The string quartets of Bela Bartok: an analysis

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THE STRING QUARTETS OF BELA BARTOK: AN ANALYSIS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Music
College of the Pacific

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Music

by
Arthur Corra
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CHAPTER I

WHY BARTOK?

What is generally referred to by the public-at-large as "modernism" is thought (by it) to be based upon the denial and contradiction of the fundamental principles of musical art. But it would be a grave error to assume from this that the present age differs in the attitude toward modernism very considerably from any other, except perhaps in degree. The general intellectual or artistic niveau of any period whatsoever is almost inevitably a low one, apart from a few outstanding figures--rarely exceeding two or three in any single generation--who impart most of the significance to it. One is too prone to forget that art is somewhat different from other human activities in that the achievement of one man of genius far outweighs that of any number of mediocrities put together, even though he may be outnumbered by them in the ratio of a thousand to one. Even though it is rare, if not impossible, to find a man of solitary genius who is not indebted to at least one or several lesser men for his achievements it still holds true that a thousand noughts added together only amount to nothing in the end. It is the inability to recognize this simple truth that is primarily responsible for the all-too-familiar charge of decadence which is increasingly brought
by each successive generation against its contemporary artists, even in the most incomparably fertile periods of artistic activity.

And if the present age, like any other, has its untold legions of negligible mediocrities, so also it has its isolated exceptions almost lost to sight in the general welter of futility which surrounds them because they are nearly always in direct conflict with the so-called "tendencies of their age", and also because they generally differ considerably from each other, presenting relatively few common characteristics which could be summed up in a comprehensive aesthetic formula. Among this small number of significant figures, Bela Bartok is one of the most significant and arresting, as he is also one whose full importance is least appreciated.

In approaching the work of Bartok it is first necessary to dismiss from one's mind many preconceived notions regarding him, otherwise one will most certainly fail to grasp his genuine significance. His work as a collector and annotator of folk music, and the role of this folk music in his musical creations are two particular areas in which there still exists a great amount of misunderstanding.

Now that Bartok is dead the time has come to review his music anew, to see it as a completed life-work and at
length to try to assess it as a finished whole. As things are, it is now possible to place Bartok in music's history and to submit his work to more assured estimations than could be given to it while still growing. Nothing can now be added by him.

Bela Bartok is a true genius, and, side by side with Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky, is one of the three great creative composers in the early twentieth century.1

His music absorbed less from his artistic environment than he placed into it out of his own creative fantasy unlike the many composers who seem to require periodic stimulation from their time in order to create.

Bela Bartok lived in a state of detachment from the world. His mind was not inclined to vacillate, but it was strong; it was not like wax that absorbs the impression of strange forms with ease, but rather like a signet ring that puts its own mark on every note. Era for most talented composers before and during the Second World War meant the summation of spiritual, literary and artistic movements in the West. For Bela Bartok the same word meant the West in which he was living and working. For the talented composers "the time" is something flowing, that carries ever new forms along. For Bela Bartok it was something enduring.

Bela Bartok is not to be considered a genius only

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because he had a spiritual pattern of his own and because the particular type of his musical imagination cannot be compared with any other type. He possessed not only the fantasy of a genius, but the lucidity of a genius as well. Imagination, intelligence and morality are united in Bartok's work, as they are in every great art.

Bela Bartok's road led from the romance of Liszt and the neo-romance of Impressionism to a new music, one which is motivated only by musical forces and which shapes its contents non-subjectively. Music without color merely for its own sake, without literary signification, without illustrative "tricks", without theatricalism; music that did not dissolve subjective moods but was form and figure; music in which the lines are not harmonically bound; that was the goal aspired to by the musical geniuses and, following them, by the musical talents of the pre-war era in diverse ways. That was the goal that Bela Bartok sought to attain in his own manner.

Bartok's music knows pain and joy, but the human quality in this music is the universal human quality, not humanity restricted by national confines. There are moments in Bartok's music which seem to be Beethoven-like music.

There is no music in later times that approaches so closely the spiritualized music of Beethoven's *adagios* in his last string quartets as some of the elements in
Bartok's music."²

The great Lento which is the last movement of Bartok's String Quartet Number Two, with its grieving and sighing; the Sostenuto that closes the Piano Suite, Opus 14, with its fervent laments—both are great music written in the spirit of Beethoven.

Like most sensitive souls, Bela Bartok often conceals this sensitivity behind grotesque humor and ludicrous satire as in the Allegretto, con indifferenza in the final movement of the String Quartet Number Five and the Interrupted Intermezzo of the Concerto for Orchestra. His rhythm becomes thorny, his temper aggressive. Wild "stamping chords" and glaring dissonances drawn out the secret laments of a wounded soul.

In Bartok's music one can feel a rich humaneness. The mechanization of music as found in Stravinsky, and the constructivism of Schoenberg in later years, are equally alien to Bartok. No matter how new his music, no matter how far he ventures into unexplored tonal spheres, his music never loses its inherent warmth. His keen mind, thinking clearly and surely, does not chill the emotion and does not allow the soul to freeze, as do the intellect of Schoenberg and the calculated objectivity of Stravinsky.

² Ibid., p. 233.
Regardless of how much Bela Bartok condenses music and reduces it to the very essential of tone and rhythm, and even when he seeks heights where the atmosphere becomes thin and cold, music remains an art of the soul, of its grief and sorrow. The songs of the people, from whom Bela Bartok is descended, still resound into the lonely spheres in which the spirit of a great composer sought a new truth.
CHAPTER II

HUNGARIAN FOLK MUSIC

A great deal has been written about Bela Bartok as a "national" composer. So much stress has been placed on this feature that his music is often thought chiefly interesting as a modern reflection of the peculiarities of Hungarian folk music and even as a continuation of the efforts of Brahms and Liszt to capture its spirit. The mere statement that Bartok is as Hungarian as Sibelius is Finnish or Manuel de Falla is Spanish cannot make a great composer of him. To do no more than to record the characteristic features of the music of one's country is not enough, although, in the case of Bartok, collecting and transcribing of such a vast body of material embodying folk music of several groups in Central Europe are admittedly formidable contributions. However, a true artist has the potentiality of greatness in him long before national consciousness comes into play and colors the development of his personality.

Bela Bartok was born a genius. It was beneficial for the variety of the art of music that he happened to come into the world in Hungary and that he should have had access to the peasant music of his country in its original or nearly-original form, undefiled by the gypsy influences that had perverted and distorted it in the versions that came into
the possession of Liszt and Brahms. If Bartok had no other merit than that of revealing the true spirit of this music, it would be sufficient for everyone to be indebted to him, although no activity of this kind alone could have provided sufficient persuasion to admire him for the creative artist that he is. He would have been a valuable archaeologist instead of a significant composer. His later works, in fact, where national elements no longer appear practically in their original forms (as they do in such early things as the Suite for Orchestra Number One, Opus 3 or the Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra\(^3\) but are "filtered" through his own personality, are infinitely more interesting and convincing. He so entirely absorbed the modes of expression peculiar to his people, they are so inextricably fused with those of his individuality, that it is almost impossible to distinguish any dividing line. But as his development progressed, his personality became more and more dominant. It subjected the folk-idiom to its purpose with greater ease, and the composer's thoughts, although still expressed in his native language, were lifted above national boundaries to become

\(^3\) These two early works, incidentally, were written before Bartok had clearly distinguished between the true Magyar peasant music and the numerous foreign elements which were artificially grafted onto Hungarian soil by shifts of political boundaries but which retained their ethnological distinctness and individuality. In his later works Bartok is always careful to make it quite clear when he makes use of themes belonging to Slovak or Roumanian territories.
universally significant.

Last born of all the schools of contemporary Europe, the Hungarian school asserted itself with remarkable speed. An article by A. de Bertha\(^4\), published in 1908 in a French periodical, relates that the earliest mention of Hungarian music (Symphonia Hungarorum) occurs in the writings of Saint Gerard, bishop and martyr (eleventh century). But from that time on to the middle of the nineteenth century, the history of specifically Hungarian music (as distinct from that of music in Hungary) is chiefly that of the growth and evolution of folk songs and folk tunes—a subject upon which a good deal of new light continues to be thrown with the periodic publication of bits of the invaluable collection of over eight thousand tunes formed by Vihar, Bartok, Kodaly, and others.

The theory is held by several critics that if the best of the folk songs of a people could be traced to their origin, they would be found to be the work of comparatively few men, whose nameless genius has kept these songs alive through generations of change and made them proof against constant adulteration. Bartok preferred an entirely

different theory. He believed that the songs sprang from ordinary people, and that they have been polished, rather than dulled, by contact with succeeding generations. In support of his case he pointed out that he had often come across different versions of the same song, all of them so good that it was difficult to choose between them. Does this suggest adulteration? He was very emphatic in his assertion that the songs were always found in their purest form in districts where the peasants could neither read nor write.

It is not merely a coincidence that folk song research and musical culture based on the elements of folk songs flourished in Hungary to such a remarkable degree. Hungary was practically the geographical center of Eastern Europe and, with her different nationalities before World War I, offered a miniature picture of the great diversification of Eastern Europe, which was inhabited by so many national groups.

The close everyday contact between the various national groups resulted in the development of an inexhaustible variety of folk music. This explains the abundance of folk music in Eastern Europe, so amazingly rich in folk songs and multiple types of folk-melodies. It is small

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Frank Whitaker, "A Visit to Bela Bartok," The Musical Times, LXVII (March 1, 1926), 221.
wonder that Hungarian musicians, living in the midst of a veritable melting-pot, turned with such great interest toward this extraordinary musical treasure.

This interest bore fruit of two different kinds: first, the scientific research, description, systematic grouping and comparison of Eastern European folk song types resulted in the development of an entirely new science—the science of comparative research in folk song similar to comparative philology. The other notable result—separate from the former—was the creation of an indigenous Hungarian musical art, inspired and influenced by this unparalleled and invaluable background of folk music. The renaissance of musical art, founded on unknown, unfaded and unspoiled treasures of folk music has almost become a new musical outlook in Hungary.

Some Western Europeans make the great mistake of classifying this manifestation in musical works as a "folkloristic" tendency and minimizing its importance. The emphasis is not on the insertion of a "folkloristic" fragment into alien material, but rather—and this is much more significant—on the unfolding of a new musical spirit, rooted in the elements of music springing from the soil.

It is another mistake to suppose that the local research in this treasure chest of music, so closely associated with rural life, has been a tiresome task, requiring a
great deal of physical effort and self-sacrifice. According to Bartok himself:

As far as I am concerned, I must say that the time devoted to this work constitutes the happiest part of my life, and that I would not exchange it for anything. Happiest in the noblest sense of the word, as I had the great privilege to be a close observer of an as yet homogeneous, but unfortunately rapidly disappearing social structure, expressing itself in music.⁶

Bartok adds several observations concerning the relationship between peasants of different nationalities. He states that when these peasants are at war at the command of their leaders, and the different nationalities seem to be intent on obliterating one another there is not—and never has been—the slightest trace of hatred or animosity against each other among these people. They live peacefully side by side, each speaking his own language, following his own customs, taking it for granted that his neighbor, speaking another language, does the same. Bartok offers as overwhelming proof of this the fact that in the words of the lyric folksongs, the mirror of the peoples' soul, it is difficult to find any thought expressing animosity towards other nationalities. And even if there should be found a line or two poking fun at the foreigner, they have no more significance than some of the words by which the people of the soil good-naturedly ridicule their own shortcomings.

"There is peace among the peasants; hatred against their brothers is fostered only by the higher circles." 7

In Bartok's writings the term "peasant music" connotes, broadly speaking, all the tunes which endure among the peasant class of any nation, in a more or less wide area and for a more or less long period, and constitute a spontaneous expression of the musical feeling of that class.

From the point of view of folk-lore, Bartok defines the peasant class as follows:

It is that part of the population engaged in producing prime requisites and materials, whose need for expression, physical and mental, is more or less satisfied either with forms of expression corresponding to its own tradition, or with forms which, although originating in a higher (urban) culture, have been instinctively altered so as to suit its own outlook and disposition.8

The indefinite expression "more or less" is used with reference to the relativity of the very expression "peasant class". For a similar reason, when defining peasant music, the question of area and period was specified but loosely; for the very definition of peasant music is elastic. It must take into account the fact that the area referred to may vary from the smallest conceivable to a very wide one;

7 Ibid.

it refers to a countless series and number of tune-types, ranging from types that can hardly be considered as peasant music at all, to types that are peasant music in the narrowest sense of the term.

Bartok admits that practically every recent European peasant music known today grew under the influence of some kind of "national" or "popular" art music. Under this term are included musical products—chiefly single, unaccompanied melodies—from authors who, being musically educated to some degree, mix in their work the idiosyncrasies of the style of the peasant music of their country with the commonplaces of the higher types of art music. Bartok includes in this category most of the "Hungarian" tunes used by Liszt in his Hungarian Rhapsodies and by Brahms in his Hungarian Dances.

Taken in a narrower sense, the term "peasant music" connotes the totality of the peasant tunes exemplifying one or several more or less homogeneous styles. Therefore, in this narrower sense, peasant music is the outcome of changes wrought by a natural force whose operation is unconscious; it is impulsively created by a community of men who have had no schooling; it is as much a natural product as are the various forms of animal and vegetable life. For this reason, its components—the single tunes—are so many examples of high artistic perfection. In their small way, they are as perfect as the grandest masterpieces of musical art. They
are, indeed, classical models of the way in which a musical idea can be expressed in all its freshness and shapeliness—in short, in the very best possible way, in the briefest possible form and with the simplest of means. On the other hand, the favorite national or popular art songs of the ruling classes contain, besides a few interesting tunes, so many commonplaces that their value is far less than that of peasant music.

Investigation of musical folk-lore has two objectives. First, to assemble as rich a collection as possible of peasant tunes, scientifically classified, and principally the tunes of neighboring peasant classes that are in close contact with one another. Secondly, to determine by careful comparison every one of the musical styles recognizable in the above materials, and so far as possible to trace them to their origin.

Hungary, before her dismemberment, was one of the best fields available for an investigation of this kind. There new styles had cropped up and were cropping up even in our own time; so to speak, right in front of our eyes. And there the older styles endured—at certain spots—in a wonderful state of purity.⁹

The influence of folk music on the development of art-music only began to make itself felt to any considerable extent in the nineteenth century, on the one hand in the works of Chopin and Liszt, and on the other in those

⁹Ibid., p. 12.
representatives of the various nationalistic movements -- Grieg, Smetana, Dvorak, Rimsky-Korsakoff, and others. This view is not altogether correct, since in the first place the works of the composers just mentioned have had their roots in the popular art-music of their native countries rather than in folk music itself. In the second place, even in those composers who stand nearer to the true folk music this relationship has not seemed to set an unmistakable seal upon their whole output but is revealed only here and there in their work.

Another manifestation of a similar sort is the relatively easily traceable "style" or "spirit" of Vienna in the music of Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms. The relationship between their music and this "spirit" is almost a non-specific assimilation.

H. C. Robbins Landon, in his monumental study of the symphonies of Haydn has called attention to the fact that the knowledge of Haydn's widespread use of folk melodies from almost every part of Europe is very fragmentary.

Undoubtedly we shall discover that most of Haydn's tunes are the conscious or unconscious embodiment of the popular melodies which are part of the great musical tradition of Central Europe. The large number of Austrian, Croatian, Servian and Slavonic melodies that has been found in the 'Saloman' symphonies does not necessarily mean that these works, as opposed to the symphonies of the 'seventies and 'eighties, made especially frequent use of Balkan folk-melodies; but rather that the themes of the London symphonies were well known, and their melodic origins therefore easy to
trace, whereas those of the preceding two or three decades were not. Thorough and systematic examination of Central European folk-melodies will certainly show an equal number embedded in earlier symphonies, and in any case, Haydn's use of them is not new but extends ... back to his earliest dated composition, the Quintet in G for strings (c.1753).10

At the beginning of the nineteenth century when the strengthening of national feeling in the, politically speaking, most oppressed of the smaller nations (as for example the Poles, Czechs and Hungarians) increased the demand for a national art, intellectual circles in these countries were familiar only with the popular art-music which, owing to its exotic qualities, was not lacking in a certain charm. No attention was paid to the real peasant music. It was looked down upon as something rather coarse and common. The fact that Brahms and Liszt thought they were using peasant music only helps to support this idea. They were uninterested or unaware of the existence of the peasant music. They were attracted to the popular art-music for its exotism.

It is only recently, that is, at the beginning of the twentieth century that the influence of genuine peasant music has again become noticeable. One can say "again" because a similar manifestation occurred during the Viennese classical epoch.

Many symphonic themes—especially in last movements—of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven suggest peasant music; in their case it would seem to be a matter of Slavonic peasant instrumental music. It will probably be impossible to ever arrive at an unequivocal answer to this question since the peasant music contemporaneous with the Classicists is lacking, thus making a thorough comparative analysis impossible. In many cases the Croatian melodies, which were preserved until the second half of the nineteenth century and were then actually committed to writing, provide a basis for the supposition that peasant music exercised a considerable influence at that time. Certain melodies which had quite accidentally escaped oblivion appear in a collection published between the years 1878 and 1881; and these had been put to use in works of Haydn and Beethoven.

The first melody in the collection is identical with the principal theme of the first movement of Haydn’s Symphony Number 4 in D Major. The second and third

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11 Juzno Kuhac, Slovijensky Narodne Popievke (Jugoslavonic Volkslieder), containing about 1600 Croatian, Slovenian and Serbian melodies, cited by Bela Bartok, "The Relation of Folk-Song to the Development of the Art Music of Our Time," The Sackbut, II(June 1921), 11.

