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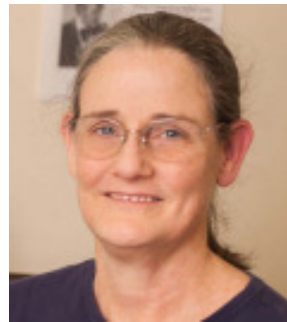
Dr. Chong Pek Lin



Dr. Anna Waluga



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Carol J. Brown

**Keynote speakers at the  
25th International Kodály Symposium**

Katowice, Poland  
August 2021 - online

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# TRADITIONAL MUSIC AWAKENED FROM SLEEPING

by Anna Waluga

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When I was browsing the topics of all the IKS symposia from the first one in Oakland, California (1973), to the last one in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia (2019), I noticed that the topics of traditional music and musical folklore had not so far been the main issues of any symposium. Each of us knows that Zoltán Kodály treated folk music as the basis of his concept of music education, and that as a Hungarian, he obviously used Hungarian folk music. Perhaps this fact of taking up the subject of traditional music—which differs in many aspects in every culture, ranging from musical to ritualistic, semantic or symbolic—was a barrier or a problem. Traditional music is present differently in different cultures. In some it is an element of everyday life and the education of society, in others it appears as an element of music education. So therefore, this music needs to be taught. In the latter case, the term folk music is used more often. In Poland, these two concepts: traditional music and folk music are not understood in the same way. Traditional music is defined as old folk music, and above all historically rural music, the specificity of which is oral and memory communication.<sup>1</sup> Today, the term folk music has become more capacious than traditional music, and it encompasses stylization practiced by artistic song and dance groups.

Traditional folk music can be experienced, described, learned, and finally researched, but one must take into account the time and changes that occur. For example, in the past, traditional musical folklore was characterized by the oral and collective nature of the message, anonymity, variability, and simplicity of form.<sup>2</sup> The reproduction and storage of the repertoire relied almost entirely on human memory. Today, it is not a secret, many bands use sheet music, and young folk musicians learn music. Another phenomenon is the movement of professional / classical musicians from the city to the countryside. There, apart from changing their lifestyle, they learn music in a traditional way, i.e. from a master, a country musician. They also get to know the manners of singing appropriate for a given region, learn to play instruments, and to dance. Perhaps it is to them that we will owe the preservation and passing of traditional music to future generations. More recently in Poland, the interest in “traditional music” shows that it is becoming a significant part of the music culture, changing the context and the recipient. This music ceases to be a shame and becomes elitist; in some cases, it is treated on an equal footing with classical (professional) music.

The year 2014 had a significant impact on this situation when in Poland we celebrated the 200th anniversary of the birth of Oskar Kolberg, the greatest Polish collector and documentary filmmaker of Polish musical folklore (mainly folk songs). It is worth mentioning that Kolberg recorded folk singing in the pre-phonographic era (1850-1860), and that the first recordings took place in the USA in 1890, the

year of Kolberg's death. His work entitled *People. Their customs, way of life, speech, tales, proverbs, rituals, witchcraft, games, songs, music and dances*<sup>3</sup> documented the rural spiritual and material culture. His complete works fill 36 volumes published during his lifetime, each of which presents a different region of Poland. Several dozen are still under development. Polish folk songs notated by Kolberg (there are about 12,000 of them) are the richest source of this musical repertoire. Musicians, composers, and teachers as well as folklore researchers reach for it. The notation of songs or instrumental melodies in those days cannot be treated in the same way as a seismograph; so Kolberg transcribed them as faithfully as possible. It is jokingly said that he did so "on the run".<sup>4</sup> What a difficult situation he was in when a folk singer was unable to sing the same songs twice, or made changes to each stanza, especially in terms of meter and rhythm.

The first part of that impact was the *Report on the Condition of Traditional Music Culture in Poland*.<sup>5</sup> Representatives of various circles — both theoreticians, researchers, practitioners and teachers — took the floor on 350 pages, often showing different approaches to fundamental issues. It talks about contemporary manifestations of folk music; about sound archives; about folk music in education; about the music of national minorities in Poland; about traditional music festivals and much more. The publication ends with an extensive list of Polish composers inspired by folklore.

*All Mazurkas of the World* is an international music festival and an artistic and educational project devoted to the musical form of the *mazurka* (this is the national dance of Poland) in folk and artistic versions, held periodically in spring and autumn. This project initiated a return to the once very popular dances attended by the elderly and the young, trying to "keep up with" their partner in the lively pace of the *mazurka*.

Traditional music is primarily live, but also animated music — that is, contemporary music of the past. The music is constantly updated and is very important to those who know it. Therefore, it is very important for its survival to update its value, mainly through interpersonal contact. The best example of such contact is the master-apprentice relationship. This old form of learning by imitating the "master" is being restored today.

Activities of the *Maly Kolberg (Little Kolberg)* foundation, which were established to introduce children to traditional music, are of particular interest.

One way is to invite grandmothers and grandparents to kindergarten, who tell children about old customs, sing folk songs and conduct traditional games. To make their message more interesting, they dress in regional costumes. The result of the work is the constant collection, description and recording of materials for educational purposes with music and traditional children's games. These are the so-called "Essentials" created with teachers and parents in mind. Members of *Maly Kolberg* also run workshops for teachers.

Educating young children with folk music is also a program of the *Preschool Academy*, in which children and their parents participate in music classes, playing together with traditional singing games. Watching the reactions of children and parents to the stories happening in each playful song in which a wolf chases a ram; grandmother digs the ground; the cat chases the mouse and many others, one can see that despite the seemingly archaic content, the games are accompanied by a lot

of emotion and joy, but sometimes also sadness, as in the song about how a dove fell from the stove and smashed its stomach. The result of these classes was the publication *Folk Music in the Education of a Young Child* by Dominika Lenska.<sup>6</sup>

Zoltán Kodály's great admiration for folk music, especially native music, and at the same time his dedication to the idea of education by cultivating the traditional folk repertoire through singing, became a pretext for an interesting reflection on the educational system and musical traditions of Poland and Hungary. The fruit of this reflection was the International Conference and Workshops titled *Kodály 2017—Folk Music and Musical Traditions: Their Place in the Family, Education and Culture*.

Traditional Polish and Hungarian music was performed for two days at the local Academy of Music. The thoughts of Zoltán Kodály (on the fiftieth anniversary of his death) about folk music and musical traditions were the subject of lectures and discussions. It is no accident that the title of the conference includes family, educational and cultural perspectives. It shows the sequence of man moving through education from what is closest to great musical culture. As part of the celebrations of the Year of Hungarian Culture in Poland 2016/2017 and the Year of Zoltán Kodály, Hungarian artists and teachers were present at the conference. Workshops and scientific sessions were also conducted by specialists in music education and musical tradition from Poland.

The two-day meeting was accompanied by a concert of music by Zoltán Kodály and a dance, modeled on the "Hungarian Houses of Dance". It was a great time to exchange experiences and talk. Similarly, the year of Oskar Kolberg proved that there is a great need among musicians to learn about the sources of Polish (and not only Polish) musical traditions and to acquire practical skills to express themselves in this music or to be inspired by it in various musical disciplines.

There seems to be nothing revealing about the reflection that music education in the field of native traditional music is essential to getting to know musical culture in general. In Poland, not only Kolberg, but also composers such as Karol Szymanowski, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki and many others pointed to this need. The interest in traditional music (theoretical and practical) is very high today. The need for education in this area is also demonstrated by programs run by the Institute of Music and Dance. One of its main goals is to promote the idea of formal education in the field of traditional music in music schools and universities.

The first university in Poland that undertook to open postgraduate studies in traditional music was the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice. From 2018, these studies teach how to play characteristic instruments from various regions of Poland. These are: violin, accordion, heligonka, hurdy-gurdy, bagpipes, cymbals and more. In addition, to singing and traditional dance, lectures in the field of ethnomusicology are offered.

These studies are very popular among music school graduates, educated in classical music, who want to learn about their own musical culture through its cultivation. Also, this music can become a valuable professional alternative for graduates of higher music schools. We are pleased that students from all over Poland come to Katowice, studying under the tutelage of outstanding musicians. It is they who pass on their passion and musical skills, which they learned in direct contact with traditional musicians. Among them are also participants of this year's IKS Symposium.

Today, the return to traditional music in Poland has taken on a fresh image. There are numerous recordings of older village singers who are still alive and older. It should be added that traditional singing, due to its closeness to people and the environment, is cultivated to a greater extent than instrumental music. By asking the question whether you can see that traditional music "has been awakened from sleep" today or is becoming a part— an element—of "global harmony," I hope that this 25th Kodály Symposium, which begins today will at least to some extent, answer this question. It will also allow us to see different approaches to musical traditions in different cultures, in education, as a subject of inspiration for composers, for research by ethnomusicologists, and curriculum material for music educators.

Thank you for your attention and I wish all participants many experiences and impressions. Let the computer screen not obscure the person sitting on the other side, obscure the man with his culture, music and traditions. Let us be glad that, although not at the same time, we are still together.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Bobrowska Jadwiga, (2000) *Folklorystyka polska*, Warszawa, p. 29.
- <sup>2</sup> Grozdew-Kołacińska Weronika, (2014) *Muzyka tradycyjna, śpiew tradycyjny, taniec tradycyjny. Próba konfrontacji terminów z rzeczywistością zastaną*, [in] *Raport o stanie kultury polskiej*, Warszawa, p. 41.
- <sup>3</sup> Kolberg Oskar, (1961-2011) *Lud, jego zwyczaje, sposób życia, mowa, podania, przysłowia, obrzędy, gusta, zabawy, pieśni, muzyka i tańce*. Warszawa-Poznań.
- <sup>4</sup> Dahlig Piotr, (2014) *Między tradycją kolbergowską a teraźniejszością* [in] *Raport o stanie kultury polskiej*, Warszawa, p. 68.
- <sup>5</sup> *Raport o stanie kultury polskiej*, (2014), editor Weronika Grozdew- Kołacińska, Warszawa.
- <sup>6</sup> Lenska Dominika, (2014) *Muzyka ludowa w edukacji małego dziecka*, Katowice.

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# DEEP ROOTS, BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

by Carol J. Brown

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Good evening. I am honored by the invitation to address you tonight. I live in the Texas Rio Grande Valley, which is predominantly Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and distant from the state's main population centers. The climate is subtropical and dry. Only four percent of the original vegetation remains, having been cleared first for agriculture and then for urban development. "The Valley" is a place that many dream to leave for "good paying jobs" and for more exciting entertainment options. Many dismiss it as backward, provincial, and corrupt. The region, if noticed at all by those in distant seats of power, is relegated as a sacrifice area for environmental destruction and militarization. In the past, neighbors spent evenings on their front porches gossiping, while their children played in the streets or explored a vacant lot. Now everyone stays inside watching television, playing video games, or attending to social media. Some locals still have a nostalgia for the old days and a saying that "If you drink the river water, you'll be back." I expect that happened to me.

When the IKS invited me to be one of the keynote speakers at its 2021 international conference, I hesitated, not knowing what I might say to this esteemed group of professional musicians and educators. My work as an elementary music teacher is rooted to this place and of little significance on the world stage. Nevertheless, I think the alienation from local traditional culture which I am experiencing around me is a common situation and challenge for us all. I would like to address it through the lens of two artists, philosophers, and writers who have influenced my perspective, career path, and teaching for decades. I hope to inspire a reflection on the relationship music teachers can have to their school community and how they might think of their repertoire choices.

As those present know, Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) was a linguist, musicologist, folk song collector, composer, and primary catalyst for Hungary's music education system which has been adopted and adapted around the world.

Wendell Berry (1934- ) is a poet, essayist, novelist, and farmer in north central Kentucky. His seminal book *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* published in 1977 described the effect that decades of industrial farming had on the soil, economics, and culture of rural America. In the ensuing forty years he has been an indefatigable advocate for listening to the many voices of local farmers who know and love the land. He wrote: "*The only true and effective 'operator's manual for spaceship earth' is not a book that any human will ever write; it is hundreds of thousands of local cultures*" (Berry, 1990, p. 166).

It strikes me that his wisdom is befitting our conference *Village Voices in Global Harmony*.

## **Deep roots**

In most contexts, the attribute "deep roots" is considered an asset, something to be sought after. Kodály wrote: "*The crown of the tree grows only as high as its roots penetrate deep into the ground*" (Kodály in Bónis, 1982, p. 55).

In a garden, plants with deep roots are healthier and more productive. They are anchored against wind and able to reach nutrition and water. People with deep roots in

their community similarly have more resilience. They have friends and family to provide support in difficult times. They have an understanding of cultural norms and expectations and a knowledge of the lore of the region, which facilitates interpersonal relationships.

Given favorable soil and sufficient water, plants will develop deep roots and flourish. Deep roots can be encouraged by improving the soil by adding organic material that feed the microbes, by keeping the soil covered with mulch or a cover crop, and by not compacting the soil with heavy machinery or overgrazing.

People develop deep roots in a community by staying put—by studying, observing, listening, paying attention, learning from elders, participating in its events and festivals. Thus the young and newly arrived learn the traditional knowledge of the community. Folk artists according to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1983)

*acquire their skills for the most part informally from others, and with those skills they acquire deeply felt values, standards of excellence, and a resonant sense of who they are and where they are. It is precisely this rootedness to community that is the hallmark of the folk arts and the folk artist* (para. 5-6).

Stories of rootedness and connection attach themselves to the artistic product whether a folktale, a basket, a recipe, or a song. The folk artist carries stories and memories of where and from whom it was learned and where and with whom it was shared.

I learned to knit as a teenager from the English war-bride of my science teacher. In the process of teaching the skill she passed on stories and advice from her life experience which I remember to this day. Years later when I was in graduate school at Indiana University, I was knitting to pass the time. One morning in the basement of the School of Music, Jean Sinor sat down next to me and took the cap I was working on. She described a Turkish custom of friends tying noticeably irregular knots in each other's hand-woven rugs as mementos. As she spoke, she tied a large knot in the yarn where I was working. I still have the cap and I cherish the memory of our friendship and this tangible symbol of it.

### **Shallow roots**

Plants generally have shallow root systems when the soil is hard and compacted or when they have received insufficient water to soak in deeply. These plants will suffer from poor growth and susceptibility to insects and disease and they are vulnerable in times of drought. People are considered “rootless” when they frequently move. The older generation may lose its support system when their children move away. One of the most tragic results are those elderly found dead in their homes following extreme heat or cold events, having had no one to check on them.

People who have lived in a location for a long time may lose touch with the informal ways, customs, knowledge, and language, their interests drawn to the exciting world of mass media or the scholarly study of books and formal knowledge. They may have developed roots in their own spheres of interest but they are not in the local community. This withdrawal from local life often coincides with a retreat indoors and a loss of interest in one's natural surroundings. The poet and environmental activist Gary Snyder (1990) wrote:

*Our relation to the natural world takes place in a place, and it must be grounded in information and experience. For example: “real people” have an easy familiarity with the local plants. This is so unexceptional a kind of knowledge that everyone in Europe, Asia, and Africa used to take it for granted. Many contemporary Americans don't even know that they don't “know the plants,” which is indeed a measure of alienation* (p. 39).



