CLASSIFICATION OF HUNGARIAN FOLKSONGS
Stephen Erdely
(Continued from last issue)

Classification by Genres:
Complementary to Bartók's work is Kodály's study Folk Music of Hungary. While Kodály maintains Bartók's classification by style, the order of his book shows the rising of a new principle, the classification by genres.

The distinguishing criterion between the genres, as well as styles, is the principle of melodic construction. There are three structural types:

1. melodies with fifth transposition,
2. melodies with partial transposition,
3. melodies without parallelism
   (a) in descending construction, and
   (b) in archaic recitative form.

But, as Kodály points out, every element of folksong, be it in the realm of poetry or music, has some historical connotation. Text and melody merge and separate constantly. In this process, new strophic forms are superimposed upon old tunes, and well-known pentatonic turns archaize new tunes. Folksong types — characterized by certain rhythmical, syllabic, or strophic structures — traverse the various layers of folksong styles. For the study of their criteria, Kodály's essay is a store-house of suggestions.

Classification by Function:
The currently published volumes of Corpus Musicae Popularis Hungaricae (I-IV)* make use of all the principles of classification which withstood the test of time. Function of folksong is the principal means of classification, and the song is then grouped by variants, syllables, cadential endings, and ambi.

Children's Songs (Volume I) are organized according to:

1. "pure" Hungarian material,
2. songs taken over from folksong, and
3. melodies related to those of other cultures.

The "head-motives" serve as guides for further organization.

Golden-Letter Days (Volume II) contains songs of folk customs on holidays throughout the calendar year. The musical order varies according to the genres. For instance, the "regős-songs," resembling children's songs, are classified by two-bar motives, whereas the Christmas songs, approximating folksong, are grouped by syllable number.

Wedding Songs (Volumes III A and III B) follow the order of events. The thirty-six phases of the traditional Hungarian wedding divide the books in just as many chapters. Each phase of the wedding has its "main" and "lesser" types of melodies. These types are classified according to the number of syllables in each line.

Match-Making Songs (Volume IV) are grouped by their texts in (1) Melodies of Typical Pairing Songs, (2) Words of Pairing Songs, and (3) the Game, "Round Goes the Basket." Within each group the songs are arranged by syllable number. The variants within each tune-family are classified by their main features: melody, key, rhythm, and form.

The five stages tell the history and growing perspective of Hungarian folksong research in both temporal and spatial dimensions. Bartók's statement that "all folk music on the Globe . . . will eventually be traceable to a few forms, types, and styles." becomes day by day more meaningful and real. There are numerous problems yet to be solved, and the work of the ethnomusicologists could be greatly facilitated by the publication of a Universal Dictionary of Folksongs.

2. Academia Scientiarum Hungarica, Budapest, 1951-

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