peasant music, however, likely allowed for its speedier internalization.

Melodic figures harmonized in parallel thirds also make a few brief appearances in the ballet. Nearly fifteen years after composing *Kossuth*, Bartók was unlikely to be consciously quoting Strauss. On the contrary, he had subsumed Strauss’s own works and techniques to such an extent that they were, in an appropriated and derived form, simply a part of his own compositional idiom. In the Third Dance, Bartók harmonizes the strings’ secondary melodic figure with traditional tonality and woodwind doubling. The higher register, ascending contour, and sumptuous, rich sound together recall the idiom of early Bartók and thus Strauss. Bartók quickly diverges from the connection, however, in
the melody’s descent: accidentals create whole-tone subsets in the strings harmonized at the third (Example 27). In the Second Dance, a strident melodic figure appears in the flute, oboe, and trumpet, creating a harsh, more angular sound amplified by the staccato articulation (Example 28). As the figure continues, the sounds intensify in dissonance, incorporating diminished and augmented triads. Indeed, the figure recalls the battle trumpet calls in Strauss’s *Ein Heldenleben*. The connection extends to a programmatic meaning: in the Second Dance, the Prince battles his way through the enchanted forest. Foreshadowing developments in *The Miraculous Mandarin*, in the Seventh Dance Bartók also harmonizes a variation of the Love theme with perfect fourths (Example 29). The line maintains an ascending contour and aggressive sweep of sound, but Bartók subsumes the technique into his own harmonic language.
Indeed, most of the grand melodic gestures in the ballet evoke rather than imitate Strauss’s aesthetic, indicating his adeptness in mediating these various influences. In the Seventh Dance, one such melodic gesture—with its wide leaps, high tessitura, thick and rich orchestration, and woodwind doubling—conveys all the drama of Strauss within a brilliant gloss of sound (Example 30). The music is Bartók’s, but the underlying sound recalls the sweeping melodies from the opening of Strauss’s *Don Juan*.\(^\text{14}\)

Direct references specifically to *Till Eulenspiegel*, however, do appear in the ballet. Perhaps Bartók thought them humorous or ironic, which Ferenc Bónis asserts as a clear possibility in the composer’s use of quotation.\(^\text{15}\) They indicate a final stage in his mediation of Strauss’s influence; possibly from Bartók’s perspective the original connection to Strauss vanished in the years since *Kossuth*. In the opening section, the contrabass and bassoon melody emphasizes the resolution of an ascending minor second by placing the first pitch, B\(^\natural\), on the downbeat, recalling the primary theme from Strauss’s tone poem (Example 31). The melody’s octave span recalls Bartók’s variations of the cyclic theme from Suite No. 1, itself related to Strauss’s composition. Likewise, when the Princess sees the Wooden Prince, Bartók places a *Till Eulenspiegel*-related

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\(^\text{14}\) For more examples of melodies that evoke Strauss’s style, see mm. 1073-75; 1143-47; and 1491-97.

theme in the first violin (Example 32). With the initial figure spanning a perfect fifth and followed by a chromatic ascent of two notes, Bartók quickly truncates the theme to a figure that bears a remarkable resemblance to the Straussian original in contour and articulation, with the minor second maintaining its prominence. Bartók’s association of the Princess with the clarinet also shares a connection to Till Eulenspiegel (Example 33). Although David Schneider convincingly argues that Bartók, through such orchestration, intends to associate the Princess with the kitschy verbunkos of the “false” Hungarian national music, one could simultaneously argue that the flightiness and cheek that characterize the Princess recall the devious imp in Till Eulenspiegel.\footnote{Schneider, \textit{Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition}, 130.}

Indeed, one can interpret Bartók’s transformation of the Princess theme in the Final Embrace of the ballet as an appropriation of the verbunkos itself. In the closing section of the ballet, Bartók rhythmically augments the theme and truncates it to a triplet figure followed by a descending contour that moves with more forward direction than the meandering original (Example 34). The Princess has shed her false, kitschy self, but maintains a core identity. Such an analogy perhaps foreshadows the later reappearance of
verbunkos elements in Bartók’s compositions from the late 1920s and afterwards; he accepts and internalizes the core, the Essence, of the verbunkos within his aesthetic.