12 H. C. Robbins Landon, in The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn says this melody (based upon a kolo from Servia) occurs in the first movement and that a similar one is used in the first movement of Symphony No. 15. Bartok, in the article "The Relation of Folk-Song to the Development of the Art Music of Our Time", cited above, states that it appears in the Finale.
melodies in the collection (two variations) constitute the
main theme of the first passage of Beethoven's Symphony
Number 6 in F Major, "The Pastoral". The possible theory
that this was Beethoven's own theme and that it penetrated
to the Croatian peasantry with the popularization of the
Symphony is quite untenable. The peasantry is capable of
taking up only such melodies as it hears repeated to the
point of satiety at village dances or other meetings. No-
body can imagine that Beethoven's symphonies achieved such a
wide-spread popularity in the villages of Eastern Europe.
One has only to consider that in the country districts of
Eastern Europe the very name of Beethoven is unknown even to
the gentry; these circles, in fact, lack the slightest ac-
quaintance with the higher art-music of any period. It is
much nearer the truth to surmise that Beethoven himself
heard this melody from a bagpipe played in West Hungary,
where Croats also are settlers and where he is known to have
visited. Before strangers peasants play on instruments much
more naturally than they sing melodies with a text. The
tune appealed to Beethoven and as it just seemed to give a
picture of rural life, he used it in his symphony without
acknowledgement—as was in fact usual at the time. Measures
16 to 25, which constantly repeat the same one-bar motif,

13 Bela Bartok, loc. cit.
are a very faithful imitation of the bagpipe interlude-passages "as they can still be heard in our day ... (and) which I (Kuhac) heard played on the bagpipes by a Hungarian peasant." 14

The re-exploration of these natural treasures of music in the twentieth century seems to have been the inevitable result of a reaction against the ultra-chromaticism of the Wagner-Strauss period. The genuine folk music of Eastern Europe is almost completely diatonic and in some parts, such as Hungary, even pentatonic. Curiously enough, at the same time an apparently opposite tendency manifest itself; a tendency towards the emancipation of the twelve sounds comprised within our octave from any system of tonality. The diatonic element in Eastern European folk music does not in any way conflict with the tendency to equalize the value of semitones. This tendency can be realized in melody as well as in harmony and is an important characteristic of the music of Bela Bartok.

Although every comparison between painting and music tends to break down, it is possible to illustrate from the art of painting, the relation between peasant music and art-music. Peasant music itself plays the part in composition that natural objects play in painting. Real folk music can be regarded as a natural phenomenon from the point of view

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14 Ibid.
of higher art-music just as well as the properties of bodies as perceived by the eye are so regarded by the painter. Or again, in order to illustrate this point from the art of writing, popular-music is to the composer what Nature herself is to the writer,15 but just as the poet cannot come to understand Nature from written descriptions, so the composer cannot hope to learn the nature of peasant music from dead collections of musical archives. In the process of notation that very essence of peasant music is lost—that which enables it to arouse the emotions in the soul of the composer. The harsh symbols cannot possibly render the subtler shades of rhythm, of intonation, of sound-transitions; in a word, all the pulsing life of peasant music.

15 As it might be supposed that poetry can draw upon a similar source in popular songs and ballads, it should be explained that folk songs seem to lack the significance for poetry that folk music has for art-music. Folk songs lack, more especially, the infinite variety that musicians find in folk music.
CHAPTER III

THE INFLUENCE OF FOLK MUSIC ON BARTOK

A combination of creative musical genius of the very first rank with persevering and detailed scientific activity is rare. Bartok looked upon the tasks and responsibilities of the collector and of the composer as entirely distinct. Those of the collector, he felt, were to gather and present the material exactly and faithfully, without any patronizing emendations or collated versions of the sort which were current in Europe and are still popular in this country. In his settings of folk-melodies he often submitted also the notations of the tunes as they were recorded from the folk singers, so that the reader could compare the two and see the material in its pristine form. Characteristically, he gave no opus numbers to those compositions which were based chiefly on folk-tunes. At the same time Bartok manifested some of the same traits both as composer and as scholar: integrity of purpose, a complete lack of capacity for compromise, subordination of the subjective element to what he felt were the dictates of his material, and a careful workmanship with regard to details which, no matter how large the framework, was so exacting as to result almost in self-abnegation. He made it his task to acquire an intimate familiarity with the general folklore of the national group
in which he worked and sufficient knowledge of the language for the arduous task of recording and studying thousands of song texts.

Bartok's ways of using folk tunes reveal the very reverse of mental laziness or poverty of invention. Bartok was steeped in the folk tunes of Eastern Europe, and he utilized them in ways which reveal a purposeful faith. He never used a folk tune merely as a quotation, nor as a theme for elaborate working out (except perhaps in Improvisations, Opus 20 for piano and Three Rondos, 1916-1927, also for piano, in which he, in a sense, combined the folk song setting with the free composition based on original material), nor with any ulterior purpose, mechanical or picturesque. Nor did he ever toy or trifle with it. With him the tune, together with the interpretation supplied by the setting, was an end in itself. One of the main reasons why Bartok's music, even when it baffles, attracts rather than repels, is that one instinctively feels that it proceeds directly from a guileless, live imagination.

The impulses which drew Bartok towards folk music were as manifold as the ultimate gains derived from it are significant. The contemporary scene at the time of Bartok's debut as a composer has already been alluded to. The serious musicians incorporated popular dance-tunes and pieces played by gypsies in their compositions, believing that
these supposedly indigenous Hungarian elements would enable them to form a branch of the then fashionable Nationalistic trend akin to the corresponding tendencies of the other arts. Examples are to be found in the works of Schubert, Brahms, Joachim and Liszt.

The idea naturally impressed Bartok and, when he turned to the indigenous "national" idiom, he began to question its originality. This critical attitude ultimately compelled him to go to the source—to the Magyar peasant himself and trace out the real Magyar music. In the company of Zoltan Kodaly he traveled far and wide in his native land equipped with an Edison phonograph and a metronome. Later he extended his field of exploration into the neighboring countries and provinces, and even to North Africa.

This cultural, social and economic aspiration to complete independence which led Bartok to the "discovery" of his own people and so to his folk music investigations, showed signs of another equally strong element: the influence of the West, of Paris. The name of the capital of France had been for the Hungarian intellectual, the conception of clarity, logic, taste; in one word, of everything which distinguishes French thought, life and art. Those who knew the oppressive might of Teuton "Weltanschauung", who saw the danger—spiritual and cultural, no less than political—of an overdose of German influence, turned their eyes...
unhesitatingly towards Paris.

This dualism, this struggle between the ethnic heritage of the past and the culture and technique of the contemporary western world, is clearly discernible in Bartok's first-period works. This dualism is also an essential feature of Bartok's creative character struggling as it does in his first and second period to reach the poise and synthesis of the third, where he achieves an artistic fusion of a very high and rare order.

The number of folk songs collected by Bartok and his fellow-investigators exceeded 10,000. But Bartok did not stop there. A thorough scientific investigation and classification followed, certain parts of which were published.16

What are the characteristics of a folksong?

You cannot say of this music that it is "harmonic", "rhythmic", or "melodic"; it is all and it is none. But the moment that one element grows at the expense of the others the perfect concord is broken or impaired, and even the particular element thus favored degenerates, becomes a morbid growth.17

Since harmony as a vertical concept is non-existent

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16 Perhaps the most important of the several books by Bartok on the folk music of various countries of Eastern Europe is A magyar népdal (Hungarian Folk Music, translated by M. D. Calvocoressi, London: Oxford University Press, 1931). The most recent is Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs written in cooperation with Albert B. Lord and published post-humously (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951).

in this kind of music, only its horizontal implications can be considered. Generally, its characteristics may be classified under four headings:

Harmonic: the prevalence of pentatonic, hexatonic, and modal (dorian, aeolian, etc.) scales; their possible intermixture; augmented seconds very seldom occur.

Melodic: typical cadential turns of the above scales; always limited compass; avoidance of wide leaps (as in the Palestrina style); rich ornamentation.

Rhythmic: either a free \textit{rubato}-structure, recitative-like, keeping to the length of the syllables (if any), and their application to the instrumental style; or symmetrical and assymetrical pulsations of \textit{giusto} rhythm; prevalent ostinato; their mixture.

Formal: either absence of any distinguishable formal design or systematic architectonic plan with phrase and sentence repeats at the distance of higher or lower fifth; interpolation of different material and recapitulation; binary and ternary forms.\footnote{18 These characteristics constitute an "averaging" of the characteristics of the various types of folk songs. A more thorough discussion of the specific differences follows on page 32.}

These elements are all assimilated in Bartok's works, certain characteristics predominating in one creative period, others in subsequent ones. His entire musical creation may be considered an artistic re-formation of Hungarian folk song elements. He is the only one among the modernists whose music despite the boldest of innovations remained tied to folk music. Unlike romantic composers, Bartok did not consider the folk song a primitive form to which the educated composer stoops and which he adopts, feeds and clothes.
as though it were a foundling. It is the source of his strength, the great nature from which all forms descended—elemental life, the elementary force of the world.

Rhythm, in which all elemental life finds its most intense enhancement, imparts to Bartok's music a vitally energetic quality. In Allegro Barbaro (1911) this elemental rhythm is wild and rough; it is like an invasion of satanic forces into the modern world, just as the noisy, ecstatic Bacchus march had been an invasion into the ancient world. All nervous reveries of impressionistic music scattered in fright before this outburst of brutal rhythmic element. Not until two years later did Stravinsky, in his Rite of Spring, roll such rhythmic masses into the orchestra.

Bartok used the popular rhythm not only in its wild original form; he animated it to grotesquery and irony (in the Scherzo of String Quartet Number Two, 1915-1917 and in the Burletta of String Quartet Number Six, 1939). In the Suite for Piano Opus 14, first movement it is folk dance rhythm; in the second movement it is witty play with a pounding motif that is always turned anew. Much like Stravinsky, Hindemith and Prokofiev, Bartok makes a game of rhythmic rumbling and mechanical tone motion; but only in Bartok's works can the connection with the rhythm of folk music be so clearly proved.
However, Bela Bartok did not develop just the rhythm in Hungarian folk music. He also had the boldness to pattern the singing in his one-act opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* after the melodic characteristics of folksongs. The vocal part repeats the musical phrases much as the Hungarian folk song does. It has something of the concentrated expression of folk ballads. A passionate dramatic language is developed from the melodies of the folk song. That which used to be musical expression of primitive emotions now becomes modern intense declamation.

Bartok learned something else from folk music. In collecting and annotating folk songs, his sense of keen, weighty expression increased. All the folk songs he gathered had characteristic outline, even if they were just a few bars of music. They were concise and full of expression. They compressed grief, lament and longing into a musical form that give it timeless validity.

Once it was a melodic turn, another time a rhythmic figure, then again an unusual harmony that condensed the contents of these songs so that they resembled a face marked by the years, by experiences, sad and joyful. The accompanying voices are not ornamentation, nor are they external color; they are essential and necessary. It was the keeness of musical motifs that Bartok learned from folk music; the conciseness and concentrations of forms, the reduction
of musical content to the essentials.

Bartok adopted many principles from Hungarian folk music, but whatever developed out of this music in new art patterns, new harmonies and new rhythms has no national "tightness". The symphonic music of Smetana, Grieg, Dvorak and the Russian "Five" that is associated with the folk song always has a background of national scenery. The music of Bela Bartok always rises to a sphere of universality. But neither does his music resound in the region of abstract tonal thoughts in which Arnold Schoenberg was at home at the peak of his creative work.

There are some critics who insist that the assimilation of folk elements never took place even in Bartok, and they condemn his "adaptation" of folk tunes in large works. Constant Lambert has written

With Le Sacre du Printemps (Stravinsky) we begin to get folk-tunes treated in an harmonic style that has not the remotest emotional or technical relation to the harmonies suggested by the melody itself. The relation between the melodic line and its harmonic setting is no longer friendly.

This lack of rapport between the tune and harmony is particularly noticeable in some of the later works of Bartok. Although in his earlier works, such as the first two string quartets and the opera Bluebeard's Castle, Bartok achieves a melodic line which . . . is intensely individual while yet drawing its inflections from national song—a line which is at one with its stark harmonic background—in his later works, such as the Piano Sonata, a dangerous split is apparent between melody and harmony, the melody becoming definitely simpler, squarer and more "folksy" while the harmonic treatment becomes more cerebral and outra. The gap
between the two becomes such that in some passages, notably the finale of the Piano Sonata, the composer gives up all attempt to bridge it, merely punctuating each pause in an innocent folksong with a resounding, brutal and discordant crash, an effect which, did it not remind one of a sadistic schoolmaster chastising some wretched country bumpkin, would verge on the ludicrous.\footnote{Constant Lambert, \textit{Music Ho!} (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1934), p. 175.}

Perhaps we can gain a clearer insight to the value of Bartok's research by examining more closely one of his published collections, \textit{Hungarian Folk Music}.\footnote{Bartok, \textit{op. cit.}} There are two main types of folk-tunes in this collection. The one is in strict time and has usually a strong stamping rhythm of equal notes, often complicated by mixtures of duple and triple time. The other type is in a free declamatory style, which Bartok calls \textit{perando rubato}. The former are dance-songs, the latter usually narrative ballads.

"There is no single instance of 2/4 rhythm in Hungarian peasant music."\footnote{Ibid., p. 27.} Apparently, because of its repetitiousness and monotony, this rhythm is repugnant to the Hungarian peasant's musical instinct. The first bar of the ground-scheme may take any of the following eight forms, of which numbers 6, 7 and 8 are the most frequent:

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\footnotesize

\footnote{Constant Lambert, \textit{Music Ho!} (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1934), p. 175.}

\footnote{Bartok, \textit{op. cit.}}

\footnote{Ibid., p. 27.}
The ninth possible combination \( J.J.J \) never occurs. When the syllabic combination \(- - - -\) crops up, it is sung to form 4 or 5. The avoidance of this ninth combination is probably due to the same psychological law which absolutely excludes the rhythm \( J J \) \( J J \) from all Hungarian peasant music.

Naturally, the rhythmic combinations change from verse to verse, according to the metric idiosyncrasies of each new verse. Consequently, there is no permanent and absolute rhythm but an ever-changing rhythm, originating in an extra-musical factor. In Hungarian peasant poems no rule or binding practice determines the succession and alternation of long and short syllables; and the tune-rhythms which these texts suggest, and which are associated with them, are correspondingly free and variable.

As is well known, the main accent of all Hungarian words is on the first syllable. Each line of the text,
therefore, begins with an accent. Upbeats and rhythmic
progressions are foreign to Hungarian tunes.22 However,
Kodaly points out that "the 'propping-up' by means of an up-
beat, of the opening of a tune-line appears to be a
psychological necessity".23 Therefore it was customary in
performance to introduce each line of the text with an in-
terjection consisting of one syllable (such as hey, ey, i)
or more, sometimes of a hummed consonant (m, n, hn, etc.)
which is not an integral part of the text. The note or
notes to which these insertions are sung play the part of
up-beats, but which are not integral parts of the tune.

The older tunes are marked by an absence of any kind
of symmetrical structure—that is, they have not the ABA form
common in Western European melody. The structure is ABCD or
sometimes ABBC, where the middle lines have some relation-
ship to one another.

Another formal structure—one that is particularly
characteristic of Hungarian peasant music—may be labeled

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22 The same applies to the tunes of the Czechs and
Slovaks; their language obeys the same law of accentuation,
and the structure of their song texts is likewise founded
upon the accent. The structure of the lines in Roumanian
peasant poems is similar; but this cannot be accounted for
by the accentuation laws of the Roumanian language.

23 Zoltan Kodaly, "The Pentatonic Scale in Hungarian
Peasant music", Zenei Szemle I (1917), cited by Bela Bartok
in Hungarian Folk Music, p. 13.
$A^5B^5AB$. Here the first and second lines are similar to the third and fourth respectively, but a fifth higher. Closely connected with this $A^5B^5AB$ is the form $A^5A^5_vAA_v$. Here the first two lines, being similar except for a difference in the cadence, constitute a period—which the third and fourth lines repeat a fifth lower. Both occur in all types of Hungarian peasant music.

Bartók suggests, in a footnote on page 22 of *Hungarian Folk Music*, that the form $A^5B^5AB$, or perhaps the even simpler $AA^5_vAA_v$, may have been the initial structural scheme of Hungarian peasant tunes, out of which the less old and more complicated ABCD may have sprung.

One may imagine the process thus: in the beginning there existed only two-line tunes, whose structure was either $AA_v$ or $AB$. For some reason or other, these developed into four-line tunes, the whole original structure being repeated a fifth lower. This might have originated in the performance of tunes on some two-stringed instrument tuned in fifths, or upon a fairly long flute, whereby the transposition would have been effected mechanically either by passing from one string to the other or by increasing or decreasing the strength of the blowing. It is surely remarkable that in most ABCD tunes the Ab lines should occupy the higher region of the octave, exactly as $A^5B^5_v$ lines do in other words, that the striking downward tendency of $A^5B^5AB$ tunes should be noticeable also in ABCD tunes.

Minor characteristics are the use of portamento (almost a glissando), ornamental melismata and the slight lengthening and shortening of certain notes, even in *tempo giusto*. A great number of the tunes are based on the pentatonic scale.
All these characteristics appear in Bartok’s music. To trace this influence in just one of his major works, but which uses no quotations of folk material, it is profitable to look more closely at the String Quartet Number Two, Opus 17 (1915-1917). The second movement, (Allegro molto capriccioso), is only explicable in terms of the non-architectural asymmetry of the old folk songs. It consists of a sequence of dance-themes linked by rhapsodical passages in a more lyrical vein. Formally, therefore, it might be regarded as a miniature dance suite.

Bartok does not always shun the outward forms of western music. The first movement of this quartet is in sonata-form, in the sense that it has an exposition, a development and a recapitulation based upon two distinct "subjects". Where it differs from the classical procedure is the matter of tonality. But although he abandoned the old practice of firmly establishing a tonic key in order to achieve dramatic interest by departures from and returns to that key, Bartok has not neglected to make use of the effect of harmonic contrast. The listener can hardly fail to be affected by the beauty of the recapitulation, where the texture and the harmony of the music becomes astonishingly clear and euphonious.