Following World War II, U.S. farmers turned to chemical inputs and mechanization to increase productivity. Despite their greater expenses, the prices they received for their products remained relatively the same. Government policies encouraged consolidation of farms into larger and larger operations which depended even more on chemical inputs, mechanization, and migrant labor. In a 1970 *National Geographic* article, senior staff editor, Jules B. Billard described the resulting population displacement and its social effects.

*In 1910 our farm population accounted for a third of the U.S. total. By 1969 it was a mere twentieth. People leave rural areas at an average rate of 650,000 a year; many drift into cities where they join past migrants in the ghettos — to become added tinder for the riots that can be labeled one of the social consequences of the agricultural revolution (p. 180).*

Stores, churches, and hospitals in rural communities closed as people moved to cities in search of jobs. Not only did small farmers and towns suffer, but large-scale, industrial farming practices brought erosion and pollution to the land and rivers. As the people who loved their native land left, mining operations flattened the mountains and garbage imported from the cities filled the valleys.

### **Moving up**

At the same time Ezra Taft Benson, the Secretary of Agriculture for President Eisenhower, was urging farmers to “Get big or get out,” the longtime siren-song of upward mobility was advocating moving to the city and becoming a “professional.” Berry (1977/2015) commented on this trend:

*It is characteristic of our present society that one does not think to improve oneself by becoming better at what one is doing or by assuming some measure of public responsibility in order to improve local conditions; one thinks to improve oneself by becoming different, by “moving up” to a “place of higher consideration.” Thinkable changes, in other words, tend to be quantitative rather than qualitative, and they tend to involve movement that is both social and geographic. The unsettlement at once of population and of values is virtually required by the only generally acceptable forms of aspiration. The typical American “success story” moves from a modest rural beginning to urban affluence, from manual labor to office work (p. 163).*

The old notion that manual work was honorable was cast aside. Modern conveniences such as processed food, the latest household appliances, and engaging leisure activities were sought even at the risk of incurring more debt. Again, Berry (1977/2015) colorfully described the phenomenon of moving up:

*Democracy has involved more than the enfranchisement of the lower classes; it has meant also the popularization of the more superficial upper-class values: leisure, etiquette (as opposed to good manners), fashion, everyday dressing up, and a kind of dietary persnickiness. We have given a highly inflated value to “days off” and to the wearing of a necktie; we pay an exorbitant price for the looks of our automobiles; we pay dearly, in both money and health, for our predilection for white bread. We attach much the same values to kinds of profession and levels of income that were once attached to hereditary classes (p. 163).*

The new city dwellers lost an appreciation for the old ways. Shared values and limits no longer held sway. Without a knowledge of neighbors and the natural world, a mistrust of people and a misuse of the land followed.

### **Modernity's effect on traditional music**

This cultural disconnection did not go unnoticed by folk song scholars who have been warning of the dangers modernity presents to traditional music for at least one hundred years. In 1966 Kodály stated:

*The biggest problem is the reconciliation of advanced technology with humanity. As technology moves ahead, and takes over more and more work from people, human activity decreased. That's why, there is a danger, instead of singing oneself, of pressing a button and listening to how others sing (npn).*

Following a three-and-a-half week revisit to the Appalachians in 1950, English folk song scholar Maud Karpeles reflected:

*The fact is that life in the mountains has been completely revolutionized during the last twenty to twenty-five years and it is no longer the folk song collector's paradise that it once was. One hesitates to generalize on the evidence of such a limited sojourn, but I have every reason to believe that the changes that I observed would be found in a greater or less degree in all the mountain regions. Roads and electricity have brought "civilization" to the mountains. Whereas, formerly there was little inducement for the people to grow more than they needed for their own requirements—and that was indeed little—markets have now been made accessible. Formerly there was leisure and time for the enjoyment of living; now everyone is so busy making money in order to acquire labour-saving devices and other amenities, that there is little leisure left and many of the social graces of life have had to be sacrificed. Judged from a material point of view the standard of life is certainly higher, but there seems to be a corresponding loss on the artistic and cultural plane. There are few homes that cannot boast an electric washing-machine and other products of modern progress. Unfortunately, these include the radio, the arch-enemy, except in certain favoured circumstances, of folk song (1951, pp. 77-78).*

Writing thirty years later and based on a long life in Appalachia, Berry (1990) remarked:

*As the children depart, generation after generation, the place loses its memory of itself, which is its history and its culture. And the local history, if it survives at all, loses its place. It does no good for historians, folklorists, and anthropologists to collect the songs and the lore that make up local culture and store them in books and archives. They cannot collect and store—because they cannot know—the pattern of reminding that can survive only in the living human community in its place. It is this pattern that is the life of local culture and that brings it usefully or pleasurably to mind. Apart from its local landmarks and occasions, the local culture may be the subject of curiosity or of study, but it is also dead (p. 165-166).*

### **Loss of regional diversity**

As the rural population moved to cities, the few remaining large-scale farmers lost interest and time for the slower, more labor-intensive methods based on intimate knowledge of the land. A national farm policy and an international agribusiness industry stressed profit and productivity over the well-being of the land and people. Scientific and technological advances lead to a uniformity of production. Today, monocultures stretch for miles.

A cross-country traveler observes an indistinguishable sameness of strip malls, fast food restaurants, and housing developments. Independent shops have been displaced by national chains. With few exceptions, the local radio will play the same handful of nationally popular styles.

I have outlined what I and others see as the result of people losing their ties to traditional ways rooted in the land and its community: A deleterious loss of top soil, pollution of our rivers, population displacement, and rural economic decay. As people have moved to the cities and become increasingly dependent on the products that industry wants to sell, a homogenization of taste, fashion, and values results promulgated by the mass media. These have little relation to what might be considered time-honored values and are instead designed to make a profit.

To an interviewer disillusioned by the situation, Berry commented:

*It comes from people's acceptance of the money economy as the only economy. The world in fact, unless you are in a prison, is full of free things that are delightful. Flowers. It won't be long till we'll be having free flowers around here. The yard will be full of dandelions. The world is also full of people who'd rather pay for something to kill dandelions than to appreciate the dandelions. Well, I'm a dandelion man myself* (Dunn & Sewell, 2016).

Berry's gentle spirit and the neighborly qualities of the folk arts recommend a deep local culture rooted in the land and community. This resonates with Kodály's philosophy as he was addressing a similarly degraded culture in Hungary. Music teachers who want to foster deep cultural roots within their schools may find the following suggestions helpful.

#### **Advice for the music teacher**

1. Don't expect a prepackaged plan or an outside expert to know what is best for your situation. Berry is skeptical of outside professionals who know best what is needed in the local situation. This rings true to many longtime teachers who have suffered through an endless parade of curricula and mandates. In his essay "*The Work of Local Culture*," Berry (1990) continued raising the alarm about the crisis in rural America and stated that an effective solution will not come from outside agencies or universities.  
*But to be authentic, a true encouragement and a true beginning, this would have to be a revival accomplished mainly by the community itself. It would have to be done not from the outside by the instruction of visiting experts, but from the inside by the ancient rule of neighborliness, by the love of precious things, and by the wish to be at home* (p. 169).
2. Whether returning home, moving to a new place, or recommitting to a current location, first and foundationally, make roots in the land. Snyder wrote: "*Find your place on the planet. Dig in, and take responsibility from there*" (1969, p. 101). Be curious to learn about its plants and animals. Get out of your house. Visit a nearby nature preserve. Make a garden and observe how it grows. Identify a volunteer plant before you label it a weed and remove it. Work with hand tools.
3. Live near your school, become part of the community, sit with the neighbors, learn their customs and lore. This is important for teachers unfamiliar with the culture of their students. In his essay "*On the Role and Place of Folksongs in Teaching Music*," László Dobszay (1992) wrote: "*For without a discipline of style, a sense of unity and taste, culture cannot be achieved. It is necessary to live for a good while according to a set of norms or to hear according to the hidden rules of a style*" (p. 96). His point here concerns giving sufficient time in the curriculum to establish the students' knowledge of a musical style, but on a larger scale, it is true too for teachers learning the ways of their new community.
4. Learn the traditional songs of your immediate area, whether historical or currently circulating, and incorporate them in your curriculum. Not only did Kodály

have an interest in preserving the old songs as a musical legacy, he felt they helped students learn their cultural heritage. He called folk songs “*the treasure trove of the most beautiful melodies and through them you can get to know the character of peoples*” (Kodály & Bónis, 1974, p. 190). Through folk songs we learn the customs and values of a people, whether ourselves or others. It is much more than the basis of a music literacy program. It is preserving and passing on our traditions and learning those of our neighbors. According to Kodály (1985):

*Each nation has a rich variety of folk songs, very suitable for teaching purposes. Selected gradually, they furnish the best material to introduce musical elements and make the children conscious of them.... To understand other people, we must first understand ourselves. Nothing is better for that than folk song, as to know other peoples, their folk song is the best means as well. The final purpose of all this must be to introduce pupils to the understanding and love of great classics of past, present and future* (pp. 17-18).

5. Have the keen interest of a folklorist. Read books on the broader field of folklore or, if available, take an Introduction to Folklore class at your local college. Find the local history museum and archive. Tell the curator you are eager to learn.

As often noted, the United States is a much larger and more diverse country than Hungary. There will be no national curriculum or repertoire. Everyone’s situation and community will be different. Each teacher must do their own work studying relevant scholarly collections with input from community elders. Encourage students to interview their grandparents and great-grandparents. Have students, parents, faculty, and staff who are recent immigrants record songs, rhymes, and games from their homeland, including the related contexts and customs.

Keep in mind that the United States culture is a tapestry or a quilt, not a melting pot. Some ethnic groups have been in the country for a century or more and have been assimilated almost to the point of extinction. These children may be best represented by the regional folk songs found in the surrounding area. Others are more recently arrived, perhaps with parents only speaking their mother tongue. We, as both teachers and cultural workers, have a unique opportunity to make them feel welcome and valued. In so doing, we may counteract the often self-imposed pressure to assimilate which Patricia Klindienst (2006) pointed out “*not only robs people of their heritage and their dignity, it robs the dominant culture*” (p. XXIII). Our newly arrived neighbors bring valuable perspectives and cultural gifts. We are the poorer for it if we demand they leave them at the proverbial door.

6. Invite traditional artists from the local community that can tell their history and stories while sharing their art and songs. Reach out to local indigenous groups. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1983) wrote:

*What better way to convey to children the cultural nature of art and the rich artistic traditions of their own community than through living practitioners, through the folk artists themselves?.... In the presence of a folk artist, the objects, the tales, the songs expand to encompass the biography and culture of which they are a part* (para. 7).

Through face-to-face interactions, the folk artist can instill a knowledge and love for the local place which may inspire children to cherish and care for it. The exchange will increase understanding and trust in the community.

7. Select songs seeking the same three characteristics that recommended the Hungarian folksong. Dobszay (1992) summarized them: “(T)he folksong is simple, it possesses a form which even a child can follow and it communicates artistic and national cultural value of the highest order” (p. 109).
8. Sing songs in their original language. Melody and rhythm are inexorably tied to the language of the song text. In many cases translation gives a poor representation of both the original song and the language into which it is translated.
9. Finally a warning about the profit and productivity mindset in education. Industrial-scale education only values data and not the well-being of the teacher or student. A sustainable teaching load must be a priority. Music must be taught with quality, joy, and health as Berry (1977/2015) described it “*not in the merely hygienic sense of personal health, but the health, the wholeness, finally the holiness, of Creation, of which our personal health is only a share*” (p. 227).

### Advice for teacher trainers

1. Our songs must not be reduced to pedagogical exercises or examples of a quaint past. Analyzing a piece for its elements and structure is like dissecting a frog. Many details can be learned, but we will never have a full picture of how a frog lives, interacts with and adapts to its environment. In folk song classes, the goal should go beyond analyzing and assembling a teaching collection. Teachers must be inspired to learn the stories of the songs and their singers and to share those with their students. We must not simply hand our students dead frogs to dissect and pass on in jars of formaldehyde.
2. Professors should be aware how they convey their expectations of success. Once again Berry (1977/2015) is skeptical of social rank as a measure of success.

*It is extremely difficult to exalt the usefulness of any productive discipline as such in a society that is at once highly stratified and highly mobile. Both the stratification and the mobility are based upon notions of prestige, which are in turn based upon these reliquary social fashions. Thus doctors are given higher status than farmers, not because they are more necessary, more useful, more able, more talented, or more virtuous, but because they are thought to be “better” — one assumes because they talk a learned jargon, wear good clothes all the time, and make a lot of money. And this is true generally of “office people” as opposed to those who work with their hands. Thus an industrial worker does not aspire to become a master craftsman, but rather a foreman or manager. Thus a farmer’s son does not usually think to “better” himself by becoming a better farmer than his father, but by becoming, professionally, a better kind of man than his father* (p. 163).

Kodály made a similar comment about professional musicians in his 1929 essay “Children’s Choirs.”

*It is much more important who the singing master at Kisvárdá is than who the director of the Opera House is, because a poor director will fail. (Often even a good one.) But a bad teacher may kill off the love of music for thirty years from thirty classes of pupils* (Kodály & Bónis, 1974, p. 124).

Among educators the attribute of success still goes chiefly to those who move up in the academic hierarchy. A professor who shared this prestige-oriented mindset chastised me for staying in The Valley rather than getting on with doctoral studies. My message to professors is: Encourage your students to go home and become teachers and cultural workers in their own neighborhoods. Don’t their students deserve the best?

## **Technology and mass media**

While the most obvious result of technology and mass media might be the rapid spread of uniformity, their dehumanizing effect is the most damaging. People find physical labor, once considered virtuous, too demeaning, tiring, or time-consuming. An endless assortment of powered devices is needed to do what could once be accomplished with a pen, a broom, a hoe, or a tuning fork. Kodály (1966, npn) warned us “*to utilize all the inventions of technology if it helps and facilitates our task, but not to the extent of impairing our own activity and humanity.*” The reliance on mass media and public entertainment has developed a populace unable to entertain itself or to appreciate the slow, the free, the local, the neighborly.

Mass media outlets serve up an endless and compelling diet of materialism and competition to its consumers. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970/2005) wrote:

*(T)he oppressed feel an irresistible attraction towards the oppressors and their way of life. Sharing this way of life becomes an overpowering aspiration. In their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow them. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in the middle-class oppressed, who yearn to be equal to the “eminent” men and women of the upper class (p. 61).*

With a single-minded aspiration to be like their pop idols, our young people desire a lifestyle of affluence, superficial glamour, and often garish display. They are dependent on mass media for their entertainment, values, and fashion trends. While popular music styles irrefutably trace their roots to older traditional music and they may provide a common repertoire for shared identity and experience, their basic ethic is materialism and competition. There is never “enough” or how else could the commercial interests sell us more? It kills the spirit. This alienation from traditional roots produces a spiritual emptiness.

