THE VIOLIN SONATAS OF BÉLA BARTÓK:
AN EPITOME OF THE COMPOSER'S DEVELOPMENT

DISSERTATION

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Preface

The six string quartets of Béla Bartók have been compared to the Beethoven string quartets not only as to the compositional influence of the latter on the former, but as similarly representing the growth of the composer's compositional style as well as a cross section of the development of his expressive means. To demonstrate that the violin sonatas also serve as an epitome of Bartók's development while broadening the outer limits of his compositional career, thus complementing the string quartets in this view, is the purpose of the following analyses and perspective.
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INTRODUCTION

The music Béla Bartók (1881-1945) wrote with a prominent solo violin part, apart from his violin sonatas, includes two concerti for violin and orchestra, two rhapsodies for violin and piano (or orchestra), and Contrasts for violin, clarinet, and piano. However, the four violin sonatas (three with piano and one for solo violin) not only trace Bartók's development from his earliest endeavors to the end of his life but, as do his string quartets, they epitomize this development including the most personal aspects of his individual style.

As a twentieth century composer Bartók stands out as a unique figure, for there has been no "cult" built around him or his music such as those that appeared around Hindemith, Schönberg, Webern, Stravinsky, Cage, et al. Furthermore, as the teaching of composition never appealed to him (he even refused an excellent offer from Randall Thompson to teach composition at the Curtis Institute of Music¹), he did not directly influence composers as did his more pedagogically inclined colleagues. His music, however, has exerted a great influence on other composers.

Although he has been criticized for his attitude concerning the teaching of composition, one can accept his point of view, for he felt that he did not have a method or system of composition which he could impart to others. Analysis of his works helps to confirm that theoretical explanations of his procedures are difficult to formulate, and that emulation of his style might emerge as an imitation of the original.

Bartók had been trained in the Germanic tradition and after an early Brahmsian influence became interested in the works of Wagner and Liszt. He was profoundly impressed in 1902 by the first performance in Budapest of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* by Richard Strauss, which for a few years influenced his composition, including the early violin sonata of 1903. In 1905 he set out to collect and study Hungarian peasant music unrecorded until then. He was helped in this endeavor by Zoltán Kodály who had a similar interest in this area. Fascinated by this material he extended his studies to other Balkan areas and beyond, even to the study of Arabic music. The influences of these studies on Bartók's composition are best described by his own words:

The outcome of these studies was of decisive influence upon my work, because it freed me from the tyrannical rule of the major and minor keys. The greater part of the collected treasure, and the more valuable part, was in old ecclesiastical or old Greek modes, or based on more primitive (pentatonic) scales, and the melodies were full
of most free and varied rhythmic phrases and changes of tempi, played both "rubato" and "giusto." ... Their new employment made new rhythmic combinations possible. This new way of using the diatonic scale brought freedom from the rigid use of the major and minor keys, and eventually led to a new conception of the chromatic scale, every tone of which came to be considered of equal value and could be used freely and independently.2

Among the chief devices he evolved were the "parlando-rubato" rhythms derived from Hungarian folk music, rhythmical repetition of a single note or chord, contrapuntal rhythmic devices, and polyrhythms. His use of rhythm is responsible for the great vitality present in his music. He was constantly sensitive to the uses of rhythm. A rhythmic element could provide a theme, be used freely for its own sake, or bind together various sections. His harmonies and tonalities relate directly to his rhythms and help to delineate them all the more.

Still another early influence on Bartók was the music of Beethoven with whom he had much in common. Bartók, like Beethoven, was a lover of personal as well as musical freedom and a man of great temperament. When he felt the necessity to break the bonds of tradition, he did so unhesitatingly; when a problem arose, he persisted until it was overcome. Again like Beethoven, his formal structure is architectonic and evolves from a basic central idea;  

he expanded and varied the standard forms to adapt them
to harmonic and melodic forces, but relating always to
a basic structure.

When in 1907 Bartók became more interested in the
Impressionistic music and theories of Debussy, there were
several valid reasons for his avid response. The modal
harmonies of fourths and fifths employed by Debussy were
implicit in Hungarian folk music. Distinct similarities
in the aesthetics of allusions, symbolism, and atmosphere
were inherent in Hungarian poetry.³ Bartók himself says
that he was surprised to find pentatonic phrases in
Debussy’s music similar in character to Hungarian peasant
music. He thought that these could be attributed to
influences of folk music from Eastern Europe, probably
from Russia.⁴

This interest in Debussy and in folk music together
with his formal training combined to create a desire to
attempt a synthesis of the modal, tonal, impressionistic,
and classical Germanic elements in his composition,
creating a struggle for equilibrium between melody and
harmony, and rhythm and meter. Throughout all of his
quartets and many other works Bartók dealt more and more
with the balance of harmony and counterpoint. His harmonic

sense kept the contrapuntal devices close to classical rules; there are employed various kinds of imitations: direct, inverse, retrograde, retrograde inversion, etc.

It is significant that Bartők never lost his interest for research in folk music. He was aware, however, that folk melodies were fine for decorative effects and color but that they in themselves should not provide him with the ideas for original works. Occasionally utilizing existing folk melodies, as in the violin rhapsodies, the Romanian Dances, and the Hungarian Dances, Bartők also absorbed the spirit of the folk idiom and it became a part of his musical language, leading to the sublimation of this folk idiom into his involved musical structures; as a result, one would find it difficult to differentiate between authentic folk melodies used in his music and melodies of his own invention. In the two violin and piano sonatas written between 1921 and 1923 it is obvious that Bartők had assimilated the folk idiom to the point where the characteristic elements are present without the use of authentic folk tunes.
I. THE SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO OF 1903

Before proceeding to a more detailed analysis of the later violin and piano sonatas, reference must be made to the early violin and piano sonata of 1903. Bartók's mention of this sonata in his short autobiography written in 1921 for the Viennese music periodical Musikblätter des Anbruch,\(^1\) indicates that he did not think it unrepresentative almost twenty years after it was written. This sonata along with the Rhapsody, op. 1 (for piano, piano and orchestra, or for two pianos) and an unpublished piano quintet he entered in a competition for the "Prix Rubinstein" in Paris in 1905; he entered this competition not only as a composer but as a pianist. The results of this competition are referred to in a letter from Bartók to his mother in August, 1905:

So Brugnoli received the first mention; the last two don't even get certificates. And I myself will return my (un-) honorary certificate to Auer in St. Petersburg as soon as I get it. . . . I may say that Brugnoli's things are completely worthless eclectic conglomerations. The most scandalous thing is that the jury couldn't see how much better my works are. . . .

