Longing to Belong: Nationalism and Sentimentalism in the Second Violin Concertos of Bartók and Szymanowski

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What music might best generate a suitably amorous atmosphere for meeting a blind date? This is the question Woody Allen ponders in the movie *Play it again, Sam* (dir. Herbert Ross, 1972). He has two ideas: some jazz (Oscar Peterson) or Bartók's String Quartet No. 5. The joke depends upon Allen's desperation to impress his date and the reputation of Bartók's music as the antithesis of sentimental mood music, as music most unlikely to generate a connective, empathetic or romantic atmosphere (unless, perhaps, your date is a musicologist).[1] Bartók's anti-sentimental reputation is of long-standing: in 1921 Zoltán Kodály wrote that Bartók "knows all shades of life from tragic trembling to light playfulness but he does not know sentimentality, caressing, 'enchanting' softness."[2] But Bartók's relationship with sentimentalism is, at crucial times, ambiguous and shifting. It relates, in fascinating fashion, to his status as both national and modernist composer. This nexus of ideas opens up parallels with his Polish contemporary, Szymanowski, who also has an ambivalent relationship with the sentimental. The violin concertos that both composers completed in the 1930s exemplify comparable relationships between sentimentalism, nation and nationalism. Before exploring this comparison, however, I will briefly open

1 On Diane Keaton's advice he plays the Peterson (the specially-composed *Blues for Felix*), but at a volume which gives his date a headache.

2 "Béla Bartók", *La Revue musicale* (March 1921).

up some familiar and yet still recalcitrant binaries around which ideas of the national and sentimental have moved and intersected.

First, the rural/urban binary. This is a persistent feature in constructions of the contrast between authenticity and artifice. Notions of purity, simplicity, and primitivism, which contribute to claims of authenticity, are frequently attached to the rural. These are contrasted with the artificial, complex, technological and corrupt which were often attached to the modern urban experience. The differences in the kind of relationships which attached to the rural/urban binary can be reduced to the archetypal nature/culture divide which underpinned Tönnies's influential distinction between *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), between an organic community which was thought to prevail in an idealized rural environment and the mechanized and rational relationships of the city. These binaries and their associated values and anxieties have of course received voluminous critical scrutiny, seminally in Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City* (1973). They are crucial to both Bartók's hopes for the regenerative influence of peasant music on art music and to Szymanowski's valorization of Polish Góral music.[3]

The perceived contrast between urban complexity and pastoral simplicity is one which maps interestingly onto conceptions of the nation. In a recent study of Chopin, Halina Goldberg noted how the city is characterized as the place where economic and cultural memberships are lived complexly, while the nation is a space which can allow self-identification through a simpler basis of belonging.[4] In this way the concept of nation is comparable with Leo Marx's "sentimental" pastoral as a home for certain forms of ideal community, a longed-for place of security and sharing.[5]

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3 For a recent discussion of these issues, which includes Bartók but not Szymanowski, see Joshua Walden, *Sounding Authentic: The Rural Miniature and Musical Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

4 Halina Goldberg, "Nationalizing the *Kujawiak* and Constructions of Nostalgia in Chopin's Mazurkas", *19th-century music* 39 (2016), 223–247, at 235.

5 Leo Marx famously distinguished between what he called "complex" and "sentimental" types of pastoral. The first is a "hard" pastoral which interrogates the problematic relationship with the city, the softer second is a type of escape from the city into an Arcadian nostalgic alternative; *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

Of course the urban/rural boundary is a shifting one. During processes of expanding industrialization the urban imperils the rural. When a city becomes a metropolis it engulfs what lies at its edge. The connectivity of the pastoral that is threatened by this urban development becomes a sentimentalized and idealized alternative to the quickened but weakened connectivity of the metropolis, the disorientating experience famously analysed at the beginning of the twentieth century by Georg Simmel.[6] In this way, as Jessica Burstein notes, sentimentalism becomes linked to anxieties over the urban experience.[7] For sentimentalism, in the definition in which I'm investing, is a yearning for emotional connection, to embrace, to share (often through sympathetic response to suffering) and belong. Sentimentalism is centripetal; sentimental bodies move around a shared centre or point of assumed common origin. In a striking turn to musical metaphor Burstein calls the urban experience an "atonal" mode of negotiating surroundings, one in which a sense of centre is lost; the implied sentimental, pastoral alternative is the connectivity of tonality, the homeward pull of cadence, or the supposed authenticity of modality.

This is a concept of authenticity which "builds a refuge of meaning within the bourgeois romantic critique of industrial society."[8] Such yearning for authenticity drives the forces of "appropriation", the desire for community and "continuity"; traditions are claimed or invented to validate contemporary practice. In the Pan-European folk-aestheticist movement of the early twentieth century claims for the authenticity of the "folk" are built against the perceived fakery of urban commercial music. But this was a bourgeois construction, its materials always mediated, its authenticity ideological.[9] For some, of course, a specifically urban identity was modern and attractive—the world of street cafés was, after all, a favoured milieu for avant-gardists, many of whom proclaimed that

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6 Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903), in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), 409–424.

7 Jessica Burstein, "A few words about Dubuque: Modernism, Sentimentalism and the Blasé," *American Literary History* 14 (2002), 227–254, at 244.