I suggest that by using folk songs of the local community, we can empower students to find value in the slow, the handmade, the cooperative, and the neighborly. In our classes we can give students musical skills apart from technology and playfulness apart from manufactured toys. Singing games and traditional passing games using rocks or sticks have always had a central place in our curricula as has the greatest joy of all: *A cappella* singing. Kodály suggested: “*Our age of mechanization leads along a road ending with man himself as a machine; only the spirit of singing can save us from this fate*” (Kodály in Bónis, 1974, p. 206).

We preserve our regions’ songs and culture as a living inheritance for our children and descendants but we also pass on the curiosity to learn, eagerness to work, patience for cooperation, and love for place that our local folk artists can share. We offer our students skills, independence, and quality not motivated by popular fashion or profit but by affection and neighborliness, empowering them to make their own entertainment — something more than an imitation of the latest fad on television or YouTube.

## **Bountiful harvest**

By nurturing students’ roots in the deep and fertile soil of the world’s musical traditions, we will reap a bountiful harvest of beautiful and happy lives. Kodály (2017) aptly employed the garden analogy:

*(L)ife without music is incomplete and not worth living. It is this consciousness that we wish to instill into all those who have not the slightest inkling of the beauties within the enchanted garden of music. They live outside the walls of this*

*garden and are thus shut out from the finest gifts of life. We artists wish to make them available to all in order that life may be more beautiful and happy* (p. 7).

Though times may be bleak, there is much we can do. Bring artistry, confidence, and pride into a child's life by teaching them to sing. Show them the wonders in nature. Offer an alternative to the acquisitive, prestige-seeking, mechanized, mind-numbingly uniform lifestyle we find around us. Show them that simple, free things are joyful and how they connect us to the earth and to each other. The values of integrity, kindness, and cooperation embodied in local traditions will encourage a cultural resilience which endures political and ecological upheaval. Growing one's own food and making one's own entertainment are acts of resistance. Teaching our children to do so are acts of hope.

**“A Vision”**

by Wendell Berry

If we will have the wisdom to survive,  
to stand like slow-growing trees  
on a ruined place, renewing, enriching it,  
if we will make our seasons welcome here,  
asking not too much of earth or heaven,  
then a long time after we are dead  
the lives our lives prepare will live  
here, their houses strongly placed  
upon the valley sides, fields and gardens  
rich in the windows. The river will run  
clear, as we never know it,  
and over it, birdsong like a canopy.  
On the levels of the hills will be  
green meadows, stock bells in noon shade.  
On the steeps where greed and ignorance cut down  
the old forest, an old forest will stand,  
its rich leaf-fall drifting on its roots.  
The veins of forgotten springs will have opened.  
Families will be singing in the fields.  
In their voices they will hear a music  
risen out of the ground. They will take  
nothing from the ground they will not return,  
whatever the grief at parting. Memory,  
native to this valley, will spread over it  
like a grove, and memory will grow  
into legend, legend into song, song  
into sacrament. The abundance of this place,  
the songs of its people and its birds,  
will be health and wisdom and indwelling  
light. This is no paradisaal dream.  
Its hardship is its possibility.

(Berry, 2013, p. 217)

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[Keynote presented at the 25th International Kodály Symposium  
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# THE SPIRIT OF KODÁLY LIVES WITHIN US STILL

by Zsuzsánna Mindszenty

*Choir Conductor, Retired Associate Professor, ELTE University, Budapest,  
President of KÓTA (Association of Hungarian Choirs,  
Orchestras and Folk Ensembles)*

It is a great honor for me to have been invited as a keynote speaker at the 25th International Kodály Symposium. These are strange times, when the pandemic prevents us from personal gathering, and everything we do happens in the virtual world. We cannot meet face to face and discuss issues that may come up during our daily work.

I have been the President of the Association of Hungarian Choirs, Orchestras and Folk Ensembles (KÓTA) for 9 years. Last year, in 2020, we planned to host an International Conference on Music Education in Budapest, to which we invited outstanding personalities from Hungary and abroad, who are not only working for the implementation of the Kodály Method on different levels and in different kinds of educational institutions, but who also have a “bird’s eye view” on all the things that are happening globally.

Among these experts was the current President of the IKS, Jerry L. Jaccard; Gilbert de Greeve, who fulfilled the presidential role for three terms; outstanding conductor and music educator, Ed Bolkovac; as well as Susanna Saw, conductor and Vice-President of the IKS, and an expert on the Kodály program in Malaysia. Judit Hartyányi, our former vice president, took an active role in the planning of this conference, and she would have given a presentation as well. Alas, the pandemic crossed our plans and the conference had to be cancelled. However, we did publish the presentations in Hungarian and in English as “*Hold Fast to Dreams While Embracing the Future.*” I presume that some of the participants of this Symposium have already come across this volume or the individual chapters.

One of the most important topics of this planned conference was the discussion of how we could concentrate more on expressive, sensitive music making and musicality as opposed to pushing theoretical and technical aspects. We planned to investigate how important the role of dedicated, charismatic teachers is in the propagation of the Kodály philosophy. And simply put, how can we grab the attention of the new, young generation to include them more into this wonderful world of music education that Kodály dreamed of.

I believe that this Symposium is looking for answers to questions similar to these.

When reading the title “Village Voices in Global Harmony”, the first thing that came to my mind was that so many things are different in this world as opposed to the world of the mid-20th century, when Kodály was walking among us.

In the preamble of his volume “Hungarian Folk Music”, Kodály summarized the significance of folk music as follows: “*Folk Music is such an integral part of the life of a healthy nation that we find it everywhere: it is present in art, in public education, in the manifestations of social life. When folk music is pushed into the background in some way, it is always a sign of the stagnation of national life.*”<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the question arises that at the beginning of the 21st century, what does a young person of today understand by the term “folk music”? Does he or she know where the collection of that rich material, on which the Kodály Method of music education relies, originated from? Does he or she ponder what folk music, village music or the

ancient music of indigenous people means in other parts of the world, outside of Europe? Does a young person of today know what it is that we may still call national and what has remained of our identity in a world that is more and more globalized? Does he or she want to get to know her own national culture at all, or is he or she happy rather with the global one? Is he or she happy with a world music created from a mixture of decontextualized folk and ethnic styles and motifs? Is he or she content with a uniformly schematized architecture and other arts, or the everyday outfits devoid of individuality, or else with the other dumbed-down parts of our cultural environment?

Our lives overflow with globally available, uniformized paraphernalia of convenience. McDonald's food, Hamburgers and Coca-Cola are the same everywhere, we have the same types of rental bikes, the same check-in counters at airports, the same computers and the same phones. The concept of franchise ensures that we feel at home wherever we are, since we are living in a "global village", like the Canadian philosopher, Marshall McLuhan<sup>2</sup> foretold in the 1960s.

Nowadays there is an expression that pops up more and more frequently, and this is: GLOBALIZATION. A common definition states that globalization primarily means the formation and uniformization of a global system of more intensive interrelationship and codependences, during which the geographical boundaries of societal and cultural systems are gradually pushed into the background. The world is shrinking in time and space. Although historically speaking, this process has been going on for quite some time, we can't fail to notice that in the 21st century, globalization has taken on unparalleled speed and scope all over the world. There are obvious benefits in terms of politics, society and culture as well. The internet has become part of our daily lives and has opened up possibilities for culture that we could not even dream of a few years back. We can watch a live stream of an opera performance from the Metropolitan Opera, we can listen to concerts with star artists, and we can catch a glimpse of how people live in far-away regions and countries. However, the global commercial media culture is a real threat for local and national cultures – it sort of feels like that we just "can't catch a break" amidst the global parade of stars.

We may ask: what sort of place does a small country choir, a zither orchestra or an elderly women's choir have on this palette? What is the importance of a traditionally known children's song or folk song that a whole nation was actually able to sing just a few decades ago? These tiny segments are of great importance, since these hold the key for a nation to keep its own national identity (in our case, our Hungarianness), the noblest traditions of our culture. These are the facts and activities that enable us to have a true national voice when connecting with the world. The prerequisite for all of this is to believe in what we are doing.

It is fortunate that this conference has the word "harmony" right after "global" in the title. I would like to be very optimistic here, since I believe that all participants of this conference – myself included – regard it as a priority to enable the presence of diversity, uniqueness and national identity within the global harmony, for these are the elements that make life truly exciting. It is just like a watercolor picture painted by a little child – she tries out all the colors at first, so the paper shows thousands of beautiful tones. Then she takes a soaked brush and paints over the colors, resulting in a grey blob. We must prevent global culture from melting down our multicolored national culture into a unified greyness.

I believe that Kodály's Concept remains alive and popular because it never wanted to schematize with force.

There are technical tasks that serve the development of skills, but Kodály always emphasized that a good musician must have

“A well-trained ear,  
A well-trained intelligence,  
A well-trained heart,  
A well-trained hand.  
And all four must develop together, in constant equilibrium.”<sup>3</sup>

The Kodály Method can only function well if, globally speaking, everybody adds the music of their own peoples and their own national identity to it.

I have been wondering how the Kodály Concept could prevail in the current era, since the countries, the schools, the children, the financial and educational backgrounds differ so much? As opposed to the rigorously schematized methods, a great feature of the Kodály Method is the emphasis on principles, the approach and the philosophy. And even among the principles, there are some that can be applied anywhere, under any circumstances, regardless of space, time, school system, school principal and financial background. What are these principles?

Let me quote Kodály once again: *“What should be done? The first task for the teacher is to teach music and singing in school in such a way that is not a torture but a joy for the pupil; instill a thirst for finer music in him, a thirst which will last for lifetime... Many times, a single experience is enough to open the young heart and soul to music for a lifetime. This experience cannot be left to chance: it is the duty of the school to provide it.”*<sup>4</sup>

And how can we actually go about that? Kodály’s concept includes certain essential principles that need to be realized no matter what.

One of the most important principle is that our teachings must be value-based. Kodály said that “only art of intrinsic value is suitable for children!”<sup>5</sup> We need to do as much as we can in order to do away with musical shabbiness! This is incredibly topical in our current era, where values tend to slowly disappear under the ever-growing amount of rubbish. Quoting Bartók: *“Only from cool mountain springs...”* because *“Bad taste is an illness of the mind that burns out all receptivity from the soul. The task of music is to ensure the mental health of its performers, provide a channel for emotions, alleviate sorrow, mitigate bitterness and to complete joy, and it teaches us loyalty, inclusion without self-surrender, and it shows us how to love.”*<sup>6</sup>

It is a main feature of the Kodály Method that singing is in the center of teaching. Kodály said the following: *“Your throat has an instrument that makes a sound more beautiful than any violin in the world – if there is someone to sound it! This instrument can take you near the nurturing closeness of the greatest geniuses of music, if there is someone to lead you!”*<sup>7</sup> There are other methods of music education that have an instrument or even percussions front and center. But the human voice as an instrument is readily available for anyone – this is much more natural, self-evident and a lot cheaper!

Musical reading and writing is an important element that tends to be somewhat neglected in other methods of music education. Kodály summarizes this as follows: *“The way to the understanding of music is available to all: it is musical reading and writing.”* Through musical literacy *“everyone may join in great musical experiences.”*<sup>8</sup>

The starting point for such undertaking is children’s songs and folk songs: Kodály stated the following: *“Each nation has a rich variety of folksongs well suited to teaching purposes. If selected and graded carefully they furnish the best material through which to introduce musical elements and make the children conscious of them”... “To understand other people, we must first understand ourselves nothing better for that than our folksongs. And to know other people, their folksongs offer the best means, as well.”*<sup>9</sup>

In addition, solmization, an awareness of rhythm and part-singing are the most important means for reaching our goals. As Kodály wrote:

*“with the help of solfa names (children) will find this way more easily in the labyrinth of tonal relations than if we only make him dizzy with great number of different key signatures.”<sup>10</sup>*

*“Rhythm... should be practiced much sooner and in much greater detail than it is customary nowadays. And when kindergarten takes part in rhythm education, reading musical notation in primary school shall not remain an illusion any more.”<sup>11</sup>*

Two-part singing – *“The developmental value of two- part singing in the purity not only of polyphonic hearing but even of unison singing cannot be praised highly enough. We can state that those who always sing in unison cannot sing in tune. Pure unison singing can only be learnt well by singing together with another voice. The two voices will adjust and balance each other.”<sup>12</sup>*

We must not forget that music education has an inherent personality-shaping effect. An immersively emotional experience is the one that shapes a personality the most effectively. Like Kodály says, *“There is no whole person without music.”<sup>13</sup>*

In 2009, at the *Conference on Music Education and Singing* in Vilnius (Lithuania), participants from 12 countries published a Document of recommendation for the Ministries of Education, Culture, Health and Social Affairs of Lithuania and for national and international music organizations. They stated – and I am paraphrasing- that choral singing is an educational, social and artistic phenomenon that ensures a mutual understanding between cultures, facilitates social integration and the acceptance of others. Common singing contributes to the physical and mental wellbeing of citizens, and by way of all of this, it contributes to the general welfare of the society in which they live and work.

Research shows that choral singing significantly contributes to the development of self-identity, performance skills, and the social and cultural skills of students. Thus, the necessary curriculum and number of lessons in music education based on choral singing, as well as musically and pedagogically trained teachers, should be made available to all children and in all schools.

Research has also shown that choral singing has a significant impact on the general physical, mental and emotional state of those who participate in it. Therefore, choral singing should be encouraged in schools, communities, hospitals, workplaces and social centers with the help of trained teachers and choral conductors.

Singing together increases the social capital of a culture by empowering human qualities such as self-esteem, respect for others, social solidarity, tolerance, empathy and loyalty – all qualities that are vital for the process of society-building and declines in crime and violence rates. Singing facilitated by well-trained professionals should be encouraged and incorporated into society-building and social projects, the lives of families (including the period of fetal development and the lives of small children), of seniors, of inmates, and of the socially disadvantaged.

Many of you who are listening to this presentation might think that in order to realize this, the necessary conditions may not be given in your region. Getting up to the spires of music is easy for those, whose environment, schools and teachers operate music education with such principles.