They declared flatly and decreed that the Quintet could not be learned, since there was

\(^1\) Béla Bartók: A Memorial Review, p. 8.
not enough time. Fortunately there was the Violin Sonata . . . and we played that. How long it took for us to find a violinist! Finally a young Russian, a pupil of Auer, named [Lev] Zeitlin, rehearsed and played it with me.\footnote{Halsey Stevens, \textit{The Life and Music of Béla Bartók}, p. 29.}

It should be mentioned that the jury was heavily weighted with Russian and French musicians; there were five votes each for these countries, as opposed to three for Germany, one for the Netherlands, and one for Hungary. Leopold Auer after listening to the violin and piano sonata said: "Ja, das ist die neue Schule; wir sind schon zu alt für so etwas."\footnote{Ibid., p. 28.}


The first performance was of the third movement only in Budapest on June 8, 1903 with Sándor Köszegi, violin, and the composer at the piano; the entire work was first performed in Budapest on January 25, 1904 by Jenő Hubay and the composer;\footnote{Halsey Stevens, \textit{The Life and Music of Béla Bartók}, p. 324.} it was performed in the above-mentioned competition in Paris in 1905 by Lev Zeitlin and the composer.\footnote{Ibid., p. 29.}
The sonata is obviously influenced by Richard Strauss but otherwise follows the tradition of Beethoven and Brahms with occasional Hungarian and Gypsy overtones. It is in three movements; the first movement is marked "Allegro moderato (molto rubato)" and is an extensive sonata-allegro form; the second movement, marked "Andante," is a theme with five variations and a coda; the third movement, "Vivace," is in rondo form. Though the first movement begins on an A minor chord, it moves quickly to E minor, the key indicated in the signature, and the movement ends in E major. There is already an indication of Bartók's concern with tonic-dominant relationships and his predilection for arch forms in that the first movement's constant use of chromatically changing harmonies and modulations culminates in the key of the dominant of A minor which is the tonality of the theme of the second movement. The third movement begins in a very definite E minor and, like the first movement, concludes in E major. The key relationships in this sonata are significant for they anticipate Bartók's later habit of linking a tonal center and its related key areas as one tonality, often superimposing them vertically.

The first movement begins in 4/4 with a syncopated rhythmical accompaniment and a basic motive A, E, D♯, C stated in four half-notes answered by a phrase of more varied rhythmical and melodic features. A third element
of the main group hinting at E minor is introduced in measure 11 and a fourth in D major in measures 20 and 21, which begins a transition leading to a second theme basically in C major at measure 51. A closing theme beginning in measure 75, based on the third element of the main group (measure 11), leads to a restatement of the first two phrases of the opening theme in the bass of the piano which begins the development section starting at measure 81 in A minor. The development section follows the normal pattern of utilizing the elements of the exposition in extended modulatory sections, and about halfway through it cadences in Eb major to begin a five voice fugue based on the theme of measures 3-6 with a counter-subject based on measure 5, followed by another modulatory section culminating in measure 157 which begins the recapitulation, again in A minor, stated fortissimo and in a modified form. It is certainly an uncommon procedure to begin a sonata in the key of the subdominant, as well as the development and the recapitulation; any one or two of these would have some precedent, but not all three. The return is a shortened version of the exposition and begins the second theme in measure 179 in the key of E major. A coda based on the motive of measure 11 and beginning in measure 212 brings the movement to its E major close.

The second movement begins with a modal (Aeolian)
phrase in 2/4 stated by the violin alone and repeated in the piano in measure 9. The second phrase (measure 17) is again stated by the solo violin and restated by the piano at measure 25. Measure 33 begins the first variation consisting of a more florid version of the theme in the violin and a cimbalon-like florid accompaniment in the piano; the variation is not repeated. The second variation begins in measure 65 in the piano and is czardas-like in character. The first phrase is repeated by the violin with piano at measure 78; the second phrase in measure 89 is stated by the violin with piano and repeated in the piano with a scale-like figure in the violin. The third variation in 3/4 begins in measure 113 and is based principally on the theme's harmonies with a rather rhapsodic treatment of the piano and violin. The first phrase is repeated verbatim; the second phrase in its repetition begins a modulation in measure 131 leading to the key of F major in which the fourth variation begins. The time signature changes again, this time to 3/8, and a melodic variant of the theme with a quiet Siciliana-like character is stated in the piano with a pianissimo dolce obbligato in the violin. The melody is repeated in the violin an octave higher and the piano accompaniment becomes quite Brahmsian in style. The second phrase at measure 154 continues the sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand of the piano with the theme
in the right hand, the violin again treated as an obbligato starting in measure 157. In the repetition the violin again states the theme while the piano accompaniment plays broken chords in contrary motion between the right and left hand in groups of six thirty-second notes. At measure 170 the phrase is extended for three measures, and the time signature returns to 3/4 at measure 173 where there is a four measure transition leading to the fifth variation in measure 177. The violin here states the theme in a slightly syncopated version while the piano plays groups of six and five sixteenth notes in syncopation; the phrase is repeated with the melody in the right hand of the piano with a slight change while the left hand of the piano and the violin outline chords in trills of six thirty-second notes. The second phrase in measure 193 finds the melody again in the violin while the piano plays arpeggios and scale patterns in groups of ten thirty-seconds; the phrase is repeated with the melody once again in the piano's right hand while the left hand of the piano and the violin again form chordal patterns in arpeggiated groups of ten thirty-seconds. The interesting thing about this variation is that no specific key is established, for there is only a B half-diminished seventh chord in various inversions outlined throughout the variation. A minor is re-established in measure 211, the beginning of the coda, which
utilizes the first phrase of the theme extended until it is dissolved, ending the movement in a quiet A minor.