8 Allan Moore, "Authenticity as Authentication," *Popular Music* 21 (2012), 209–223, at 215–216.

9 Ibidem, 211.

being metropolitan and cosmopolitan was more important than national identity.[10] But both Bartók and Szymanowski had problematic views or experiences of the city, as demonstrated by the former's *The Miraculous Mandarin* (1924) which depicts the metropolis as dirty and decadent,[11] and Szymanowski's contemporaneous bewilderment in New York during his visits there in early 1920s. For pastoralists such as Bartók and Szymanowski there was a fretful concern to recall and preserve an imperilled rural life. In such a mind-set "every aspect of peasant ... life, from tools to architecture to dialect to 'being' itself in the form of 'the character', becomes ... a potential souvenir. And the impulse of such souvenirs is to simultaneously transform nature into art as they mourn the loss of 'pure nature' at a point of origin." The souvenir, for example a recalled or recorded folksong, is "metonymic, a sample"; in these composer's pastoral-national works it is "supplemented by a narrative discourse ... which articulates the play of desire." This desire is a longing to belong in which the "referent of the souvenir is the authentic."[12]

In Williams's phrase the pastoral is a "myth functioning as a memory."[13] Of course this is all very nostalgic. If the "prevailing motif of nostalgia is the erasure of the gap between nature and culture" then nostalgia is always ideological and its project always incomplete, always generative of desire, of longing, because it is Utopian, its goal impossible.[14] When this longing brings individuals together through empathy it develops a "collective dimension."[15] The nostalgic longing to belong is a key sentimental

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10 See Philip V. Bohlman, *Focus: Music, Nationalism, and the Making of the New Europe*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 41 and 238 on the cosmopolitan city and its centralising role in the Habsburg Empire. For an excellent collection of essays on cosmopolitanism see those gathered in *The Musical Quarterly* 99 (2016), 135–279.

11 See Stephen Downes, "Eros in the Metropolis: Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin*," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 125 (2000), 41–61.

12 Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 136–143.

13 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 43.

14 Stewart, *On Longing*, 23.

15 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii, xviii. Boym makes a distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia; the former is

aspect of bourgeois nationalism in which "sentimental rhetoric is mobilized to describe" the supposed "timeless psychic unity of citizens possessing a national identity"; "sentimental culture" invokes a "community of individuals sanctified by recognising the authority of true feeling."[16] So we can see that ideas of the pastoral, the folk and the nation become so strongly attached in large part because they share this sentimental dimension.

Recalling Woody Allen's joke and Kodály's influential characterization we may well, however, remain sceptical about the idea of a sentimental side to Bartók. As is well known, for Bartók, the "peasant music" of rural regions was, by contrast with the commercial concoctions of urban popular music or the folkish tone of the romantics, "natural" and an "absolute artistic perfection."[17] In the late 1920s this image of peasant music incorporated what Bartók described as its "anti-sentimental" quality. He explains this by contrasting the sentimentalism of romantic uses of folk music in the 19th century with modern primitivism. Anti-sentimentalism is a term he prefers as an alternative to "objectivity" because he complained of the "dryness" characteristic of objective art. His key phrase, peasant music's "lack of sentimentality" should not be taken as espousing a lack of expression. Bartók admired simplicity and directness but also powerful expressive, subjective forces.[18]

Bartók identified sentimentalism and anti-sentimentalism in specific musical details. He heard the sentimental in the expression of romantic

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a reconstruction of tradition, or an attempt to do this; the latter thrives in the longing itself, delaying the homecoming. These two forms of nostalgia, she argues, may overlap in their frames of reference, "but they do not coincide in their narratives and plots of identity" they may "use the same triggers of memory and symbols … but tell different stories." Modern nostalgia is a "mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world." (8, 49).

16 Laura Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 21, 34.

17 Béla Bartók, *Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 320–30. See also James Bennett, "Béla Bartók's Evolutionary Model of Folk Music," *twentieth-century music* 13 (2016), 291–320.

18 László Vikárius, "Bartók and the Ideal of a 'Sentimentalitäts-Mangel'," *International Journal of Musicology* 9 (2000), 197–242.

yearning focussed on the leading note. This could be countered by the consonant lower seventh of peasant song modality. László Vikárius has suggested that Bartók's avoidance of leading notes in his own music can be heard as a "deliberate act of deprivation" by a composer steeped in but seeking escape from the romantic tradition, a kind of "ascetic self-mutilation." Early works such as the *Elegy* Op. 8 (1908–1909) and especially the First Violin Concerto (1907–1908) are saturated with leading-note sentimentalism, but these are in strong sense confessional products of a specific autobiographical period of eroticism and loss around the troubled relationship with Stefi Geyer. In a famous letter to Geyer he identified her with the harmonic richness of leading notes combined with "Hungarian" rhythms.[19] Bartók's subsequent eschewal of this sentimental style is partly because of these intense personal associations. But in the Second Violin Concerto, composed in the foreboding year of 1938, Bartók turns to a lush lyricism in which leading note expressivity has a central role. The motivations for this return of a sentimental idiom lie in a combination of public and private circumstance.