I would like to share my personal experiences with you. My road towards music was not an obvious and straight one. There were no musicians and no teachers in my family. My parents were open-minded, cultured people, who regularly attended concerts and went to the opera, but they had very different occupations. My father worked in sports, and my mother in the chemical industry. They worked a lot during the 1950s, when I was a little child. My grandmother raised me, she loved me very much and paid close attention to me. We had a piano and she was the one, who noticed how enchanted I was

by this instrument, how I searched for little songs that she taught me, plopped on the keys with one finger to sound them out, and how happy all of this makes me. She gave the idea to my parents that I should learn music. So, I did not go to a kindergarten or school that specialized in music, but learned the basics in afternoon music school prep lessons, and then we chose an instrument – the piano, of course. I studied together with the other children, and I was not among the prodigies. However, my interest in music was very strong, and I was always happy when we got to attend a concert or when I could listen to the music of Mozart, Beethoven or Bartók on the radio. I recalled the melodies I heard in the great works, and I sang frequently. I might not have had an especially beautiful voice, but I loved to sing. And I think that this is important. Talent might not manifest itself in someone singing beautifully or playing the piano surprisingly well at a young age. It depends more on whether or not there is general interest and passion. Because motivation is essential in order to make it into this field! I did not attend a conservatory. During my high school years, there was a lot of studying and I also did sports, however, I continued my extra-curricular piano lessons, and during this time – given my passion and motivation – it became clear that music might be my calling. My dedicated teachers noticed this, they encouraged me, and they helped me to make use of special opportunities, since they saw that I was receptive to these. After getting my secondary school graduation, I spent a whole academic year exclusively with music, and then achieved a high score at my entrance exam to the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music. Still, it was challenging to catch up with those fellow students who came from schools that specialized in music, or had conservatory training, because they had more knowledge than I did. I worked hard and I practiced because I had the DRIVE to learn everything that is needed to become a music teacher and a choral conductor. And I did it!

I wanted to share this with you because it is my firm belief that an attentive family background, helpful teachers, and a solid drive and passion are able to replace what a regular music education that might not fit into the school system cannot provide. It is ideal if someone can attend a kindergarten that specializes in music, then study at a primary school with extended music education, get accepted to a conservatory and has a straight road to the Academy of Music. But the regular, non-specialized way is also doable. Kodály's principles and methods can accompany someone along the regular road as well.

I would like to circle back to the issue of folk music: It is well worth considering that although authentic folk music has become a rarity even among those living in villages (especially in European countries), contemporary composers tends to re-discover it for their purposes again and again. Due to the world-famous heritage of Kodály and Bartók, we in Hungary have many of musical pieces from the 20th century that are one way or another permeated by folk music. This might be a simple folksong transcription, a musical work that contains a folk music motif, or it may be a piece that does not include any specific folksong or folk music motif, but the composer is evidently a native speaker of the national musical language. This last example might be the highest level integration of the nation's voice. And this is not unique to Hungary; this can occur with any composer. The way I see it, at the end of the 20th century and in the beginning of 21st century, composers tended and tend to re-discover the integration of folk music motifs into their compositions. It is a most interesting phenomenon when a folksong is not directly present, but having reached down to the deepest roots, the voice of the national identity presents itself in an atavistic way within the composition. Just think of the choral works written by the Estonian composer, Veljo Tormis in the mid-20th century (for instance, his monumental *Curse Upon Iron*, written for a male choir and drum and

using the text of the Kalevala, or his *a capella* work, *Incantation for a Stormy Sea* published in 1996, which commemorates the tragedy of the ferry Estonia that sank in 1994.)

The recently departed South-African Joseph Shabalala, the defining personality of African choral music, introduced the world to Zulu music in his active years. We can also recall the works of the Australian composer, Stephen Leek, who was inspired by aboriginal music or the rich sound of nature (e.g. *Kondalilla*, *Red Earth*, *Ngana*). We can also mention Japan's Ko Matsushita, who takes inspiration from musical traditions reaching back thousands of years—the Japanese musical culture—and he combines these with experiences he gained during his studies in Europe—in Hungary.

Choral music also has an important role in the musical culture of the Philippines. An outstanding ensemble, the University of Philippines Madrigal Singers, who have won a Grand Prize at several choral competitions around the world, help us to get to know music from the Philippines that is richly infused with traditional elements. Their special strength is that they not only perform classical choral works on an outstanding level, but they can also perform folklore in an authentic way.

Given the legacy of Kodály and Bartók, composers in Hungary, who wish to use folk music as their origin, do not have it easy. Then again, new compositions inspired by folk music tend to pop up from young Hungarian composers, since we do have a deeply rooted demand to preserve our folk music, our traditions, and convey them in an innovative way.

Many of you might have come across the name of Levente Gyöngyösi<sup>14</sup>, who is one of the most talented young Hungarian composers. He made the following statement during an interview: – “*Folk music has a very important role in my life especially because, relatively speaking, I use it seldom, but when I do, I use it to express the deepest emotions. For example, I tend to use a Sirató (Lamentation song) in those situations when I need to grasp the most painful moments that almost exceed reality. In my compositions, the folksong tries to carry the piece over to the transcendental world, I use it when I need to raise the atmosphere to more noble heights.*”

His choral work “*Gloria Kajoniensis*” was written in 2010 for equal voices, two violins and percussion instruments. It is highly interesting that despite the historical and Christian theme and the Latin language, the inspiration gained from Hungarian folk music is strongly evident both in the atmosphere and the structuring of this piece.

We can also mention György Orbán, János Vajda, Miklós Csemiczky or Péter Tóth, who were all raised with the Kodály traditions, but having grown up and having found their own unique voices as composers, they use folk music in quite a new context in many of their choral works.

Seeing and hearing the tendency of turning towards folk music in contemporary compositions, I may allow myself to state that we can be optimistic that the voice of the village, although it might undergo a number of transformations, shall retain its place and role in the global harmony. Preservation is a task we all must undertake. In a global world, we can only create musical harmony if we know and appreciate our own roots, we are proud of them and we preserve them, while still being open to the beauty and characteristics of the world.

I wish to all participants of this conference to listen to each other with such a mentality and to share knowledge with such purpose so we can create inspirational experiences through music for all people in our environments and for the new generation. And do not forget words by Kodály:

*“The fire must be not extinguished!”<sup>15</sup>*

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Kodály-Vargyas: A magyar népzene (Hungarian Folk Music), p.7, Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1969.
- <sup>2</sup> Herbert Marshall McLuhan (July 21, 1911 – December 31, 1980) was a Canadian philosopher. McLuhan coined the expression “the medium is the message” and the term *global village*, and predicted the World Wide Web almost 30 years before it was invented.
- <sup>3</sup> Kodály: Ki a jó zenész (Who is a good musician) 1953.
- <sup>4</sup> Kodály: Gyermekkarok (Children’s Choirs), 1929.
- <sup>5</sup> Kodály: Gyermekkarok (Children’s Choirs), 1929.
- <sup>6</sup> Kodály: Gyermekkarok (Children’s Choirs), 1929.
- <sup>7</sup> Kodály: Gyermekkarok (Children’s Choirs), 1929.
- <sup>8</sup> Kodály: Mire való a zenei önképzőkör (What is the purpose of extra-curricular music education?), 1944.
- <sup>9</sup> Kodály: Folksong in Pedagogy (Ittzés Kata 197-198)
- <sup>10</sup> Kodály: Bicinia Hungarica Utószó (Epilogue for Bicinia Hungarica) (Singing Exercises Ittzés 99)
- <sup>11</sup> Kodály: Singing Exercises (Ittzés 100)
- <sup>12</sup> Kodály: Singing Exercises( Ittzés 104)
- <sup>13</sup> Kodály: Közönségnevelés (Educating the audience (Ittzés 73)
- <sup>14</sup> Levente Gyöngyösi–born in 1975 in Cluj (Romania), has been recognized with the Erkel award and the Bartók-Pásztory award. His works include operas, oratorios, cantatas and choir works.
- <sup>15</sup> Kodály: Hungarian Folkmusic 1925.

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# FROM REMOTE BORNEAN VILLAGES TO THE MODERN CLASSROOM

by Chong Pek Lin

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## Introduction

I am honored to be one of the keynote speakers for this symposium and grateful for the opportunity to share my research with scholars and music educators from around the world. The theme for this year's symposium, "*Village Voices in Global Harmony*" really resonates with me personally. For over 20 years, I have dedicated considerable time and effort to a singular mission: to record and transcribe songs from remote villages in the interior of Borneo before they disappear, and to bring them to the attention of the public, with the hope that schoolchildren, choirs, and music lovers around the world would be able to partake of these musical gems. I embarked on this mission as a direct result of the influence of the Kodály philosophy. In 1994, when my fellow Malaysian music lecturers and I attended an introductory course on the Kodály method, we were fired up with enthusiasm, but subsequently, became frustrated for we were unable to implement it properly. There was one vital tool we lacked: a collection of local folksongs, particularly those with tone-sets suitable for the beginning stages of a Kodály program. In addition, I was desperately short of local repertoire for my choir. Inspired by the work of Kodály and Bartók, I resolved to search for songs from my own home state of Sarawak, in southwestern Borneo.

Research in the Sarawak Museum archives led me to the hypothesis that, among the state's twenty-seven indigenous groups, it was the Kenyah who were most likely to possess a substantial repertoire of songs. Both Kenyah and Kayan are widely known for their skill in playing the *sape*, a boat-lute, but few are aware of the extent of their choral skills. In their reports, British colonial officers who travelled upriver mentioned the fondness of the Kenyah for choral singing but did not include any transcriptions. I was further convinced after learning several Kenyah songs from my *sape* teacher, a retired Kayan headmaster who had been serving extensively in Kenyah areas. Thus, in 1996, I took two years study leave to pursue a master's degree (with a research focus on Kenyah songs and dance) and began my forays into the far interior of Borneo, where the Kenyah live.

Borneo, the third largest island in the world consists of five political entities (Figure 1): the Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah, the Malaysian federal territory of Labuan, the Indonesian province of Kalimantan, and Brunei.

The Kenyah traditionally dwell in the heart of Borneo, near the border between East Malaysia (Sarawak) and Indonesia (Kalimantan). Their villages are located on the upper reaches of four major rivers of Borneo the Baram and Balui rivers of Sarawak, and the Kayan and Mahakam rivers in Kalimantan. In the past there were also large populations in the Apo Kayan plateau in Kalimantan and the now deserted Usun Apau plateau in Sarawak (Figure 2).

The Kenyah, like many other Bornean peoples, dwell in longhouses such as the one at Uma Sambop shown in Figure 3 where I discovered many delightful songs. A longhouse can be described as a village under a single continuous roof, somewhat like a condominium block on one level with each family occupying one unit. You will notice that it is raised on stilts 5-6 feet above ground level.





Fig. 1: Map of Malaysia and Borneo  
[https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/malaysia\\_map.htm](https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/malaysia_map.htm)



Fig. 2: Sketch Map of Borneo showing location of Kenyah homeland (Chong, 2013)



Fig. 3: Longhouse at Uma Sambop, Balui river, Sarawak (2008)

In the past, this was vital for security as Borneo was once plagued with frequent inter-tribal warfare. The entrance staircase was a detachable one and could be pulled up at night. Nowadays, the stilts serve primarily as protection from floodwaters. Most Kenyah villages are located near a river, and during the rainy season, the water-level can rise more than 30 feet overnight, something I experienced in January 2009. Around 3 A.M. one morning, I was awakened by a cacophony of sounds: everyone was rushing around trying to rescue gas tanks, boats and other possessions usually stored under the longhouse from being swept away by the swift currents.



Fig. 4: Kenyah men performing Saga Lupa, Long Moh, Baram River, Sarawak (2004)



Fig. 5: *Datun Julud* (group dance) accompanied by ensemble, Long Moh, Baram River (2004)

The individual family apartments open onto a wide common veranda where the villagers gather for music making and dance. Figures 4 and 5 show typical musicking activities on longhouse verandas in which I participated, including dance accompanied by Kenyah music ensembles, consisting of *sape*, *jatung utang*, and an assortment of other instruments. As I soon found out, any visitor to a Kenyah longhouse is expected to perform a dance, complete with accessories such as hornbill feathers, after the whole gathered community sings a song of invitation.

Travelling in the interior of Borneo requires complicated logistics and considerable expense. My journeys, however, have been wondrous and fruitful, yielding a musical treasure of over a hundred songs. I have witnessed spectacular scenery and become intimately acquainted with a people whose lifestyle is completely different from my own. Despite the spartan conditions in which they live, they have nurtured an amazingly sophisticated music culture. Quoting from an address by László Vikár, distinguished ethnomusicologist and research assistant to Kodály:<sup>1</sup>

*Whenever we went to a region for the first time the choice of location was of decisive importance. Good results could only be hoped for in villages situated far from the railway line and the main routes of bus connections, which could be reached by cart or on foot exclusively (Vikár, 1995).*

For research in Borneo, a land of mighty rivers, the last phrase could be modified to “villages which could be reached by boat exclusively.” In the past, the only way to reach a Kenyah village would have been by boat, maneuvering over dangerous rapids, a skill at which the Kenyah are highly adept (Figure 6).



Fig. 6: Traveling by boat on the upper Baram River (2004)

Nowadays, it is more economical, though equally risky, to travel by land, utilizing the rough and ill-maintained logging roads built by timber companies. Aside from travel, the most difficult hurdle I had to overcome was translation. There are over forty different indigenous groups in Borneo, each with their own language, and the Kenyah make up less than two percent of the population. This is further complicated by the existence of over twenty dialects and the fact that, as yet, no Kenyah dictionary has been published. In addition, the younger generation of Kenyah, and those who live in urban areas, are unfamiliar with the nuances of the poetic song language. Conducting the research itself was fraught with uncertainties. There is no public electricity supply in the hinterland of Sarawak. Villagers have to purchase their own generators, powered by drums of diesel which are exceedingly expensive due to the cost of transport. Consequently, most villagers seldom switch on their generators. When I spent two weeks in Long Moh in 2009, I had to make numerous trips picking my way precariously across the ill-maintained suspension bridge to the school (on the opposite side of the river) to charge my camera batteries.

Yet it is imperative that these songs be documented as this musical tradition is fading away. Factors accelerating the loss include the following:

1. Rural-urban migration: Many villages are half empty as the majority prefer to seek employment in the towns. For instance, Long Moh's population dropped from 600 residents in 2004, to 100 in 2009, then dwindled to only 50 in 2020.
2. Due to the risk and expense of travel to the nearest schools, children are routinely sent to boarding schools from the age of seven. Thus, they are away from the village most of the time and the repertoire is not being passed on.
3. The building of mega dams has drastically altered the communal lifestyle in which this musical repertoire was nurtured. For example, the Bakun dam displaced ten thousand people from fifteen Balui villages, and the Baram dam, if built, would displace twenty thousand from twenty-six villages.

These factors have also accelerated the loss of instrumental repertoire and the near extinction of rare instruments such as the *lutong kayu* (a board zither, see Figure 7) the nose flute, and the *kedire*' (mouth organ).



Figure 7: Documenting the *lutong kayu* repertoire, Long Semiyang, Baram River (2004)

## Children's songs

In 1996, I was fortunate to be able to hitch a ride on a boat to Long Moh in the Upper Baram. The children were from boarding school as it was the Christmas holidays (Figure 8) thus enabling me to document several children's songs such as *Tai Uyau Along* (Figure 9 and video-clip 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHaxZdT1Mes>). The lyrics are delightfully cheeky, and reflect a rural agrarian lifestyle, so unlike the sanitised songs composed for Malaysian school programs.