The E minor opening theme of the last movement is in the character of a Hungarian dance containing a syncopated figure and an eighth-note figure which are utilized extensively throughout the movement. It is stated in the form of a period which cadences in G major at its midpoint in measure 9 and abruptly modulates to a B major cadence in measure 17. An A minor theme related to the opening theme is begun in measure 18 with an up-beat in the violin and is stated in a canon at the octave between the violin and the right hand of the piano until measure 26 where it diverges from its canonic structure; this is accompanied by the left hand of the piano outlining A minor chords. An E minor cadence is reached in measure 30 on the second beat of which a violin figure begins which, though only two and a half measures long, becomes more significant later in the movement. The root and fifth of E minor arpeggiated in the piano in measures 32-37 can be construed as a closing theme to the exposition of a sonata form in light of what follows. Thus far there is an opening first theme in E minor, an A minor second theme, and an E (neuter) closing theme. A development section begins in measure 38 with up-beat in the key of C minor utilizing the rhythmic outline of the opening theme only presented legato and softly with a "rubato"
indication; played by the violin, this is treated in sequence with a chordal accompaniment in the piano consisting of a half-note, a syncopated eighth-quarter-eight, and a reminder of the open fifths of the closing theme. A modulation beginning in measure 48 is brought to a cadence at measure 56 where the right hand of the piano outlines a Bb major triad while the left hand begins the closing theme figure, this time with Bb and F, joined by the right hand in octaves in the following measure and continuing in a parallel statement of that closing theme; this leads to a restatement of the opening development theme in Eb minor stated by the piano and again treated sequentially and modulating to a C major cadence in measure 74. A sudden shift to an F# dominant seventh chord, the V/V in E minor, in measure 75 serves as the beginning of a modulatory sequence leading to the return of the first theme in measure 86. This modulatory passage contains a four-note whole-tone scale pattern (E, F#, G#, A#) in the piano which eventually arrives at the E minor chord in the piano at measure 86. The recapitulation restates the first and second themes exactly as in the exposition, but instead of going to the closing theme utilizes the violin figure from measures 30-32 beginning in measure 114 to effect a transition to the second section of the rondo. Bartók here has employed a compact sonata-allegro form as the A section to a
rondo. A very lyrical B section follows with a melodic line in the violin the first two measures of which are derived from the opening intervals of the beginning of the movement. This is accompanied in the piano by an arpeggiated figure in open fifths (G and D) in the first two measures and changing in various chordal patterns thereafter; the open fifths can be seen as deriving from the closing theme figure of the A section. In measure 146 a motive in the piano deriving from the figure in measure 27 (in the piano) begins a transition to the second part of the B section. The theme which is rhythmically very similar to the first part is stated in the piano in the relative minor (B minor) of D major, which is the dominant of the key of the first part (G major). The violin plays the theme a fourth higher beginning at measure 164 and maintains the principal melodic interest for the rest of the section which ends at measure 186 with a return of the transitional figure of 146 in the piano which breaks into an eighth-note figure in 189 which this time continues the transition; the entrance of the violin at measure 194 continuing the eighth-note pattern but shifting the accent to groups of three notated as three eighths barred together sometimes over the bar-line introduces a device which Bartók was to use extensively thereafter. The return of the first part of B is at measure 198 with the theme in the violin,
the left hand of the piano playing an arpeggiated figure, and the right hand of the piano playing the transitional motive; a climax is reached in measure 210 and there is a gradual diminuendo while the music transitions to a "Poco adagio" stating the movement's opening motive in augmentation. A "Tempo primo" follows with a paraphrase of the closing theme of the A section but on the intervals G and D leading once again to a "Poco adagio" which restates the augmentation of the first motive rhythmically but resolves the last note down to $G\frac{1}{4}$ instead of up to $B\frac{1}{4}$. This is followed by another "Tempo primo" again paraphrasing the closing theme figure, but this time the opening notes are $C\frac{1}{4}$, A#, and E$\frac{1}{4}$, the pattern continuing with only the E and A# until the violin re-enters on the up-beat to measure 242 with the first theme of A. The A section is here much abbreviated to include only the first and second themes of the exposition followed by the violin figure of measures 31-33 whose dotted eighth, sixteenth, and quarter segment (containing the notes $C\frac{1}{4}$ and D#) is used to effect the transition to the C section of the rondo beginning in measure 278. This section begins in C minor in the piano with a theme containing the characteristic motivic fragment of a dotted eighth and a sixteenth but otherwise following the general shape and rhythmic grouping of the first theme of the A section. (Interestingly, Bartók's method of leading into this
section by utilizing a small segment of a very short characteristic figure stated early in the movement points up his propensity for architectonic structures which he retained throughout his life.) This dotted eighth and sixteenth rhythm remains dominant throughout the entire C section. The opening thematic material of this section is very legato with a dynamic marking "piano semplice." The violin enters with a statement of the theme in measure 296 after which there is an eventual modulation which seems to be heading for F major but turns out to be Eb major at measure 314 which begins the second part of C. This part is marked "forte energico" and is of the same rhythmic contour as the first part, but the notes are detached and the treatment is very contrapuntal between the right and left hand of the piano and the violin. There is a climax at measure 341 where the violin states the theme of the second part an octave higher fortissimo while the piano plays rich chords and arpeggios in the right hand with a pedal G octave broken in groups of six eighth-notes; this continues until measure 356 where there is a cadence in C major and the piano states a legato theme in forte similar in contour to the first part while the violin imitates this a major seventh lower starting one measure later with a piano indication. This section concludes in measure 366 with a hold on a Eb and Eb7 in the piano. A dotted quarter and an eighth
figure (an augmentation of the dominant rhythmic figure of the preceding) is stated in rhythmic counterpoint between the right and left hand of the piano with a basic interval Bb and E♭. In measure 371 this becomes an alternating eighth-note pattern between the right and left hand of the piano over which the violin begins to play a sixteenth-note figure at measure 373 (a figure similar to the one in measures 30 and 31) bridging into the return of the first theme of A at measure 377 with the piano part quite altered. The second theme of A appears at measure 393 with the up-beat and all proceeds as in the first statement of A until measure 454 where the transition material changes, and instead of recapitulating the material of A it moves directly to the B section this time stated in E major. The second part of the B section is omitted and instead an extension of the A materials ensues and concludes the section at measure 522 on a G# diminished seventh chord. At measure 523 a device similar to that at measure 367 serves as a transition to the return of A at measure 531 with the basic motive beginning on E instead of B and the intervallic relationships modified thereafter. The underlying piano harmony is that taken over from measure 523, an E diminished seventh chord. This return of A also constitutes the beginning of an extended coda employing materials and
devices of the A section as well as rhythmic cross-accents and rhythmically barred eighth-notes. A "Vivace molto" at measure 575 and then a "Presto" at measure 613 indicate the increasing momentum generated culminating with a reminder of the closing theme figure over the entire span of the keyboard punctuated by intermittent perfect fourths (B and E) in the violin, and the movement ends with three chords consisting of the open fifths E and B.