The finale is undoubtedly the most difficult of the three movements to understand. The harmony is more
uncompromising and, since the tempo is slower, its dissonances are harder to appreciate. At one point in the third section (lento assai) of the movement, the harmony consists of three intervals of a perfect fourth superimposed upon one another. It is one of the earliest and most successful of Bartok's use of harmony based on fourths. Here again, the influence of his native folk songs is apparent, for in glancing through the tunes in his published collections, one cannot fail to notice the frequency with which this interval recurs. Although it is used melodically, it implies also its presence in the harmony.

A rather interesting, though incomplete, insight into the development of Bartok's style is provided by his folk song settings for voice and piano. There are four groups of these, dating from 1906, 1917, 1924, and 1929.

The 1906 volume, called Hungarian Folksongs, consists of ten settings each by Bartok and Kodaly. The object of the volume was to bring Hungarian folk music to the urban population of Hungary. In the extremely Germanized Hungary of those days it was a bold and difficult undertaking, likely to be met with apathy or even open hostility. Without insisting too strongly on the inviolability of the songs, they gave hints for performance to protect them from gross distortion. They doubled the melodies in the very simple piano accompaniments, and they omitted the vocal ornaments.
These characteristics represent, to some degree, Bartok's and Kodaly's own ideas at that time on the proper treatment of folk song. Neither of them had yet found his individual style, but Kodaly was much better equipped technically and nearer to a mature style than Bartok. Both were also quite inexperienced in arranging folk songs. In their postscript to the second edition in 1938 they admit that their omission of the ornaments, for instance, was partly due to their inadequate realization of their importance.

In the thirty-two years that have passed since the 1,500 printed copies of this volume ran out, we have had time to change our attitude regarding the ornaments. A considerable time ago we realized that ornamentation is an organic part of folksinging, and can no more be left out than the ornamentation of any Couperin work. Since then we have tried to represent it as faithfully as possible in our publications, and in this new edition we have now added it where possible.24

Sharp differences can be observed between the harmonizations of Bartok and those of Kodaly. Kodaly's are indisputably better; his original harmonic conceptions were supported by an absolute mastery of harmonic technique which Bartok did not yet possess. "For sheer beauty some of Kodaly's settings are unsurpassed even by Bach's Chorale-harmonizations."25 Bartok's harmonies by comparison are


bare and harsh.

Bartok's next attempt at setting folk songs for solo voice and piano was the set of *Eight Hungarian Folksongs*, completed in 1917. They show a striking advance in skill and boldness over the previous set. This development of technique and idiom can be attributed partly to the many folk song arrangements for piano solo which he had written in the intervening years. Four of the songs are purely pentatonic. (In the more than one hundred and fifty folk songs that he had set since 1906 there had not been more than one or two pentatonic tunes.) He tries, wherever the voice is not present, to keep the pentatonic atmosphere in the piano part, and although as soon as the voice enters he introduces more varied harmonies, they are milder than those in previous settings. During the years Bartok's ideas of consonance had naturally changed. He now used any chord composed of the notes of the pentatonic scale as a consonance, and practically any chord of the seventh.

In 1924, Bartok completed *Dorfszenen* ("Five Village Scenes") with traditional Slovak texts and melodies. The real difference between *Dorfszenen* and the earlier groups lies in the character of the songs themselves, which with one exception are totally different in style from Hungarian folk songs. Their actual melodic structure is no less foreign to western ears, for the tunes are all in the lydian
or mixolydian modes, nor is their formal structure of a more familiar type. It is simply the absence from the Slovak tunes of those sharply defined and very individual rhythms characteristic of Hungarian folk music that really accounts for the readier accessibility of the Slovak folk songs to the unaccustomed ear. Their rhythms are immediately intelligible to any ear, whereas it is almost impossible to grasp the full musical meaning and exact accentuation of the rhythms of Hungarian folk music without a knowledge of the Hungarian language.

Bartok's fourth and last group of folk song settings for solo voice and piano was the Twenty Hungarian Folksongs, written in 1929. In harmony and texture some of the songs show signs of the development Bartok's style had undergone in the previous ten years, but in general they have little in common with the "difficult" works of the 1920's. With the two Violin Rhapsodies of the previous year, they mark the beginning of Bartok's return to a more lyrical style.

In this restraint in the treatment of folk-material lay Bartok's solution of the difficulty of the idiom. Just as the folklorist and humanist in him could never allow him to distort folk songs formally for the sake of an art-form, so they could not allow him to experiment on folk songs idiomatically for the sake of new means of expression. In folk song settings he always returned to an idiom which he
had already mastered, not to make his problems easier, but out of an almost fanatical desire never to destroy any element of the folk song.

Bartok's melody is of such supreme importance that it may be well to examine it more closely. From the various forms of folk melody, conditioned in many cases by word-meters, he has selected three main types. The first is the short motive which lends itself to repetition—as in the oboe solo at the beginning of the "Interrupted Intermezzo" in the Concerto for Orchestra. The tune may be varied either by syncopation of the accompaniment or by change of stress of the notes forming the melody. Such tunes are as characteristic of Russian as of Hungarian music, and Stravinsky has made them familiar in Western Europe. His tunes are invariably diatonic, but Bartok's are usually chromatic or modal.

The second type of melody is modal in character. It is this modal quality in Bartok's music that is apt to mislead the listener most. The ears of present-day listeners are so accustomed to tunes based on diatonic scales that they involuntarily expect diatonic resolutions. Their musical subconsciousness is constantly jarred by the modal sequences inherent in Bartok's music.

The third type of melody is the rhapsodical, a flowing and "growing" melody, as distinct from the short,
self-contained motive previously mentioned. An example is the first theme of the Violin Concerto.

Other characteristics of his melodic style are (1) building lines from compact motive sequences (as in the String Quartet Number Three), (2) going over the same tetra-chordal scheme or successive pitch-names with different pitch values (as in the String Quartet Number Four), and (3) favoring the Lydian fourth which gives a whole-tone implication.

Rhythm is very marked in Bartok's music. It differs essentially from that of Stravinsky, which is complete in itself, and is written apart from the melos. Bartok's rhythm emanates from the nature of the folk-melodies; it is largely conditioned by their characteristics. He makes frequent recourse to ostinato figures. These ostinato figures sometimes give the impression of a drone, and it is possible that he had in mind a Hungarian instrument corresponding to the bag-pipes, the "duda", for example, or one that is used as a "thrumming" accompaniment. Bartok's ostinato figures carry the music along with great energy. As it gathers impetus he shatters the meter into pieces which fly in all directions. It is possible that this music represents the traditional dances executed by a band of Hungarian peasants. Their persistent rhythmic stamping and clapping form a solid accompaniment to the intricate
convolutions of the dance. Each figure is developed to a climax, and the final figure ends in a whirl of excitement. Great vitality is imparted to his rhythms also by his use of patterns in Hungarian folk music which are very similar to the "Scotch snap" and other syncopation schemes of all sorts.
CHAPTER IV

BARTOK'S STYLE

An understanding of the function of unresolved passing tones is essential to any understanding of Bartok's later music, for the unresolved passing tone leads to the unresolved passing chord and the unresolved neighboring tonality. It is also necessary to consider the harmonic and melodic possibilities originating from the unresolved passing tone when the harmony note happens to be the third degree of the scale. The simultaneous appearance of an E flat and an E in conjunction with a C and a G inevitably suggests a new conception of the relationship between major and minor modalities.

These unresolved passing tones are dissonant, especially when they are struck with the tone towards which they should conventionally proceed. Discord has always been an essential element in music, just as distortion has been a part of the technique of painting, but various generations of composers have approached the matter differently. Bartok went back to the folksong and to the eighteenth century masters and created a style where dissonance was again treated melodically.

The absence of resolution would not in itself be of vast importance, but as early as the Violin Sonata Number Two
(1922) it becomes plain that the unresolved passing tone has a tendency to become interchangeable with the note to which it might be expected to resolve. Thus the sonata actually begins with an F sharp (acciaccatura) in the bass which must in the light of later developments in the movement be regarded harmonically as a G in a C major six-four chord.26

EXAMPLE 1.

This interchangeability of harmony notes and neighboring tones affects the whole future course of Bartok's harmonic procedure, for when more than one unresolved passing tone is used, a chordal function is achieved. When such a combination contains, for instance, a D and an A coincident with an E flat and a B flat, two tonalities are

26 Henry Pleasants and Tibor Serly, "Bartok's Historic Contribution", Modern Music, XVII (April, 1940), 136.
immediately suggested due to the presence of two fundamentals and two fifths. To call this bitonality is to jump at conclusions. Polytonality is certainly suggested in the first movement of the *String Quartet Number Three*, but careful analysis presents a contrary conclusion. The tonality is insistently maintained by such devices as that introduced at the close of the *Prima parte*, where the tonic triad appears in conjunction with the other related and unresolved roots.

Example 2.

In these measures the C sharp-G sharp is the natural root. The D-A root above is simply a new root still
employed within the tonality of C sharp minor, according to the principle established by Bartok in his use of unresolved passing tones or neighboring tones. Similarly the D-G is in the dominant relationship. This enables an extensive development in D minor during which the tonality of C sharp minor is never really abandoned.

In the **String Quartet Number Four** and the **String Quartet Number Five** there are instances of four imitations entering within the space of successive half-measures at intervals of a semitone. According to the theory advanced by Pleasants and Serly, these might be considered imitations in the octave or unison.

**EXAMPLE 3.**

As would seem inevitable from this new conception of
interval relationship, even the nature of cadence undergoes a change, as reflected in the closing measures of the *String Quartet Number Four*, where the movement actually closes without a definite determination of major, minor, or modal character.

![Example](image)

**EXAMPLE 4**

It can hardly be claimed for Bartok that any of the devices he used were strictly new. It had been common knowledge among composers and other thinking musicians that the structure of harmony reached at about the end of the last century a point of expansion where further progress meant either a fresh start from older tonal bases or a complete breakdown of tonal relationships. Bartok was not the only one who found fertile soil in the eighteenth century conception of melody, or in the eighteenth century conception of dissonance. His distinction lies rather in
what he has created from the new material. His insight led him to those vital elements in the older music from which the new materials have evolved, and his creative intelligence enabled him to resolve a novel harmonic grammar into an articulate musical language.

Another area in which Bela Bartok is recognized to have been of outstanding importance is counterpoint. Throughout his large output of music counterpoint is found in all its forms, linear, chordal, and "rhythmic" counterpoint, in which two or more independent rhythms are set against each other simultaneously. Bartok, whose works show a great preoccupation with matters of formal construction and counterpoint, found fugue a rewarding medium in which to express his ideas. From the String Quartet Number One (1908) to the Piano Concerto Number Three (1945) one finds his thought falling into fugal forms, whether he was writing for solo violin, piano, string quartet or orchestra.

It may be remembered from the study of Fugue that if the subject at its first statement emphasizes the dominant, or inclines to modulate to the dominant, a real answer will tend towards the supertonic, producing a vagueness of tonality. Bach overcomes this by using a tonal answer rather than a real one, answering tonic for dominant and dominant for tonic. If, however, the tonality
of the fugue is such that tonic and dominant are not so clearly defined, as is sometimes the case in Bartok's fugues, one cannot properly speak of any alteration of the actual notes of the subject as tonal alteration. Alteration of the subject in this case becomes rather an organic growth of the initial idea, designed not to lead back to the original form of the subject, but away from it.

To illustrate the distinction between tonal alteration of a subject and its alteration by organic growth, comparison may be made between the fugue in the last movement of Bartok's String Quartet Number Five and that in the last movement of his Piano Concerto Number Three. In the Quartet the tonality of the fugue is very indefinite, a point which is emphasized by the short passage of plain tonic-dominant harmony (Allegretto, con indifferenza) which occurs soon after it. The fugue subject, developing the opening theme of the first movement, varies considerably throughout its appearances, but there is no sense of tonal answer because there is little sense of key in the first place. The alteration of the subject in this case is an organic growth. The first entry of the subject is as follows:

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\begin{verbatim}
   [Musical notation]
\end{verbatim}
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EXAMPLE 6.

The sixth entry:

In the fugue from the Piano Concerto Number Three, however, the tonality is very clearly C sharp minor, and the initial dominant-tonic leap in the subject is answered tonally by a tonic-dominant leap. The fourth entry of the subject, made by the violas, is similarly tonal. The subject and its answer are as follows:

EXAMPLE 7.

EXAMPLE 8.
In the *Concerto for Orchestra* there is again a more distinct tonality in the subject of the fugue during the last movement than in the fugue of the *String Quartet Number Five*. The key center is B, emphasized by the opening notes of the subject:

**EXAMPLE 9.**

The answer is tonal:

**EXAMPLE 10.**

In the exposition of this fugue one may observe the two principles in use simultaneously. The tonality is sufficiently definite to allow a tonal answer, and at the same time that answer grows organically. It is as if the sense of urgency in the argument increases with each entry. The difference between the first and fourth entries is considerable.
EXAMPLE 11.

EXAMPLE 12.

By the time the first real stretto is reached the subject has developed still further.

EXAMPLE 13.

Repeated notes of the type which occur in the String Quartet Number Three and the String Quartet Number Five are a characteristic of Bartok's subjects. In these two
particular works they play an important part in the structure of the music; in fact, they might almost be regarded as themes, or motifs. In a sense, fugue has always been a form involving organic growth; the simplest and earliest fugues had to grow from exposition to coda, or they were not fugues. But to this Bartok has added the possibility of the metamorphosis of the subject itself, rather than the presentation of the same subject in new situations.
CHAPTER V.

A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF EACH STRING QUARTET

I. STRING QUARTET NUMBER ONE

The String Quartet Number One, Opus 7, was written in 1908, the same year as the set of fourteen Bagatelles for piano, and it bears the opus-number following that of the Bagatelles. The Bagatelles is the earliest work in which Bartok showed his real individuality; it might serve almost as a "dictionary" of modern music; each piece is a study in one or more of the devices that were just being added to the musician's vocabulary—polytonality, added-note chords, fourth chords and melodies derived from them, appoggiaturas used instead of "real" notes of the harmony, and so on.

The String Quartet Number One, while seeming rather conservative and eclectic, also shows traces of the same delight in new-found resources as does the Bagatelles. It is in three movements, the first of which is somewhat reminiscent of the first movement of the C sharp minor Quartet, Opus 131 by Beethoven. It begins as a slow, tortuous fugue.

The first movement, Lento, is a three-part form. The first part is fugal (or "pseudo-canonic"), emphasizing the
downward leap of a sixth; the second part is highly chromatic with its use of the "Mannheim sigh"; the third part is a modified recapitulation of the fugue. Although the Quartet is marked in A minor, it seems to begin in F minor. The first violin begins and is answered a perfect fourth lower by the second violin at a distance of two beats. After seven measures the cello states the subject in the original key (F minor) and the viola answers a perfect fourth lower and at a distance of two beats.

The motive marked in the example above is destined for an important role throughout the Quartet. It is
not of sufficient melodic or thematic significance to be labeled clearly as a second part of the first theme. It is of prime importance rhythmically, for the syncopation element is referred to many times.

This section builds to a great climax, the height of which is reached through a curious passage where the viola and cello play in octaves while the violins play in parallel major thirds.

In the last measure quoted Bartok uses, after the third beat, a short vertical line in all the parts to indicate a short pause or hesitation. It is very characteristic of his later works, and we shall find it often in the succeeding quartets. It is similar to the sign found in Gregorian Chant, but is used here to indicate a small break in the
chain of thought rather than to mark off the "phrase" groupings.

The contrapuntal activity is resumed after the break, with a great deal of emphasis on the rhythm of motive 2. Before this first section of the movement comes to a close there are several reminders of the characteristic downward leap of a sixth with which each instrument began.

EXAMPLE 16.

The second section begins with the cello playing an open fifth (C and G) over which the viola sings what seems to be the new theme, molto appassionato, rubato.
EXAMPLE 17.
It turns out to be, however, merely a fragment, very much in the manner of the "Mannheim sigh", used to accompany the real theme of this second section.

EXAMPLE 18.
The rest of this section of the movement consists of rhythmic variants and sequences of these four notes. All traces of imitation are gone; there is a great deal of parallel motion; the note values are generally much shorter than those in the first section.

At #11\(^2\) begins a modified restatement of the opening. The first violin begins again (an octave higher than at the beginning) with the second violin answering a

\(^2\) All numbers preceded by " señ refer to rehearsal numbers in the pocket scores of the quartets as published by Boosey and Hawkes.
a perfect fourth lower and at a distance of two beats. The next entrance comes after only five measures and is in the viola this time. The cello answers a perfect fourth lower and at a distance of two beats.

During the course of the section the first violin plays unobtrusively with a motive which is to play a large part in the two ensuing movements.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example19.png}
\end{center}

**EXAMPLE 19.**

It can be seen that this is related to the first violin part of Example 14, measure 5, beat 1, page 54. This motive is a retrograde of that in the first theme.

In the next-to-last measure of the movement the viola and cello have three notes which rise chromatically in major thirds. These notes, with rhythmic alterations generate the transition to the second movement, which follows without pause.

The second movement, *Allegretto*, is a sonata form. The transition is accomplished through the chromatically rising thirds which also refer to the basic motive in the first theme of the first movement (Example 14, first violin, measure 4, beat 4 and measure 5, beat 1, page 54).
EXAMPLE 20.

Two measures before the Allegretto begins the basic motive, which plays an important role in both the second and third movements, and which, as it has been shown, was already predicted in the appoggiatura-patterns of the first movement, is stated.

EXAMPLE 21.

This is seized upon and used as an ostinato under which the first theme (Theme Ia) is stated by the second violin.
At #3 a quieter section begins. Here, along with the second part of the first theme (Theme Ib) played in parallel thirds by the second violin and viola while the first violin plays a transposed version of it. Underneath the cello, which is part of the ever-evolving motive (motive b) contains Example 23.

Motive b is used extensively and combined with various scale figurations which emphasize the tritone.

The second theme (Theme II) is introduced by the second violin and viola in unison with motive b used as an ostinato in the outer voices. This theme is a waltz-like
affair with the whole-tone scale giving it its special flavor.

\textbf{EXAMPLE 24.}

At \#9 a variant of motive b (motive b') is used as an accompaniment to the closing theme.

\textbf{EXAMPLE 25.}

Notice the whole-tone construction of the closing theme.