Fig. 8: Documenting children's songs, Long Moh, Baram River (1996)

Tai U - yau A - long le me - sih - A - sin a - lak ca - kelem  
 6 pung tai - ee kelem - pung tai - ee iya ti - ga iya ti -  
 11 ga u - kok mu - la U - bi ngan je - lai ba - a ha - ha ha!

Fig. 9: Transcription of *Tai Uyau Along*, Baram version (Chong, 1998)

### Lyrics

*Tai Uyau Along lemesih*  
*Asin alak ca' kelepung taiee*  
*Kelepung taiee iya tiga*  
*Iya tiga ukok mula*  
*Ubi ngan jelai baa, ha - ha - ha*

### Translation

Uyau Along went fishing  
 Alas all he caught was a lump of dung!  
 A lump of dung is good  
 Good for planting  
 Potato, maize and rice

Unfortunately, the time for music-making is usually at night after daily chores are completed. As generators are often in a state of disrepair and neighbours often not around (leading to adjacent sections of the veranda being unlit), my recordings were often dimly lit, utilizing only oil-lamps (Figure 10).



Fig. 10. Learning songs by lamp light, Long Moh, Baram River (2009)

Daytime recordings such as the next one below are a treasure. I discovered this song sung to entertain children during a visit to Long Moh in January 2020. In this recording (video-clip 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rea6bzQjd4E>) Ulau Lupah and Ungan Anyie sing *Tut Uyat* while imitating the movements of a cork puppet (*uyat piping*) controlled by a musician playing the *sambe asal / sambe bali dayong*. This is an older form of the *sape* (broader, short-necked, with two strings tuned a third apart). The second part of the video features an earlier recording of the musician *cum* puppeteer, the late Lian Langgang, playing the accompaniment while simultaneously maneuvering the cork puppet's acrobatic antics. I was fortunate to have recorded this in 2009 as Lian, the last remaining exponent of this repertoire in the Baram, passed away in 2017. The *sambe asal* repertoire (markedly different in style and context from contemporary *sape* repertoire) may well have disappeared with his passing.

Fig. 11: Transcription of *Tut Uyat* as sung in Long Moh (Chong, 2020)

**Lyrics**

Ne pen tang tut tut  
 Na pen tang tut uyat  
 Ne pen tang tut tut  
 Na pen tang tut uyat

**Translation**

{vocables}  
 Uyat refers to *Uyat piping*, the cork  
 puppet manipulated by the *sambe*  
*dayong* player

The song is ideal for preschool or elementary Kodály music classes, with a tetratonic melody (tone-set *s, d r m*) accompanied by an *ostinato* (*d s, s, d*).

***Belian dado'*** (Dance-songs)

The bulk of the repertoire that I have collected come from the category *belian dado'* or dance-songs. *Belian dado'* are traditionally sung *a cappella*, accompanied only by rhythmic stamping on the wooden floor. The atmosphere is relaxed, and anyone present is welcome to join in at any time. One such example (*Kuda Pa' Ali*) from Uma Sambop is featured in video-clip 3 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r\\_iG9jiLptA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_iG9jiLptA) and illustrated in Fig. 12.



Fig. 12: *Belian dado'*, Uma Sambop, Balui river (2008)

The majority (75%) are pentatonic, with lyrics often revolve around the joy of getting together for song and dance, pining for absent friends, or a variety of other themes. In addition, at least 45% were sung in two-part harmony, making them attractive to both music teachers and choral conductors. The following table (Figure 13) shows the partial analysis of twelve *belian dado'*, demonstrating the variety of tone-sets<sup>1</sup> and the richness of the cultural context.

As teaching materials, they serve the dual purpose of illustrating musical concepts present in a standard school curriculum (such as solfa, tone-set, metre, rhythm) and the characteristics of a specific Asian folk tradition (such as anhemitonic and hemitonic pentatonic modes, melisma, and asymmetrical form). They are also highly unusual in that they display multipart, homophonic harmony.

	Title of Song	Tone set	Mode	Theme
1	<i>Abe Na'on Nekun</i>	<i>s, t, d r m f</i> ( <i>d m f s l t a</i> )	Hemitonic So-hexatonic	Escape from enemy tribe
2	<i>Bampa Lale</i>	<i>d r m s l d' r' m'</i>	Do-pentatonic	Longing
3	<i>Chin M'bi</i>	M: <i>s, l, t, d r m s</i> H: <i>d m s l d'</i>	Major	Invitation to dance
4	<i>Ilun Kuai</i>	M: <i>s, l, d r m</i> H: <i>m s l</i>	Do-pentatonic	<i>Argus pheasant</i> (Protected bird)
5	<i>Kuda Pa' Ali</i>	<i>d r m s l d' r' m'</i>	Do-pentatonic	Merry making
6	<i>Lan-e</i> version 1 (Baram)	M: <i>s, l, d r m s l</i> H: <i>r m s l d' r'</i>	Do-pentatonic	Merry making/ Invitation to dance
7	<i>Lan-e Tuyang</i> version 1	M: <i>s, l, d r m s</i> H: <i>s, d r m s l d'</i>	Re-pentatonic	Welcoming guests
8	<i>Liling</i>	M: <i>s, l, d r m s l d'</i> H: <i>s l d'</i>	Do-pentatonic	Merry making
9	<i>Mudung Ina</i>	<i>l, d r m s</i>	Do-pentatonic	Mountain, animals
10	<i>Sayang Dau</i>	<i>s, l, d r m f s l t d'</i>	Major	Love
11	<i>Ule Kun Along</i>	<i>l d r m</i>	La-tetratonic	Farewell
12	<i>Telu Tiang</i>	<i>t, d r m f s l</i>	Major	Quiet gathering

Figure 13: Table showing analysis of several *belian dado'*  
(extracted from Chong, 2013)

Kenyah multipart singing has intrigued me. Singing in harmony is a skill they acquire early in life, merely by listening and direct participation. Apparently, it does not (as many educators believe) require years of training and music literacy to achieve. Several songs, such as *Lan-e* are always sung in harmony, with melodic variations in the solo prelude for different villages as illustrated in **video-clip 4** (Long Semiyang, 2005; Long San 1996) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HORZZ7CEwh0> and **video clip 5** (Long Moh 1996). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phahT5-t0Ms>.



The image shows a musical score for the song 'Lan-e'. It consists of four systems, each with a Chorus part and a Leader part. The lyrics are in Malay and English. The score is in 4/4 time and features traditional Kenyah harmony with intervals of fourths, fifths, thirds, sixths, and octaves.

System 1:  
 Chorus (Kerawang): Lan  
 Leader: Men-chai ke - nai ne lo' i - ko ti - ang me - tik Lan

System 2:  
 Chorus: su - ngai li - mun lan  
 Leader: su - ngai me - tik su - ngai li - mun lan

System 3:  
 Chorus: ka - nan Ne - lan ne - lan  
 Leader: ka - nan ah Ne - lan ne - lan

System 4:  
 Chorus: e ne - lan e ne - lan e  
 Leader: e e - ne - lan ne - lan e ne - lan e

Fig. 14: Transcription of *Lan-e* as sung in Long Selatong (Chong, 2020)

**\* Lyrics**

*Mencat kenai*  
*Ne lo' iko tiang metik*  
*Lan sungai*  
*Metik sungai limun kanan*  
*Nelan-e*

**Translation**

Seldom do you come  
 My friends you have travelled upriver  
 This river  
 Up this great river  
 Truly so

\*Apart from the context of welcoming guests, this song sometimes appears, with different lyrics, as an invitation to dancers to perform. This occurs in the recording from Long Semiyang (video-clip 5) where the lyrics *Miling Mubai* meaning “pivot turn” refers to the central movement in a solo dance.

As shown in the above transcription of *Lan-e* (Fig. 14) Kenyah traditional harmony differs from Western Classical harmony in that interval of the fourth and fifth often occur in succession, interspersed with thirds, sixths, and octaves.

**Video-clip 6** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haZuTmA\\_CMw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haZuTmA_CMw) shows a stage performance of *Lan-e* (first song in the medley presented) in 2019, with added piano accompaniment and choreographed dance-movements based on Kenyah dance-movement vocabulary.

**Video-clip 7** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNjGi65wDA&t=1s> presents a virtual choir performance by St Joseph's School Chamber Choir, Kuching, featuring *Lan-e* as the second song (beginning at 1:29) in a medley arranged by their conductor,

Benedict Lo based on my transcriptions. The performance won a gold award in the 2nd World Virtual Choir Festival 2020. I am overjoyed that, with this achievement, Benedict and his students have brought Bornean songs to a global stage.

### Adaptations for Stage

In trying to portray this repertoire to the urban populace in stage-performance contexts, several adaptations have been made.

(i) **Adding accompaniment**, beginning with western classical instruments such as the piano and cello. As this seemed to irritate many ethnomusicologists, I tried to employ traditional Kenyah instruments such as sape and jatung utang. However, these instruments are limited in application as they can only play in one key. Each jatung utang, a wooden pentatonic xylophone, is tuned to a specific key while sape can be retuned but the process is a time-consuming one, impossible to carry out during a live performance.

(ii) **Choreography**: Adding a greater variety of choreographed movements, selecting from the movement vocabulary of different Kenyah solo and group dance repertoire

(iii) **Modifying the tempo** to keep the interest of the audience

(iv) **Language**: As far as possible the original language was retained. However, as most Malaysians are unfamiliar with Kenyah, we sometimes performed translated versions in Malay (the national language of Malaysia) alternating with verses in Kenyah, or conveyed the meaning through dramatization.

The next two songs, both documented from Long Moh, were incorporated into musical dramas performed by students of ITE (Institute of Teacher Education) Batu Lintang under my direction. *Chut Tunyang* (transcription in Fig. 15, **video-clip 8**, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgxevgZGRJA>), which literally means *Step in the mud*, is the lament of a young man who has to slink away in the dark after being rejected by the girl he admires. Together with seven other songs, this was woven into a mini-opera entitled *Love Triangle in the Baram* (**video-clip 9** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zK4\\_s4Hc7TM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zK4_s4Hc7TM)). With its pentatonic tone-set (*s, l d r m s*) this is a suitable song for elementary school. The main instrument here, in traditional as well as in stage context, is the *jatung utang*, which I have been attempting to popularize as an attractive instrument for use in schools.

Be' un U - tan ke - loh ke - na se - pak me - lu Se - lem se -  
 yang chut tun - yang na' ma - u Chut tun -

lem yang tai'ee na' me du lu Sai'ee a - me di - a ku - a si - lung a -

su Chut tun - yang Chut tun - yang na' ma - u Chut tun

Fig. 15: Transcription of *Chut Tunyang* as sung in Long Moh (Chong and Lajinga, 2011)

**Lyrics**

*Be'un Utan keloh kena sepak melu*

*Selem-selem taiee na' me dulu*

*Saiee ame dia kua silung asu?*

*Chut tunyang, chut tunyang na' mau*

**Translation**

The young lady doesn't want the betel nut (symbol of courtship)

Secretly I slip away

So ashamed, does my face resemble a dog's?

Stepping in the mud, stepping in the mud at night

The next song, *Telu Tiang* (transcription in Fig. 16, **video-clip 10**, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoyHZ3VBcZE>) features one of Long Moh's leading singers Sigau Langat as the soloist. This song was one of several incorporated into a musical drama based on a local Iban legend entitled *Dayang Petri and the Magic Rice*, performed by ITE Batu Lintang in 2007 (**video-clip 11** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyFhrzKyBpA>). The gentle, lyrical tune conveys the atmosphere of a quiet night on the longhouse verandah, and the lyrics describe the sentiments of friends who meet too rarely but gather now in close comradeship.

Te-lu ti - ang ti - pa lan te-pat ka - u Te-lu ti -  
 Te-lu ti - ang men - jat ne te-lu ji - tu Te-u ti -  
 ang nen - tuk lan ka - yu nen - tuk ka - yu lu - nang lan lia -  
 ang ba - tung lan u - sah Ba-tung u - sah e - yong i -  
 an ne lan - e ne - lan - e  
 nan ne lan - e ne - lan - e

Fig. 16: Transcription of *Telu Tiang* as sung in Long Moh (Chong, 1998)

**Lyrics**

*Telu tiang tipa lan tepat kau*

*Telu tiang nentuk lan kayu*

*Nentuk kayu lunang lan lian*

*Nelan-e, nelan-e*

*Telu tiang menjat ne telu jita*

*Telu tiang batung lan usa*

*Batung usa eyong inan*

*Nelan-e, nelan-e*

**Translation**

Dear friends we sit here reminiscing

Dear friends by the light of the firewood

By the light of the dying embers

Truly so, truly so

Dear friends too seldom do we meet

Dear friends we gather now in close

comradeship

Truly this is so

**Bringing the songs to schools**

As a music education lecturer for over 25 years, I had the privilege of involving my students in my projects. Teams of talented students assisted me as facilitators during workshops introducing East Malaysian songs and instruments to teachers and schoolchildren (Fig. 17). Books featuring the songs were also made available to the schools.



Fig. 17: Introducing the *jatung utang* during a workshop for schools, Bintulu, Sarawak (2008)

**Video-clip 12** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feY9ZcQ4pvo> features one of the workshops we conducted in 2008 using funds from the ISME-Gibson award bestowed on me during the ISME<sup>2</sup> world conference in 2006.

From 2011 to 2012, I also enlisted the help of teacher-trainees and serving teachers to teach 4-5 Kenyah songs over a period of 8 weeks during music lessons in fifteen primary schools, including Malay-medium and Chinese medium schools. I also personally taught a Year-5 class. The reactions of the children to the songs were gauged both quantitatively and qualitatively through written responses to questionnaires as well as through direct observation. Even though over 90% of the children were unacquainted with Kenyah culture and language, we had surprisingly positive results. Their responses showed a genuine appreciation of the characteristics of Kenyah melodies. The children could also sense that the songs were unlike those in their standard texts, in that they had a living cultural context. Their value lay far beyond the narrow objectives of ‘musical concepts.’ The lyrics could spark discussions on a host of topics, such as folk tales, endangered animals and courting rituals. Thus, these songs would be invaluable material for teachers in areas such as environmental studies. They also provide insights into aspects of rural life which echo those of a great many other indigenous groups around the globe.

Finally, what about the opinion of the culture-bearers? Many were surprised at my interest and touched to see the wide appreciation of the songs from non-Kenyah communities. Recently through social media platforms such as face-book, I was able to gauge the reactions of Kenyah from both sides of the border. **Video-clip 13** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NvT0qCp6Gw> features a recording of a recontextualized performance of a *belian dado*’ from Long Moh entitled *Bampa Lale* (Transcription in Fig. 18) with piano and cello accompaniment. It is a pensive song, sung in honour of guests, tinged with sadness as visitors to upriver longhouses may never come by again. I posted it on the page of a Facebook group named *Lagu Kenyah* which has over 10,000 members from across both Sarawak and Kalimantan and was delighted to receive their enthusiastic support and approval.