The complexity of the structures in this sonata, particularly of the last movement, can leave no doubt as to Bartók's ingenuity and flair for the art of composition which were so definitely confirmed in the years to follow.
II. BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF
THE TWO SONATAS OF 1921-22

When in 1921-22 Bartók wrote his two great violin
and piano sonatas he had already finished the first two
string quartets, several collections of arrangements of
Hungarian, Roumanian, and Slovak folk songs and the
exotic ballet, The Miraculous Mandarin. Both sonatas
were dedicated to Jelly d'Arányi; the first performance
of the First Sonata (1921) was in London by d'Arányi
with Bartók on March 24, 1922, and of the Second Sonata
(1922) also in London, again by d'Arányi and the composer,
on May 7, 1923. These sonatas share many characteristics
with the later third (1927) and fourth (1928) string
quartets, the First Piano Concerto (1926), and the Piano
Sonata (1926). The violin sonatas, however, are more
improvisatory in nature and freer formally than the above-
mentioned works. Although the two violin sonatas are
very similar as to the material used in their component
parts, they are very dissimilar as to structure and
effect; in fact, one might almost say they are com-
plementary.

Besides an obvious impressionistic influence it
is clear that Bartók was familiar with the music of
Stravinsky and Schönberg, and one can discover influences of these composers, such as serialization of vertical elements and the avoidance of repetition of notes in melodic lines in which all twelve tones are stated, as well as polytonal harmonies and irregular rhythms with shifting tempo markings; his octave displacement technique is not exclusively a Schönberg influence, as Bartók stated in his reference to folk music:

Hungarian peasants do not devote much care to selecting a suitable pitch, but they simplify difficulties in proportion as they occur; whenever a note is too high or too low for them, they transpose it by an octave, regardless of design and rhythmic conditions. This they will do "ad libitum," perhaps several times in the course of one tune. Hence at times the most peculiar leaps of a seventh occur; for instance, instead of the usual we often hear . In the course of time this practice has become so usual that many peasants resort to changes of octaves without being driven by need.

The Beethoven-like use of expanded and free sonata and rondo forms with a basically architectonic structure is evidenced in both sonatas. In spite of these influences, the harsh chromaticism, emotional outbursts, and complex harmonies with frequent use of purely percussive sound masses to accentuate rhythmic ideas are used highly

individualistically and remain pure Bartók and unlike anything else written in this medium. It is interesting that unlike in most sonatas, there is practically no exchange of material between the violin and piano parts in either of these works, giving the impression of two players improvising simultaneously on different ideas, but the two instruments complement each other as in a jigsaw puzzle and there is an underlying unifying element of motivic relationships which brings about an artistic whole similar to an intricate mosaic pattern.

All the harmonic progressions Bartók acquired and experimented with during the preceding years are exploited to the limit, but the music is always basically tonal, and although, as mentioned before, serial methods are occasionally employed, such as melodies containing series of unrepeated chromatic notes, the compositional technique is not basically dodecaphonic. In harmonizing many of his Hungarian folk songs and in his Eight Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs, op. 20, for piano (1920) he had experimented with the capacity of folk song melodies to support the most dissonant harmonic combinations. He defends the use of such harmonizations in an article, "The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music" in which he states:

It may sound odd, but I do not hesitate to say: the simpler the melody the more complex and strange may be the harmonization and accom-
paniment that go well with it. Let us for instance take a melody that moves on two successive notes only (there are many such melodies in Arab peasant music). It is obvious that we are much freer in the invention of an accompaniment than in the case of a melody of a more complex character. These primitive melodies moreover, show no trace of the stereotyped joining of triads. That again means greater freedom for us in the treatment of the melody.\(^2\)

The folk melodies Bartók investigated are usually modal or pentatonic and commonly conceived in systems outside of our major and minor scales; in this Bartók found justification for negating the supremacy of major and minor triads, utilizing chords with neuter thirds (i.e. superimposed major and minor triads or chords employing major and minor thirds simultaneously). One of the main characteristics of both the sonatas (in fact, most of Bartók's music) is the use of this neuter third. Often one instrument plays in a major mode while the other outlines the parallel minor mode.

Most significantly, folk idioms derived from common sources permeate these two violin sonatas, indicating a common undercurrent strongly relating the two works in spite of their obvious differences. The melodic contents of the first movements of both sonatas are related to the Hora Lunga, a Roumanian incantatorial style (with floridly embellished melodic lines) found also in Arabic and some Hungarian music. Examples of this style can be

found in Bartók's *Volksmusik der Rumänen von Maramures*.³ Many of the violin figurations in the first movements of both sonatas allude to the Kora Lunga, and the last fourteen measures of the first movement of the *First Sonata* contain four phrases, three of which contain eight notes, corresponding to octosyllabic verse of Roumanian poetry. Also, the characteristic rhythmic formula of popular Roumanian melodies, , is found in the second movement of the *First Sonata* and in the first movement of the *Second Sonata*. The last movements of both sonatas, especially the first, have definite parallels in the Roumanian instrumental dances although the melodic character of some of the second movement of the *Second Sonata* has its roots in the Hungarian folk idiom where melodies with a strong pentatonic residue and almost isometric phrase structures create the impression of popular Hungarian songs in the old style, except for certain irregularities of rhythm typical of Bartók's stylization. The *Volksmusik der Rumänen von Maramures* contains instrumental dances⁴ very similar in character to the opening of the last movement of the *First Sonata*, and anyone leafing through this volume cannot