Our understanding of the meaning of this turn has been greatly refined by the work of David Schneider and Lynn Hooker. Bartók's fiftieth birthday coincided with a "sense of rejection" by his country. His reputation abroad as Hungary's most important composer was secure, but at home his status was that of an artist recognised by the international elite rather than a national public. Bartók stopped giving concerts in Hungary in 1930 and did not perform his own works there again until 1937. He withdrew into his folk music research, for which work the government, keen to push the idea of Hungary's cultural stature, provided significant support. In the 1936–1937 season, however, the atmosphere began to change; he resumed concert performances of his own works with his

19 Letter of September 1907; in Béla Bartók, *Letters*, collected, selected, edited and annotated by János Demény, transl. Péter Balabán and István Farkas, revised Elisabeth West and Colin Mason (London: Faber, 1971), 87. I discuss this letter and the Geyer works in "'She Dies': Trauma and erotic elegy in Bartók's pre-First World War music," in *The Muse as Eros: Music, Erotic Fantasy and Male Creativity in the Romantic and Modern Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 147–167.

post-Lisztian *Rhapsody* Op. 1, a crowd pleaser in his early style. Schneider comments: "now that Bartók had evidence of sympathy and support from a greater number of Hungarians, he seems to have been moved to return the favour by adopting a more congenial manner in communicating with them." The Violin Concerto was conceived during that 1936–1937 season and completed by the end of 1938. Its 1939 world premiere was in Amsterdam: Dutch critics noted the softer, more approachable style with some unease, as a sign of compromise; the critic of the Amsterdam *Telegraaf* (L.M.G. Arntzenius, 24 March 1939) wrote that the concerto "strives to please" and that "Nine times out of ten this kind of pleasing is the sign of the composer's weakness."[20] This Dutch critic is clearly no sentimentalist.

The accessibility of the concerto, however, was part of Bartók's desire for reconciliation and reconnection with the domestic national audience and for expressing mutual sympathetic union in difficult times as war approached in the late 30s (sadly, it was not performed in Budapest until 1944). As Schneider notes, the concerto is "highly referential, hence multivalent," a "complex web of motivic relationships and topical allusions"—including a return of the *verbunkos* style long associated with the previously discredited gypsy idiom, in a work which does not actually quote folk melodies, as part of a particular pastoralism. The concerto is a blending of late nineteenth century and more recent styles.[21] Schneider identifies a "culmination point" towards the end of the first movement, a moment which summarizes and surpasses all that has preceded (see Example 1).

Bartók withholds the return of the second section of his theme for this section and especially potently holds back the leading note until the final beat of bar 363; this culmination point is about giving what has been previously withheld and also of bringing together, as it unites two parts of the primary theme in superimposition. With the harp accompanying in full "sensual" mode this moment marks a new-found (or re-found) inclination

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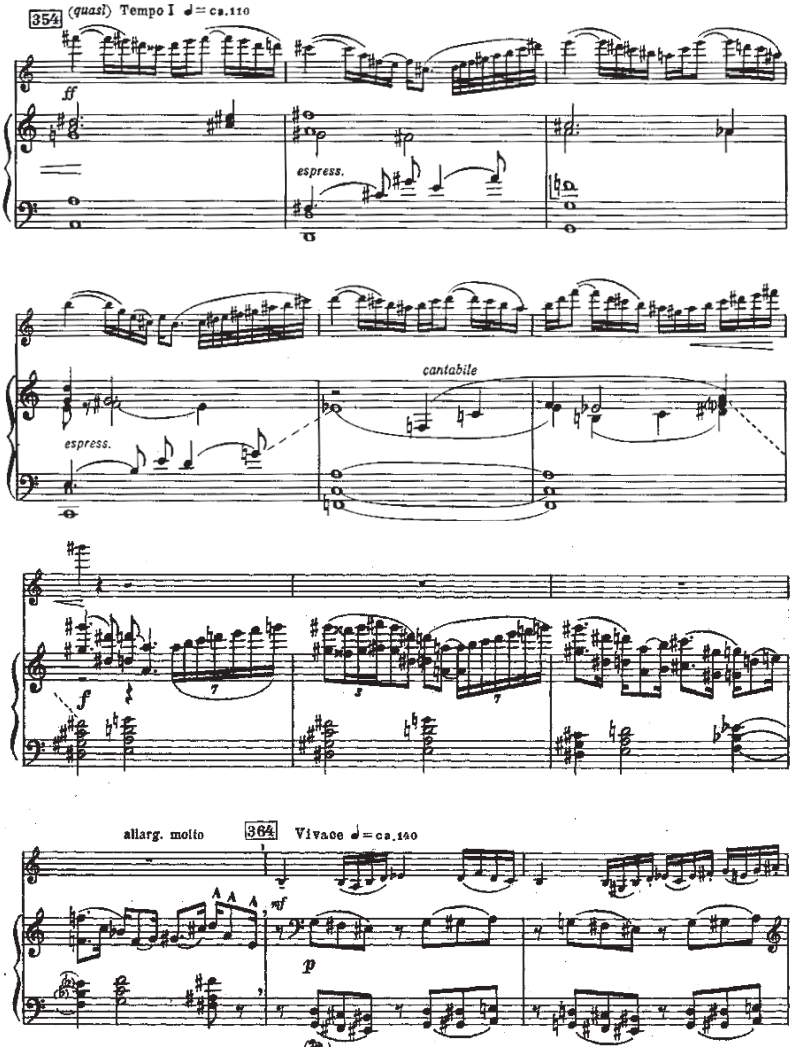
20 David E. Schneider, *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 225–231; see also Lynn M. Hooker, *Redefining Hungarian Music from Liszt to Bartók* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 251.