The codetta employs much of the material of the movement (motive b, Theme II, Theme Ib and motive a) as if
to pass them in review before the development section begins.

The first section of the development (#12 to #19) concerns itself with Theme Ia and motive \( \mathfrak{a} \). There are also several references to the closing theme. Theme Ia is heard in many surroundings. At #13 it is used in parallel first inversion triads. It is eventually contracted to a length of only one measure and with the increase of agitation and tension it is fragmented so that only the first two notes are used just before #19.

At #19 all instruments play motive \( \mathfrak{b'} \) fortissimo, which is very suggestive of the stamping and clapping in some Hungarian peasant dances. The second half of Theme II is developed next. It is treated as a single line as well as canonically. Three measures after #24 motive \( \mathfrak{a} \) reappears in the second violin and viola and again six measures after #24 in the cello in augmentation.

The retransition is based on the material which introduced this movement. The rising thirds and motive \( \mathfrak{a} \) appear, with each pair of instruments (the violins versus the viola and cello) in contrary motion.

Theme Ia is restated five measures after #28 along with hints of the closing theme. Next motive \( \mathfrak{b'} \) and the closing theme are treated together in much the same way that they were in the exposition.
The Coda begins at #31 and consists of the last part of the closing theme with a characteristic addition of an appoggiatura. Motive \textit{a} is augmented, and the movement comes to a close with a final reminiscence of Theme Ia in the viola three measures before the end.

The third movement of the quartet is preceded by an \textit{Introduzione} of considerable length and importance. It presents the most easily perceptible influence of Hungarian peasant music, especially in its alternation between the fast "tempo giusto" of the three upper instruments and the slower, recitative-like "parlando-rubato" of the cello. The prominence of intervals of the fourth, the "rocking-stamping" characteristic of the fast material and the rhythmic motive \textit{\[\text{\rotatebox{90}{\textbf{\textbullet}}}\text{\rotatebox{90}{\textbullet}}}\} are all features of peasant music also.

The third movement itself is a sonata form. Under an ostinato of repeated eighth notes the first theme (Theme Ia) is stated in unison by the viola and cello.

\textbf{Example 26.}

The relationship with motive \textit{a} (Example 22, page 59) of the second movement can be readily seen. The second part of the first theme group (Theme Ib) follows soon afterwards.
EXAMPLE 27.
There is a resemblance between this theme and the one called motive b (Example 23, page 60) in the second movement, especially in its use of accented neighboring tones or appoggiaturas.

The opening of Theme Ia is elaborated contrapuntally from #4 to #7. A third part of the first theme (Theme Ic) is announced at #8.

EXAMPLE 28.
It is based on the syncopated rhythm hidden in Theme Ia (Example 26, page 63) marked a. As this theme unfolds there are several references to Theme Ia.

Theme II is stated Adagio at #11.

EXAMPLE 29.
It is a great contrast in tempo as well as in character to
those in the first theme-group.

The closing section consists of various manifestations of the syncopated motive $a$ of Theme Ia.

The development begins at #14. The introductory ostinato is treated first. After a fleeting reference to the motive $a$, Theme Ia is heard in all four instruments in octaves and forte. At #17 begins a fugato on a new version of Theme Ia.

EXAMPLE 30.

The viola begins, the second violin answers a perfect fourth higher. The first violin states the subject in the original key and the cello answers a perfect fourth higher. The last segment of the subject (marked $c$ in the example above) is repeated and used in stretto. The first seven notes of the subject are next treated in stretto fashion along with motive $c$.

At #25 motive $b$ (see Theme Ib, Example 27, page 64) is developed and combined with motive $c$. Theme Ia is also used. The retransition consists of the ostinato eighth notes (which is a pedal on the dominant of $A$ minor) under which is heard motive $c$ and measures five and six of Theme Ia
(Example 26, page 63). It is interesting to notice that the first violin, which is playing the repeated E's also includes its upper and lower neighboring tones much as they appear in Theme Ib (Example 27).

The recapitulation begins at #28. Theme Ia is restated first, followed by motive a and motive b. At #32 Theme Ib reappears. It is interrupted by motive a and is then heard again and combined with motive c. Theme Ia, motive b, and motive a are all used again before Theme II is restated in A minor five measures after #34. The closing section is again derived from the syncopation of motive a.

The coda begins at #37 with Theme Ia in its fugato form. It is next heard very much as it was at the beginning of the movement. The syncopated motive a takes over in all instruments in octaves. A repeated B flat might be considered the Neapolitan of the tonic A minor or it might be interpreted as the upper neighbor serving (by implication) as the tonic itself. Motive b is augmented, followed by whole tone scales in the syncopated rhythm of motive a. The quartet ends with arpeggios and chords of the A minor triad but with the note "b", the lower neighbor of "c" replacing it.
II. STRING QUARTET NUMBER TWO

The String Quartet Number Two, Opus 17, was finished in 1917. During the nine year interval between the First Quartet and the Second Quartet Bartok wrote a great deal of piano music (Elegies, Burlesques, Allegro Barbaro, and Sonatine) and many folk song arrangements (For Children, Rumanian Folk Dances, and Rumanian Christmas Songs). It is logical to expect, then, a greater exploitation of percussive effects in the string writing (as had taken place in the piano music). Up to the time he wrote the First Quartet, he had dealt only with Hungarian folk music. However, between 1907 and 1917 he extended his research to Rumania, as can be seen in the appearance of several arrangements of Rumanian folk material during that period. Since there exists in Rumanian folk music a strong predilection for the tritone, it is expected that this interval might play a significant role in the Second Quartet. Bartok's rhythmic imagination was reawakened also as a result of his work with these folk songs.

The simplicity and intimacy of this quartet, as compared with the previous one, are very noticeable. One of the themes (the closing theme, Theme III at #9 (of the exposition) is even remarkable for its euphony (a somewhat rare quality in Bartok), particularly when it returns in
the recapitulation four measures before #21.

To speak of "themes" in the ordinary sense, however, is misleading in music of this type. The traditional sonata-allegro is made up ordinarily of full-fledged "themes", stated in their definitive form and fragmented and recombined in the development section before they are restated. Here there are motives of four or five notes, and there are thoughts spread over many bars; but the motives by no means constitute the true substance of the thoughts: they are not so much the bricks in the musical structure as the mortar. The subtlety with which motive grows from motive, and with which a motive gradually assumes a new form is the key to an analysis.

Another characteristic of Bartok's handling of sonata
form is his conception of "restatement". In the recapitulation sections of his movements in sonata form themes are likely to return in strongly modified forms; as a rule in simpler or more easily apprehended forms and, quite often, in a purer harmonic atmosphere. For example here is the opening of the first movement of the Second Quartet and the parallel passage, the opening of the recapitulation.

EXAMPLE 32.

Almost everything that appears in the first movement is present in the opening measures.
EXAMPLE 33.

The first five notes of the first violin (motive a in Example 33) are the generating source of the entire movement. The intervals are progressively pulled apart, the rhythmic relationships are transformed, until it is unrecognizable as the same motive except as it has been observed in the process of transmutation. The expansion of the intervals of motive a occupies the first eighteen measures. In the next section the second violin adds a triplet figure to motive a which becomes important later in the formation of the closing theme.
A transition is effected to the second theme (Theme II) which is announced at #5 in the first violin.

EXAMPLE 35.

Stevens says, "... it may be construed as a compression of the opening motive." 28

EXAMPLE 36.

An even more obvious relationship with the first theme is the use of the triplet figure (compare measures 5 and 6 of Example 35 and motive 2 in Example 34, page 70).

Motive 2 is simplified to three single notes and is used ascending and immediately descending in another octave. At #9 it is transformed into the closing theme (Theme III).

EXAMPLE 37.

The second measure of this closing theme is very much like an inversion of the fourth measure of the second theme (Theme II, Example 35, page 71).

The development section, which begins at #10 concerns itself primarily with the first theme and more specifically with various manifestations of motives a and b. Motive a is handled in a "conversational" manner, being bandied about by each of the instruments in turn. At #12 motive b is brought into use and is the sole thematic element up to #15.

![Example 38](image)

The retransition, beginning at #15 utilizes the grating minor seconds of the very opening of the quartet and additional manifestations of motive b.

The recapitulation (Tempo I, ma sempre molto tranquillo) begins six measures before #17. As has been stated above, the "restatement" in Bartok sonata forms is strongly modified and, as a rule, simpler and more euphonous. Theme Ia is restated first over the pulsating accompaniment which now emphasizes the interval of the tritone. The bass-line (the cello part) also moves in the progression of a tritone so that this interval forms the horizontal and vertical
basis of the accompaniment. A brief use of motive c (two measures before #19) ushers in Theme Ib in the fourth measure after #19. Motive b returns for another work-out as a transition to Theme II, which now is presented bitonally, in A minor while the accompaniment is in A major (Example 31, page 68).

The coda begins in the third measure after #21. It brings forth "glimpses" of the thematic elements of the movement: motive c, motive a, Theme Ib and finally motive a again.

The second movement, Allegro molto capriccioso, is a rather wild and barbaric scherzo which seems, at first, to have no features to give it formal unity except perhaps the persistent minor-third motive. On closer study the internal organization is revealed as nothing more than a series of miniature dances, much in the manner of the more extended Dance Suite for orchestra (written in 1923). Like the dances which make up this later Suite, those of the middle movement of this Quartet are attractive and strongly rhythmical; not actual folk dances or imitations of them, but impregnated with influences from Magyar folk music. The gradual--and to the unaided ear quite imperceptible--transition from the $\frac{2}{4}$ of the sostenuto interlude to the $\frac{3}{4}$ of the allegro molto dance is typical of Bartok's plastic conception of rhythm and tempo.
One of the most characteristic aspects of the movement—which can be found in many similar movements in Bartok's later works—is the way in which section after section is suspended upon a single tone repeated in eighth note patterns. For instance, after the short introduction the note D is the focal point, being repeated in the second violin more than one hundred and fifty times. The next section centers upon D and its neighbor E. The notes A and E form the basis of the next section. By such drastic means—possibly related to the drones of primitive instruments—a tonal level is established which even the most remote chromaticism cannot dislodge.

To increase the resonance many such passages employ open strings together with stopped strings (the device anchors the musical conception to certain locations in which C, G, D, A, and E may serve as foundation). By making use of the open strings in this way, Bartok is able to build up savage sonorities which still remain within the bounds of chamber music. Such procedures are even more frequent in the later quartets.

The movement begins with an introductory passage of seven measures which contains the "seeds" for a great amount of future development.

EXAMPLE 39.
Following this introduction there are four measures of the rhythmic ostinato on the note D after which the first dance is played by the first violin.

EXAMPLE 40.

It is immediately repeated with only slight alterations in some of the intervals.

After a strong cadence at #4 a new tonal plane is achieved by the ostinato on the notes D and E in the violins. After three measures the next dance is played by the viola and cello in octaves. It is a subtle distillation of the principal elements of the first dance.

EXAMPLE 41.

That the fragment in the third measure is really motive a' is confirmed when this second dance tune is repeated in the
viola alone. Here motive \(a'\) is inverted.

**EXAMPLE 42.**

At \#6 the introduction to the movement is repeated in inversion, emphasizing the tritone \(F_{\#}-C\). After the cadence another rhythmic ostinato of eighth notes sets the pace for the third tune, heard first in the cello and then repeated by the viola.

**EXAMPLE 43.**

At \#10 after a brief pause, Bartok embarks on an exploitation of motive \(b\) from the introduction (Example 39, page 74).

**EXAMPLE 44.**

This is used as an introduction to the next dance tune, which is given to the cello.
EXAMPLE 45.

The violins play a new syncopated ostinato which has as its tail motive b, sometimes inverted and sometimes not. Motive a', with its accompanying motive b, are sequenced. The transition to the next dance which follows is an ultrachromatic affair which, in effect, "pulls apart" the intervals of motive b.

The next dance (the fifth) begins at #13. It is also based principally on motive b.

EXAMPLE 46.

It is sequenced a minor third higher and then again a minor third higher. The last five notes serve as a transition to the next section; they are handed from first violin to second violin to viola to cello, each time a whole step lower, going from B flat down the whole-tone scale to finally rest on D.
This whole-tone transition brings us, at #14, to a repetition of the first dance tune (Example 40, page 75), only this time it is given out by the second violin, viola and cello in octaves while the first violin has the, by now, familiar ostinato of eighth notes consisting of D and its neighbors. The tune is repeated and extended, culminating in a rather lengthy transitional passage which lasts from four and a half measures after #18 to #20. This transition features the interval of the tritone (from the first two notes of the movement as well as fleeting reference to motive a' retrograde in the viola.

After a general rest comes a section which might be called "introductory". It is a rhapsodic reworking of the thematic elements already presented. It might be thought of as a lull in the proceedings before the next dance tune is presented. It reminds one of the sounds that might transpire when the village musicians play a medley of dances; they finish one and are not always sure what tune will follow so they improvise or "vamp" until one of them thinks of the next tune. In this case "the next tune" is hinted at a great many times before it finally arrives. There are several "false starts".

The first fragment is from motive b, augmented and inverted in the cello followed by the original version in the second violin. There is another general rest and then
two more halting beginnings, each followed by a general rest. The four-note motive is next enlarged by the addition of three-falling fourths. The fourths and motive $b$ are each separately tossed from instrument to instrument and finally the fourths take over completely, being heard in all four voices in octaves. From #22 to #23 motive $b$ is heard against a background of descending and ascending fourths in quarter notes in the first violin with fourths a half step lower and syncopated in the second violin. The viola and cello alternate between motive $b$ and a rising figure involving the interval of a tritone. The section from #23 to #24 is very similar except that the intervals are now the rising tritone and a dominant-tonic type ostinato on the notes $A$ and $D$.

At #24 are re-introduced the accompaniment elements of the fourth dance (the melody of which is quoted in Example 45, page 77) which serves as a link for a re-hearing of the rocking minor thirds of the first dance (motive $a$). These minor thirds alternate with broader hints at the new melody to come, which we now can hear will be slower and more lyric. It is unique also because it is not based primarily on the motivic elements of the introduction.

The labor pains are over. The tune finally emerges at #27.

\[\text{EXAMPLE 47.}\]
It is repeated and developed quite extensively featuring an inverted version (at #28) and finally (at #29) a massive statement in imitation and *stretto*. Four measures before #30 it is hurled into the faster tempo of the first dance. Four measures before #32 is a modified restatement of the fifth dance (Example 46, page 77) with its emphasis on motive b. The same five notes which proved useful before as a transition to the next section are used here again to effect the subtle change from duple to triple meter.

The next section (from four measures before #34 to three measures after #41) consists of a highly varied restatement in triple meter of all the structural elements of the movement. The first dance (Example 40, page 75) which exploited motives a and a' is represented by the following theme, played by the lower three instruments over an ostinato on the note G in the first violin.

![Example 48](image)

The tune is repeated a minor third higher by the second violin and the viola but the ostinato (now in the cello as
well as the first violin) only moves a major second—a major second from the note G in both directions, up in the violin and down in the cello. The transition, which begins one measure before #36 features an ostinato of a tone cluster—the first four notes of a whole-tone scale played simultaneously.

The next element to "pass in review" is motive h, which is used from five measures before #37 to #40. The sixth dance, which was slower and more lyric and contained none of the structural elements of the previous dances is heard briefly seven measures before #41.

EXAMPLE 49.

The coda features a polymetric scheme of 4 4 simultaneously and presents a final hearing of the various components of the harmonic basis of the movement (the tritone, the perfect fourth and the tonal center D with its upper and lower neighbors) as well as the melodic germs (motives a and a' with their characteristic minor third) in what might be called a "dissolved" state.

As if the whole vital energy was spent in the second movement, the quartet closes with the third movement in a
spirit of utter desolation and resignation. As a matter of fact it is rather exceptional for a string quartet to end with a very slow movement, as this one does. Structurally this Lento is chain-like, one section following another without much apparent thematic connection. There are four sections plus a Coda. There are several unifying devices, especially the intervals of a minor second and a tritone. In addition the movement is punctuated by a cadential figure which marks the end of the various sections and also brings the whole work to a close in the central key of A.

![Derivation: Theme I, motive a of 1st movement](image)

**EXAMPLE 50.**

Its derivation from the basic motive of the first movement, though not apparent at first, is unmistakable.

Bartok seems to experiment, perhaps a little self-consciously, with melodic and harmonic fourths; near the end he builds a chord of five perfect fourths (two measures before #10).
That there are great expressive possibilities in this generally rather hard and unyielding harmonic idiom is demonstrated by the third section, \textit{lento assai} (#4 in the score).

\begin{example}
\includegraphics{example52.png}
\end{example}

This is quite Schoenbergian; but comparison with a similar passage of Schoenberg (for example, the opening of the second movement of \textbf{Five Orchestral Pieces})

\begin{example}
\includegraphics{example53.png}
\end{example}
shows Bartok's richer exploitation of the expressive possibilities of this idiom.

After ten measures of introduction the first theme appears in the first violin.

\[ \text{EXAMPLE 54.} \]

This theme is also derived from motive \( a \) of Theme I of the first movement (Example 33, page 70). The first section soon comes to a close with the cadential figure quoted above (Example 50, page 82).

The second section begins at \#2. It consists of a new melody played simultaneously with the cadential figure.

\[ \text{EXAMPLE 55.} \]

Here there is a reference to motive \( b \) of Theme I of the first movement.
After a brief work-out the third section follows immediately. The thematic material (emphasizing chords built in fourths) is quoted above as Example 52, page 83. At #6 the cadential figure is introduced and gradually extended.

The fourth section begins four measures before #7.

A relationship exists here between the notes marked off by a bracket and the triplet figure and following dotted quarter note in Theme I of the first movement (see Example 33, page 70).