⁴Ibid., pp. 102-116.
help but find the sources of inspiration for a goodly part of both sonatas.
III. FIRST SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

The First Sonata is basically in C# minor and is comprised of three movements, the first of which, marked "Allegro appassionato," is a kind of sonata form in that the materials are presented, developed, and recapitulated. Much of the material of the first movement used in the violin part derives from the melodic and rhythmic fragments of the first two bars. The cimbalon-like opening measures of the piano begin with a C# minor triad which is quickly obscured by arpeggiated notes foreign to this key; the violin further obscures this hint of C# minor by entering on a C/4 with a Hora Lunga type theme of great dynamic intensity. At figure (1) a recitative-like violin passage is accompanied by a series of chords which become verticalized three measures after (1) and remain significant throughout the movement; they recur at (3), five bars before (16), and in many other places in transposition. A second element of the main group appears six measures before (2) and is characterized by wide leaps in the violin and a Brahms-like chord displacement in the piano accompaniment. A transposed augmentation of the first violin theme appears at (3) with a transposition of the chord progression of (1) and is used transitionally
to a third element of the main group at (5), containing a characteristic syncopated element on the last beat of the second measure after (5). An antiphonal, cadenza-like section between the violin and piano at (6) forms a bridge to what can be considered a second theme, or B group, at (7), where rapid violin arpeggios and harsh dissonances in the piano played in irregular rhythms create a wild, exotic atmosphere, which finally dissolves itself at (10) and bridges to an impressionistic second element of B at (11). Three measures before (11) is an excellent example of the major-minor third, or neuter third. The arpeggiated violin part at four measures after (11) and at four measures after (12) is reminiscent of the section at (6) and leads to the development section beginning at three measures before (13). At (13) the violin states the opening theme this time on a G a fifth higher than the original C while the piano states an ostinato triplet figure (C, Eb, against B, G#). This material is utilized with some arpeggiated embellishments in the violin until a "Tempo primo" at five measures before (16) where the chord progression of (3) makes its appearance, and at three before (16) the third element of the main group is played by the violin against this. At (18) elements of the second group, or B theme, are utilized in the piano while the violin plays running sixteenth notes containing rearrangements of the opening
basic motive of a minor second and minor third; this section dissolves into the recapitulation at (20) where the violin theme is stated in augmentation, slightly varied, and two octaves higher than its original statement. There is a "Tranquillo" marking and a pianissimo indicated in contrast to the explosive beginning. The piano, with a pianississimo indication, is heard as a pale reflection of the opening cimbalon effect. The recapitulation is a shortened, slightly varied reflection of the exposition, and the movement ends with a quiet coda, derived from the first two measures of the violin part, and culminates with a minor third (A and C) played by the violin under which the piano plays consecutively Bb, Db, E, F, G, and Ab; these notes plus the Eb and Bb in the violin figure on the first beat of the second to last measure comprise ten of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale.

The following movement is marked "Adagio," and is basically a large three-part form. An A section ending at (4) begins with an unaccompanied violin line at the close of which the piano enters with an F major followed by a D minor and a C minor chord, over which the violin plays an F# with upper and lower neighbors. This is followed by widely spaced triads in the piano with a violin line based on fragments of the opening theme. At (2) the violin remains alone with a theme similar in
nature to the opening, and the piano re-enters at six measures before (3) on an A minor chord followed by a G major chord and an F major chord, over which the violin plays a Bb with its upper and lower neighbors. This is followed again by widely spaced triads in the piano over which is placed yet another variant fragment of the opening theme leading to the B section at (4). The A section can then be said to consist of a, b, a', b'. The B section is more intense and of a more varied nature than the preceding. It begins with a repeated ostinato F# in the piano over which the violin plays a typical Hungarian-Roumanian rhythmic figure in widely spaced double stops. The piano part becomes quite florid at (5) and rhythmically quite complex with the texture further enriched in this section by the minor ninths, seconds, and major sevenths of the violin part. A repetition of the basso ostinato figure, this time on G#, follows with the same folk rhythm in the violin, leading again to another florid section at (8), similar to that at (5). Thus the B section can be described as c, d, c', d'. The highly embellished cadenza for the violin at (10) is in reality a variant of the opening violin theme and serves as the recapitulation of A. There follows a reminder of the widely spaced piano chords serving as a two-measure transition to a varied version of the violin melody at (2), this time accompanied by richly
textured harmonies. At five measures after (13) a section parallel to that at (3) leads to a three-measure codetta (with a reminder of the Hungarian-Roumanian rhythm of the B section) which ends the movement. The final note of the violin is C♯, under which the piano plays a bass note C# with F♯, A, and E# superimposed, tonally reminiscent of the opening of the first movement.

The final "Allegro" is best described as a rondo. After a three measure piano introduction containing powerful and percussive tone clusters, the violin enters with a wild barbaric theme (typical of Roumanian instrumental dances) played entirely on the G string, and is accompanied by a rhythmic, percussive piano part with interspersed arpeggios. The persistent C# in the bass of the piano now indicates clearly the tonal center of this composition. The A section of the rondo is followed by a B theme at (8) with flourishing arpeggios in groups of five sixteenths in the piano and a Roumanian, almost Arabic violin theme of great impetus; a tonality of E seems to be emphasized by the repeated E's in the violin and the bass notes of the piano. At (12) a rhythmically complex C section begins and continues until five measures after (18) where a violin figure similar to that at (8) is accompanied this time by after beats, and can be labelled B'. This section dissolves completely by the eleventh measure after (21). The large section which
follows can be considered almost developmental, hinting at a sonata-rondo form. It begins with a fragmented version of the A theme, which is treated sequentially until (25) where a theme rhythmically similar to that of B and B' is followed by an augmented version of the opening violin figure played by the piano, one of the few instances of material sharing in this sonata and the Second Sonata. This material is utilized throughout this developmental section (which can be labelled D) until (33) where a return of A signals a recapitulation. The return is much modified and leads to a shortened version of B which introduces a short cadenza in the violin followed at (40) by C, this time stated in canon between the violin and piano and much abbreviated. At (41) there is a return of B' which once again dissolves and is followed this time by a coda which is really a parallel of the developmental section (D), and brings the movement to a close in a wild flourish of sound generated by the violin and piano. The final chord contains an E major triad in the violin, a C# major triad in the right hand of the piano, and a C# minor triad in the left hand of the piano, perhaps indicating an implicit tripartite tonality for the sonata, which however remains basically in C# minor.
IV. SECOND SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