Remarkable similarities to melodies in Bartók’s earlier orchestral works (especially the *Four Orchestral Pieces*) within *The Wooden Prince* further solidify the chain of continuity in his compositional evolution, in his desire to “perfect” a musical encapsulation of the Essence. The dreamlike opening of the ballet bears a remarkable similarity to the Preludio in the *Four Orchestral Pieces*, especially the horn melody evocative of nature. Likewise, the oboe figure with accented minor seconds in the Scherzo closely resembles the trumpet calls used throughout the ballet (Examples 35 and 28). The ending clarinet motive for the Intermezzo includes the triplet ornamentation that characterizes the Princess’s theme in the ballet (Example 36). One can draw an endless list of parallels between the two compositions; these brief passages exemplify a pervasive tendency in Bartók’s aesthetic: music from previous orchestral works reappears—sometimes in an altered form—in later ones, as if the composer were revising previous

Example 34. Bartók, *The Wooden Prince*, mm. 1511-14

Example 35. Bartók, Scherzo, *Four Orchestral Pieces*, mm. 92-6

Example 36. Bartók, Intermezzo, *Four Orchestral Pieces*, mm. 122-27
compositions in an attempt to encapsulate the Essence, to achieve perfection. Indeed, Ferenc Bónis asserts as much, calling them “shopwork quotations, themes recurring in several works until they attain final perfection.”\(^{17}\) Although such continuities are not explicitly drawn from the composers on which this study focuses, the fact that they occur provides another confirmation of Bartók’s methodology: he appropriates elements from his own works as well as other composers and subsumes them into his latest compositional developments.

**The Miraculous Mandarin**

Hailed as one of Bartók’s masterpieces, *The Miraculous Mandarin* dramatically shifts in compositional style from Bartók’s previous orchestral works. Harmonically, the dominance of the triad so prominent in *The Wooden Prince* dissolves in favor of the polymodal chromaticism, interval cycles, and cell structures that epitomize his compositions post 1919.\(^{18}\) Nevertheless, within the pantomime, remnants of Bartók’s past experiences with Strauss, Liszt, and Debussy persist. *The Miraculous Mandarin* thus represents a final internalization of Bartók’s reaction to these influences; he subsumed them such that their continuities to the past fade after nearly twenty years of compositional maturation.

A greater distance from the original influences tangibly materializes in Bartók’s orchestration. Many examples occur throughout the work; two suffice to make the point. The pantomime opens with a cacophony, representative of the city, that quickly swells to a massive *Steigerung*, with endless ascending and descending streams of notes in the

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\(^{17}\) Bónis, “Quotations in Bartók’s Music,” 381.

woodwinds and pulsating articulations in the strings (Example 37). The resonance from Strauss’s tonal-based harmonic language is gone, but his orchestrational brilliance remains in the sonority Bartók creates. Likewise, in the Girl’s Third Seduction Dance, the entire orchestra articulates the same ascending swell three times (Example 38). Although Bartók denotes slides rather than precise pitches for most of the orchestra, the technique creates the same effect, albeit in a completely different harmonic context.

Debussy’s influence also appears, once more as if Bartók were filtering the Frenchman’s aesthetic through Strauss, suggesting Strauss’s more prominent influence upon the Hungarian composer. In the closing section, rhythmically straight half notes appear in ascending lines in the woodwinds, while the cello, contrabass, brass, and piano create an ethereal murmur of sound in the background, typical of Debussy (Example 39).

The “melody” merely ascends, mostly in thirds, in a static texture reminiscent of Debussy’s presence in the Second Dance of *The Wooden Prince* as well as the *Four Orchestral Pieces*. In the subsequent measures, however, Bartók thickens the orchestration and moves into a much higher register, creating a more aggressive, radiant sound exemplified by Strauss (Example 40).

Harmonization of melodic units in parallel thirds also evolves in the pantomime. When the Mandarin enters, Bartók employs the effect in an altered harmonic context. The string passage during the Girl’s First Dance, doubled in the clarinet and bassoon, includes a forte sweep and rubato tempo that highlight its expressive intensity (Example 41). The harmonization, however, consists mostly of major thirds, creating a series of augmented triads. The increased dissonance distracts the listener from the Straussian
connection. A more radical departure occurs as the Mandarin’s body begins to glow. The first and second violins, both doubled at the octave, play an ascending melody in parallel fourths (Example 42). In the subsequent measures the melody achieves heightened expressivity with a higher tessitura, stepwise figurations, and woodwind doubling that epitomize the brilliance of Strauss’s own violin-dominated expressive melodies. Moreover, the overall texture remains decidedly lighter in comparison to Bartók’s earlier works. Only punctuated chords for percussive effect intersperse with the melodic drama. Bartók internalizes the technique into his own harmonic language devoid of traditional, more tertian-based harmony while banishing the hyper-expressive excesses of Romanticism.

