
Circles of Bartok

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Abstract

Same as Mozart - great composer Bartok has no limits of ideas and artistic and technological merits to fulfill his new music demands. The analysis opens the door to comparison of European and Asian style in classic music, example of this difference is Solo-sonata.

Bartok is starting his piece with Chaconne. I see clear connection to Chaconne by Bach. Bach's music starts from low tension folk style suite dances Allemande (German), Courant (French), Sarabanda (Italian), Gigue (English) this is like life journey which comes to an end with its climax - Chaconne. On the contrary Bartok is starting his composition with clear reference to Bach but instead he puts his Chaconne as the beginning. Amazingly for orthodox European music taste Chaconne becomes the beginning of a new Circle! If we take the idea of Bach's Chaconne thema then the classical harmony's idea is to release the tensions in consonant ending. In a way the music can be modeled as waves on the seashore; coming and returning back. The Bartok's Chaconne harmony is out of tension-relaxation mode. The whole idea is not to release harmonic energy by natural classic routines but to accumulate it more and more. It can be modeled as the planets running with enormous speed around the sun. I feel that Bartok's music is inspired more from Universe when Bach is clearly expressing the world of humanity. Bartok is too different from other European composers. To find out the reasons for this inequality we must go to the roots of Bartok and his people. It is amazing that Hungarians came to East Europe from Ural. Definitely we can think of their ancestors as of Asian origin. My opinion is that even now majority of Hungarian believers are of Christian faith, but more that 1000 years ago when their ancestors were living near Modern Ufa city that place had no connection with Christianity but had strong ties to Buddhism.

We cannot underestimate importance of Bartok -European composer of Asian routes and influence.

Keywords : Bartok, Solo-sonata for violin, Bach.

It is really my dream to write about Bela Bartok and his Circles. This miraculous (like one of his characters) composer is one the latest genius and genuine ones of our world's music. What is making his music so special? How to describe his separate place among other composers of his calibre?

As a performer I thought it is a best way to play as much as I can of his music and then during the process of studying and performing to analyze Bartok's music and my feelings and impressions of it. This is why I decided to make recital consisting only of Bartok's music from his early age to his last completed work. The program (Bartokiana) I performed together with prof. Satoko Tanimoto and Tokyo Symphony's 1st clarinet Mr. Emmanuel Neveu is following Adagio (composed when Bartok was only 17 years old), Rhapsody No. 1, Three Hungarian folk songs and Allegro Barbaro for piano solo, Solo sonata for violin (one of his last pieces), Contrasts for clarinet, violin and piano and Romanian dances. Each piece belongs to different period of Bartok as a creating human being. You certainly can find his admiration to Wagner in Adagio, his search for American naturalization in Contrasts (in fact he finished his life being American) his folk roots in Romanian dances and Rhapsody. You can feel how Bartok's personal life story is affecting and changing his Art. Same as Mozart and many other great composers Bartok has no limits of ideas and artistic and technological merits to fulfill his new music demands. So you ask- why I have that strong opinion to single him out and use the word (Circles). I simply cannot stop myself thinking about the difference between Bartok and others. This analysis suddenly opened the door to my research about European and Asian style in classic music. And the clearest example of this difference is Bartok's

Solo-sonata.

This piece was commissioned by one of most prominent violinists of 20th century Sir Yegudy Menuhin. I had chance to be introduced and talk to him during his concerts to Moscow in 1990s. He was able to keep in his memory all violin repertory at once. No wonder he became the 1st and till now the best performer and interpreter of Bartok's music. Paying a tribute to universality and long history of performing the best of German music of the commissioner (Mehnuin) Bartok is starting his piece with Chaconne and here begins the 1st Circle I am fascinated with. Because it is a clear connection to another Chaconne for violin solo - the most famous for centuries - Chaconne from Partita no 2 by Johann Sebastian Bach. Why do I apply the "Circle" word - it is because in Bach's partita music starts from low tension folk style suite dances Allemande (German), Courant (French), Sarabanda (Italian), Gigue (English) this is like lhfie journey which comes to an end with its climax - the main event of this composition, enormous size Chaconne (Funeral music) It is like life of human being is inevitably finished and purposed for death. This is typical structure of European music of 17th, 18th centuries with its strong and almost exclusive connections to Christianity. On the contrary Bartok who was composing this piece with certain (to my opinion) thoughts about coming end (he passed in 1 year and this is his last completed work) is starting his composition with clear reference to Bach but instead he puts the "event of human's end" as the beginning. Amazingly for orthodox European music taste Chaconne becomes the beginning of a new Circle of existing! It is followed by Fuga, Adagio and Presto. I will give more detailed analysis of that 3 movements later but I want to emphasize that together with Bach's music Bartok is showing us that our existence is not a straight line but something of a Circle. This is a difference to historical mainstream of European religion. Now I want to go into details of comparing 2 chaconnes.