Unlike the First Sonata, the Second Sonata consists of only two movements; however, a separation between the first and second movements is not sharply defined, since the first movement brings about no feelings of finality but instead dissolves into the second. The basic tonality of this composition is C major, and the two movements can be compared to the lassú and friss of the violin rhapsodies; however, the motivic relationships of the two movements and a more compact structure bring about a formally more integrated totality and a greater underlying depth of emotional resources. The first movement marked "Molto moderato" begins with a four-measure introduction on a sustained low F# in the piano while the violin plays repeated syncopated E's. This is followed by the opening theme stated in the violin, a quiet lyrical theme much in contrast to the opening of the First Sonata. This rhapsodic first theme is once again related to the Roumanian Hora Lunga style. The use of glissandi in the violin between (2) and (4) remains a characteristic of Bartók's style obviously derived from the Hungarian-Roumanian folk idiom. At (5) a 5/8 scale-like theme is stated in the violin against
a 2/4 melodic line in octaves in the piano joining the 5/8 of the violin the sixth measure after (5). A return of the first theme at (9) begins a transition to a middle, B, section beginning at (11) and rather similar in the violin writing and in mood to the middle section of the second movement of the First Sonata. A transposed return of A begins at (16) with a more expanded use of its motives and this material dissolves directly into the second movement, marked "Allegretto." The underlying B, F in the piano part at three measures after (18) parallels the B, F in the piano at the violin's first statement of the theme in measure 5. The alternating F# in the bass at the opening of the second movement pointedly reminds the listener of the sustained low F# at the beginning of the first movement; the alternation with G points up a dominant relation to the basic C major of the composition. The violin states an opening theme (played pizzicato) which is similar to the scale-like theme at (5) in the first movement. The pizzicato writing foreshadows the pizzicato movement of the Fourth String Quartet (1928). At the second measure of (3) the piano states a folk-like theme of Hungarian character accompanied by a drum-like eighth-note beat in seconds by the violin. At (7) a diminution of the opening scale theme is played arco by the violin starting a fifth higher (on G). An extended section based on this figure
follows until (13) where another folk-like melody is stated in the violin (again of Hungarian flavor). At measure 15 a Roumanian dance-like figure thematically derived from the first movement opening theme is utilized until (21) which begins an extended middle section based somewhat on preceding material. After (21) the glissandi of the first movement are hinted at and at (24) a theme derived from the opening theme of the first movement and similar to the "Burletta" theme of the Sixth String Quartet (1939) makes its appearance. At (27) the piano accompaniment takes on a cimbalon-like character while the violin continues its Burletta-like theme. At (29) begins what seems to be a parallel section to that at (12) in the first movement only this time at (30) the piano takes on a dance-like scherzando character as accompaniment. At (34) the violin recalls the opening theme of the first movement in harmonics. This is followed by a "Molto tranquillo" reminiscence of the opening theme of the second movement with the violin playing a vibrant pizzicato. At (35) the piano sets the stage for a return of the opening theme of the second movement, this time more clearly showing its relationship to the theme at (5) of the first movement. The effect here is of a whispered tremolo with rising and falling inflections played con sordino on the violin. This builds to a climax at (43) and begins a new section
which is highly developmental and based partially on the Hungarian-like theme of the second measure after (3) of the second movement. This is coupled with a violin pizzicato figure derived from the first theme of the second movement and an arco rhythmic figure similar to that at (4) of the second movement. A "Vivacissimo" coda beginning at three measures before (50), based again on the opening scale figure leads to a violin cadenza (elements of which he utilized later in the violin cadenza in *Contrasts*) and a modified return of the opening theme of the first movement at (56) stated forte and diminishing in volume to the end. The movement ends quietly in C major with the violin intoning an E two octaves above the opening E in a similar syncopated rhythm under which the piano plays a bare C and G.

Obviously the two movements do not follow any established formal structure. The first movement is a large three part form with elements of a sonatina, but a much too extended middle section to relate it to that form. There is no real development section, although the material throughout the sonata derives from a few basic elements. In this sonata Bartók has arrived at the method of allowing the germ of an idea to spawn a new idea which in turn generates still another in a constantly evolving pattern. In this type of structure the components are so closely knit that meaningful organic unity is achieved
whether they are combined in an established form or in a purely arbitrary one. This method of constant evolution is exploited even more so in the second movement, where a rondo-like structure seems to emerge, but where each section generates the succeeding section so that even where thematic ideas seem similar they are always considerably modified, while the sections themselves do not follow any ordinary rondo sequence. This sonata is a good example of what Schönberg called perpetual variation, where literal repetition is avoided to exclusion.
V. SONATA FOR SOLO VIOLIN

The Sonata for Solo Violin is Bartók's last completed work, the Third Piano Concerto being complete except for the last seventeen measures which were completed by Tibor Serly. A seventh string quartet remained unfinished and the Viola Concerto (commissioned by William Primrose), completed in Bartók's sketches but unorchestrated, was later reconstructed from these sketches and orchestrated by Tibor Serly. Indeed, Bartók had mentioned in a letter to Primrose that the Viola Concerto was ready in draft and only the score had to be written, which meant "a purely mechanical work."¹ This "purely mechanical work" turned out to be an extremely difficult task for Serly,² indicating the clear picture of the orchestration Bartók must have had during the composition of his works in order to find scoring such a routine.

Commissioned by Yehudi Menuhin and completed in 1944, the Sonata for Solo Violin was first performed by Menuhin in New York on November 22, 1944. There was a large

¹Halsey Stevens, The Life and Music of Béla Bartók, p. 105.
²Ibid., p. 253.
audience and Bartók, who was present, was brought to the stage to acknowledge the applause. It did not receive much critical acclaim, and Olin Downes wrote that the work was "a test for the ears, the intelligence, the receptiveness of the most learned listener . . . On initial acquaintance, we take none too kindly to the piece." Bartók on the other hand wrote: "It was a wonderful performance. [The Sonata] has 4 movements and lasts ca. 20 minutes. I was afraid it is too long; imagine: listen to a single violin during 20 minutes. But it was quite all right, at least for me." In a letter to Yehudi Menuhin dated June 30, 1944 Bartók thanks Menuhin for having bowed and fingered the sonata and goes on to note several corrections, (obviously in answer to questions posed by Menuhin) all of which are incorporated in the Boosey and Hawkes edition.

