The need for a universal classification of folksongs is more urgent today than ever before. Museums and record-archives are filled with folksong data; the bibliographic material on primitive music and instruments is very large. Due to the variety of systems underlying the publication of ethnic music, there is a need for a good cross-index classification which would allow for comparison and efficient reference to the various data available and to the investigations that have taken place in different cultures.

What are the best methods of organization? Among the numerous properties of folksong, which should be selected for classification?

The following article suggests some answers by summarizing the classificatory methods of Hungarian folksong research. It is hoped that similar reviews of other methods will follow and that a universal classification system will emerge out of the consideration of the best suited principles.

The Hungarian methodology of folksong classification evolved in five stages. Each subsequent method incorporated certain concepts from the preceding system and, in turn, introduced new principles which were superimposed upon the old ones.

Classification by Metrical Structure of the Strophe:

The first system of order finds its exposition in Zoltán Kodály’s study, “Strophic Structure of Hungarian Folksong.” The subject the author set himself to investigate is the metrical property of the folksong line and the strophe as a metrical complex. His tools of analysis are borrowed from the fields of poetry and music in accordance with his definition of the term folksong as “vocal-text.” In his analysis he uses the concept, “accent-unit,” in place of foot. The “accent-unit” consists of recurring groups of syllables, usually on two beats or an equivalent portion of the bar. The thesis is always upon the first of these syllables.

The concept of the “accent-unit” is borrowed from poetry. The rhythm of Hungarian verse divides into time-units of equal length which begin with an “accented pulse.” Within this time unit the number of syllables may vary. However, four is the upper limit as a rule. When the number is smaller than four, elongation of a syllable, or a rest, make up for the difference in time, for example:

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Ezt a kerek/ erdőt / járom én //
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In Kodály’s method of classification the number of such time-units (three in the above line) determines the metrical character of the folksong line. Distinction is made between “primary” (two-, and four-time) and “secondary” (three-, five-, six-, etc., time) accent formations. The latter type is regarded as a derivative form, the origin of which is traced to the primary accent formation it resembles the most. Among the various factors which bring primary and secondary lines into an interplay, Kodály observes (a) the acceleration or retardation in performance, (b) contraction or dissolution of phase, or uttered sound, and syllable numbers, and (c) organic extension of accent formation—for example, addition or repetition of a part of the text.

Hungarian folksong strophe, being usually the aggregate of four lines, divides into two sections of equal, or unequal length. Kodály groups the former in Class I, the latter in Class II. Traversing this classification is the order of isometric and heterometric stanza structures which is divided again into further groups formed by the order of primary and secondary lines.

Classification by Quantitative and Qualitative Properties of the Melody Line:

The second system of order is the modified method of the Finnish folksong collection, Suomen Kansan Sävelmä (Volumes II-IV, 1904-1928), which was first
introduced by Ilmari Krohn. Following is a brief comparison of the two systems.

Krohn proposes a classification by variants. The degree of familiarity between the variants is determined by their structure, rhythm, and melodic contour. The songs are grouped according to the number of syllables in each line.

Another principle, hitherto unknown to methods of classification, arises out of Krohn's observation that the ending note towards which the melody line strives, is equally important in determining its character — at least to the same extent as its syllable number. Thus, the songs are classified further by their cadential structure. Since Finnish folksongs are close to the realm of harmony, the final notes of the lines are indicated as harmonic, functional tones. Accordingly, the cadences may be perfect and imperfect endings on the tonic, perfect and imperfect endings on the dominant, and rarely the subdominant (in major) and the parallel tonic and dominant (in minor). First the cadential note of the fourth line is examined. Groups formed thereby are classified by the cadential note of the second line, then by the first line, and finally by the third line. Tonality and ambit of the melodies are further aspects of classification.

The innovation of Krohn is this double system based on the syllabic order (quantitative property) and on the cadential order (qualitative property) of the melody line. While this basic principle enriched Zoltán Kodály and Béla Bartók's imaginations, grouping of the line endings according to functions was not elastic enough to accommodate Hungarian folk melodies in all their forms of appearances. Pentatonic tunes, for instance, with the tonic-dominant relationship, would have been excluded from it. Hence, the two Hungarian folklorists created a new version which reads as follows:

... the arrangement of the song collection must be solely a musical one, made purely from the point of view of the characteristics of the melody, and of a dictionary-like order, so that the related songs, when placed next to another, show the main species clearly. ... every tune is reduced to a common final ... to end on g'. As the number of melody lines is four, almost without exception, only three of the line endings are considered here. Of the three, the most important is the second one, in the middle of the melody, at the end of the first period. All those songs to which this note is common, come together. Within the groups originated this way, subgroups are formed according to the final note of the first line and, within the latter, according to the final notes of the third line.

Crossing this classification is the order of rhythmic groups: each category starting with the shortest tunes which are followed by the longer ones. And finally, the tunes are aligned according to their compass, headed by the ones with narrow range and followed by those with wider ambit.

All folksong publications of Bartók and Kodály are prepared in the above order. Symbols consisting of letters, numbers, figures, and the like are used, and each melody is identified by its own index.

A change in the order of the above aspects led to two variant systems, the "lexicographical" and the "grammatical." Essentially, the "lexicographical" system groups the melodies by their cadential structures; the number of syllables in each line is a secondary principle. The "grammatical" system reverses the order of these two criteria.

**Classification by Style:**

Béla Bartók's essay on Hungarian Folk Song marks the third stage in the evolution of classification. Bartók asserts the melody on the basis of their main characteristics and by re-organizing them in the "grammatical" order, he introduces a new concept of classification — that of style.

**Class A:** Old Style melodies are characterized by iso-syllabic lines, pentatonic tonality, gradually descending melodic construction, parlando rubato method of performance, and rich ornamentation. The arrangement of the examples is organized according to the number of syllables in each line in the following order: 12, 8, 6, 7, 11, 10, and 9.

**Class B:** New Style melodies are described as having "rounded architectural structures"; their method of performance is a "variable" tempo giusto (melody adjusting with its rhythm to the metric peculiarities of the text), and the strophes are built of equal number of syllables from 6-25.

**Class C:** Songs of Mixed Genera which do not entirely fit into the above two classes and show also the penetration of some alien element.


5. Oxford University Press, London (1931), (To be continued in next issue)

CONTEST FOR FOLK OPERA

The Music Committee of the West Virginia Centennial Commission announces a contest for an original folk opera on a West Virginia theme. Prizes will be given to the three best entries and performance to the first prize winner. The Committee is now seeking an appropriate script. Further information can be secured from Dr. Thomas Wistron, Chairman of the Committee, State Capitol Building, Room W-138, Charleston, West Virginia.