Pe-ke-re-go A-ke ti-ang pa-sa Lan-ka-lo  
 Pa-sa' ka-lo su-ngai lan-ka nan Oi  
 yois ne lan-e ti-ang Bam-pa-la-le lan-e

Fig. 18: Transcription of *Bampa lale* as sung in Long Moh (Chong, 2006)

**Lyrics**

*Pekerego ake tiang pasa'  
 Lan kalo  
 Pasa' kalo sungai lan kanan*

**Translation**

My voice quavers  
 Like a branch trembling  
 A branch trembling in the swift flowing river

**Chorus**

*Oi yois ne-lan e tiang  
 Bampa lale lane*

**Chorus**

Oh, my friends  
 We miss you/long for you, truly so

This presentation would be incomplete without your participation. Let us sing along now (refer to score in Fig. 14) with a recording of *Lan-e* in traditional Kenyah harmony

[**Audio-clip** <https://www.dropbox.com/s/w8oelq84ertxpuj/Lan-e%20audio%20extract.mp3?dl=0> ]

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**Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> Dr. László Vikár (1929–2017) was a student of Kodály and the former head of the Folk Music Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.
- <sup>2</sup> M = melody; H = harmony; Ending tone: bold font; s, denotes low *sol*, etc.
- <sup>3</sup> International Society for Music Education

[Keynote presented at the 25th International Kodály Symposium in August 2021, Katowice, Poland – online]

# “EDUCATIONAL BUREAUCRATS! LET THE CHILDREN SING!”

(Zoltán Kodály)

by Soma Szabó

*Artistic Director, Cantemus Choral Institute, Nyíregyháza, Hungary*  
*Artistic Director, Banchieri Singers*

From time to time, people emerge who would like to think that they are smarter than Kodály. Those who lack a deep understanding of the basic principles and driving forces of the Kodály principle, or fail to recognize the system’s infinite openness and potential for development might falsely believe this pedagogical concept to be outdated. The critics of the Kodály Method believe that there is overemphasis on the national consciousness, or they are taken aback by the concept of community, or they believe that the passing on of values is an outdated idea. Sometimes they dislike the most important attribute of the method, i.e. that it is far more than a music pedagogy system. The “Kodály Method” (although ‘concept’ would be a better choice of words) develops a human being, its main purpose being the development of an educated, cultured, and sophisticated person who is able to make conscious decisions and detects the difference between right and wrong. It develops a human being who is not only self-conscious but values the community. Given today’s prevalent philosophy of “prioritize yourself”; this does indeed seem to be an outdated concept, but I believe that even the masterminds of this philosophy of selfishness cannot escape the realization that this approach has only a temporary yield and no future. It is questionable whether or not they actually intend to classify pedagogy, the art of building the future, as inferior to the purposes of momentary gain. Today’s world wants to replace ‘being sophisticated’ with ‘being informed’. Instead of the wonders of infinite human achievements, it promotes being up-to-date and following trends. It is obvious that we cannot live in the past and we need to face the realities surrounding us. However, those regarding the Kodály Method as unnecessarily ‘dwelling on the past’ do not understand its principles.

I am lucky to live on one of the few remaining islands of wonders. Although few of these have survived in Hungary, it is evident that schools still offering real music specialization classes with an excellent music educator have a higher standard of not only music but general education – quite an enviable status quo. Globally speaking, the Kodály Method is held in high regard from Japan to the USA. The world deems it enviable, a model worthy of following. They are striving for a quick and easy adaptation of the method in order to implement it in the given country with success. This is why many have visited Hungary to study the method in the past several decades. Although they do not understand the ideology and the philosophy of the method, they are trying to take certain simple details of the method and adapt it with more or less success.

The Zoltán Kodály Primary School (Kodály Zoltán Általános Iskola) in Nyíregyháza, Hungary, has had a working music specialization program for 60 years. This music specialization program that has ceased to exist officially involves 3 to 4 music lessons per week (depending on the given grade), as well as regular participation in choir work starting from the 3rd grade. The schools that have been able to keep this extended number of weekly lessons despite the new educational measures also have an outstanding choir that is still active.

*“Our task can be summarized in one word: education.”* (Kodály, 1934, Musical home mission)

The significance of choir singing is not limited to us proudly referencing the outstanding results achieved by our choirs at international competitions. Kodály always emphasized the importance of choral singing. We, who grew up with it and still have it as an integral part of our lives, are aware of how right he was. Children growing up in this music specialization system experience things that are not accessible anywhere else: sophistication – which is slowly disappearing from our modern life –, the art of taking into account the community and paying attention to each other, they learn order and discipline, and most importantly, they get the wondrous artistic experience resulting from hard work. As such, these children receive something in the music specialization programs that is not available anywhere else. (It is quite symbolic that my spell checker underlined the word *zenetagozat* “music specialization” in red.)

It is unfortunate that since Kodály’s death, multiple generations of educational administrators have misunderstood the essence of the Kodály Method, resulting in such decisions that propelled us to the brink of the abyss. The situation looks quite bleak today. The concept of music specialization in schools being canceled and the number of music lessons in schools being reduced to virtually zero have resulted in the total loss of prestige of music teaching as a profession. This has obviously led to an adverse selection in teacher training. Only those are choosing to become music teachers who are not good at anything else. And again, what kind of magic can we expect from a music teacher whose meek one lesson per week reduces them to the periphery of the teaching staff, and who would need to represent the values of this subject with authenticity in front of adolescents? The Kodály Method is slowly and steadily being bled out, so anyone can justly deem it as useless like an animal with its throat slashed open.

The method once referred to as “Hungarikum” (i.e. a unique and distinctive, typically Hungarian attribute – translator’s note) is approaching complete annihilation. *“Referring to the Kodály Method as Hungarikum today is like proudly showcasing award-winning Tokaji Aszú wine, while not cultivating any more grapevines”* (Dénes Szabó, 2014).

In the course of my work, I have daily experience with all levels of our educational system, from the primary to the teacher training college. In cooperation with the Banchieri Singers and the Szabolcs Symphonic Orchestra, I have organized about 30 youth concerts annually for decades in the regular primary schools and high schools within Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county. I do not believe that we should accept the fact that children think the tuba looks like the flute, or they cannot recall the name of the composer of the Hungarian National Anthem. In the Secondary School of Arts in Nyíregyháza (Nyíregyházi Művészeti Szakgimnázium) only those students are familiar with solmization (and can read music and can write down a melody with the correct notations) who completed their studies at the Zoltán Kodály Primary School. The majority of students still have difficulty with the notation of a single part melody from the classical period at the graduation exams, even though they are intending to become music experts. Unfortunately, the situation at the teacher training program of the University of Nyíregyháza is not that much better either. Despite all their efforts, the students’ lack of basic level training puts them at such a disadvantage that they simply cannot catch up. This projects a discouraging picture regarding the education standard for future generations.

The situation can be accurately summarized by recalling Kodály’s words from a speech he gave in 1937 in Nyíregyháza, Hungary: *“I see the reason for the failure of*

*music education in schools within the lack of three things: TEACHING STAFF, CURRICULUM, AND TIME.*” (1937 Nyíregyháza, “Musical life in a provincial town”)

The current problem is the same as in 1937. Due to the above mentioned prestige loss and the lack of fundamental music education of those entering the teacher training programs, the teaching staff are unable to fulfill their duties. Compared to the situation in 1937, we might have a more developed curriculum today, although there are several things that should be revisited. On the one hand, the different kinds of publications pose challenges to, for example, primary schoolers on a scientific level that completely disregard the age-related characteristics of the children. As such, without emotional motivation, these publications become a useless heap of data. On the other end of the spectrum, we find devalued materials that give in to current trends and point towards pop culture. I found a training program online that claims to teach pop music with the Kodály Method. This is an oxymoron in itself, since Kodály regarded only the highest quality worthy of being passed on to children. “*There is no compromise when it comes to Hungarianness and art.*” (Kodály, Debrecen 1957)

The issue of time, i.e. the number of music lessons per week in schools, is the main problem, the proverbial knife held to the Kodály Method’s throat. One music lesson per week does not a music education make!

As for a solution for building the future, I regard the proposal by Dénes Szabó that he submitted to the Hungarian Academy of Arts in 2014 as a noteworthy idea to consider. The simplified gist of his proposal is as follows: as a long term goal, he proposes the establishment of 100 primary schools that offer music specialization. The method for establishing these schools involves allocating those schools that currently have a high quality active music specialization program as base points. The new schools offering music specialization are to be established close to these. The base point schools that have a successful program running would closely work together with the new ones (sitting in on lessons, school inspections, choir academy<sup>1</sup>, choir meets etc.), sharing their invaluable insight to facilitate the new program’s development. In time, all county seats should have a working base point school, and, connected to these, 4 or 5 other schools offering a music specialization program within the county. Of course, there are conditions that need to be fulfilled to achieve this, as follows:

1. An expert teacher (one who is trained at the highest level and possesses a good aptitude for pedagogy),
2. A supportive school principal (one who understands the importance of the Kodály Method and gives priority to music as a subject),
3. A dedicated mayor (who is confident in the spiritual and cultural development of the Hungarian nation),
4. An adequate number of lessons: 4 music lessons per week for all grades, adequate choir work: 2 lessons per week for grades 3 and 4, 3 lessons per week for grades 5 through 8,
5. An adequate curriculum: coursebooks and repertoire that have been proven successful within the practices of base point schools.

Our task is, therefore, to resolve this two-faced situation. On the one hand, we have the last remaining forts of music specialization programs (with an extended number of music lessons per week) that are still providing outstanding quality music education, and on the other hand, we have the majority of schools in Hungary where music education has been almost completely eradicated. Kodály’s country finds itself in an extremely polarized situation. Then again, let’s not forget his words: “Music should be-



long to everyone”. We cannot accept a status quo where only a selected elite can reap the benefits of this type of education. Our purpose must be to enable more students to have access to a sophisticated and value-based paradigm. We must strive for a learning environment where all – from the mayor and the principal through the math teacher and to all children – have absolute faith in the Kodály education system. This has to be an axiom that is beyond reproach or disputes. We need to raise public awareness for not only recognizing the successes of choirs achieved in the last decades, but for the numerous studies and ample research that prove the all-encompassing, universal effects of music education (i.e. the works of Klára Kokas, Erzsébet Barkóczy, Csaba Pléh, Tamás Freund, and several researchers in Canada, the UK, and Germany). We need to make the public and especially the decision makers who influence education aware of the importance of music education. And whenever we stand in front of our students, we teachers must have unwavering faith in our work being of utmost importance. Our lesson is the most important one, because a music lesson provides the most viable platform to help avoid the confusion of values in our world flooded with information. Given my experiences in various countries of the world, I am still convinced that there is no pedagogical methodology that would work better or be more useful and more complex or influence all areas of life better. We should believe in Kodály’s words. Let’s not try to be smarter than him.

#### Endnote

- <sup>1</sup> Choir Academy refers to weekly choir events that have been taking place in Nyíregyháza for years. During these events, the members of the Cantemus Choir are joined by enthusiastic students from nearby schools. It is important to fine tune the number of highly trained and beginner singers so that the valuable time spent together really helps students’ development. The repertoire studied during the year is always showcased at the Singing Youth event by the choir of the Choir Academy.

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# NOSTALGIA VERSUS REALITY

Only close international collaboration can offer the promise of success

by Gilbert De Greeve

*Past President of the International Kodály Society,  
Director Emeritus of the Antwerp State Music Academy*

Many years ago I read a very intriguing statement: “*tradition is something we have to know well, to avoid stepping into it...*”

Does that mean that tradition is worthless? Of course not. But tradition is much more something that we have ‘to learn’ from than something that we should be nostalgic about or firmly hold on to, to preserve... Because the danger is very big that tradition becomes folklore... And although, as such, there is absolutely nothing wrong with folklore, I do not think that it is what Kodály meant when he outlined his vision on music education for everyone.

In fact, dear colleagues, it is very simple: when we would get stuck in tradition there would be no evolution anymore. And evolution is the only way to cope with all the challenges of the present and future time.

In a lecture in 1925 with the title *Hungarian Folk Music* Zoltán Kodály said: “*Rural Hungary has preserved the continuity of traditions. It is our job to take over from it and to cultivate them further.*”

Let me repeat the last words of his statement: “*to cultivate them further.*” And as we all know, that means evolution; an evolution that finds the right and healthy balance between the *core* of the intention, which is good music education, and the necessary adaptation to cultural, social and global challenges, linked to specific geographic and demographic circumstances.

All this said, please will allow me to become very realistic and look at a part of the ‘tradition’ of which I, personally, have been a key witness.

So let me begin with some history.

My first contact with the Kodály Method was in early 1972 when the late Gábor Friss gave a one-week Seminar at the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp. One-and-a-half years before I had become the Director of the newly founded *State Music Academy of Antwerp* in September 1970. This Academy was the first ‘official’ school that was allowed to accept children from the age of 6 instead of the legally set 8 years old. It was an ‘experiment’ which I organized with the Ministry of Culture in Brussels.

At that time, in Belgium, the *basic course* in music education was so-called *sofège*, based on the French model and absolute system. Although my degrees were in performance and composition, not in education, I quickly realized that the dry *drilling* way in which *sofège* was taught would not work with children of age six. I wanted to keep this very short, therefore in a nutshell. I asked advice to many people, more and less known pedagogues.

Someone said: *Orff*. So I went to a few Orff sessions. Someone said: *Dalcroze*. So I went to visit the Dalcroze Institute in Geneva. Someone said: *Gherels* (an interesting Dutch method), someone said: *Ward* (another interesting Dutch method named after Justine Ward), and there were a few more ones...

And then came Gábor Friss with *Kodály*. I knew Kodály as a great composer but had no idea that there was also a Kodály-method. The Seminar was very interesting and for the first time I heard about what was going on in Hungary. In fact it sounded like a fairy tale and, I have to admit, I was quite skeptical. So, one week later, with the help of Gábor Friss, Mrs. Inge Gabos at the Liszt Academy organized for me a 3-day school visit.

We are still early 1972 when I visited the school at Marczibányi tér and saw classes with the at that time still very young Gabi Thész and the, a little older, Mária Katanics. After 15 minutes I knew that this was what we needed for the program in Belgium. I had many other beautiful moments during that 3-day visit. One in particular I remember: Kati Forrai at Csobánc utca with the, still very young, Helga Dietrich...

After a fundamental difference of opinion about the use of materials (I do not want to go into details) we stopped working with Gábor Friss and, fortunately, I had the great privilege to meet with Professor Szőnyi who became our guide and mentor, a friendship that lasted for 47 years and will in fact go on forever...