This sonata is technically and musically extremely demanding and the performance problems are manifold. It demands the ultimate in technical achievement from the performer and taxes the tonal resources of the instrument to its extreme limits and sometimes beyond. The marvelous sonorities and musical inventiveness latent in this

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3 Ibid., p. 102.
4 Ibid.
composition can be exploited to great effect by a performer of the first rank, but, on the other hand, the piece can be made to sound incoherent and acoustically repugnant in the hands of a violinist incapable of its demands.

The rhythmic and melodic characteristics of this work derive in part from the popular Hungarian folk idiom and Bartók's increasing interest in the music of J. S. Bach. In contrast to the two violin and piano sonatas, Hungarian elements are dominant in this work, whereas Roumanian elements took precedence in the former.

Although the marking "Tempo di Ciaccona" appears on the first movement, it should be observed that it is not a ciaccona, but only in the tempo of a ciaccona, and begins with the characteristic rhythm of the dance. Actually the conception of the movement is in sonata form with the following main divisions:

- Exposition----------measures 1-52
- Development--------measures 53-90
- Recapitulation------measures 91-136
- Coda---------------measures 137-150

Beginning in G minor, the movement closes in G major and, as is characteristic in Bartók's music, the movement is treated with great chromatic freedom. Seconds, fourths, sevenths, and other dissonant intervals are much used, and this plus the use of typical Hungarian rhythmic patterns shows that folk elements continued to
greatly influence his style. The first part of the exposition states the theme of the ciacona, and almost immediately the difficulties become apparent in the use of extremes of range, as in measure 12. The second section of the exposition consists of an alternating open A string figure over which a series of major and minor sixths are played, interspersed with occasional violent outbursts of thirty-second notes (measure 20 and measure 25). The third section consists of a more lyrical melody based on a triplet figure which is extended and treated quite contrapuntally to the end of the exposition. The beginning of the development restates the ciacona theme at measure 53 followed by rhapsodic flourishes leading to an interesting canonic device at measure 57. The use of fifths, fourths, and sixths seems to dominate and is followed by a stretto section at measure 67 followed again by passages in minor sixths, perfect fourths, and major and minor thirds, alternating with a typical Bartók figure (measures 75 and 76, measure 78 and measure 80), marked "ruvido." After a complex contrapuntal section at measures 84-86 followed by a "pesante" section of triplet sixteenths, there is a return to G minor and the ciacona theme stated an octave higher at measure 91, this time greatly varied and constituting the beginning of the recapitulation. The treatment of the main elements is here shorter and in varied forms and the movement
closes quietly with simultaneously bowed and plucked (left hand) pizzicato notes ending with right hand pizzicato figures recalling the triplet theme at measure 32.

The second movement in C minor is entitled "Fuga," but is much freer in form than a typical Bach fugue and often seems more rhapsodic than fugal, containing long stretches where the subject is not at all present. The fugue contains four successive entries and the subject is chromatic and characteristic of Bartók. The motives of the subject are separated by rests which become shorter as it progresses. The first answer of the subject is a real one, while the two following entries are variants. The episode following the exposition contains elements of the last measure of the subject played in sixths (measures 23-25). After continued passages in sixths and thirds there is a return to the subject played freely, first in single notes with a chromatic counterpoint, and then as thirds in the bass with the counterpoint above. Following another episode, the subject returns in regular and inverted forms and then appears once again as a canon in contrary motion in an alternating arco-pizzicato section containing the famous Bartók pizzicato, where the string is snapped against the fingerboard, and pizzicati intervals at the tenth are played with the thumb and first finger simultaneously with occasional interspersions of arco glissandi in fifths. The violin is brought to
the limits of its possibilities in this section, which is followed by the subject appearing in triple stops interspersed with florid chromatic counterpoint in a fourth voice. This leads to a coda consisting of a fanfare-like treatment of fragments of the episodes and a restatement of the fugal subject followed by a flourish leading to a series of four-part chords in irregular rhythm culminating in a long glissando in fifths to "ppp" followed by the first motive of the subject (C and Eb) played fortissimo.

The title "Melodia" appears for the third movement which is most meditative and relaxed in mood, and comes as a welcome relief after two movements of such high intensity. It is a simple A-B-A form; the A section consisting of a simple melody suggesting the tonality of Eb major. The four long phrases of this opening melody terminate in a refrain-like motive played pianissimo, in harmonics the second and third times. The melody of the B section consists of intervals in tenths accompanied by left-hand pizzicati and tremolos and is essentially a simple folk-like tune. At the end of this section at measure 48 there appears a characteristic two-note figure employed often by Bartók. The return of the A section is marked by repetition of the first sixteen bars, but in a modified form. This time the theme is stated two octaves higher with quite subtle variations
but always maintaining its basic shape. A slight variant of the parlando figure in measure 48 appears in measures 63-64, and in measure 64 the final statement of the first theme, starting this time on Db one octave and a third higher than the original, closes the movement, ending on a succession of double stop harmonics in fifths with the final notes Bb and F suggesting the dominant of Eb major.