There is a brief pause and then the Coda begins seven measures before #9. Various elements of the movement are restated in the Coda. The first theme is treated first, followed by a glimpse of the third section now harmonically enriched by additional fourths. There is a fleeting reference to the second section and a modification of the cadential figure which brings the quartet to a close in A minor.
III. STRING QUARTET NUMBER THREE

The String Quartet Number Three is a particularly abstruse work; it is the shortest and the most intense of all the quartets. It was written in 1927. In the ten years which had elapsed since the String Quartet Number Two his style underwent a considerable change: the "romantic" expressiveness and lyricism gave way to a more acid, uncompromising and more "objective" style. The String Quartet Number Three came as a climax to a whole series of difficult works, including the two Sonatas for Violin and Piano, the Sonata for piano and the Piano Concerto Number One. To the customary difficulties of Bartok's music and the difficulty of a melodic idiom of which one parent is rather remote folk music, the other intellectual modernism, are added special difficulties of structure---of both inner, detailed structure and outer, general structure. Bartok's motivic logic is seen approaching its highest point. For practical purposes there are only two or three separate motives in the whole work; all the rest constitutes a manipulation of these few. To grasp all the links in the chain of musical reasoning is impossible to the unaided ear and difficult to the score-reading eye. Yet this is not mere "paper music"; the ingenuities of motive-logic constitute the structural principle, the organic tissue of the
music—not its real sense.

This quartet is in one continuous movement, subdivided into four sections of varying character. The sections are labeled Prima parte, Seconda parte, Recapitulazione della prima parte, and Coda, which re-uses materials from the second part. This is the earliest manifestation of the arch-form, that architectonic scheme which Bartok adhered to for many years.

The thematic "germ" which is almost the only basis for the first section is first presented in the sixth measure, after five bars of introductory material, and consists of an ascending perfect fourth and a descending minor third. It is the underlying foundation for the first theme, which is presented canonically in the violins. To be sure, it is a very Bartokian canon, with many unessential notes in the leading voice and imitated without the unessential notes a third lower and at the distance of one measure.
A precedent for this canonic opening can be found in the opening of the String Quartet Number One which also begins with a "free" canon for the violins.

Another characteristic which was revealed in earlier works (especially the String Quartet Number Two) is that the themes of a Bartok work are liable to return, in recapitulations, in more easily apprehended forms and in a purer harmonic atmosphere. So it is well to look for the thematic "clue" to this quartet on some later page. It is found not in the part of the quartet actually marked Ricapitulazione della prima parte, but toward the end of the Prima parte itself (fourth measure after #11 in the second violin and viola in octaves).

This long, expansive "theme", a simple, almost folk-like version of the opening canon is made up almost exclusively of the basic motive (motive a), occurring in different permutations, sometimes extended or otherwise varied, but always recognizable.
run its course in the violins (see Example 57, page 37).
It is taken up by the viola and cello at the interval of an
augmented fifth and at a distance of one measure. Again
this comes to a cadence and the canonic treatment is resumed
in the viola and first violin (at the interval of a perfect
fourth higher and a distance of one measure) with motive a
serving as a ground-motive in the cello.

EXAMPLE 59.
The first section of the Prima parte comes to a close
with a vertical statement of the basic motive played
fortissimo and in chords of open fifths.
There is a general rest and then at $\#^4$ the second section begins—a quieter, rhapsodic and less intense section. Over a canonic ostinato in the viola and cello—each with motive $a$ a tritone apart and at the distance of half a beat—the violins present another important motive (motive $b$) whose chief characteristics are the semitone and dotted rhythm.
At #5 the materials of this section are repeated with a few modifications. The canonic accompaniment is a half step higher in each voice than previously and there is now a double pedal joint on the interval of a diminished octave (a semitone inverted).

In the fourth measure after #5 Bartok develops motive b in a double mirror canon—the violins lead in a mirror beginning an augmented octave apart; the viola and cello follow after two beats also an augmented octave apart and a perfect fourth lower than the leaders. This dissolves at #6 into a four-voice canon based upon motive a and which is now subjected to expansion, involution and octave transposition of some intervals.
The development continues at #7 alternating an extended version of motive a (which includes the original motive as well as the motive in retrograde) with chordal passages of multiple stops.

The step-wise motion of the chordal scheme implies a relationship with the principal "theme" of the Seconda parte. (Compare the excerpt above with Example 66.)

In the sixth measure after #8 motive a is heard again in a four-voice canon. There are seven entries, each a perfect fourth lower than the preceding one and each at a distance of one beat. The developmental device at #10 is motive a (in the second violin and viola and next in the first violin) "filled in" with passing tones.
The retransition (a four-voice canon on a greatly extended version of motive a) begins at #11 and the recapitulation begins four measures later. (The "theme" of the recapitulation has been quoted above, Example 53, page 88.) As has been stated previously the "theme" returns in a simpler and purer version. The material at #13 is related to the material in the exposition at #3 (Example 59, page 89).

The Seconda parte follows immediately, without pause. The form is best described as a set of variations on a seven-bar theme in consecutive triads and of folk-dance character (Theme Ia). The initial statement of the variation theme is made by the cello, pizzicato.
A sixteenth-note passage (Theme Ib) which follows in the first violin foreshadows an auxiliary melodic line which will be superimposed upon the triad-theme (Example 66, page 93) and itself varied. (Incidentally, the melodic contour of the sixteenth-note passage--Theme Ib--is quite similar to that of the triad-theme--Theme Ia.)

\[ \text{EXAMPLE 67.} \]

The triad-theme is next given out in canon between the viola and cello at a distance of one measure. At \#2 Theme Ib is also repeated.

The first variation begins at \#3. It is a limping, halting version of Theme Ib (heard in the first violin) while the cello plays Theme Ia.

\[ \text{EXAMPLE 68.} \]

This fragment is repeated, and at \#4 repeated again with the viola and first violin in octaves. At \#5 Theme Ib is inverted and the rest of the variation consists of an alternation of Theme Ib as shown in Example 68 and its inversion.
In the third measure after #7 there is an interesting example of the use of the original and the inversion simultaneously.

The second variation begins one measure before #10. This variation features a rhythmic variant of Theme Ia in octaves in the viola and cello.

At #12 the violins take up the tune in canon at the octave at a distance of one measure and at #13 they repeat it a third higher. One measure before #14 the viola takes up the canon and leads the cello by one measure. One measure before #15 the first violin restates the canon-theme, followed at one measure by the second violin and at four measures by the viola. In its next appearance (one measure before #16) the canon-theme is used by all four instruments, the violin in its original form and the viola and cello in inversion making a double mirror canon. At #17 the violins take the inverted version, playing it in parallel thirds while the viola and cello, a measure later begin on the original version also in parallel thirds.

There is a brief transition to the third variation which begins in the fourth measure after #19. Here again
the instruments are used in pairs, the violins versus the viola and cello. Throughout most of the variation both pairs of instruments play in parallel tenths. Theme Ib is the basis for this variation, which might be labeled "antiphonal" with a few small changes.

EXAMPLE 70.

The fourth variation begins in the fifth measure after #23. The first violin and viola join together to play the open-spaced triads of Theme Ia (Example 66, page 93), which now assumes the rhythm of the second variation (Example 69, page 95). The cello follows in an inverted canon one measure later.

The next variation, the fifth, continues the developmental scheme of referring to elements of the preceding
variations. At #26 the viola states Theme Ib (Example 67, page 94), only now it is in $\frac{7}{2}$ rather than in the original $\frac{5}{4}$. Theme Ib is taken up canonically by the first violin, the second violin and finally the cello, with each entrance at a distance of one eighth note. The next element to be used is the variant of Theme Ib as used in the first variation (Example 68, page 94). The second violin introduces this version of Theme Ib in the sixth measure after #28. It is subsequently inverted and, finally, treated canonically.

The sixth variation begins at #31. It is an elaborate fugato based on a very subtle synthesis of Themes Ia and Ib.

**Example 71.**

The exposition is worked out in the traditional order, beginning on A (in the second violin) with the response on E (in the cello), the subject again on A (in the viola) and the response on E (in the first violin). The entrances take place at progressively shorter intervals, four measures, three and a half measures, and two and a half measures, creating a feeling of stretto before the materials are fully
exposed. The first actual stretto begins at #34, involving the three lower voices at a distance of one beat each. This stretto is quickly followed by another on the subject inverted. Again, it is a three-voice stretto, employing the first violin, the viola, and the cello. A four-voice stretto begins at #35 with the instruments following each other in descending order at a distance of only one half of a beat.

The seventh variation (beginning at #36) serves as recapitulation of the theme of the variations (Theme Ia, Example 66, page 93). It returns in the cello, pizzicato, and is imitated canonically by the first violin. Meanwhile the second violin continues the incessant sixteenth notes based on Theme Ib. At #37 the viola takes up the triad-theme (Theme Ia), the cello follows in inverted canon, and the violins continue the sixteenth notes in canon and contrary motion. In the sixth measure after #37 the violins join the viola and cello in the canonic treatment of Theme Ia.

At #38 begins a section of four three and four-voice canons based on the material of the second variation (see Example 69, page 95). Sometimes the melody is in its original form and sometimes it is inverted.

The \textit{Coda} begins at #41. The first section is based on Theme Ia but the diatonic moves upward and downward are now replaced by glissandi. The second section, beginning at
#46 serves as a transition to the Recapitulazione della prima parte, at #10 with a great deal of emphasis on the note C# which acts as a center of gravity or artificial tonic for the entire quartet. There is a reminiscence in the cello of the intervals of motive a of the Prima parte (a perfect fourth and a minor third) and a dissolution to a unison F in the viola and cello, at which point the "recapitulation" begins.

The "recapitulation" is not only very much condensed, but the material is altered generally beyond easy aural recognition. Motive a is "worked over" in several ways: in retrograde (up to #1) in involution and canon (from #1 to five measures after #1). In the fifth measure after #1 motive b of the Prima parte (Example 61, page 90) is heard again.

At #2 is a canon in the viola, second violin, and first violin based on motive a in involution, after which motive b is brought into play again. Motive a is involuted and expanded in the section beginning from #3 to #5.
Motive b returns briefly at #5. It is worked out in canonic imitation. Four measures before #7 there is a reference to the martellato figure which served as a transition to the "recapitulation" and which occurs in the Prima parte at #10. It consists of motive a filled in with passing tones. (See Example 64, page 93.)

![Example 73](image)

The last four measures of this section are devoted to a restatement of the material used in the retransition in the Prima parte (#11 in the Prima parte).

The fourth part of the quartet is labeled Coda. It serves as a recapitulation of the materials used in the Seconda parte. Theme Ib is developed into a four-part perpetual canon, and is gradually increased in length from the original ten-note figure to twenty-two-note figure. At #3 Theme Ib is restated in the violins as it first appeared in the first variation (Example 63, page 94). It is used in the original form and also inverted. Meanwhile the cello is playing theme Ib inverted. Theme Ib is heard in its original form at #4.

At #5 Theme Ib is combined with Theme Ia of the Seconda parte and motive a of the Prima parte. Theme Ib
takes over completely at #7, being in all four instruments simultaneously both rectus and inversus. It is shattered into fragments, and at #9 only the four pick-up notes are left. There is another restatement of the thematic material of the first variation at #10. It is heard in canon in the violins at the distance of one eighth-note and at the interval of a semitone.

At #11 the viola and cello play the material of the second variation (Example 69, page 95) while the violins play the characteristic half-step progression of motive b of the Prima parte (Example 61, page 90). At #12 the first violin joins the viola and cello, playing in inverse canon. The second violin finally joins in the imitation.

The intense imitation dissolves into the Codetta at #14. This final section features trills, glissandi, and multiple-stopped chords and is based on the half-step progression of motive b of the Prima parte. The last four measures consist of percussive chords built up in superimposed perfect fifths. The chords move apart chromatically in the next to last measure, and the quartet ends on a crashing, fortissimo, multiple-stopped chord of fifths.

The Quartet Number Three features a great many "special effects" for the strings: sul ponticello, glissando, col legno, and multiple-stopped chords bowed in
alternating directions. It makes great technical demands on the players. Bartok began by writing well within the limits of conventional string technique, but he greatly expanded these means in every successive work.

IV. STRING QUARTET NUMBER FOUR

The *String Quartet Number Four* marks the summit of Bartok's constructive endeavors, and in many ways it is the most "cerebral" in his entire output. It was written in 1928, only one year after the *String Quartet Number Three*, but it also contains many resemblances, mainly architectural, and superficial characteristics of the *String Quartet Number Five*, which was written six years later. It marks the beginning of the transition from the period of the most severe formal and intellectual discipline and most austere thematic invention to the period in which he achieved a perfect synthesis of the new mastery of sonata forms with the earlier richness of material.

The *Quartet Number Four* is symmetrically constructed in the form of an arch, with five movements, in which the first and fifth and the second and fourth movements respectively are thematically closely related. The slow middle movement is the nucleus of the work, and it, too, is symmetrical; it is a three-part scheme with the second part, or departure, a fine example of "night music". The quartet
is also somewhat symmetrically planned in its tonal relationship: the outer movements are in C; the second movement is in E, a major third higher and, incidentally played con sordino throughout, and the fourth movement is in A flat, a major third lower and played entirely pizzicato. The tonality of the central movement is quite ambiguous, but is probably in a Lydian D, even though there is a strong tendency towards C in the melody, which leads to prominent cadences on C in measures 34, 54, and 63.

A single motive, used in both chromatic and diatonic versions, is of fundamental importance in the first and last movements. This "basic motive" is heard first in the cello.

![Example 74](image)

The basic motive is subsequently inverted, transformed diatonically, expanded in intervals, and extended in length. In the last movement this same motive assumes a dance-like rhythm pattern utilizing the diatonic form of the basic motive; it is inverted and finally, the intervals are pulled apart so that the newly assumed rhythm becomes the
The relationship between the last motive and the first motive cited above would be difficult to discover without the intermediate steps.

The first movement is a sonata allegro, but almost all the thematic material is derived from the basic motive.

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quoted above (Example 74, page 104). The first six measures serve as an introduction, during which the basic motive is hinted at. In the first two measures the cello plays a series of ascending sixths, a figure which will reappear later in the movement. Measures 8 and 9 feature a verticalization of the four semitones of the basic motive.

EXAMPLE 76.

In measures 11 and 12 the basic motive is stated in octaves by the first violin and viola and imitated canonically in inversion by the second violin and cello, also in octaves. The first violin and viola next state the basic motive inverted and the other pair of instruments imitate canonically the normal version. The first of these imitations (measure eleven) is at the distance of one beat; the second is at the distance of half a beat.
The next transformation of the basic motive appears in the violin as a perpetual free canon in which the intervals of basic motive are constantly expanded.

EXAMPLE 77.

Theme Ib appears over a double ostinato: the cello plays a diatonically expanded version of the basic motive and the viola plays a diatonically expanded version of the first three notes of the basic motive, but the intervals are also expanded to ninths rather than seconds.

Measure 25 presents the next thematic element, Theme Ic, whose chief characteristic is the interval of a second both vertically and horizontally in contrary motion (motive a).

EXAMPLE 78.
There soon follows another brief canonic work-out of the basic motive stated by the violins in parallel ninths and answered in inversion and also in ninths by the viola and cello. When the violins have the inverted version of the basic motive the answer is the normal version. This passage is a verticalization of the diatonic elements of the basic motive, for the voices as a whole are a whole step apart. (Compare with the verticalization of the semitones in measures eight and nine; see Example 76, page 106.)

There is a brief transition to the second "theme-group". The transition consists of long scale lines which are nothing more than expanded versions of the basic motive. Throughout the transition there is a great deal of canonic imitation, often utilizing the material normally and inverted at the same time.

The first element (Theme IIa) of the second "theme-group" appears in measure 37. It is a series of multiple-stopped chords which are stated canonically by pairs of instruments, violins and viola-cello. The basic motive figures prominently as the lower voice of the successive chords.
The second element (Theme IIb) follows immediately. It also has the basic motive as its source, but here the basic motive is greatly expanded. A seemingly inconsequential motive (motive b) accompanies Theme IIb in the cello.

EXAMPLE 30.

This motive, which is a modification of the basic motive, plays an important role in the rest of the quartet.

The closing theme, measure 44, is derived from Theme IIa (Example 79, page 108) and contains the basic motive inverted.

EXAMPLE 31.

The development section begins in measure 49. The first part of it treats the material of the introduction. An interesting insight into Bartók's all-encompassing use of canon is offered by the passage beginning in measure 54. The outer voices engage in a free canon at the interval of
a tenth and at the distance of one beat. As an accompanying "coloristic" device the inner voices have what Bernard Rands calls a "canon in contrary motion without a time distance between the voices . . . (or) a simultaneous mirror canon".\(^{30}\) The voices involved in the simultaneous mirror canon are at the interval of a diminished octave.

The second part of the development section begins in measure 58. Motive a (see Theme Ib, Example 78, page 107) is expanded to twice its original length, and, as such, is used as an accompaniment for Theme Ib. This accompaniment is very similar to the "Musettes" in Out of Doors, for piano, written two years prior to this quartet. Theme Ib is developed in canon: the cello leads, followed by the viola playing Theme Ib inverted. The first violin joins the cello to repeat Theme Ib in octaves.

At measure 69 the third part of the development begins. The first half of the basic motive is used in three and four-voice canons with the expanded motive a accompanying it intermittently. These same elements are the basis for the last part of the development, which begins in measure 80. Motive a stated very forcefully in all four instruments at once alternates with the various manifestations of the basic motive (the original version, the

inversion, a fragment, or the "ornamented" version that is motive b).

The recapitulation begins in measure 92 with a restatement of the material of the introduction. The cello now plays the sixths it had in the introduction as double-stops. This introductory material alternates with the basic motive three times. In measure 98 is a canon restatement of the second half of the basic motive (as in measure 5 in the exposition). Measures 101 and 102 present again the verticalization of the semitones of the basic motive. A free four-voice canon based on Theme IIb (Example 77, page 107) begins in measure 104.

The basic motive is next heard in a two-part canon, the viola and cello leading, playing in parallel ninths, and the violins following, playing the basic motive inverted and also in parallel ninths (as in measure 26). Motive a is expanded and extended. Theme IIIa is restated in only three chords. At measure 126 the closing theme is restated along with its companion, motive b.