21 Schneider, 231–232, 240.

Example 1: Béla Bartók, Violin Concerto No. 2, b. 354–365



to appeal directly and unashamedly to sentimental emotions of release and embrace. When combined with the allusions to romantic idioms, furthermore, "even as the composer builds the culmination point on an 'objective' element of peasant music ... he revels in the Romantic sentimentality of the

national tradition of nineteenth-century Hungarian art music." [22] Perhaps even Woody Allen might seduce his date with this sequence. The complexity of this moment is, however, heightened in that in the orchestral cadence which immediately follows the move to the tonic is strongly pulled by the use of "modern" fourth chords, and the single pitch tonic B at bar 364 is approached through descending sequence of melodic fourths.

The allusion to earlier styles raises questions: Is this different from the romantic versions Bartók previously seemed to have resolutely dismissed? Is this some kind of meta-sentimentalism? Is it ironized, parodied, distanced? In this instance, in spite of the modern fourth-based harmony of the orchestral cadence, I find irony hard to hear. Hooker suggests a sense of broader national acceptance may have given Bartók the "emotional and intellectual breathing room to accept a creative re- or mis-reading of 'Gypsy style'." Furthermore, Hooker cautions us over taking Bartók's claims at face value about relying on "pure sources" and not "artificial Hungarian styles." Rather, the latter is repeatedly reinterpreted and retained. [23] It is also not insignificant that 1936, the year before the concerto was begun, marked the 125th anniversary of the death of Liszt, an event which seems to provoke a rethink from Bartók. Bartók's Liszt essay of that year is more generous than the essay he published on Liszt's birth centenary of 1911. But while Liszt is now embraced as a modernist, as is Liszt's "optimism" expressed in his magnificent Verklärung-like codas, the sentimental aspect of his style is still too much for Bartók. [24] In the 1911 Liszt essay, which dates from the years when Bartók was discarding his own sentimental style of the works of 1907–1909, he identifies Liszt's "sentimentality," a major element in what he calls the unfortunate "trivial" aspect of his music, with the influence of Chopin. [25] Chopin's music is further criticised in the 1921 essay on "The relation of folk song to the development of the Art music of our time": Chopin's misfortune, according to Bartók, was to have had no exposure to

22 Ibidem, 243–245.

23 Hooker, *Redefining Hungarian Music*, 216, 257.

24 Bartók, *Essays*, 504.

25 Ibidem, 451–452.

"genuine peasant music," and Chopin's music is described as the "imperfect" outcome of a mixture of "exoticism" and "banality." [26]

Bartók's comments on Chopin were unlikely to go down well in Poland. They were a major stimulus for Szymanowski's first published statement on folk music, "The Ethnic Question in Relation to Contemporary Music" (1925). [27] The authenticity of the "folk" tone and materials of Chopin's music, the "mythological" marker of his Polishness, [28] was challenged by Bartók's identification of its source as "popular art songs" which had been "appropriated" by peasant musicians performing for money in towns. But while Szymanowski's understanding of Chopin (inevitably) departs from Bartók's, his views on folk music accord in many ways with those of his Hungarian contemporary. He writes that "folk-art clearly reveals the deepest primordial character of a given people in the sphere of aesthetics." [29] Looking back over the interaction of "art" and "folk" music he describes how "authentic 'folk' elements ... began to intrude increasingly strongly upon 'cultured,' academic music in the form of an 'exotic' style" in an "artificial assimilation" or "seasoning." (His example is Dvořák's *New World Symphony*). Despite its "artificiality" Szymanowski is not wholly against this "compromise 'folksy' academic idiom." He considers it to be an important "bridge," a breaking into new, potentially highly fertile ground. The parallels with Bartók are especially clear when Szymanowski claims that the music of the folk is so powerful because it appears "fixed and unchanging, transcending the limits of history and being the most direct expression of the spirit of a race." [30] The revitalizing potential of this

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26 Ibidem, 322–323.

27 "Zagadnienie 'ludowości' w stosunku do muzyki współczesnej," *Muzyka* 10 (October 1925), 8–13.

28 On Chopin and the "constructed" myth of his folk authenticity see Barbara Milewski, "Chopin's Mazurkas and the Myth of the Folk," *19th-century music* 23 (1999), 113–135. Milewski concludes that "like so many of his musical compatriots, [Chopin] was not interested in recovering rural truths, but in bringing Poles of the urban upper classes a little bit closer to a highly constructed and desirable idea of themselves."

29 "The Ethnic Question in Relation to Contemporary Music," Transl. in *Szymanowski on Music*, ed. and transl. Alistair Wightman (London: Toccata Press, 1999), 126–135, at 128.

30 On race (and anti-Semitism) in Szymanowski's writings on Chopin see Maja Trochimczyk, "Chopin and the 'Polish Race': On National Ideologies and the Chopin Reception,"

resource is strongly felt and Chopin is raised a "dazzling glimpse" of the creative force which leads to perfect, universally significant artistic forms. By contrast with Liszt, whose "Hungarianisms" Szymanowski dismisses as exoticism, Chopin's "Polishness" is deep-seated, manifest especially powerfully in works with no overt "folk references," at the abstract, or absolute level of form and expression.