The last movement, marked "Presto," is a free rondo form beginning in G minor, starting muted with fast repeated notes at the tip of the bow. (Bartók in the above mentioned letter to Menuhin suggests that the movement may be played totally without mute.) After some highly chromatic passages at a rapid pace a series of repeated D's on the open string plucked with the left hand serves as a bridge to a B section with a vigorous Hungarian folk-like theme in the Phrygian mode. Although notated as 3/8 throughout, the feeling of hemiola predominates, i.e. alternating 3/4 and 6/8 pattern. Between this section and the return to the first theme a repeated open G played with left-hand pizzicato serves as a bridge (also allowing the violinist to remove his mute as he plucks with the left hand). This time the A theme is played in fifths and there is a bridge consisting of a plucked open A string leading to a C theme at measure 270, employing another simple folk-like theme. At measure
312 a B-like section returns and at measure 334 a coda begins, starting with the A theme, while the remainder utilizes the various elements and motives of the entire movement. The movement seems to revolve around the tonality of G minor and ends ultimately in G major.
VI. THE VIOLIN SONATAS AS BOUNDARIES OF BARTÓK'S CAREER

It is clear that the violin sonatas provide a valuable insight into the musical as well as emotional progression of Béla Bartók. The early sonata of 1903 shows Bartók at the age of 22 as a sophisticated, musically knowledgeable composer steeped in the Germanic musical tradition. The analysis of this sonata indicates a composer who, though aware of the past, is fully capable of inventiveness and a willingness to explore new paths. His fascination for the music of Richard Strauss during this period supports this hypothesis, for Strauss was certainly the musical bogey of that period. That Bartók was intrigued by technical prowess can also be gleaned from the use of the violin and the piano in this early sonata; letters written by him during this period and earlier substantiate this in his references to such performers as pianists Emil Sauer and Teresa Carreno, and violinist Jan Kubelik whose performance of Bazzini's Dance of the Goblins is enthusiastically reported.¹ Thus this work of his youth serves as an excellent example

of the composer's foundation for future development, and as such is an important musical cornerstone as well as an interesting work in itself.

The period intervening between the writing of this youthful endeavor and the first and second violin and piano sonatas of 1921-22 is marked by the awakening and growing interest of the composer in the folk music of the surrounding areas and the composition of many beautiful and important works among which are the Violin Concerto no. 1 (1907), String Quartet no. 1, op. 7 (1909), Duke Bluebeard's Castle, op. 11 (1911), Allegro Barbaro, for piano (1911), Roumanian Folk Dances from Hungary, for piano (1915) (which were transcribed for small orchestra in 1917 as Roumanian Folk Dances), String Quartet no. 2, op. 17 (1917), The Miraculous Mandarin, op. 19 (1919), and the Eight Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs, op. 20, for piano (1920); in 1913 he published his Roumanian Folksongs in the Bihor District, containing 371 tunes.

He resumed and intensified his career as a concert pianist in the 1920's going as far afield as London, Palermo, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. He retained his post at the Academy of Music in Budapest and continued playing in Hungary and neighboring countries. His concert activities included performances with Imre Waldbauer and Jelly d'Arányi, both Hungarian violinists; as mentioned
before it was with Miss d'Arányi that the first performances of the first and second violin and piano sonatas were given. In London where these sonatas were first performed, Bartók was surprised that British audiences were aware of him and his music and wished to hear more of it. The first violin and piano sonata met with success in Paris (Bartók modestly attributing this to d'Arányi's playing) where Bartók was introduced to Ravel, Stravinsky, and Szymanowski by Henry Prunières, who also published articles about Bartók in France. This interest in Bartók did not make him a more popular composer as his music was still far beyond the understanding of the general public, and although the violin sonatas met with limited success, they were far too uncompromising and difficult to be performed frequently.

The first and second violin sonatas can be considered Janus-faced in that the first represents the culmination of Bartók's researches and experimentation while maintaining the formal structures of tradition, while the second, utilizing similar elements, turns formally in a new direction, breaking the bonds of established forms. This view of the sonatas, of course, is not altogether correct, because they both served as models which Bartók elaborated upon in many of the works that followed them. However, it is certain that they mark a distinct point of departure and as such can be looked upon as a bridge
between Bartók's earlier works and those to come. It is noteworthy that the period immediately following these sonatas is marked by a decrease in the composer's productivity; this can be attributed to the fact that he was pondering what path he was to proceed upon, that he considered these sonatas a significant compositional milestone, and that considerable thought on his part should be given to their significance and the compositional and musical implications they contained for him.

The echoes of these sonatas can be heard in the Third String Quartet, where its one movement form relates as an offshoot of the Second Sonata employing similar organic evolution of motives to achieve a musical totality. The fourth and fifth string quartets, both in five separate movements, contain many devices and elements derived from both sonatas but their formal structures relate more to the First Sonata than to the second. The Sixth String Quartet seems a fusion of the two formal principles in that there are four distinct movements, but they are all tied together firmly by one basic idea. Not only are these two sonatas the necessary links between the second and third quartets, but they (the sonatas) represent the fundamental aspects of Bartók's compositional procedure and style, which, though modified extensively in later years, always retained the basic characteristics contained and exemplified therein.
Indeed these two sonatas contain the essence of Bartók the composer; in them is compressed the nucleus of his art. Because of this they may be considered his most austere and far-reaching works; consequently, because of their pithy contents they have remained comparatively inaccessible and seldom performed, but in recent years have begun to be performed more often. The First Sonata is less often performed, perhaps due to its great technical difficulties for both instruments, not to mention the problems it poses for balance and ensemble. The Second Sonata, although less problematical in these respects, is formally more intricate and poses the problem of rendering it intelligible to the listener.

It would be unfeasible to go into all of the great works which Bartók wrote between his writing of the Second Sonata and the Sonata for Solo Violin. It is sufficient to mention that these works represent the true "flowering of his genius."

As his last completed work the Sonata for Solo Violin stands at the pinnacle of Bartók's career. Its formal structure is quite clear and his compositional idioms have become second nature to him. Its inventiveness in its exploitation of the violin as a compositional medium is fantastic; the economy of material used and the restrictions imposed by the medium are no obstacle to Bartók's imagination. Although there are almost in-
surmountable technical obstacles contained in this work, there is no vagueness or studied esoteric purpose but only clarity and an openness of expression without any loss of the Bartókian motoric drive or imaginative thematic ideas. This sonata certainly represents Bartók's maturity in the handling of musical elements even under the most austere conditions. The elements of his style are all there, but they have been transformed into a very natural and pliable vocabulary easily utilized for his expressive ends.

Thus the four sonatas serve as a frame for a portrait of the composer. The years between the sonata of 1903 and the First Sonata can be seen as the period in which Bartók had gathered the greater part of his resources, while the years between the Second Sonata and the Sonata for Solo Violin contain the exploitation, modification, and codification of these resources, resulting in the clarification and refinement of the vehicles for his expression. As such they serve as boundaries which contain and epitomize his creative life.
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