So far a little bit of history. Let us return now to reality.

1972. At that time there were in Hungary, as I was told, around 320 primary schools with a daily music program. From 1972 on I saw many of these in various cities. Like people from all over the world did, we also came to Hungary to learn, to observe, to witness the incredible realizations inspired by Zoltán Kodály. Hungarian music education was *the* example for the world. Between 1972 and 1989 I came to Hungary more than 100 times for advice on our Belgian project and for more observation in those exceptional schools.

So, dear colleagues, with the title of my paper being: *Nostalgia versus Reality* let me immediately ask you a question. In 1972 there were around 320 primary schools with a daily music program. How many primary schools with a daily music program are there today...?

I let you answer the question by yourself.

I know that the responsibility for the demise of what was the *ultimate* example of good music education in the world is not your responsibility. I am sure that most of us here, today, would wish that it was still as in the past glorious time. But the reality is different. It is *not* anymore as it used to be and we are not going to get it back by being nostalgic. It is much better to face the reality and to hope that we can plant new seeds in fertile soil. However, that can only work when the seeds are of the highest quality, have in them the *core* of Zoltán Kodály's vision and can grow in soil that is well cultivated.

I am aware that all of this may sound a bit abstract? So let me clarify what I mean.

If I speak about planting new seeds, I am referring to initiatives which respect the *core* of the Kodály vision and, at the same time, adapt to the *specific challenges of our time*. As you can see, there are 2 data: (i) the *core* and (ii) the *specific challenges of our time*.

I have always been convinced –until today– that the *essence* of Kodály's vision is: *music education must lead to musical literacy*. If that intention is no longer the aim, then we better leave out Kodály's name. Therefore I see it as a very negative evolution nowadays that there are –so called– Kodály teachers who seem to opt for a kind of music education with the focus on *entertainment...* or so-called *improvisation* (let the children enjoy and that is it...). The so necessary *learning process* is often very weak or simply totally lacking.

During my 3 terms as President of the International Kodály Society I have been able to closely follow up on the various evolutions and tendencies connected to the applica-

tion of Kodály's vision. Most of these evolutions and tendencies were at least unfortunate and sometimes nothing short of negative. Happily, once in a while I saw the opposite. A few places where Kodály's spirit is still alive and where the core of his vision – musical literacy – is still present. Those positive experiences I want to keep for the conclusion of the paper, so that we can end in a positive mood...

In the course of the last 20 years I have often reflected on: "what is going wrong?" and "what needs to be done to counter the wrong tendencies?" I always came to the same conclusion, a conclusion that for most of you, here present, will be familiar. Let me describe it as follows: in the training of Kodály teachers, often nowadays, the focus has moved from "musicianship" to "methodology". Obviously it has become more important that the future teachers know HOW to apply a *sequence* rather than to master WHAT they have to teach (musically speaking) in that sequence...

A time ago I had an interesting experience. At a Kodály Conference I went to a session targeting "novices" in the Kodály inspired music education. It was a session about one of the very basics: how to teach a new song to children? (Although I have seen these kinds of basic session numerous times already. I was intrigued to see whether it is still done in the same way. Or?...) )

Even today it is hard for me to believe what I saw. It was done in co-teaching by two young Kodály specialists. Seldom before I have seen such brilliant *pedagogues*.

They knew exactly HOW to teach a new song to children... There was only one problem, a big and fundamental problem..., they did not know the little song very well... Their intonation was sloppy, there were little mistakes and little rhythmical problems... (And I am even not counting their total lack of understanding of the *mood* of the little song...) Yet, and let me repeat it, *pedagogically* and *sequentially* speaking, their teaching was brilliant...

So, please, think for a moment about what was happening here...

Well, let me tell you: these young teachers were teaching in a brilliant way...: *mediocrity*. The reason is that they lacked musicianship. There was this big discrepancy between their musical education and their methodological education. There is an eternal law for you, for me and for every teacher in the world, dear colleagues: "you can only pass on to someone else what you know yourself."

I am afraid that this is the most imminent problem which the so-called Kodály world is facing. Nowadays – with some positive exceptions with which I want to finish. In the education of Kodály-inspired teachers the focus seems to have shifted too much towards the *technical* side of the teaching. Of course that is much easier than training someone to become a skilled musician... Do I really have to spell it out for you? How many times have we seen people becoming a *Kodály specialist*... after a few weeks of Summer Course somewhere, which they entered with very little or sometimes no musical formation at all...

In my opinion, that is one side of the problem. The focus of training programs should primarily be on their *musicianship* formation and that is mostly not the case. It really makes little sense to teach them *methodological* sequences or give *research* commitments if their musical level is insufficiently developed.

The other side of the problem, I think, is that many of the Kodály Training Courses focus primarily (if not entirely) on the *methodological-didactical* issues and have disconnected from the ultimate aim, which is *music making*... I know that there are courses who demand their participants to sing in a choir. At least if the number of participants is sufficient to have a choir. That is an excellent form of music making. But it is not the *only* one; there is so much more.

That brings me to the positive example I want to speak of for a moment. A Summer School that is exemplary, not only qua structure but also qua level, concept and representation of the true Kodály spirit. I am talking about the two-week *Summer School* in Brisbane, Australia, organized by Dr. James Cuskelly, as you know a former President of the International Kodály Society.

Before giving you my argumentation why I consider the just mentioned program exemplary and why the whole Kodály world can learn from it let me tell you first that I am sure that there are other exemplary programs from which we can also learn. To mention just one: there is the *International Kodály Seminar* in Kecskemét at the *Kodály Institute*. I am not familiar enough with that course to talk about it in a knowledgeable way and I am sure that I can leave that to the leadership of the Institute.

However, about the Brisbane Summer School I can speak with the necessary authority because I have been closely involved in it for a time already, teaching a piano mainstream and doing coaching and accompaniment in other departments, like vocal and chamber music.

Why do I think that the Brisbane course is exemplary and can be an inspiration for everybody involved in Kodály-inspired music education? Well, I see 3 important reasons: (i) the scope and structure, (ii) the concept and (iii) the continuity.

### **1. The scope and structure**

- This year, in January 2020, there were 330 participants, varying in age from little children to adults and even elders.
- There are 8 levels of musicianship training, each of them taught by a skilled and devoted teacher. Every participant has to do musicianship and sing in one of the 4-5 choirs. That means one-and-a-half hours musicianship class and one hour choir. Together two-and-a-half-hour pure *musicianship* training every day for two weeks...
- Then there is also an abundance of *learning possibilities*. Let me just mention a few. Beside the *normal* music education courses ranging from *Early Childhood Education to Secondary Strands*, there is an *Opera Studio*, an exceptional *Chamber Music Stream*, a brilliant *Jazz Department*, *Instrumental and Vocal Training Courses*, *Musical Theatre*, etc... As you can see, there is an enormous scope of possibilities and everything is well structured with a strong emphasis on Musicianship, not for the least because all participants, also Opera, Chamber Music, individual Instrument, students... everyone has to do a musicianship level and sing in a choir.

### **2. The Concept**

Earlier I mentioned my concern that Kodály Courses have often disconnected from the *music making* and mainly or even completely concentrate on *Methodology and Research*. Because of the *concept* of the Brisbane Course the music making is omnipresent and every participant is permanently *exposed* to great music. At the end of the two weeks the Opera Studio performs an opera with full orchestra and at an excellent level. This year it was *Il trittico* of Giacomo Puccini. For many of the participants it may have been the first time to be exposed to that kind of great musical experience. And there is not only the Opera. In the course of the past years I have heard exceptional performances of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven String Quartets. Last year I coached Brahms' First Piano Trio in B major. This year, one of the students in the Mainstream Piano, a 15-year-old boy from the Sydney Conservatory, did the complete Grieg Piano Concerto. And he told me how much benefit he had from the Musicianship Class and from singing in the SATB Choir, by the way conducted by Dr. László Norbert Nemes.

There are the high standing Choir Performances, including an excellent Jazz Choir, Instrumental Groups, etc. Every day there are concerts.

I can only give you an idea of the offer. Those interested can find everything in the Brochure on the website.

### 3. Consistency

I mentioned also the importance of consistency. It is striking how many of the participants return every year and do the whole range of 8 Musicianship levels. I mentioned the 15-year-old boy from the Sydney Conservatory who did the complete Grieg Concerto. He came last year, came back this year and already announced that he is coming back next year... It proves that the participants found what they were searching for and know that they can learn more every year again... All this thanks to the professional way in which Dr. Cuskelly and his team are organizing the School and to his choices of the best people for the teaching staff.

Let me bring this to a conclusion.

The subtitle of my lecture is: *Only close international collaboration can offer the promise of success.* Kodály said this in 1961 at the *Second International Conference of Musicology* in Budapest. Personally I think that Kodály's words are more important now than ever before.

In the past we all looked at Hungary for the good examples. However, that past is gone and we need to broaden our horizon to good and workable examples anywhere in the world... We have to learn from them, acknowledge them and try to collaborate, at least if we are seriously concerned about the future of Music Education following Kodály's vision.

To finish, let Kodály speak once more. In 1959 he did a lecture: *In Memory of Haydn*, and finished with the following words: *“Well, in spite of the century-old traditions of the Viennese choir, only two Haydns and one Schubert appeared. And a János Richter, too. And the others? They became the public who were able to understand the works of the great ones. For this, however, even seven hundred schools would not be too much. And what if it is precisely in the seven hundred that a Haydn crops up? Our remembrance of Haydn is, therefore, not meditation on the past: his example nourishes our faith and hope in our own artistic and scientific future.”*

Wise words of a great and realistically thinking genius...

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# “KODÁLY CHOIRS” ON TWO DISTANT CONTINENTS, BETWEEN 1995 AND 2019

by Judit Hartyányi

*Master Teacher, Former Co-President of the Hungarian Kodály Society,  
Former Vice President of the IKS*

The planned agenda of our international conference also contained round table discussions. One of these discussions would have been a section with the participation of choral conductors from Hungary and abroad. Since we cannot meet and hold a discussion in person, I imagine us sitting around a table and – in front of an interested audience – sharing our experiences as choral conductors, the joy we find in our work and the challenges we face. Among the invitees, there are two foreign choral experts, Dr. Edward Bolkovac from the US and Susanna Saw from Malaysia, both of whom are amazing musicians and good old friends. The “discussion” with Hungarian colleagues is not going to be in the form of spontaneous and inspirational conversation, but we shall each elaborate on a topic in writing. It is our hope that these co-supporting “puzzle pieces” are going to form a pleasant picture.

The title might be misleading. It is not about choirs named after Zoltán Kodály, but rather assemblies of institutions, schools and communities abroad that have directors and leaders who studied the music educational system advanced by Zoltán Kodály. These choir directors and even their teachers had learned the method that became globally famous and successful. The members of the first generation – like Sister Mary Alice Hein, the founder of the Kodály Program at Holy Names College, whose name was changed to Holy Names University (HNU) in 2004 – were inspired by the persuasive lectures of Zoltán Kodály in the 1960s and started following it or studied at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Budapest. Upon their return to their respective countries, they were soon able to get teacher certification at one of the many summer courses offered, and several of them founded schools.

We probably do not need to explain why Hungarian music teachers went on to spread and disseminate Kodály’s method worldwide. Many students from the Department of High School Music Teacher Training and Choral Conducting at the Liszt Academy, with Erzsébet Szónyi as Head of Department, had an opportunity to spend an academic year or more abroad in order to lay down the foundations of Kodály’s music education method in primary schools and to provide students in teacher training with the necessary introduction to methodology.

I intend to give a short personal account, because I believe that readers might find those details interesting that were a source of so much happiness and memories of beautiful music making in the course of those 24 years indicated in the title. The intensive choir work, facilitated by the lessons learned at solfège and choral conducting courses, connected us spiritually. It was not only our ever-growing knowledge that helped us to overcome difficult tasks, but the emotional bond, finding co-resonance within each other in music.

It was this deep connection that brought back many to the courses in subsequent years, and this was why they attended anniversaries to express their love through singing and remembering together.

I spent most of my time in Oakland, California, where I served as adjunct faculty for one year in the Kodály Program established by Sister Mary Alice Hein in 1968 at then Holy Names College. Following Sr. Mary Alice's retirement in 1990, Ed Bolkovac took on the directorial duties, followed by Anne Laskey from 1995-2015. During her tenure, I taught courses for two semesters in two different years, as well as sixteen summer courses. The choir of the Kodály Program had a varying number of members from year to year (summer to summer), anywhere between a 21-member chamber choir and a 48-member mixed choir. The primary task was to fine-tune the overall sound with appropriate section proportions, as well as develop and stabilize clear intonation. This complex task remained a priority throughout the years, due to the varying number of participants in each summer course.

I need to mention the development of the repertoire: in the course of 24 years, we prepared 20 official end-of-semester concerts. Singers learned around 200 works, most of them in a mere 3 weeks. This means that in each summer course, an average of 8–15 works were learned. These works had varying degrees of difficulty, ranging from – for instance, among the 23 Kodály works (11 for women's choirs and 12 for mixed choirs) – *Shepherds' Christmas Dance* to *Wainamoinen Makes Music*, or from *Cohors generosa* and *Pange lingua* to *An Ode for Music*. A total of 58 works of 15 Hungarian composers, ranging from Ferenc Liszt to Levente Gyöngyösi, were performed at concerts. The repertoire encompassed 150 choral works by several Italian, German, French, English, American, Canadian, Russian, and Czech composers from different eras. To highlight a few: Ives' *Crossing the Bar*, Elgar's *The Dance*, and Rossini's *La Passeggiata*.

A selection from the aforementioned repertoire performed at concerts commemorating the 50th anniversary of the HNU's Kodály Program was published on CD.

Another thought regarding HNU: the participants at the Children's Choral Festival established in 1996 studied under the direction of choral conductors who earned a certificate in Kodály music pedagogy at this institute. The children's choirs – 7 of them each morning and 7 in the afternoon, daily – sang easier pieces for two voices, and at the end of the concert they all sang a pre-appointed work together. The goal was not to have the most number of voices within a piece or learn high difficulty pieces, but rather to achieve a clean, beautiful sound – and to find joy in singing together, of course. The work of teachers fueled by joy and success has resulted in a festival that takes place every two years even today.

Apart from the exciting variety of choral pieces, teachers also found joy in the fact that solmization as a tool greatly facilitated the learning process of the compositions, allowing us to put a greater emphasis on the beauty of interpretation and performance.

During my years spent at HNU, I also had other opportunities to work with choirs. I am mentioning this because the continuous practice and development of sight-reading, as well as the interpretation and understanding of music with the help of relative solmization was truly fulfilling work.