The Coda begins in measure 134. It consists almost entirely of statements of the basic motive alternating with cadential chords. There are more canons and the basic motive is heard in its original form as well as inverted and fragmented. The final section of the Coda (measure 157) features a two-voice canon on an extension of the basic
motive. The first violin and viola play in octaves and are followed a beat later by the second violin and cello also in octaves a tritone lower. The movement comes to an end with a combination of the cadence chords with the basic motive very much as the recapitulation had begun.

The second movement is a scherzo and trio, both of which are three-part designs. This second movement has a strong chromatic character due to the prominence of minor second intervals. The minor seconds also make apparent a relationship with the basic motive of the first movement. The theme of the first part of the scherzo (Theme Ia) is given to the viola and cello, beginning in the first measure.

EXAMPLE 82.

In measure 10 it is repeated by the violins. After these two complete statements the theme is fragmented and played antiphonally between the upper and lower pairs of instruments.

The second part of the scherzo begins in measure 27. The melodic material is clearly derived from that of Theme Ia.

EXAMPLE 83.
The double neighboring tone figure (marked $\underline{2}$ in Example 33, page 112) is found in several places in the first movement (motive $b$, Example 30, page 109). Theme $1b$ is stated in a four-voice canon with the instruments entering in descending order, each a whole-step lower than the previous one. The canonic statement is repeated from measure 36. Elements of Theme $1a$ and $1b$ are combined in the transition to the repetition of the first part of the scherzo. The first motive of Theme $1a$ is also inverted and used antiphonally.

The third part of the scherzo (the repetition of the opening part) begins in measure 54. Theme $1a$ is used in a four-voice canon at the octave. It is fragmented, and the fragments are treated canonically. In the last two measures of the scherzo (measures 73 and 74) the viola and cello anticipate the first thematic element of the Trio.

The Trio is also in the conventional three-part design. The viola and cello play the first part of the theme (Theme $IIa$) and then it continues as accompaniment for the second part of the theme (Theme $IIb$).
EXAMPLE 34.

Both of these themes are closely linked to material in the first movement. The notes which make up Theme IIIa are the four consecutive semitones of the basic motive of the first movement; the double neighboring tones of Theme IIIb are found in Theme Ib of the scherzo (motive x, Example 83, page 112) as well as motive b of the first movement (Example 80, page 109).

The canonic statement of Theme IIIb is repeated, again at the interval of a major second higher and still accompanied by Theme IIIa. Theme IIIb is modified, but constantly appearing in canon up to the departure (measure 102).

The second section of the Trio develops the two rhythmic elements of Theme IIIa in consecutive major thirds.
At measure 115 the two elements are stated in a double canon. This section ends in a long series of glissandi in all the instruments, emphasizing the interval of a whole step (and thus implying the Lydian tetrachord) both vertically and horizontally.

The repeat of the first part of the Trio (the third section of the Trio) presents Theme IIb greatly modified to include many other notes in addition to the upper and lower neighbors of the principal tone. It is played in parallel seconds antiphonally with overlapping entrances. Each time it is finished off with Theme IIa (as at measures 149 and 150). A four-voice canon on an extended version of Theme IIa, beginning in measure 161, introduces the transition which leads back to the scherzo. Theme IIa is progressively shortened, the meter changes back to $\frac{6}{8}$, and elements of Theme Ib (Example 83, page 112) are gradually re-introduced. (It is interesting to note that in the recapitulation of the scherzo the themes are presented in reverse order: Theme Ia is preceded and followed by Theme Ib. This particular formal device which aims at complete symmetry is not yet at the highly developed stage which is found in the String Quartet Number Five, where the themes are often presented in the recapitulation not only in reverse order but also inverted.)

Theme Ib begins in measure 175 and is played a
diminished fifth higher than in its appearance in the first scherzo (measure 45). In measure 134 there is a pizzicato transition to Theme Ia which is related to the similar passage in measure 51. Theme Ia is presented in measure 139 in the original key of E but in stretto. The section concludes in a series of canons on fragments of Theme Ia.

The third part of the scherzo returns to Theme Ib. It begins in measure 213 in the second violin and in the key of E. The cello plays a series of ascending chords of superimposed perfect fifths pizzicato glissando. The double neighboring tone figure (motive x in Example 33, page 112) is treated canonically. Elements of Theme Ia, played over glissandi in the viola and cello lead to the Coda.

The Coda, which begins in measure 238, features the interval of a third, which is the characteristic interval of the lower voices in Theme IIa of the Trio (Example 34, page 114). The movement fades away in a series of glissandi, ending decisively on E.

The third movement forms the center of the arch-scheme of this quartet. As such it should hold the secret to the entire work.

What is centrally important in the middle movement is the harmonic and melodic structure of its opening seven bars, which provide the clue to the harmonic and thematic structure of the whole work.
EXAMPLE 35.

These bars contain three distinct thematic elements, which together yield two more—the two symmetrical harmonic groups of three adjoining whole tones (Example 36, BB), separated by a minor third (E), and the melodic alternation of D sharp and D natural between them (F). Combined these elements create what can for convenience best be called two overlapping Lydian tetrachords, i.e. two groups of four adjoining whole tones AA), and a group of four adjoining semitones (CC) filling in the central minor third (B).
The entire thematic material of the first movement, and most of that of the rest of the work, is derived from these note-groupings, which here have no thematic form, but may be described as the thematic or motivic or intervallic source of the work. The principal melodic motive of the first subject of the first movement and of the work (see the basic motive, Example 74, page 104) is a form of CC, and the harmonic texture in which it is set throughout the first movement is derived wholly from the other components of Example 36... significant use is made (in the passages cited which involve the basic motive) of all the components of the thematic source set out in Example 36 excerpt E, the minor third. The significant thematic use of this (as distinct from its inherent thematic relevance, residing in its being the compass of the motive CC and the difference in compass between this CC and the AA on to which it often resolves), is in the second-subject matter of the movement, the sharpest thematic distinction of which from the rest of the thematic material (disregarding the marked tonal distinction, which is equally important), is the pervading presence of the minor third, breaking up the sequence of regular seconds, major and minor, and giving it a suggestion of a pentatonic character. With this single additional melodic feature to distinguish it, the second-subject matter is derived from the same elements in the thematic source as provide the material of the first-subject and its development.\footnote{31 Colin Mason, "An Essay in Analysis: Tonality, Symmetry and Latent Serialism in Bartók's Fourth Quartet," \textit{Music Review}, XVIII (August, 1957), 190-191.}

The third movement, then, serves as the keystone of the quartet. It is a three-part form. The sustained chords of the first section (cited above in Example 35, page 117, as the underlying source of the entire quartet) serve as foundation for a long, rhapsodic, Magyar melody in the cello. The line is freely improvisational and bears a resemblance to the quiet, rather static, but florid melodic characteristic of the tarogato, a Hungarian woodwind instrument.
There are three statements of the theme, all in the cello and each a third higher than the preceding one. The other instruments supply an expanding harmonic background of long-held chords, coming to a cadence on C in measure 34.

![Reduction of chordal scheme for theme I](image)

**EXAMPLE 87.**

The second section is a rich example of "Night Music", an ethereal, nocturnal music which played a large part in his writing during the last two decades of his life. The usual technique employed to create the atmosphere of the out-of-doors at night include blurred, pianissimo cluster-chords against which are heard the twitterings, chirpings, and croakings of nocturnal creatures. There had been suggestions of it in earlier works (the second of the Improvisations and "The Night's Music" from Out of Doors for piano).

(The fact that) this movement is dedicated "to Ditta," and from the frequent recurrence of this nocturnal mood, and from its final appearance in the Third Piano Concerto, which was designated for the composer's wife,
it is not illogical to postulate an extramusical connotation entirely aside from the merely pictorial. 32

There are three motives in this "Night Music" section, the first played by the first violin and the other two by the second violin.

Theme IIc has already been encountered at least twice previously in the quartet, as motive b of the first movement (Example 80, page 109) and as Theme IIb of the second movement (Example 81, page 114). This section also comes to a close on C (measure 54).

The first part is freely restated beginning in measure 55. Theme I is again in the cello with a free canonic imitation in inversion in the first violin. A cadence on C in measure 63 signals the end of this section. The Coda begins in measure 64 and is based on material from the second--"Night Music"--section. The final cadence contains

32 Stevens, op. cit., p. 135.
all the tones of the Lydian mode built on D.

The fourth movement is closely related to the second. The transformation of themes from one movement to the other is not cumulative as it was in the outer movements but simply variational.

EXAMPLE 89.

The two movements, the second and fourth are twin scherzi. The first thematic idea of the second movement is the chromatic line of the viola and cello, ascending from E to B and returning to E. (The chromatic ascent and descent appear to be an expansion of the basic motive of the first
and fifth movements.) In the fourth movement the corresponding theme is in the viola. It is diatonic rather than chromatic, and consequently covers an octave instead of a fifth. The second thematic idea is a motive of double neighboring tones around a single note, imitated immediately in canon a whole-step higher. The same process takes place in the fourth movement, the canon being at the ninth.

There are five introductory measures of rhythmic material. Theme I (Example 89a, page 121) begins in the viola in measure 6. The second violin repeats it in measure 13, the cello picks it up in measure 20, and finally the first violin has it in measure 23. A four-part canon on Theme I begins in measure 37 and brings the first section to a close. It should be noted that although this movement is scherzo-trio-scherzo, none of the subdivisions are ternary. Each of the scherzi is unary, the trio is binary.

The Trio begins in measure 45. Just as in the second movement it has two thematic elements (Theme IIIa and Theme IIIb), and, just as in the second movement Theme IIIa is used as an accompaniment for Theme IIIb. (Theme IIIb is cited above in Example 89b, page 121.) The second section of the Trio again is a development of Theme IIIa, beginning in measure 65.

The scherzo is restated beginning in measure 73. Theme I is stated in the second violin and cello two octaves
apart. It is repeated and leads directly to the Coda.

The first part of the Coda (from measure 88 to 101) consists of a two-voice canon based on Theme I. The second part is a series of canons, two two-voice, one four-voice, and finally a three-voice, all based on Theme I. The final cadence is on A flat.

The fourth movement uses a large variety of "special effects"—arpeggiated and non-arpeggiated chords, sul ponticello, specially indicated strings, strummed pizzicato, and a special strong pizzicato in which the string rebounds off the fingerboard.

The fifth movement is a three-part design and is closely related to the first movement (Example 75, page 105). It begins with an introduction fifteen measures in length featuring a rhythmic ostinato on multiple-stopped chords. Theme Ia is announced by the violins in unison in measure 16.

Example 90.

This theme is clearly derived from Theme Ib of the first movement (Example 77, page 107). It is interesting to note, also, that the last measure of Theme Ia, quoted above, is a diminution of its first measure. There are five more
measures of stamping rhythms and then Theme Ia is inverted.

EXAMPLE 91.

This inversion could also be Theme Ia in retrograde for it is so constructed that it is the same upside-down or backwards.

In measure 32 a new modification of Theme Ib of the first movement is presented. It is very similar (especially in its rhythm) to Theme Ia (Example 91) but it has been subjected to interval expansion.

EXAMPLE 92.

It is repeated (inverted) after several measures of the stamping chords.

EXAMPLE 93.

Throughout this section (up to measure 42) the tonal center has been clearly C, the tonality being established by constant reference to the notes C and G along with their
auxiliary tones D flat and F sharp. The accompaniment
sinks to A and E with its auxiliaries B flat and D sharp.

Another elaboration of Theme Ia (Theme Ic) is pre-
sented in measure 48.

![Example 94](image)

Theme Ic is repeated in a two-voice canon and immediately
inverted in a three-voice canonic setting. The last three
notes of the inversion are seized upon for a canonic work-
out in three voices, each at the distance of half a beat.
The cello plays a descending Lydian scale in parallel fifths
leading to a series of cadences on C.

In measure 32 begins a two-voice canon on Theme Ia,
but with the last note changed. The cadence material returns
and then Theme Ia is repeated twice, each time in a two-
voice canon, the first time with the original ending and the
second time with the last note changed. There quickly
follows a perpetual canon on the closing figure of Theme Ia.
A codetta follows whose theme (Theme Id) is based on the
opening notes of Theme Ia.

![Example 95](image)
After three statements of Theme I, the fortissimo clashing chords of the introduction to this movement are heard again (measure 121). The chords alternate with several fragments of the basic motive of the first movement (Example 74, page 104). The final cadence of this section is on C.

There are three measures of general rest and then four measures of introduction to the second part of the movement. The introduction consists of arpeggios across the open strings of the cello and second violin. Theme IIa is stated by the first violin in measure 156 and bears a strong resemblance to the basic motive (Example 74, page 104).

**EXAMPLE 96.**

The rest of the thematic material for this section of the movement is introduced immediately, Theme IIb in the first violin in measure 160 and Theme IIb in the cello in measure 163.

**EXAMPLE 97.**

**EXAMPLE 98.**
These two themes (Theme IIa and Theme IIb') are worked over in a variety of ways. They are slightly altered, fragmented, augmented, and finally, in measure 183, Theme IIb' is presented in a two-voice canon. Theme IIb' is slightly modified (several notes are added) and it is treated in a four-voice canon; the modified version is inverted and used in a four-voice canon. Theme IIb' is shortened for the next appearance, a two-voice canon, and finally it returns in its original form in another two-voice canon.

Measures 196 to 215 constitute a working-out of Theme IIa. Beginning in measure 214 it alternates antiphonally with shortened versions of Theme IIb and Theme IIb'. The rest of the second section of the movement (up to measure 238) is devoted to an inversion of Theme Ia, emphasizing the minor third E flat-C, heard over a canonic ostinato in the viola and cello based on Theme IIb'.

The third part of this final movement begins in measure 239. The materials of the first part are heard again in varied order and in altered versions. Theme Ia (Example 90, page 123) is heard first in a two-voice canon. Its tail has been slightly modified. In measure 241 the heavy introductory chords are restated, with C as the tonal center. A two-part canon on the inversion of Theme Ia (Example 91, page 124) begins in measure 250. Theme Ia is compressed to a length of only eight notes. Then the
introductory chords are heard alternately with an even shorter version of Theme Ia (only its final six notes are used).

Beginning in measure 273 Theme Ic (Example 94, page 125), which has been altered considerably, alternates with the introductory chords. Theme Ic is heard first in octaves in all four instruments, next in a two-voice canon, and finally, greatly altered and used both rectus and inversus, in a four-voice canon.

The basic motive of the first movement (Example 74, page 104) is restated in measure 317, growing very logically out of the preceding material. It appears in a double mirror canon. In measure 320 Theme Ia (Example 90, page 123) is stated mirror-wise by the violins and viola and followed canonically by the cello. It stops on a massive cadence chord reminiscent of the chords in the introduction. Theme Ia is progressively shortened and alternates with the cadence chord. The introductory chords, now composed of superimposed fifths, are heard in measure 332. The players are instructed to bow them in alternating directions, to play col legno, and to play pizzicato.

Theme Id (Example 95, page 125) returns mirror-wise in measure 347 in the violins. In measure 350 in the cello is the double neighboring tone figure which has been encountered several times previously (in the first movement.
in measure 40 along with Theme IIb; in the second movement in Theme Ib—Example 83, page 112, marked \( \Box \) and in Theme IIb—Example 84, page 114). Finally Theme Id is heard in mirror and canon simultaneously.

The Coda begins in measure 365. It is based entirely on Theme Ia (Example 90, page 123) and the basic motive of the first movement (Example 74, page 104). Theme Ia is played by the first violin and viola in octaves, followed in stretto by the second violin and cello two octaves apart. There are several additional entrances of Theme Ia, all in stretto, with Theme Ia progressively shortened. In measure 374 there is a two-voice canon at the interval of a tritone on the basic motive (Example 74, page 104). The canon continues to measure 386. There are two measures of rest followed by the first figure of Theme Id (Example 95, page 125). After a pianissimo reference to the introductory chords the quartet comes to a close with the basic motive used in a cadence on C very similar to the cadence which concluded the first movement.

The harmonic idiom of the String Quartet Number Four can hardly be labeled "harmonic". The coincidence of sounds at any point is so completely dependent upon the horizontal motion of the voices that it seems illogical to analyze them vertically. The emphasis throughout the quartet is polyphonic, and there are innumerable canons.
The Fourth Quartet comes close to being, if it does not actually represent, Bartok's greatest and most profound achievement... there are few works of this century so meaningful or so rewarding.33

V. STRING QUARTET NUMBER FIVE

The String Quartet Number Five was written in 1934. In the six years which elapsed between the Quartet Number Four and the Quartet Number Five, Bartok wrote only two major works, the Cantata Profana (1930) and the Piano Concerto Number Two (1931). The rest of his creative effort was spent primarily in transcribing for orchestra some pieces which he had written earlier for other media. The Quartet Number Five is dated 6 August to 6 September 1934—only a month between its inception and its completion.

Despite the frequent experimentation that appears in this quartet (the kind of experimentation that is attributable to a composer's personal development in expressivity and not simply the blind sort that seeks novel effects), there is a close relationship to the other quartets. The Quartet Number Five is quite similar in structural plan to the Quartet Number Four: it has five movements of which the outer ones are thematically related; the second and fourth movements are similar formally and thematically. In the Quartet Number Five, however, the second and fourth

33 Stevens, op. cit., p. 191.
movements are both slow movements flanking a central scherzo, a plan which is just the reverse of that of the Quartet Number Four. The use of the tones of the thematic material in well-spaced chord formations—what some writers have called "serialization"—appears as early as the Quartet Number Two, and serves as an integrative method, much as it does for the writers of the "twelve-tone" school.

The Quartet Number Five carries the formal principle often described as "arch form" several steps farther than the two previous quartets did, for here the "arch" characterizes individual movements as well as the quartet as a whole. In the first movement the main themes of the exposition in the sonata allegro form are inverted and in reverse order in the recapitulation, producing an unusual symmetry before and after the development section.