Through the late 1920s and early 30s Szymanowski wrote a number of essays which share the theme of counterpointing folk music with the sentimentalism he disparages in romanticism and its epigones. His anti--sentimental stance on folk music was highly indebted to the musicologist Adolf Chybiński, who in 1925 sought to distinguish folk melodies of the Polish mountain region from the "mannerist" emphasis on "sadness for sadness's sake," from the "easy sentimentalism," the superficial "tearful style" embodied in the misused cliché of the augmented second in romantic versions of folk melodies:

> The melodies of Podhale have a character that is, so to speak, optimistic. They are free from the overused symbols of sadness for sadness' sake, which have simply become a mannerism in the majority of Polish songs. One of the accessories of this easy 'sentimentalism' is the augmented second, used stereotypically, and alongside it certain perfunctory turns of phrase, which are in no way utilised in Polish folksong. Admittedly, many mazurkas leave nothing to be desired in regards to their colourful content. However, the point is not this, but only that persistent yet often superficial 'tearful style,' which has become a mannerism. The melodies of Podhale are the antithesis of this trend, or this mannerism. It can be no surprise that in a land of free spirits, and those which have almost always been free, that these kinds of melodies, and not others, have appeared, full of affirmation, and not negation. [31]

In the essay "On Góral Music" (*Muzyka* 1, 1930) Szymanowski similarly complained about the "needlessly 'minorised' somewhat sentimental" versions of folk songs in the nineteenth century transcriptions by Kolberg

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in *The Age of Chopin: Interdisciplinary Inquiries*, ed. Halina Goldberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), at 300–304.

31 Adolf Chybiński, "Mazurek Redivivus," *Przegląd Muzyczny* 4 (1925), 6–11. Transl. William Hughes.

and Kleczyński.[32] This is comparable with Bartók's disdain for those who infused folk melodies with yearning leading notes. In Polish Góral Highland music he heard an "immediacy of expression" combining with formal clarity to ensure a "simple, direct beauty," a particularly powerful union of "vigour and directness" in improvisation with the "desire for and pursuit of absolute formal perfection." He saw such things as an urgent counter to the "exaggerated sentimentality" and neglect of form with which he charged nineteenth-century Romanticism.[33]

Szymanowski, like Bartók, knew what it felt like to be misunderstood, marginalised or just plain ignored by his own countrymen. On his return to Warsaw in the early 1920s his music met with critical opprobrium and public indifference. Góral folk music became attractive as another creative stimulant but it was also one which offered an idiom for connecting with the nation. During the summer of 1932 Szymanowski's rapidly sketched his Second Violin Concerto (within four weeks according to the composer). The full score was completed in the autumn of 1933.[34] The concerto, in-

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32 Bohlman writes on the nineteenth century editions of folk songs as a "unified simulacra of the nation itself." "Predicated on some kind of stylistic and linguistic unity, the anthology of national songs possessed some of the same properties of collective cohesion as the nation whose name they bore." National folk-song collections appear at critical moments in national history and articulate them, when the nation is contested, imperilled or redefined; such collecting is often done in borderlands. *Focus: Music, Nationalism*, 17, 31, 69. In his "Foreword" to Stanisław Mierczyński's *Muzyka Podhala* (1930) Szymanowski wrote: "Folk song, and even an overwhelming number of 'plains' dance melodies, is soaked in this lyricism, or in its immediate reflection rather, and represents a kind of uninterrupted line, an unfinished film, throwing light on the sentimental life of peasants from within. Our own sentimentalism is beguiled by 'folk song', we wallow in its primitive lyricism, are affected by its own emotions, and most of all, we neglect to place any kind of critical demands in relation to our own 'civilized' concept of musical art." Transl. William Hughes.

33 In "Romantyzm w dobie współczesnej" (*Muzyka* 7/9, 1928, 132–37) Szymanowski stated: "we are indebted to these people only for their unbearable 'emotional' verbiage, their pathetic sentimentality, the naïve 'immediacy' of the connections they make between dull, personal experience and musical 'expression,' the dilettante neglect of form in favour of 'ideological' substance, the lack of heed paid to music's self-sufficiency, histrionic gestures which carefully conceal inner emptiness and musical worthlessness, plus a hundred and one other grievous faults which today I would rather not mention." See "Romanticism in the Contemporary Era," transl. in *Szymanowski on Music*, 148. It's a damning verdict!

34 Kochański returned to Poland to play the concerto in Warsaw in October 1933, as preparation for the official premiere, planned for New York the following year. Kochański was,

cluding the melodic employment of the Góral scale with raised fourth and flattened seventh, is his final tribute to Polish Highland culture (in 1934 he confessed to being "bored by folklore"). It might seem unexpected, given his published views on folk song, then, that the composer privately described the new concerto as "horribly sentimental." "I am almost ashamed of myself!!" he exclaimed.

We might hear this sentimentalism in the melancholic tone of the opening, which has been compared to a lullaby, expressive perhaps of the wish to return to the embrace of the mother (or mother-land). But it is also palpable in a passage comparable with the culminating in Bartók's concerto. This is what Alistair Wightman calls the concerto's "turning point" where "contrapuntal complexities" are "provoked by the attempt to integrate ... diametrically opposed materials": namely, the "saturated lyricism" of a "death wish lullaby," with its modal flat seventh, with "life-asserting" stylizations of highland music and "upwards-resolving appoggiaturas" [35] (see Example 2). The passage is a complex chromatic prolongation of a modally mixed E, the dominant of the concerto home tonality, A. During this harmonic field there are multiple notions of return and embrace: the double layer of quotation, from within the work (the cyclic return of the primary theme of the first movement) and from "outside" (the Góral idiom, as marker of folk music [36]) are brought under the centripetal force of bringing together pastness and presentness, ancient and modern, home and

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however, in serious ill-health and he played the concerto seated and at enormous physical cost. He died in New York three months later. The concerto is dedicated "À la mémoire du Grand Musicien, mon cher et inoubliable Ami, Paul Kochański" and for Szymanowski the work would always be haunted by the death of his great friend and collaborator.

