

Hungarian folk song features

According to the International Folk Music Council the definition of folk music is: the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of transmission. The factors that shape the tradition are:

- continuity that links the present with the past – from one generation to the next
- variation which springs from the creative impulse of the individual or the group, birth of individual, but generally accepted new forms
- selection by the community which determines the form or forms in which the music survives. It is the survival of accepted forms.
- They spread without being written down or recorded.

Hungarian folk songs have almost always four lines and they are always homophonic.

The systematic study of Hungarian folk melodies, carried out by Kodaly, Bartok and their associates during the last seventy years, revealed two distinct types of folk tunes: the "ancient strata" or old style and the "new style" which evolved from this during the last two centuries.

The old style tunes seem purely Hungarian creations so far as we know nothing similar in style and character to be found in any other country.

The main characteristics of the "*ancient strata*" are:

- The pentatonic scale: only five tones are used instead of the seven known in western music. The second and sixth tones ("a" and "e") are missing, though they may appear in the form of unaccented, passing notes in ornamentation.
- The melody is repeated a fifth lower later in the song. This is called the "fifth construction" and it usually occurs in a "descending structure."
- The rhythm is 'parlando' (recitativo) or "rubato" (free) to suit the singers' mood and the occasion. Quicker ("giusto") tempo is used with dance melodies and group singing. The slower rhythms accept all forms of ornamentation, as well as decorative, individual variations.
- The song-structure usually consists of four lines of equal length, the second of which may carry the repeated melody five tones lower.
- The songs generally end on the lowest or second lowest note of the tone set.

Like their ancient language, the folk music of the Hungarians has maintained its basic structure through centuries of migrations and more than a thousand years of statehood in Central Europe. The structure of their folk music underwent certain superficial changes during these centuries. Ornamentations, modern, richer tonalities, western scales and rhythm patterns have been added to the original pentatonic scale and simple structure, without obliterating the distinct, ancient characteristics of this unique form of artistic expression.

THE NEW STYLE OF HUNGARIAN PEASANT MUSIC

The main type of it has a repetitive form with the first line heard again at the end.

- Involves tempo giusto rhythm
- They have the following structure: A-A5-A5-A, A-B-Bv-A, A-A5-B-A, A-A-B-A. The A-B-Bv-A (or A-A5-A5v-A) form is considered a particularly Hungarian structure in western European literature.
- They have the architectural "arch" form in melodic structure.
- The compass can be from one octave to tredecima.
- The Dorian, Mixolydian, Aeolian and major scales are equally common.

This new style is a purely Hungarian creation; nothing similar in style or character has been found in the Central European region.