The tonality of the first movement is also subjected to the symmetrical principle of the arch. The semi-octave, both the diminished fifth and the augmented fourth (six semitones), plays a particularly significant role in the first movement, although it is to be found frequently in the other movements also. Pairs of tones a tritone (six semitones) apart are thrown into opposition, often with the same relationship as tonic and dominant in more conventional

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music. The exposition, which opens on B flat, ends on a chord of the dominant. The development immediately starts on F, the semi-octave of B flat, but closes with the superposition of the dominant, F, on the semi-octave, G. The recapitulation begins with this same "chord", eventually leading back to the tonic, B flat. The semi-octave plays a large part in the harmonies, and, at some points, in the melodic line as well.

The first three and a half measures of the quartet establish the tonality in the simplest possible way: by repeating in rhythmic patterns the keynote, B flat (Theme Ia).

EXAMPLE 99.

In the middle of the fourth measure Theme Ib appears in the viola and cello, taking its departure from the repeated B flat and imitated canonically by the violins a few measures later.

EXAMPLE 100.
The third thematic fragment (Theme Iq) in the first theme-group is played by the viola and cello under the appearance of Theme Ib in the violins.

EXEMPLARY 101.

Theme Iq has the characteristic double neighboring tones in the five pick-up notes that have played such an integral part in themes of earlier quartets.

In measure 14 begins a section which might normally be considered a transition to the second theme-group except for the fact that this material never returns anywhere in the movement or the quartet and the real transition theme follows it (in measure 25). This "irrelevant" material is canonically stated.

EXEMPLARY 102.
There is a short reference to Theme Ia (Example 99, page 132) on C sharp and B, and then the real transitional theme appears in measure 25.

EXAMPLE 103.

This transitional theme is derived from Theme Ib (Example 100, page 132). Although the \( \frac{3}{4} \) meter is retained without deviation, the metrical groups are set off by dotted measure bars, the violins really having two measures of \( \frac{6}{8} \) followed by one of \( \frac{3}{8} \) and other irregular divisions. The cello and viola start in the same way, but one beat later, so that there is in effect a "rhythmic canon". The five note pick-up to Theme Ia (Example 101, page 133) are heard next in canon from measure 31 to 36. The tonal level shifts to C, and at this level Theme Ia (Example 99, page 132) makes
another violent outburst. Theme Ib and the pick-up notes to Theme Ic lead to the second theme.

The second theme, *meno mosso dolce*, is an augmentation and expansion of Theme Ic.

The development section begins in measure 59. The first part of it opens with Theme Ia (Example 99, page 132) on E, the semi-octave of B flat serving as the artificial dominant. Theme Ia alternates with fragments of Theme Ib (Example 100, page 132), which are treated canonically.

The second part of the development section begins in measure 86 and combines the transition theme (Example 103, page 134), played by the viola and cello, with statements of Theme Ic (Example 101, page 133), in the violins. After
two measures of the transition theme in octaves, the viola
and cello resume the rhythmic canon scheme in which it first
appeared. In measure 97 the instruments trade parts, the
violins taking up the transition theme and the viola and cello
playing Theme \textit{Ic}. From measure 104 to measure 112 Theme \textit{Ic}
is treated alone in a four-voice canon.

The final section of the development combines Theme
\textit{Ic} with Theme \textit{Ia} (Example 99, page 132). Beginning in
measure 112, the first segment of Theme \textit{Ic} is used canon-
ically along with Theme \textit{Ia} centered on \textit{E}. In measure 119
the second segment of Theme \textit{Ic} is worked over in a two-
voice canon at the interval of a semitone and at the dis-
tance of one beat.

Theme \textit{Ia} played in \textit{E} and \textit{F} (the artificial dominant
and the real dominant) simultaneously serves as a retrans-
sition beginning in measure 126. Theme \textit{Ib} (Example 100,
page 132) appears again just as it did at the end of the
exposition, only now it is inverted.

In the recapitulation the materials of the exposition
are restated inverted and in reverse order. Thus Theme \textit{II}
is the first to be heard. The stationary pedal tone in the
recapitulation is \textit{F} sharp, the upper neighbor of the dom-
inant, whereas in the exposition the pedal tone was \textit{A} the
lower neighbor of the tonic; the auxiliary pedal moves
downward chromatically from \textit{F} sharp to \textit{C} sharp.
At measure 147 the transition theme is restated, and it is also inverted. Here again the tonality shows a symmetry: in the exposition the transition theme is in C (a whole step above the tonic); in the recapitulation it is in A flat (a whole step below the tonic). Beginning in measure 160 the first theme-group is restated and all are inverted. Theme Ia appears on the tonic, B flat. Theme Ib is presented canonically and overlaps with Theme Ic.

The Coda begins in measure 177. The first part of the Coda deals with the opening figure of Theme Ic (Example 101, page 133). It is stated in octaves in all four instruments and then treated extensively in a four-voice mirror canon. The next section (from measure 191 to measure 210) is based on Theme Ia followed by another extensive canonic treatment of the opening figure of Theme Ic. The final section of the Coda uses Theme Ia, principally to reaffirm the tonic, B flat. The last three measures feature a stretto on the opening figure of Theme Ic, with a final appearance in contrary motion leading to the final cadence on B flat. (This was one of the first examples of Bartok's use of convergence and divergence to the final tonic, a device which he used often in later works.

The second movement, marked adagio molto, is in a simple three-part form, with an introduction and postlude. The introduction is primarily a contrast of ranges and
timbres of the instruments. Isolated trills and pairs of tones are spaced over a wide range. The first section proper begins in measure 10. It consists of a succession of sonorous and full chords—simple triads and seventh chords in chorale style. Above them, the first violin sings a peaceful, highly expressive melody.

EXAMPLE 105.

The middle portion of the movement has a hushed expectancy to it and is related to "night music" of the Quartet Number Four and other works. For the entire first half of this section (measure 26 to measure 35) there is a persistent tremolo on the low G of the second violin. The principal motive (Motive II) is presented against a series of pizzicato-and-arco-glissandi.

EXAMPLE 106.

The interval of the tritone (the semi-octave) is important in this section.

The second section of this central portion of the
movement begins in measure 35. It is a continuation of the preceding section with Motive II melodically broadened and presented in canonic imitation. The melodic interval of a fourth assumes great importance.

Beginning in measure 46 the first portion of the movement is restated in shortened form. The hesitant phrases of the first violin (Motive I, Example 105, page 138) are now reduced to single notes. The postlude, beginning in measure 50, repeats the material of the introduction.

The central movement is a scherzo with trio. Its tonal center is C sharp, and the mode is Dorian. What gives it its character are the Bulgarian rhythms. These rhythms occur frequently in the music of Bartok; their principal distinction is the division of the measure into asymmetrical groupings, which recur regularly. The last six pieces in Mikrokosmos are dances in Bulgarian rhythms, as are also Number 111 and Number 115; the Trio of the third movement of Contrasts is in a Bulgarian rhythm, with a signature of \( \frac{5+5}{8} \). The Concerto for Orchestra is strongly conditioned by Bulgarian rhythms, especially in the first and fourth movements. Here in the scherzo of the Quartet Number Five the meter signature is \( \frac{4+2+3}{8} \), changing in the Trio to \( \frac{3+2+2+3}{8} \). These metrical combinations seem complex to Western ears at first hearing, but, handled as simply as they are, the metrical groupings soon acquire a natural
The scherzo is ternary. The bulk of the interest lies in the treatment of the one-measure arpeggio theme (Theme Ia) with its one-measure "answer" (Theme Ib).

EXAMPLE 107.
The second part begins in measure 24 with Theme II, which is used in combination with Themes Ia and Ib.

EXAMPLE 108.
From measure 36 to measure 50 Theme II is condensed to a short two or three-note pattern. The first position is restated beginning in measure 50.

The Trio, played muted, has a ten-note ostinato in the first violin which lasts almost the entire sixty-five measures.

EXAMPLE 109.
Originally starting on F, the ostinato is transposed up by half-steps from time to time, until at the point of highest interest it is pitched a major third higher, at which time three of the instruments are playing the pattern, in inversion or in another transposed form. The climax is reached in measure 44, from which point the ostinato fades to the vanishing point in measure 65.

Superimposed on the ostinato, and in the same range, the viola plays very simple peasant-like melody.

EXAMPLE 110.

In the given meter, this melody has a free-flowing, improvised character. At measure 53 an augmented version of the arpeggio theme of the scherzo (Theme Ia, Example 107, page 140) appears in the cello, but the weird ostinato (Example 109, page 140) persists to the end of the Trio.

The da capo of the scherzo brings back the material of the first part with some slight changes. Themes Ia and Ib (Example 107, page 140) are restated both normally and inverted. Beginning in measure 30 Theme II is restated (both normally and inverted) together with Themes Ia and Ib. In measure 37 an altered version of Theme II is stated in a three-voice canon. Just as in the exposition, Theme II is
fragmented and in measure 41 the theme is represented by patterns of two or three notes. As the fragments of Theme II continue in the cello the three upper instruments play Theme Ia (Example 107, page 140) in parallel triads. This section comes to a close with Theme II modified to a length of one measure and appearing in mirror fashion with the inner instruments alternating with the outer instruments.

The Coda begins in measure 53. The first section (up to measure 67) is a four-voice canon on the one-measure version of Theme II. Theme Ib (Example 107, page 140) is the basis for the next short section, and, finally, Theme Ia (Example 107), stated both normally and inverted, brings the movement to an end.

The fourth movement, Andante, is simply a variant of the second movement. The fourth movement is ternary in form, and its tonal center is G (a third below the principal tonality of B flat). The introductory sections of both movements correspond, only here in the fourth movement the trills are written out; the glissando, notated before, is now indicated by a slanting line. The melodic material of this movement is also derivative.

Second movement: measure 31

Fourth movement: measure 43

EXAMPLE 111.
Another interesting comparison can be made between the rhythmic use of chords in measures 23 to 39 here and the chorale-like section in the second movement, measures 10 to 25.

EXAMPLE 112.
The introduction to the fourth movement, Andante, lasts through measure 22. The basic elements contained in it (corresponding to the introduction to the second movement) are bowed trills that are written out and pizzicato-glissandi. The first section of the movement begins in measure 23. It consists of a short, three-note melodic motive set against repeated chords (motive I, Example 112, page 143).

The second section of the movement is again divided into two parts, just as the corresponding section of the second movement. Beginning in measure 43, after one measure of introduction, motive II is presented canonically in the first violin and cello.

EXAMPLE 113.

The inner instruments accompany them with ingredients of "night music"—quasi-trills and quasi-glissandi. The second part of the second section begins in measure 64. Motive II is modified and accelerated and stated canonically by the violins over a florid, annotated-glissando accompaniment in the viola and cello.

The first section of the movement, in a highly
modified form, is restated beginning in measure 82. The principal item of recognition is the sustained chords in the violins. The viola and cello continue fragments of material from the previous section. The postlude, the last four measures of the movement, hints at the material of the introduction, condensing the first seven measures into four.

The Finale is related to the first movement, not so much formally as in melodic material. This movement is a combination sonata-rondo with elements of "arch form". There are two principal "themes" (as in the sonata allegro) which alternate (as in the rondo) with an important development section (as in the sonata allegro) with thematic material reappearing in the latter part of the movement in reverse order (as in the rondo or the "arch form").
The Finale begins with a thirteen-measure introduction on a four-note motive (motive \( g \)) which can be found in the Coda of the first movement (especially between measure 197 and measure 208).
EXAMPLE 115.

This four-note figure (motive a) has as its original sources Theme Ic and Theme II (Example 104, page 135).

EXAMPLE 116.

After the double-bar the main theme of the movement (Theme I) begins with repeated E's in the violins; it soon becomes apparent that Theme I is only a free inversion of Themes Ia and Ib of the first movement (Example 99, page 132 and Example 100, page 132).
Motive a from the introduction (Example 115, page 147) is now expanded to include five notes and to span a tritone (motive a'). The tritone is also significant in the melody as a whole, where B plays the role of artificial dominant for the tonic B flat. Motive b (Example 116, page 147) exhibits the Bartok characteristic of involution. Motive a' is used to connect the several repetitions of Theme I or fragments therefrom which are heard in octaves, in two-part canon and, finally, in four-part canon between measures 13 and 55.

An episode begins in measure 55 which consists of an elaboration of motive a'.
Beginning in measure 75 the episode is repeated with the parts inverted (the violins now play the material played formerly by the viola and cello and *vice versa*) and the melodic lines inverted intervallically as well.

A transition begins in measure 93 which is based on motive b of Example 117, page 148). The transition leads to a rhythmic figure which, after four measures, becomes an accompaniment for a repetition of Theme I (Example 117) inverted. During the course of this restatement there is a considerable amount of canonic development of motive a' and motive b.

The material of the introduction (Example 115, page 147) is restated beginning in measure 150. A second episode follows whose principal elements are derived from Theme I: motive a' and the interval of a minor second, here used to imply a leading tone-tonic relationship.

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**EXAMPLE 119.**
Beginning in measure 172 the notes of the minor second are separated by *arpeggios*.

EXAMPLE 120.

The device which begins in measure 183 is characteristically Bartokian: this interval of a minor second (which has just been exploited in two divergent ways) is now progressively enclosed within a minor third, a perfect fourth, a perfect fifth, and, finally, a major sixth encloses the entire complex. It is as if the original interval had turned itself inside out. The process is repeated a fourth higher and concludes with alternating sevenths.

This interval of a seventh (a second inverted) is seized upon and becomes the principal element of the next melodic idea (Theme II).

EXAMPLE 121.

Theme II is presented in canon beginning in the violins at measure 202. The idea marked \( \text{x} \) in Example 121 plays an important role in the canonic development. There is a
general rest in measure 249, after which Theme II is repeated with the idea marked $y$ in Example 121 becoming increasingly important. The presentation and development of Theme II culminate in measure 352 in a figure of sequential fourths.

The introduction is repeated and leads to the expected return of Theme I. Theme I is transformed into the subject of a vigorous fugato accompanied by col legno rhythms which emphasize the tonic.

![Fugato]

**EXAMPLE 122.**

The subject of the fugato (Example 122) shows its derivation from Themes $Ia$ and $Ib$ of the first movement (Example 99, page 132 and Example 100, page 132) even more clearly than did Theme I (Example 117, page 143) of this last movement. The fugal entries are successively on E, B flat, E, and B flat, thus emphasizing the basic tonal centers of the quartet. Underneath, in the cello, the same two notes form a drone bass.

There is a total of eight entries of the subject in the fugato, the last of which is inverted. This section concludes with a free canonic development (measure 430 to
measure 457).

The return of motive a of the introduction (Example 115, page 147) serves as a retransition. In measure 474 there is an anticipation of Theme II with its characteristic descending seventh. The recapitulation begins in measure 484 with Theme II (Example 121, page 150) being restated first. (The themes are restated in the recapitulation in reverse order just as they were in the first movement.) Theme II is greatly altered; the falling seventh, now played glissando, assumes the function of the whole theme.

The introductory material is repeated once again, beginning in measure 527. It is combined with the glissandi from the previous section. The recapitulation of Theme I begins in measure 546. It is stated almost entirely in canon and often at the interval of a tritone.

The transition based on motive b of Example 117 (page 148) which was heard in measure 93 is restated, beginning in measure 606. This transition leads to a restatement of the first episode (Example 118, page 148). The second episode follows immediately (beginning in measure 651). Again it features the interval of a minor second, especially in its arpeggiated form (as in measure 172, Example 120, page 150) and in its convoluted form (as in measure 183).

The progress of the movement is suddenly interrupted
by a very curious passage, beginning in measure 699. A whimsically distorted version of the first episode—feature motive \( a' \)—is interjected, giving the impression of an out-of-tune barrel organ. The motive is thus transmuted into a naive, banal tune in \( A \) major, with the viola providing an Alberti bass and the first violin plucking tonic and dominant triads. The extreme relaxation of the harmonic idiom is shocking. Shortly the first violin superimposes a modified version of the same tune now in \( B \) flat, making the passage bitonal.

The first episode resumes in its normal fashion, with a great deal of canonic imitation. After measure 747 motive \( a' \) is extended to a length of two or more measures.

The Coda begins in measure 781. The first section is based on motives \( a' \) and \( b \) of Theme I (Example 117, page 143). The second section (beginning in measure 803) is derived entirely from motives \( a \) and \( a' \), as in the introduction. The final cadence is on \( B \) flat and is reached by contrary motion as in the first movement, but through divergence rather than convergence.

VI. STRING QUARTET NUMBER SIX

The String Quartet Number Six, written in 1939, can in many ways be compared to the Opus 135 of Beethoven. In fact, the words of Sullivan in which he describes the Opus
might, with only slight modification be applied to the
Quartet Number Six of Bartok.

It ... makes a fitting end to his great series of
explorations. It is the work of a man who is funda-
mentally at peace. It is the peace of a man who has
known conflict, but whose conflicts are now reminis-
cent. 35

The Quartet is a work growing out of a feeling of
confidence and even playfulness. It is a warm song of
faith.

Bartok had always been interested in the old nine-
teenth-century problem of giving unity to the complete work;
he liked, in particular, to link up the finale with the first
movement. In the Quartet Number One the syncopated rhythm
of a thematic element in the first movement becomes impor-
tant in two themes in the finale; in the Quartet Number Two
the rising fourths which characterize the first theme of the
first movement cast their shadow telling on a thematic frag-
ment and the all-important cadential figure of the finale.
In the next three quartets the relationship between the first
movement and finale of each is more convincing and more
clear. In the third quartet Bartok even labels the last
section "Ricapitulazione della prima parte" in which the
materials of the Prima parte are freely re-used. The basic
motive presented in the first movement of the Quartet
Number Four is almost the sole source of thematic material

35 J. W. N. Sullivan, Beethoven: His Spiritual Devel-
for the final movement, and the endings of both movements are practically identical. In the Quartet Number Five the two outer movements also share melodic materials, the themes of the first movement being freely altered for use in the finale.

In the Quartet Number Six the idea of unification by establishing relations between movements is carried another step further. All four movements are connected by a recurrent theme which serves as an introduction to each movement (each time in a fuller texture and in a more expansive statement). In the first three movements it plays only a preludial part. In the finale, however, it dominates the whole movement. In addition two of the main themes of the first movement make a transitory appearance in the finale, thus continuing the usual Bartokian link between first and last movements.