35 Alistair Wightman, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Work* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 382–383.

36 Vikárius writes that folk song functions as an object to be "found" or "discovered"; and preserves some kind of "quotation" quality no matter if transformed as it is a reference to an "outer world"; "Bartók and the Ideal of a 'Sentimentalitäts-Mangel'," 240. For Stewart, the "privileging of origin", of "original" context, is particularly manifest in the ambivalent status of the quotation, for the quotation lends both integrity and limit to the utterance by means of its "marks"; it speaks of "history and tradition" but is severed from its origin that which granted it "authenticity". "Once quoted, the utterance enters the arena of social conflict: it is manipulatable ... it is no longer the possession of its author; it has only the authority of use ... what stands outside the quotation marks is seen as spontaneous and original." Stewart, *On Longing*, 19.

memory. All this is suffused by the desire to connect through the leading note as the passage builds to, in effect, an interrupted cadence, with the violin soaring to a B–C leading note climax of the submediant C major harmony at fig 51.

Tellingly, in 1929 Szymanowski admitted that he was "fundamentally late-romantic." After the composer's death in 1937 many reflections by Polish critics made this characterization (Mateusz Gliński, [37] Konstanty Regamey, [38] and after the war by Zofia Lissa). I think they were right. Furthermore, Szymanowski was a romantic who could, at times, be as sentimental as the best of them. Was Bartók romantic? This may seem to be as doubtful as calling him sentimental. But as Matthew Gelbart has pointed out, in Bartók's "method for turning folk artefacts from 'tradition' into material for aesthetic art": "all of the authority over 'authenticity'—now lies with the individual artist"; in this way Bartók was guided by romantic principles of genius, subjectivity and originality in that he gives superiority to those composers whose inward assimilation of folk music is so complete that it becomes an essential element of their "mother tongue," more than simply quoting, or fabricating a folk-like tone. [39] More widely, as Matthew Riley and Anthony D. Smith, wrote: "Despite his anti-romantic rhetoric ... Bartók's appropriation of folk music ultimately reveals a Romantic agenda

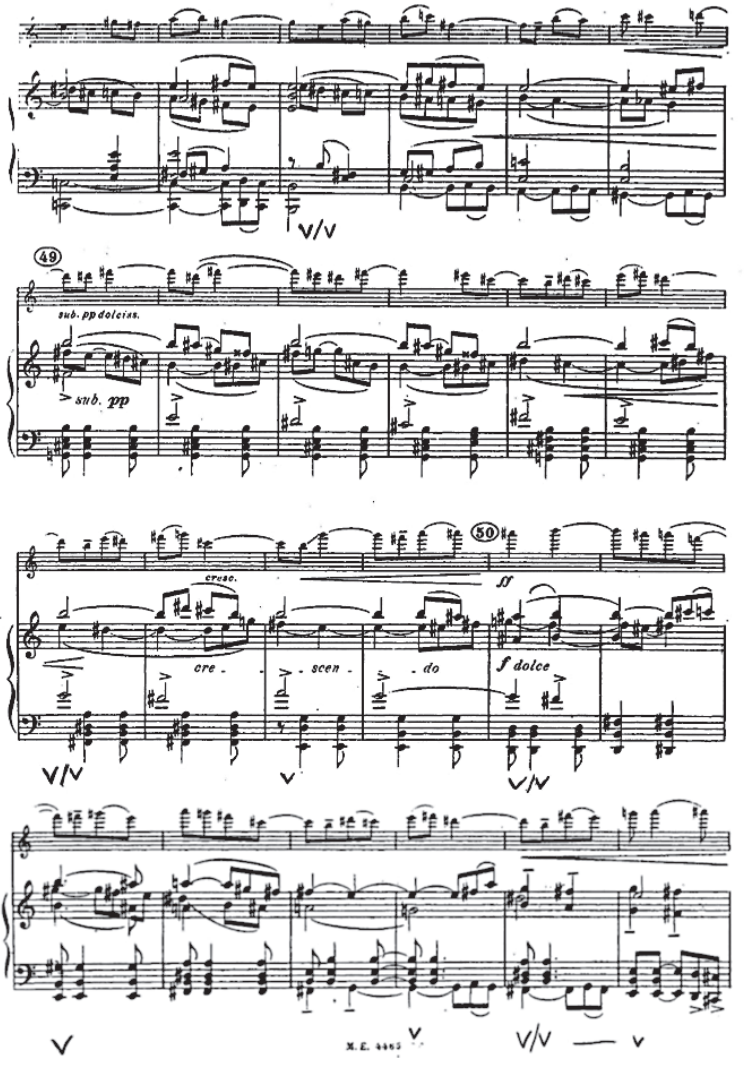
37 "Most often, a lyricism springs from Szymanowski music, which has the same characteristics that affect us so deeply in Chopins's music; a fluid of the same arch-Polish, contemplative pensiveness (also typical of various other Slavic nations) oozes out from Szymanowski's Preludes, Variations and the First Sonata, as does the very same 'żal' [grief] in Chopin's music, both of which to this day throughout almost all of Europe are the symbols of a Polish national style in music. As far as the fundamental tone of the music is concerned, Szymanowski's lyricism has nothing of the sentimental wailings of Chopin's epigones." See "Twórczość kompozytorska Karola Szymanowskiego. Ideały, styl, technika," *Muzyka* 4–5 (1937), 119–130. Transl. William Hughes.