The sudden shifts in texture and tone that mark Strauss’s symphonic poems likewise continue in The Miraculous Mandarin, but in a starkly divergent harmonic context. At the close of each of the first two Seduction Dances, the opening music—now
associated with the tramps—violently interrupts the Girl’s actions (Example 43). There exists, however, a programmatic reason for the interruption—the pictorial nature of the music is very much in the line of Strauss (see *Also sprach Zarathustra*, mm. 105-14 and *Ein Heldenleben* mm. 110-18), in which shifts or interruptions occur for the narrative purposes. The technique is particularly effective in Bartók’s work because of the generally sparse, more soloistic texture of much of the Seduction Dances. Indeed, all three seduction dances lack the repetition of melodic fragments characteristic of *The
Wooden Prince, pointing to Bartók’s mature, terser style, with concise sections of music that quickly shift onward.¹⁹

With respect to melodic material, a newfound distance from Strauss, Liszt and Debussy appears in the pantomime; Bartók has fully subsumed their respective idioms. The pantomime’s monothematic design involves an original theme; Bartók applies the same technique, but completely on his own terms.²⁰ This is not to say that he never before achieved originality in thematic development; rather, for the first time in his large-scale orchestral output the primary material for the thematic content is Bartók’s own creation. Nevertheless, distant melodic connections to previous orchestral works still occur, but the original connection is fortified only through the continuity of appropriation; Bartok achieves independence devoid of domineering influences. When the Mandarin enters and the Girl begins her seduction, Bartók includes a melodic passage in muted trumpets that dominate the texture (Example 44). Highly dissonant, the passage echoes Kossuth: the rest of the orchestration includes only pianissimo arpeggiations and steadily pulsating articulations of various chords. Each figuration also begins with a quicker rhythmic value, usually two sixty-fourth notes, paralleling the snap-

Example 44. Bartók, The Miraculous Mandarin, mm. 442-47


²⁰ As Kroó convincingly argues, the vast majority of the thematic content in The Miraculous Mandarin is derived from a minor third. György Kroó, “Pantomime: The Miraculous Mandarin,” in The Bartók Companion, 377-82.
Example 45. Bartók, *The Miraculous Mandarin*, mm. 855-58

like rhythm at the beginning of each figure in Strauss’s work. Bartók may not place his figures on the offbeat as Strauss does, but their crisp quality induces the same effect.

Similarly, the horn melody in the pantomime’s closing section bears a resemblance to the Hero theme in *Kossuth*. With the initial figuration inverted and rhythmically altered to straight eighth notes, the figure evokes a majesty analogous to the original theme (Example 45). Indeed, the Mandarin is at this moment fulfilling his sexual desire with the Girl—who offers her body in heartfelt, noble sympathy—before dying. Unequivocally within Bartók’s unique harmonic conception, the melody makes use of the Z-Cell, a hallmark in most analyses of Bartók’s music. A wash of sound likewise characterizes the strings and woodwinds underneath the melody, but in a cacophonous blare of sound that does not approach the size and volume of *The Wooden Prince*. Bartók’s different treatments of melodic material from *The Wooden Prince* in *The Miraculous Mandarin* highlight his complete internalization of the foreign idioms with which he had been wrestling for decades. The trombone call in the opening section parallels the trumpet call used throughout *The Wooden Prince*. Both are characterized by wide leaps, harsh articulation, and prominent placement over a wash of sound (Examples 46 and 47). In the latter work, however, Bartók places continuous swells only in the

Example 46. Bartók, *The Miraculous Mandarin*, mm. 15-19

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viola; the rest of the orchestra simply rearticulates pulsating triplets or sixteenth notes. Moreover, seconds, sevenths, and tritones comprise most of the harmonic intervals, rather than the preponderance of thirds in the former work. The overall sound is simply not as expansive; Bartók uses fewer instruments.