Most of the familiar characteristics of Bartok's technical procedure reappear in the Quartet Number Six: for instance, when the march proper is repeated after the Trio, some of the material returns in free inversion. But everything sounds clearer, easier, less aggressively individual. The first movement is in absolutely classical sonata form with a return to a definite and clearly defined tonality: a first subject in D minor-major and a second subject in a contrasted key in the exposition, in a
reconciled key in the recapitulation. And there is more than one point where one is reminded of Beethoven's last quartets: at the beginning, for instance, directly after the molto theme appears in the viola, all four instruments in *pensante* octaves announce the real first subject of the movement in rhythmic augmentation—a passage precisely parallel to the opening of the Grosse Fuge—while the main theme of the march awakens echoes of the *alla marcia* in *Opus 132*. Such similarities are only superficial, musically of little importance, yet they are not entirely insignificant.

The viola, unaccompanied, opens the quartet with a mournful, thirteen-measure melody which is a *ritornel*, or "the motto" of the *Quartet*. It is not a folk song, but it is not so very distantly related to folk song. (Compare this "motto" theme with *Number 119* of Bartok's *Hungarian Folk Music*.

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**EXAMPLE 123.**

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This *ritornel* provides the chief thematic material for the quartet, including motive \( z \), with its chromatic neighboring tones; motive \( y \), the "consequent" of \( x \); motives \( z \) and \( z' \), featuring the typically Bartokian involution; motives \( a \) and \( b \) which are the principal thematic elements in the first movement.

After the *ritornel* has been stated by the solo viola, all four instruments break in to play the introduction in octaves. This introduction, already likened to the opening of the *Grosse Fuge* of Beethoven, begins tentatively, then states both motives of Theme I.

![Example 124](image)

Motive \( a \) is first stated in retrograde (with the note \( E \) flat necessarily written an octave higher for the violins). Motive \( a \) is next stated in its normal form and immediately repeated. Motive \( b \), whose last three notes are a retrograde inversion of motive \( a \), closes the introduction.

The first movement is a *sonata-allegro* with introduction. There are only two themes in the movement, the first of which appears at the *Vivace*, measure 24.
Theme I is announced by the first violin and then repeated a half-step higher by the second violin. (That Theme I also has a folk song ancestry can be seen by comparing it with Number 299 in Bartok's Hungarian Folk Music.) This theme, in its various manifestations—-inverted, fragmented, augmented, stretched interval relationships—provides the material for the first section (measures 24 to 80). At measure 31 Theme I (Example 125) is stated in free inversion. From measure 60 Theme I is extended and presented canonically. The transition to the second theme material begins in measure 68. It consists of the typical shortening of thematic material; the first violin plays motive \( \text{a} \) in augmentation while the cello has a four-note figure which represents all of Theme I.

At measure 81 the Theme II enters, un poco meno vivo. It consists of two figures of characteristically Hungarian rhythm—a trochee (\( \ddagger \ddagger \)) followed by an iamb (\( \ddagger \))

\[ \text{Periodically these figures are reversed.} \]

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37 Ibid., p. 289.
EXAMPLE 126.

The entire section is centered on C; the theme itself is derived from the following Hungarian scale and its resultant emphasis on the tritone.

EXAMPLE 127.

The closing section begins in measure 99 and consists mainly of motives X and Z from the Ritorne. There is a great deal of canonic imitation.

EXAMPLE 128.
A four-voice canon on motive 2 begins in measure 117. A two-voice canon on the chromatic neighboring-tone characteristic of motive 2 begins in measure 126.

The exposition ends quietly in F major. From measure 137 the cello signals the cadence by playing the descending form of the scale shown in Example 127, page 159, over which the other three instruments make references to the chromatic motive 2 and the diatonic Theme II.

EXAMPLE 129.

The development begins in measure 153 with the tentative, hesitant measures which form the introduction. Their appearance here gives the impression of a new beginning, in the tradition of the classical sonata, but the reappearance here is a tritone higher.

At measure 166 the cello and viola play the Theme I (Example 125, page 158) in octaves, while the violins, in unison, play a retrograde inversion of the first four notes of Theme I. In measure 170 the cello plays motive 2, now filled in with passing tones. The other instruments follow in canon, each playing a seventh higher than the previous instrument. This passage sets the "harmonic atmosphere" for
the next twenty measures. From measure 174 to 179 the cello
and viola play in parallel sevenths while the violins play
also in sevenths in a canonic inversion of the lower parts.

The second section of the development (beginning in
measure 180) features an ostinato which continues the exploi-
tation of the seventh. In measure 182 the viola plays the
second half of the first theme. It soon becomes apparent
that this ostinato is really the first half of the first
theme, here being used to introduce and at the same time to
support the second half. (If the leaps of a seventh are
reduced to seconds, the ostinato may also be related to the
whole-tone scheme of the first measures of Theme II—Example
126, page 159.) In measure 184 the second violin plays the
second half of Theme I (Example 125, page 153) in inversion.
The two instruments (second violin and viola) continue,
treating only the second half of the theme in imitation and
inverted. It is further fragmented so that only the first
four notes of the second half of Theme I are used.

The viola launches into a new ostinato (a rhythmic
ostinato in \( \frac{2}{4} \)) under which the cello plays a greatly
extended version of Theme I*. This theme is extended to a
length of twenty-one notes instead of the original nine and
covers a range of almost two octaves rather than the original
one octave.

The third section of the development begins in measure
222. Theme III (Example 126, page 159) is the principal
element of this section, although, beginning in measure 237 the Theme II materials are almost always preceded by the first half of Theme I.

EXAMPLE 130.

At measure 256 the motive marked in Example 130 is treated canonically in inversion by all four instruments. The intervals are altered and the motive is fragmented until all instruments come to rest in measure 267.

The retransition begins in measure 268. It is based primarily on Theme I along with extensive use of motive (Example 124, page 157). The recapitulation begins in measure 287. There are three statements of Theme I, each on the tonic and each in stretto. The transition to the return of Theme II features a pivoting on the third of the chord. The interval of a third was a characteristic of motive of Theme II (Example 126, page 159) as well as the inversion of the last two notes of Theme I.

Theme II is restated beginning in measure 312. It appears a half-step higher than originally, with a resulting emphasis on the leading tone of the original key. Theme II
is used in its normal state as well as inverted.

The recapitulation of the closing section begins in measure 332. The material is re-distributed, inverted, and appears on the dominant. The first violin and the cello have exchanged parts, and the second violin and the viola have exchanged parts. Again there is great emphasis on motives \( x \) and \( z \) with brief reference to Theme I.

The Coda (beginning in measure 363) is in the classical key of the subdominant. It reaffirms Theme I and then, in measure 371, there is a free inversion of Theme I very much like the appearance in measure 31. The movement trails away, softer and slower, to a close in D major.

The second movement begins with the Ritornel in a two-voice setting, the cello playing the melody against a counterpoint played by the other three instruments. This countermelody is doubled in three octaves, the tremolo in the inner two voices seeming to give it an eerie incandescence. The Ritornel melody itself is a fourth lower than it was before the first movement and is extended by one measure. Just before the double bar the second violin announces a new motive (motive \( f \)) which is the basis for the movement proper.
The second movement is a march. The form is typical; it consists of a three-part section plus a Trio with a return to the three-part section. The Marcia is dominated by a very strong, rhythmic idea (Theme I) whose relation to Example 131 can be seen immediately.

EXAMPLE 132.

Motive $f$ also bears a striking resemblance to the Verbunkos of Contrasts which Bartok had written the previous year. Theme I also contains motive $g$, a scale-wise figure, and motive $z$, the involuting figure from the Ritoro. Theme I is stated canonically. At measure 25 it is dashed to its smallest component—the leap of a third—motive $f'$.  

After several measures of teasing with the shifting accent of motive $f'$, the second section of the Marcia begins in measure 33. Theme I reappears briefly at the beginning, sometimes inverted and sometimes not. The principal element of this second section, however, is motive $g$. The end-figure of motive $g$ is used in quarter notes at the Resoluto in measure 43. The transition back to the first section is accomplished through the "thirds with shifting accents", or motive $f'$. 
The materials of the first part are freely re-used, beginning in measure 55. The viola and cello play motive $f$ (Example 132, page 164) canonically. The violins play "fanfare-like" material based on motive $g$, building up in rising fourths after measure 67. There is a descending line which leads to the final cadence.

The Trio is rhapsodic and somewhat erratic, with its melody high in the cello, accompanied by tremolos and strummed chords.

\[ \text{EXAMPLE 133.} \]

The Trio theme is based on motive $f^i$ of the Marcia (Example 132, page 164). At measure 94 it is laden with glissandi, and at measure 99 it is taken up by the first violin in a highly modified version which is later imitated by the cello. The Trio concludes with a "quasi-cadenza" for all four instruments based on motive $f$ (Example 131, page 163).

The Marcia is repeated but greatly modified. There is canonic imitation, with harmonics in the first violin, giving the upper part an eerie, "whistling" quality. Some of the material is inverted. Motive $f^i$ again leads to the second section, which begins in measure 138 with a three
voice canon on an extended version of motive $g$. The rest of the section gives great prominence to motive $g$. At the recapitulation of the Risoluto the upper instruments exchange parts with the lower instruments and the thematic material is inverted. The material of the transition returns in measure 159 (corresponding to the passage at measure 49) but this time it does not lead directly to a repeat of the first section. There is inserted a canonic work-out of motive $g$.

The first section of the Marcia is finally restated, meno mosso, at measure 174. Motive $f$ (Example 131, page 163) is the principal element, accompanied by trills and the rising fourths which characterized it in the original Marcia.

The descending passage returns, leading to the final cadence. The cadence is indeterminate, the violins holding $G$ sharp while the viola and cello pluck chords representing a dominant-ninth chord on $E$. The clue to this harmonic structure may be found in the measures which precede the cadence: motive $f$ is expanded by thirds to extend to a ninth—all of this being an amplification of the two superimposed thirds of the motive itself.

The third movement again begins with the Ritornel, now expanded to a three-part setting (the viola enters in the tenth measure, duplicating the first violin an octave lower). The Ritornel is also extended by an insertion
(from the middle of measure 7 to measure 14) which consists of a canonic work-out of motive x similar to the passage beginning at measure 99 in the first movement (Example 128, page 159). The theme now begins on B flat; it was first presented on G sharp and then on E flat.

The movement is called Burletta and is in the form of a Scherzo and Trio. The Scherzo is ternary. The first section begins with a jolly, comically skipping theme (Theme I).

![Scherzo theme](image)

**EXAMPLE 134.**

Motives h and i supply most of the material for the first section. Great use is also made of comic effects like glissandi and playing a quarter-tone out of tune. The second section begins in measure 33. The two principal motives (j and k) are derived from motives h and i.

![Second section](image)

**EXAMPLE 135.**
The parallel seconds of motive \( j \) come from the seconds of motive \( i \); the leap of a fourth of motive \( k \) is related to the first grace notes of motive \( h \), which also outline a fourth. The two motives, \( i \) and \( k \) are used alternately and in combination. The first part of the Scherzo is repeated, beginning in measure 60. Motive \( i \) precedes motive \( h \). The material is considerably shortened. In measure 63 there is an allusion to elements of the second part of the Scherzo.

The Trio begins in measure 70. Both its themes are derived from the themes of the first movement. Theme I of the first movement (Example 125, page 158).

\[\text{Theme I of 1st movement} \]

\[\text{Theme I in Trio of 3rd movement} \]

EXAMPLE 136.

The first violin is silent in the Trio until, in measure 78, it announces Theme II, which is related in rhythm and contour to Theme II of the first movement (Example 126, page 159). Again this version in the Trio is based on a free inversion of the original Theme II.
EXAMPLE 137.

From measure 82 to measure 96 these two themes are alternated in a very simple setting.

The Scherzo is recalled in measure 97 after a four-note figure which is almost a retrograde version of the figure which ended the Burletta the first time. The thematic material is severely altered and mostly played pizzicato to add to the humor and gaiety. Motives $h$ and $i$ (Example 134, page 167) alternate, with motive $i$ usually preceding motive $h$. The second section begins in measure 110 with great emphasis on motive $k$. In measure 131 begins a four-voice canon on motive $k$.

The Coda, which begins in measure 135, presents an alternation of Theme II of the Trio (Example 137, page 169) and motive $i$ (Example 134, page 167). After three appearances of those two fragments, motive $i$ (Example 135, page 167) holds forth until, in the final three measures, motive $i$ takes over again to conclude the movement.
The humor of both the *Marchia* and the *Burletta* is a bitter humor. There is no gentleness or playfulness but rather a cutting, savage satire.

The *Finale* consists almost entirely of the material contained in the *Ritornel*. The movement is a three-part form with *Coda*. The first section is devoted almost entirely to the first phrase of the *Ritornel* (Example 123, page 156). There are two statements of the phrase, presented in imitation, followed by various elaborations of motive $x$. From measure 7 motive $x$ is extended; beginning in measure 13 motive $x$ is inverted and extended. The section from measure 17 to measure 22 presents motive $x$ in a manner similar to that in measure 99 of the first movement (Example 128, page 159) and referred to again in measures 7 to 13 of the *Ritornel* which precedes the *Burletta*. The rest of the first part of this movement is devoted to repetitions of the first phrase of the *Ritornel* with certain tones periodically omitted. The closing figure of the first phrase is given great emphasis by repetition.

The second part of the movement (beginning in measure 31) is concerned primarily with the second phrase of the *Ritornel*. There is one complete statement of the second phrase, followed by three short references to the beginning of the third phrase.

The third part of the movement is extremely short--
it lasts only from measure 40 to measure 45. It consists of one statement of the first phrase of the Ritornel in augmentation, to be played slowly and colorlessly.

The Coda is rather extensive. The first section begins in measure 46 and consists of several statements of Theme I of the first movement (Example 125, page 158), molto tranquillo. The second section treats Theme II of the first movement (Example 126, page 159) in its original version, and then inverted and extended. It builds to a great climax but is broken off suddenly at measure 72, where the third section of the Coda begins. This last part is devoted entirely to the Ritornel. Motive x (Example 123, page 156) is sequenced several times and stated in imitation. Motive y (Example 123, page 156) is extended, during a passage which gives the impression of a tentative groping for the cadence. In measure 75 is a chord played tremolo, pianissimo, sul ponticello which serves the function of a Neapolitan six chord. In the next measure, a chord similarly played again emphasizes the neighboring tones of both tonic and dominant. In measure 78 the three upper instruments play C sharp and B flat, the neighbors of the dominant. The answer, in cello, viola and second violin is a tonic D minor triad with an added raised sixth scale step. The upper instruments next play C sharp and B flat, the neighbors of the tonic. The answer is another tonic triad,
but with an added seventh scale step. The last outburst of the instruments consists of F sharp and G sharp, the neighbors of the subdominant. The answer is in the viola, the first phrase of the Ritenue, ending on the lowered second scale step. The viola and cello play G sharp, lower neighbor of the dominant; the violins play E flat and A, the upper neighbor of the tonic plus the dominant. At last the violins settle on tonic and dominant, but the cello, after having played a tonic triad in D major seems to overshoot and leaves the uneasy feeling of ending on a tonic minor seventh in first inversion.

This fourth movement is pervaded by despair. Nowhere in all Bartok's music is there a movement so restrained and at the same time with such a powerful impact. It may not be irrelevant to remember that, at the time of writing this quartet, Bartok's mother had just died, and, in the midst of the threats of war, he was preparing to leave his homeland for nearly the last time.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The six string quartets of Bartok are the most important series of string quartets since Beethoven. Of course, there have not been many "series" of quartets since Beethoven at all; a great many composers--Franck, Debussy, Ravel, Verdi, Wolf, Sibelius, for instance--have written single quartets of great value and then failed to return to the medium. The three quartets of Brahms as well as Schumann's set of three hardly represent their composers at the height of their powers. One certainly cannot trace in them their composer's musical autobiographies. Several recent composers have written numerous quartets: Hindemith has written six and Milhaud has written eighteen. But one has the feeling that many of these are not fully mature works. Neither of these series demonstrates the growth process in the life of the composer, nor do the four quartets of Schoenberg, whose widely divergent character result from their chronological separation. It is rare to find, as we do in Bartok, a composer who has turned to the string quartet at every stage of his creative career.

There is no better way to approach the music of Bela Bartok, and certainly no better way of understanding the processes of growth that his music underwent, than through the string quartets. This was the only form which held Bartok's attention from his student days to the very end of his life; his first quartet, later
suppressed, was written (according to Kodaly) in 1899, when he was eighteen years old; and in December 1914, less than a year before his death, he was planning to write a new quartet, of which only a few motives were sketched. Between are the six quartets which mark not only successive culmination points in Bartok's career, but also in a sense the culmination of twentieth-century activity in the form.38

An analysis of modern musical technique is almost a rash venture. In our century nearly every major composer has evolved a language of his own; there is scarcely a common factor between them, and, in most cases, a much more slender connection with the past than in any previous revolutionary technique. Some composers have set forth their methods in theoretical writings, providing a framework for analysis of their works. Bartok left only his music, and so, if one is to deduce Bartok's methods, he must go directly to Bartok's music. If a style carries conviction, as does that of Bartok to an ever-growing audience, it must be as capable of analysis as any music of the past. Though the ultimate greatness in a Beethoven quartet is not to be grasped in terms of technical analysis, the latter is nevertheless a partial contribution to a complete understanding and a sufficiently valuable one to have brought forth volumes of material. So, too, the greatness of Bartok may not be understood through a mere analysis, but that analysis is a requisite to the understanding.

The string quartets of Bartok are his most representative works; they form the "backbone" of his entire output. The quartets show in a clear line the growth and development of the composer; he turned to the medium of the string quartet at every stage in his career. Bartok seems to express his most essential thoughts in his string quartets. It would be a colossal, but valuable, task to make a comprehensive comparison of the quartets with the rest of his works. The central position of the quartets would thus be more obvious. It would be seen that the quartets contain the germinal essence of the entire output of Bela Bartok.
A. BOOKS


B. PERIODICALS


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