38 In "Stanowisko Szymanowskiego w muzyce europejskiej," *Ateneum* 2 (1938) Regamey writes on Szymanowski as leader of a return to romanticism (of this trend he cites Berg and Markevitch, but not, perhaps unsurprisingly, Bartók) as paradigm of a "progressive modernist romanticism", based on heightened expressive and formal cohesion, in other words to save romanticism from two of its Achille's Heels—the imbalance between form and content and the tendency to sentimentalism. Transl. William Hughes.

39 *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music". Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 218, 220–221; B. Bartók, *Essays*, 343.

more than a nationalist one in his alienation from urban society and search for expressive authenticity."[40]

Example 2: Karol Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2



40 *Nation and Classical Music: From Handel to Copland* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), 82.

A final unstable binary: national or nationalist?

"Nationalists are supremely sentimental"; so declared Michael Ignatieff, writing as the Balkans were plunged into an ethnic nightmare in the early 1990s. The "latent purpose of such sentimentalism" [the sniper humming nostalgic songs] "is to imply that one is in the grip of a love greater than reason, stronger than the will, a love akin to fate and destiny." Without national belonging, says the nationalists, all other forms of belonging (family, friends, or colleagues) are insecure. Of nationalist art Ignatieff is condemning:

> There is no nationalist art that is not kitsch, no patriotic creation that does not pantomime emotional sincerity. Why? Perhaps no art that is not personal can ever be genuinely sincere, and nationalist art, by definition, cannot be personal. Perhaps also a nationalist art cannot invent the new. It is chained to available tradition, or, failing that, chained to kitsch. [41]

But sentimentalism is not, of course, the sole property of the nationalist. The romantic sentimentalism of our two concertos resists being "nationalist" in Ignatieff's terms because it is personal, and complex, and hence art, not kitsch. The music is also not merely or solely sentimental: those passages in examples 1 and 2 can also be heard as ecstatic, even erotic. But both concertos undeniably relate to concepts of nation. And here we can usefully invoke Philip Bohlman's distinction between national and nationalist. The nationalist, driven by a sense of superiority and chauvinism, seeks to secure and bolster borders, to rescue the nation for history in the places where it is most contested. Nationalism is antagonistic to cosmopolitism and Universalism. Its rhetoric differs from "national" music. [42] Nationalists are isolationists; artists like Bartók and Szymanowski value and respect the nation but also celebrate, for example, the plurality and ethnic mixing of the Carpathian region, which would represent a problem or worse, a battleground for nationalists. But we must beware of bolstering simplistic binaries. As Bohlman cautions, nationalism is always in shift, it is not monolithic,

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41 *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (London: Vintage, 1994), 6, 53.

42 Ph.V. Bohlman, *Focus: Music, Nationalism*, 58, 60, 85–89, 91, 161.

and music's malleability makes the potential for hearing nation and nationalism vast, it can both mark borders and broach them; national and nationalist music can blur and overlap. [43]

We might conclude by dismantling Ignatieff's one-to-one mapping of nationalist and patriotism and say that Bartók and Szymanowski, while undoubtedly patriots, are not "nationalist" composers in Bohlman's definition. [44] But they are at important moments sentimentalists, and this is what they share with nationalists. Where they differ from nationalists is in their belief in the original contribution of individual artists to Universal art—in the contribution, indeed potential unity of all traditions, whether in Szymanowski's vision of the Persian-Slavonic, or Bartók's of the Arabic-Slavonic. Szymanowski abhorred what he called the "narrow-minded and egoistic nationalism" which he saw emerging out of the ashes of the First World War. His response was to place hope in a "Paneuropeanism" which would be based upon "the gathering together of the best individuals around the greatest conquests of a distinctive, spiritual culture." [45] This is a community in which individuality is not repressed in the service of mass uniformity and not dependent upon self-preservation through isolation behind a defensive nationalist shield. [46] This was the Pan-Europe envisaged

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43 Ibidem, xxv, 5, 58.

44 On the distinctions between patriotism and nationalism see also Carlo Caballero, "Patriotism or Nationalism? Fauré and the Great War," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52 (1999), 593–625. My thanks to Barbara Kelly for this reference.

45 Szymanowski, *Efebos* (1917); in *Karol Szymanowski: Pisma literackie* (*Pisma*, tom 2), ed. Teresa Chylińska (Kraków: PWM, 1989), 128.

46 "Paneuropeanism is an evolutionary symptom: unheard of refinement of the culture of some individuals, increasing sensitivity on the one hand and intellectual on the other, encompassing more and more wider horizons of a mutual past (historical), and as a result it erases and minimizes the present differences, bringing them down to 'provincialism'. This increased feeling of a common crib—due to the unravelling 'historical thinking'—must in the end lead to a single denominator of all cultured individuals and find a common tongue for communication." Szymanowski, *Efebos*; *Pisma literackie*, tom 2, 193; transl. from Chylińska, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Works*, transl. John Glowacki (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1993), 135. Szymanowski was a member of the Polish Pan-European Union, founded in 1927. On this, and the relationship with Richard Coudenhove-Calergi's *Pan-Europa* (Vienna, 1923), see Chylińska, "Szymanowski and

by the cosmopolitan Viennese Count Richard Coudenhove-Karlergi, itself an "object of longing," a "daydream" as Szymanowski put it, in which individual nations retain identity but join to form a new kind of fecund federation. And here finally, we can once more compare Bartók who was, as Riley and Smith say, similarly, a "patriot" whose works "reflect a notion of a multi-ethnic imperial Hungary that after the Great War no longer existed." [47]