In both *The Wooden Prince* and *The Miraculous Mandarin*—though to a far greater extent in the latter than in the former—Bartók associates the minor third with love and eroticism. The interval forges a chain of continuity through both works’ focus on relationships between men and women, a well-documented important element in all of Bartók’s stage works.\(^{22}\) During the Sixth Dance of *The Wooden Prince*, the first violin plays a passage that includes statements of the minor third at different pitch levels (Example 48). Dramatically, the Princess attempts to win the favor the Prince she once rejected; she realizes that she loves him. This parallels the interval’s appearance in the Fourth Dance, as the dejected Prince watches the Princess dance off with his diabolical

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creation. In the Seventh Dance, when the Fairy attempts once more to keep the two apart, the first violin plays a three-note descending melodic fragment that emphasis the minor third (Example 49). Most importantly, when the two characters embrace, the minor third appears in rich and lush orchestration of intense expressivity. In The Miraculous Mandarin, the minor third’s presence in nearly every motive symbolizes the eroticism of the entire scenario, especially that between the Mandarin and the Girl, who eventually offers her body to him before he dies.

Bartók’s pervasive use of the minor third appears to have its roots in Strauss’s erotic Salome, a work with which he was deeply familiar. Throughout the opera Strauss uses thirds, especially those of the minor variety, in melodic lines which detail erotic sentiments and actions. As Salome sings “Ich will deinen Mund küssen, Jochanaan,” the phrase begins with an ascending minor third, paralleling her later statement, “Ich will den Kopf des Jochanaan.” The text of the statements themselves demonstrate Salome’s lustful obsession with Jochanaan. Indeed, the same ascending minor third occurs when she states “Wenn er kommt,” referring to the man himself. Although, as Carolyn Abbate argues, motives and their meanings form a continuum, here the constant linkage of this interval with Salome’s most erotic thoughts suggests a connection. No definitive evidence linking Bartók’s use of the minor third to Salome exists, but his thorough knowledge of the opera as well as his methodology at the very least create a plausible

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23 Although this instance is notated as an augmented second, Bartók frequently used enharmonic pitches to facilitate ease in performance. See Gillies, “Portraits, Pictures, and Pieces,” in The Bartók Companion, 479.
26 Ibid., 63.
explanation for its prevalence in these two stage works. He subsumes the original into his own aesthetic; the original connection all but vanishes.

**Conclusion**
Throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries, Bartók’s music has remained an integral part of the standard concert repertoire of the world’s major orchestras. Listeners have accepted the scholarly conclusion that Bartók made a clean break from the Austro-German and French musical traditions of Strauss, Liszt, and Debussy, even though the composer himself admitted the profound influence of the European mainstream on his compositional development. This misjudgment has far-reaching implications for our reading of Bartók as a central figure of nationalism in European cultural history. An essential aspect of his artistic personality has remained unexplored. He may have begun the methodology unintentionally, or as an academic means to master unfamiliar compositional techniques, but the process itself came to define Bartók’s approach to the art of composition. The manner in which he engaged with rural peasant music throughout the majority of his career—an interaction he admitted evolved from outright imitation to evocations of atmosphere or mood—developed because of his introduction to and subsequent obsession with Strauss. Strauss’s—and to a lesser extent, Liszt’s—constant presence, in contrast to the relative ease in which Bartók reacted to Debussy and developed his treatment of rural peasant music, speaks to the German composer’s profound influence on the Hungarian composer, one that the present discourse overlooks.

Bartók’s reaction to these various compositional sources underscores his predilection for a particular flavor of nationalism. The original source of the material did
not matter; rather, how he, the artist, molded and shaped it into a new creation representative of the Hungarian ethos, the Essence, is the key to his intent.\textsuperscript{27} Indeed, at the inaugural lecture at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, he stated:

Every composer, even the greatest, proceeds from something existing, from one or several related things. Some of the innovators gradually achieve such forms as hardly contain traces of the original. Others, the great synthesizers, develop all previously existing things into a whole, never before conceived or imagined.\textsuperscript{28}

Bartók’s deeply personal approach to composition, rooted in the desire to craft music that expressed the Essence for the betterment of society, caused him to appropriate from the multitude of sources he encountered, be they other European composers or peasant music from across the globe.\textsuperscript{29} Discovering shared characteristics—intersections between antiquity and modernity—fortified the philosophical underpinnings of his approach. His reaction to Debussy, specifically the Frenchman’s pentatonicism and coloristic orchestration, is but one example.