In Cupertino, California, I had the opportunity to teach 5 different choirs of the Crystal "choir family" in the choir camps organized by the extensive and strong Chinese community. The beautiful sound, the high level of preparedness, and the musicality of these choirs served as true inspiration for collaboration. (We studied Hungarian works, e.g. Kodály's *Wainamoinen*, Kocsár's *Gloria*, Szónyi's *Salve Regina*, Levente Gyöngyösi's *Cantate Domino*, Bárdos's *Cantemus*, and Bartók's *Four Slovak Folksongs*.) At the 2004 conference of the Organization of American Kodály Educators (OAKE) in San Francisco, I gave a presentation with the Crystal girls' choir. After the introduction and demonstration of certain parts, they sang the following works as a concert: the first of



the *Four Italian Madrigals* by Kodály, two movements of *Finno-Ugric Landscapes* by Tormis, Busto's *Salve Regina*, and one movement of *Chinese Poems* by Chen Yi. The latter work, composed in 1999, contains unique sound effects and complex imitative motifs, making the use of solmization as essential support – a fact readily recognized by the choir members as well. Their choral conductors knew about “The Kodály concept”, and, as an ensemble participating in European tours and achieving success at festivals, they saw the key to success within the method that helped to grasp the gist of music making.

My American experiences did not only include working with a girls' choir but also with an adult women's choir. In 2007 I was invited by the VOCI women's vocal ensemble for the spring semester. Our weekly rehearsals were spent in good spirits, while working hard to achieve great results. In their case, there were no choral conductors familiar with the Kodály Method in the past, so I was the one introducing Hungarian music pedagogy to them. While the know-how of the university choirs and of the children's and youth choirs always gave impetus to my work, VOCI was not a solmization-using choir. Slowly but surely, they learned to use solmization to clean up certain phrases and melodies, their ears sharpened, and they were more and more striving for clean intonation. After several weeks of practicing, they developed self-control, so they were not always looking to me for corrections. After the rehearsals and concerts, we found mutual joy in the fact that they accepted a new approach – previously unknown to them – to music pieces, and they experienced how useful it was. The pinnacle of our semester together was the recording of 19 works performed at concerts published on CD, including the performance of *Canticum Sponsae* by Erzsébet Szőnyi. It was memorable because this beautiful piece was by far not easy to master. The learning process – apart from learning other pieces as well – required the most effort from choir members but also provided the most delight.

On another continent, in Asia, more specifically in Manila, in the Philippines, I taught on seven occasions. This remotely located country, encompassing more than 7,000 islands that form three main groups from North to South, is quite special in several respects. The city of Manila with a population of 20 million is located in the southern part of the island group in the North. The Kodály Society of the Philippines (KSP) was formed in 1985 as a local organization of the International Kodály Society (IKS). The 13th IKS Symposium was held in Manila in 1997, with the attendance of internationally recognized Hungarian music teachers as presenters. It provided a great opportunity to get to know several other cultures – local music education was especially propelled by the best practices of Kodály's music education system applied in the American and Australian teacher training. The locally organized two-week summer courses usually take place around Easter during the school holidays that are regulated by the arrival of the monsoon season. On average, 50 to 60 music teachers apply to attend this training that offers solfège as well as Kodály Method and conducting technique courses. The attendees have a long commute to reach the venues of the seminar each day in the nearly 40 degrees Celsius heat, first on boats or catamarans and then on buses. Singers with beautiful voices, including a large number of male participants arrive with a significantly differing knowledge base, but all are ready to learn diligently. One of the founding members of the KSP, Miriam Factora, started a revolutionary folksong collecting project 40 years ago. Folk music collected from indigenous peoples on thousands of islands was published in print, with enclosed CDs. These publications served the high purpose of fulfilling Kodály's requirements of providing an ethnomusical foundation, upon which music education can be built. However, the challenging conditions,

the late start of teacher training according to the Kodály Method, and the absence of textbooks amount to a great development gap. This requires a long time to fill and show mass results.

Some of the folksongs in this ethnomusical collection inspired composers to create arrangements for choirs. Tasteful, stylish accompaniments have also been composed for soft-sounding folk instruments made of bamboo and wood. I taught works of four composers to the choir of the summer course. These were performed at the final concert with the attendance of the satisfied and happy composers. I believe it is self-explanatory why the list of works learned during these seven summer courses contain a total of 30 pieces. These include arrangements and original compositions of Kristina Benitez and Augusto Espino. The repertoire also includes the following works: Kodály's *Advent Song*, *A Birthday Greeting* and *Horatii Carmen*, some easier Bárdos pieces, simple madrigals, Britten's *A Hymn to the Virgin*, and Duruflé's *Ubi caritas*. I also heard other great choirs "loosely" associated with the KSP. Some of these might also be known in Hungary, for the choirs going on European tours have been making sure to stop in Hungary ever since the Philippine Madrigal Singers performed with tremendous success in Debrecen. I was invited to conduct rehearsals with two exceptional children's choirs and one youth choir. Let me elaborate on these experiences. The Hail Mary the Queen Children's Choir has toured many parts of the world, and they also earned the Children's Choir of the World award in Llangollen. The artistic directors requested that I teach Kodály's *Dancing Song*, which only required one rehearsal to "snap into place". The excellent abilities of the children and the dedicated work of the ambitious composer/conductor couple, Jude and Maria Vizconde Roldan, have led the ensemble to victory at contests several times. It would be well deserved to list other choirs and mention their achievements, but I am keeping this remembrance short.

We can safely state that Kodály's music pedagogical concept is still alive and effective today and even in far-away countries of different social constructs. There are several countries I did not mention above, where the importance of music education, the cohesive force and the irreplaceable pedagogical effect of singing together are only recognized at the theoretical level, however, their faith seems to dwindle and the actions do not reflect the candor of the words. We need to be courageous enough to believe that the omnipotence of informatics and digital technology is not ultimate. It is the responsibility of the generation of young teachers to commit themselves to the cause and work on achieving the everlasting purpose: raising today's children to become emotionally sensitive and confident adults whose lives are bettered by childhood experiences of making beautiful music.

*Reprinted with the kind permission of the editors from symposium proceedings published as: Mindszenty, Zsuzsánna and Hartyányi, Judit, eds. (2020). Álmodok Szárnyán a Jövőbe – Nemzetközi Zenei Nevelési Konferencia / Hold Fast to Dreams While Embracing the Future – International Music Education Conference. Budapest, Hungary: Hungarian Association of Choirs, Orchestras and Folk Ensembles, pp. 193-200.*

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# SOCIETY NEWS

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## FROM THE OFFICE IN BUDAPEST

Dear Members and Friends of the International Kodály Society,

It is my great pleasure to introduce Krisztina Molnár-Litvai to you as our new IKS Executive Secretary! Krisztina brings much previous experience to this position, having already been an executive secretary for the Hungarian Association of Spanish Teachers, an administrative assistant to the Budapest Klezmer Band Ltd., and as a Spanish language teacher in Hungarian schools. Moreover, she grew up in the Hungarian music education system. We are also grateful to former IKS executive secretaries Lili Vandulek and Boróka Bodacz-Nagy as well as Dr. Zsuzsánna Mindszenty for their excellent work as a search committee to find and recommend Krisztina to the IKS Board.

I also wish to express on behalf of the IKS Board our heartfelt thanks to outgoing Executive Secretary Agnes Sztana, for especially serving the IKS during these two years of pandemic-imposed restrictions, major communication inconveniences, and government paperwork. She accomplished this in the face of her own and her family's significant health challenges. Thank you, Ági!

Regarding the pandemic, if anyone wanted proof of our resilience and resourcefulness as finders, makers, and teachers of quality music, they would have found it in our first ever online symposium this past August 9–13. We extend our heartfelt thanks and congratulations to the local organizing committee in Katowice, Poland: Dominika Lenska, Krzysztof Dudzik, and Łukasz Szmigiel. Their brilliant organization of the symposium proceedings into “Day and Night Editions” made it much easier to accommodate so many time zones around the world. Their mastery of the complex technical issues associated with a worldwide online symposium was amazing to behold, as was also the high quality of the concerts and presentations. We also hasten to thank the administration of their sponsoring institution, the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music, for their generous support and use of facilities to produce such an outstanding symposium. Also, many thanks to the IKS Action Committee for Symposia and Regional Development, chaired by IKS Vice-President Susanna Saw, with members Past President Dr. James Cuskelly, and former Board member Dr. Joy Nelson for their overall symposium guidance and oversight.

To me, one of the most unique aspects of our symposia are the daily keynote addresses. This year's four keynote speakers are featured on the cover of this issue of the *Bulletin*. I am fascinated with how each author's concepts seem so interwoven with and supportive of the other three, perhaps due to the rich potential of the symposium theme of *Village Voices – Global Harmony*. Taken together, these four outstanding keynotes constitute a basic course in what to do, how to do it, and why. May you all find much encouragement in them for your own very important work:

**1. Dr. Anna Waluga**, a pioneer in establishing the Kodály Concept in Poland, reported on the ongoing process to reawaken Polish folksong. Her descriptions of the richness of Polish folk music provide a type of what we may expect to find in other cultures. The Polish experience is full of clues about how all of us might be able to go about restoring the ancient musical treasures of our own peoples to national musical life.

**2. Carol J. Brown's** insightful and poetic metaphors especially draw our attention to the importance of local and regional musical cultures. She cites other authors in ways that help us to not lose sight of the humanity inherent in Kodály's vision. Carol's description of musical diversity is a reminder that Kodály's vision is about much more than mere methodology. She gives us practical examples of how to widen our field of activity to discover, explore, and incorporate nearby resources into our own teaching.

**3. Dr. Zsuzsánna Mindszenty's** equally motivating keynote focuses on how valid the basic principles of Kodály's vision remain in our media-rich and increasingly globalized society. Her personal story about how she—now a gold medal prize-winning conductor and president of the Hungarian Association of Choirs, Orchestras, and Folk Ensembles—came up through the *non-specialized* music schools of Hungary. She makes the point that those of us who teach and make music the Kodály way in “regular” situations are a fundamental part of his vision of “Music for Everyone.”

**4. Dr. Pek Lin Chong's** love for the indigenous peoples of Borneo is infectious. Her desire to share her findings and her generous invitation for us to receive them are heartwarming. Her experiences as an educator-researcher-curriculum author exemplify the multi-faceted kind of teaching musician Kodály envisioned. Her research highlights that there are yet many intact folk cultures in the world to be celebrated and perpetuated in classroom music and on the concert stage before they are overwhelmed by commercialization.

I am also happy to report that planning for the 2023 IKS International Symposium is well underway. Save the dates of July 31 to August 4 for *Connecting Humanity Through Music* in Los Angeles, California. The well-staffed local committee is already energized and hard at work making decisions and arrangements to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first international Kodály symposium. Be sure to check the IKS website for updates.

Lastly, I hope that it is apparent how much we have accomplished together in spite of the challenges and uncertainties of the past two years. My heart is full every time I hear from individual members or leaders of our affiliated national institutional groups. You are all amazing examples of faith in our message, its power to change lives, and brilliant problem solving. Let's keep moving forward with joy and kindness through the healing power of music!

Jerry-Louis Jaccard EdD  
President

## **Election Results 2021**

On July 6th 2021 the Election Committee — Zsuzsanna Polyák (Hungary), Chairperson, Amy Morrison (Ireland) and Josephine Ang (Malaysia), Members — came together to count the votes sent in by the members.

The results are:

Vice President: László Norbert Nemes, Hungary

Secretary Treasurer: Shinji Inagi, Japan

Director: Lucinda Geoghegan, UK

Auditor: Eila Peterson, Canada

Auditor: Anne Ralph, Ireland

Alternate Auditor: Pei Wen Tham, Singapore

The President and the Executive Secretary found everything in order according to Article V of the Statutes and Item 4 of the Election By-law of the IKS. The results were officially ratified at the General Assembly in Katowicze, Poland (via Zoom), on August 13th, 2021.

## **In Memoriam Lady Solti**

The widow of György (aka George) Solti, the guardian of the conductor's legacy, known as the patron of classical music, Lady Valerie Solti died on March 31, at the age of 83.

Lady Valerie Solti was the patron of the World Orchestra for Peace, co-founded with her husband, and supported a number of other cultural institutions, including György Solti's alma mater, the Liszt Ferenc University of Music.



Lord George and Lady Valerie Solti

After the death of György Solti in 1997, Lady Valerie founded the Solti Foundation, which provides assistance to young artists. In 2012, she received the Middle Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit from the Hungarian Prime Minister.

She was a patron of the International Kodály Society, and the main patron of the Bartók World Competition and Festival of the Academy of Music.

## Presentation of the 2021 International Katalin Forrai Award

The International Katalin Forrai Award is a juried recognition for excellent in early childhood music education presented every symposium year by the IKS Katalin Forrai Forum. This year's award went to Anne Lindeberg-Piironen of Finland. The following photo features Anne with the traditional crystal owl award, her certificate, and a photo of Katalin Forrai she received to honor her lifework as a Kodály music educator of young children and of their teachers:



Anne Lindeberg-Piironen

Mary Place, who chairs the Forrai Forum Award Committee, and her colleagues used the online platform of the symposium to great advantage by providing an inspiring audio-visual presentation of the award, including an excerpt from the *Portrait of Katalin Forrai* DVD, remarks by Mary about the rationale for the award, past recipients, and Anne Lindeberg-Piironen's many achievements. Anne expressed her surprise and gratitude through a videotaped response featuring her beautiful homeplace of Kesalahti, Finland, with glimpses of her teaching career as inspired by Katalin Forrai. Former IKS president Gilbert De Greeve and current president Jerry L. Jaccard offered congratulatory remarks to Anne.

The presentation was infused throughout with selections from Finnish composer Aulis Sallinen's *Songs from the Sea*, performed by the Tapiola Choir conducted by Erkki Pohjola, and ended with pianists Professor Gilbert De Greeve playing *Oeillet* (Carnation) then Jessica Suandrianna playing *Aquileja* (Columbine) both by Jean Sibelius. Special credit also goes to Markus Pulkkinen and Thomas Starr who produced the video presentation, and to the Katowice, Poland local symposium organizing team.



# BULLETIN

## OF THE

### INTERNATIONAL KODÁLY SOCIETY

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#### **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership fees:

Full: USD 30.00. Student: USD 20.00. Retired: USD 20.00.  
Registered: USD 5.00. Institution: USD 30.00. Supporting: any donation.

#### **Subscription to the Bulletin only**

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(\*) IKS members in Australia can also transfer directly to the IKS account in Australia: Account #164561 BSB: 034086 International Kodály Society at Westpac Banking Corporation.

#### **Bulletin and Newsletter**

Deadlines for submission of papers in the Bulletin are:  
for the spring issue: 28 February; for the autumn issue: 31 August.

The editors of the Bulletin look forward to receiving scholarly, well-documented articles related to the three major fields in which Zoltán Kodály was active: composition, musicology/ethnomusicology, and music education. Authors are requested to follow the APA Style Guide posted on our website for citations and references. News items, reviews and reports of conferences may be considered for publication in the online Newsletter. Articles for the Newsletter can be sent at any time.

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