If we take the idea of Bach's Chaconne thema then the harmony makes 2 almost straight lines -1st up going T-S-D-T or in terms of baseline re-sol-la-re, in modern halftone system it will give us line of numbers 5-2-5=12(or Octave) the second line is down heading 6-S-D-T. The classical harmony's idea is to release the tensions in consonant ending. In a way the music can be modeled as waves on the seashore; coming and returning back. The melody of the thema consists of pointy lines; la-mi-la-fa. Let's have a look at Bartok's Chaconne. Harmony is out of tension-relaxation mode- T-d(minor)-6-S(major)-2(major)- T. The whole idea is not to release harmonic energy by natural classic routines but to accumulate it more and more. It can be modeled as the planets running with enormous speed around the sun. I feel that Bartok' music is inspired more from Universe when Bach is clearly expressing the world of humanity. Let's see the melody of Bartok's Chaconne; sol-fa-mi-fa-sol (perfectly half of circle) then (sol)-do-re-mi-fa spiraling down. As the result the music is passionate but shifts freely between tonalities. To balance this freedom and integrate Chaconne in 1 unity the rhythm is becoming very important. This is why Bartok is using much less rhythm variations then Bach. Speaking about rhythm and meter. Bartok is keen to use three beats meters (1st, 2nd and 4th movements of his Solo-Sonata). All triangle structures tend to spin-good; example is waltz. Instead 2-4-8 movements are largely realized with parallel up-down moves. There a lot of melodic similarities in 3rd and 4th movements - all are circles or spirals. Too many to consider it a coincident. Bartok is too different from other European composers to be part of for example German, or Austrian school. To find out the reasons for this inequality we must go to the routs of Bartok and his people. It is amazing that Hungarians came to East Europe from Ural Mountains. Together with Finnish people they speak languages very different to Roman-Latin based group. Definitely we can think of their ancestors as of Asian origin. I will not try to explain now the influence of the religion to the culture of nation, but everybody should agree that in ancient times it was enormous. My opinion is that even now majority of Hungarian believers are of Christian faith, but more that 1000 years ago when their ancestors were living near Modern Ufa city on the side of Ural Mountains , that place had no connection with Christianity but had strong ties

to Buddhism. Let's try to evaluate how the religion can influence music.

If you think of a human life as a single journey than every decision is judged as right or wrong, that in terms of music results the stricken rules of German harmony and kontrapunkt. These rules are based on constant move from dissonant to consonant. From not resonant cords to resonant. In terms of numbers from big to small. I am talking about the numbers of natural sound order when 1 is the original sound, 2 is the sound 1 octave higher, 3 -1 quinta higher, 4 -1 quarta higher, etc....Clear example is the ending of Bach's chaconne which is sound re or #1 for D minor.

When you believe in life as many circles then musical equivalent will be not judging and evaluating but observing and being part of universe - this is why one can find in Bartok's music Fibonacci sequence. In Solo Sonata it is typical for voices to go from unison to spread different directions at the same speed till it becomes octave again. I marked many circles in his music(attached).

We cannot underestimate importance of Bartok. Though there are many genius composers, they usually can be grouped by style and technique-for example Vienna school. Bartok is the only one of his kind! On the other side having 99% of classic music of European origin or European influence it is so great to have genius composer who has to my opinion Asian routes and influence. Paying more attention to his inheritance and making deep analysis to his music and style can contribute therefore greatly to Japanese musicians and can help in making Japanese composers school.