The extent to which we can hear the play of sentimentalism and anti-sentimentalism more widely in the work of Bartók and Szymanowski is also a subject ripe for further study. Sentimentalism can be expressed in many different ways. The enthusiasm for Bartók's music shown by Allen Stewart Konigsberg, of Russian and Austrian descent and better known as Woody Allen, is perhaps because he hears something sentimental beneath the fifth quartet's spiky exterior. It is certainly true, however, that while irony and satire are largely absent in Szymanowski's work they play a major role in aspects of Bartók's art. And that while Szymanowski is thoroughly a sensualist, Bartók often turns against sensualism more overtly. But as Jonathan Greenberg comments,

> Even in the most ruthless satire there often emerges an occasional gesture where poignancy is salvaged; the balance is merely shifted so that increasing quantities of cruelty or suffering are required to justify (to "earn") the rare moment of tenderness. In a way this a version of the old claim that the satirist is really a closet sentimentalist; that the cruelty of satire is but another way to arrive at those very affective indulgences that are purportedly jettisoned. [48]

Politics," *Music in Poland* 42 (1990), 5–17; Stephen Downes, "Eros and Paneuropeanism: Szymanowski's Utopian Vision," in *Musical Constructions of Nationalism: Essays on the History and Ideology of European Musical Culture 1800–1945*, eds. Harry White, Michael Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001), 51–71 and Stephen Downes, "Cultural Affiliations and National filiations: Textuality and History in Edward Said's 'Secular Criticism' and Szymanowski's Poetics of Paneuropeanism," in *Karol Szymanowski w perspektywie kultury muzycznej przeszłości i współczesności*, ed. Zbigniew Skowron (Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 2007), 93–104. On Szymanowski's cosmopolitan and aristocratic Polishness see H.H. Stuckenschmidt, "Karol Szymanowski," *Music & Letters* 19 (1938), 36–47.

47 *Nation and Classical Music*, 42. See also William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848–1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 320–322.

48 Jonathan Greenberg, *Modernism, Satire, and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 19.

The two violin concertos offer a gateway into further considerations. Other fruitful comparisons are those between Szymanowski's *Symphonie concertante* (1932) and Bartók's Third Piano Concerto (1945, particularly the *Adagio religioso* slow movement) and between Bartók's *Cantata Profana* (1930) and Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* (1926). But these are questions for another paper.

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ABSTRACT

Longing to Belong: Nationalism and Sentimentalism in the Second Violin Concertos of Bartók and Szymanowski

The second violin concertos of Szymanowski and Bartók exemplify nationalism's ambivalent link with sentimentalism. Bartók asserted that "peasant" music is "anti-sentimental" in its primitivistic objectivity and avoidance of leading notes. Bartók invoked the contrast

STRESZCZENIE

Tęskniąc za przynależnością: narodowość i sentymentalizm w II Koncercie skrzypcowym *Bartóka i Szymanowskiego*

Drugie koncerty skrzypcowe Szymanowskiego i Bartóka ilustrują ambiwalentny związek nacjonalizmu z sentymentalizmem. Bartók twierdził, że muzyka „chłopska" jest „antysentymentalna" w swej prymitywistycznej obiektywności i unikaniu dźwięków prowadzących.

between rural authenticity and urban artifice. But as with so many binaries, the boundaries are unstable, with specific fluidity in the nationalist imagination. Bartók's Second Violin Concerto (1938) aimed to re-connect with his domestic audience through sympathetic union during anxious times. Recalling the leading-note idiom of his First Violin Concerto, it builds to a climactic moment of sentimental expression. Szymanowski praised Tatra music as a counter to the "exaggerated sentimentality" of the romantic "epigones". Like Bartók, he publicly sought in "real" folk music an alternative to this sentimentalism in his Second Violin Concerto. But privately he described the concerto as "horribly sentimental" and like Bartók he recalls an apparently lost style to express a sentimentalism that hardly dare speak its name.

KEYWORDS Szymanowski, Bartók, Sentimentalism, Nationalism, folk

Powoływał się na kontrast pomiędzy autentycznością obszarów wiejskich i sztucznością miejskich. Ale tak jak w przypadku wielu innych opozycji binarnych, granice są niestabilne, zwłaszcza przy specyficznej płynności nacjonalistycznej wyobraźni. *II Koncert skrzypcowy* Bartóka (1938) miał na celu ponowne nawiązanie kontaktu kompozytora z rodzimą publicznością w burzliwych czasach, poprzez rodzaj współodczuwania. Przypomnienie idiomu dźwięków prowadzących pierwszego koncertu skrzypcowego prowadzi do kulminacyjnego momentu ekspresji sentymentalnej. Szymanowski sławił muzykę tatrzańską jako przeciwwagę dla „przesadnej sentymentalności" romantycznych „epigonów". W swym *II Koncercie skrzypcowym*, podobnie jak Bartók, jawnie poszukiwał w „prawdziwej" muzyce ludowej alternatywy dla tego sentymentalizmu. Lecz prywatnie opisał koncert jako „strasznie sentymentalny" i, podobnie jak Bartók, przywołał pozornie utracony styl do wyrażenia sentymentalizmu, który ledwie śmie wymówić swe imię.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE Szymanowski, Bartók, sentymentalizm, nacjonalizm, naród