The philosophical undertones of this amalgamation cannot be underestimated; from this perspective, \textit{The Wooden Prince} serves as a musical representation of Bartók’s evolving philosophical views on nationalism within the context of twentieth-century Europe. In the ballet he adroitly molds the idioms of Strauss, Liszt, and Debussy into an independent compositional vision. The nationalist chauvinism from 1903 that tinged the methodology’s inception appears ever more bizarre. Moreover, the persistence of these musical elements, when studied through the lens of continuity, within \textit{The Miraculous Mandarin}, a work fundamentally different in construction and conception from \textit{The

\textsuperscript{28} Bónis, “Quotations in Bartók’s Music,” 382.
\textsuperscript{29} Klára Móricz discusses a specific example of the “purification of a melody” in “‘From Pure Sources Only’: Bartók and the Modernist Quest for Purity,” \textit{International Journal of Musicology} 9 (2000): 243-66.
*Wooden Prince*, re-emphasizes this newfound direction that simultaneously retains continuities with the past. Indeed, most scholars classify *The Wooden Prince* as the last work before Bartók’s full-fledged artistic maturity. The accepted view of this work as the conclusion of a developmental period indicates its centrality to the development of his musical language and independent voice.

To be sure, in the years following *The Miraculous Mandarin*, Bartók continued to draw on a variety of compositional influences. Characteristics of the *verbunkos*—used as a kitschy façade for the Princess in *The Wooden Prince*—appear as an integral part of the melodies in many of his later orchestral works, such as *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* (1937) and *Concerto for Orchestra* (1943). Perhaps decades of practice in the methodology cooled his original dismissal of nineteenth-century Hungarian composers: “Only dilettante musicologists can discuss these dilettante works in a serious tone of voice.” Moreover, perhaps the trumpet theme from the final movement of the *Concerto for Orchestra* prominently spans a descending octave and includes a fifth, is a subtle reference to the octave motivic unit in Strauss’s *Also sprach Zarathustra*. The issues of life-affirmation and death with which Bartók wrestled at the time of composition (he was in poor health in the remaining years of his life) indicate a connection.

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Bartók’s implementation of these musical techniques and ideas, however, should not reflect negatively on his status as one of the great composers of the twentieth century and western music as a whole. Scholars such as Malcolm Gillies, however, suggest:

Bartók was always insecure as a composer, whether in his youth, in his middle age or his sixties. He was ever looking over his shoulder, always susceptible to the latest trends and to the influence of novel ideas he observed in the work of others, whether alive or dead.  

Yet Bartók’s penchant for appropriation of new ideas and sources that led to a synthesis in his own music introduces issues of preference and taste. Criticisms of his lifting from Strauss, Liszt, and Debussy—Gillies discusses Bartók’s reaction to the string techniques of Polish composer Karol Szymanowski in the 1920s—dominate the discourse simply because western scholars remain unfamiliar with quotations of rural peasant music, especially when compared to their knowledge of the traditional canon. Moreover, the “originality complex” plagues contemporary thought on musical composition to such an extent that one wonders at the mere possibility of anything “new.” Bartók simply never fled from the possibility of inspiration from other sources. Asserting that “Stravinsky’s personality lost nothing under Schoenberg’s influence; on the contrary, it developed, so to speak, in a still more unrestrained way,” Bartók consciously appropriated from any interesting source he encountered, as long as it was “fresh and new.” As he achieved compositional maturation, Bartók likely recognized the chaotic nature of his early forays in appropriation, and quietly shelved those early compositions or neglected to promote their performance. Indeed, he seemed to find orchestral music the most challenging

genre in which to compose. Nor did he ever publish the full orchestral score of
Kossuth. This does not diminish the works’ importance, however, in Bartók’s
compositional development. In their finest moments, their cases of stylistic synthesis,
Bartók’s compositions exemplify his desire to musically encapsulate the Essence for the
betterment of society. And from this perspective, Bartók’s musical appropriations
transcend issues of original creativity and influence, and instead emerge as astonishingly
imaginative and sincere.

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34 Gillies claims that Bartók did not achieve unquestioned mastery of “abstract orchestral music” until the
Bibliography


**Scores**


