# *An die nahe Geliebte*: The Model of Béla Bartók's Youthful Song Cycle

**Fanni Molnár**

**ABSTRACT** – Felicie Fábián, three years younger than Bartók, studied piano and composition at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest. Her name appears more and more frequently in Bartók's letters from the beginning of the 1899 academic year, and their intense relationship, lasting until 1903, is also evidenced by three compositions associated with Felicie. *Liebeslieder* is the earliest of these, written during 1900, lacking an opus number, and unpublished during Bartók's lifetime. Its lyrics and musical style suggest German Romantic models which, indeed, played a decisive role in the young composer's orientation. This is confirmed by an important source: until 1903, the composer kept detailed lists of all the works he had studied, heard, or intended to study in the future. Lieder are included in the list of pieces he had already known from the spring of 1898 onwards; before that, Bartók makes no mention of the genre, and from the end of 1900 the Lied almost disappears from the list. Since during this period the young composer studied several songs or song cycles by Schubert and Schumann, certain songs by Brahms, and even Wagner's *The Valkyrie*, we can agree with scholars who compare the *Liebeslieder* to these works. Although some others think that the influence of Hugo Wolf, Richard Strauss and Franz Liszt can be traced in the *Liebeslieder*, their names do not appear in Bartók's list yet, so we can rather speak of coincidental similarities or common stylistic bases. However, the analyses often disregard a no less important figure from the list: Beethoven, who was not only considered by Bartók to be an unavoidable figure in symphonic, chamber and piano works, but the young composer also studied his Lieder. In this paper, I explore the influence of Beethoven's only song cycle on Bartók's *Liebeslieder*.
**Keywords**: Béla Bartók, German Romanticism, musical influences, song cycles, Ludwig van Beethoven, early 20th-century music.

## 1 Introduction: more than just a muse

It was a special exception that Bartók was admitted to the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Budapest in two degree programmes, moreover, immediately in his second year he began studying piano with István Thomán and composition with János Koessler, in September 1899. Felicie Fábián, who was three years younger than him, attracted attention because, despite her being a woman, she also studied both majors at the same time and did actually compose. The name of the talented young girl appears in a letter from Bartók in September 1899 for the first time, and from then on, the references in his letters to his mother multiply, and become all the more intimate, until Felicie's first name is mentioned frequently and naturally. Bartók first visited the Fábián family in May 1900, and these visits also rapidly became more and more frequent. The two young students met mainly to play some music, but Bartók also taught Felicie English and they visited the salon of Emma Gruber (who later married Zoltán Kodály) together for the first time. Although the Fábiáns were by no means a musician family in the strict sense of the word, Bartók liked to spend time with them and, as *Liebeslieder* and other pieces show, the relationship with Felicie deeply influenced his compositional work.

On the evidence of surviving sources (letters as well as the first draft and the final copy in Bartók's hand), the genesis of *Liebeslieder* cannot be precisely reconstructed. Bartók may have been planning the song cycle from February 1900, but there are no surviving drafts. In June, at the end of the school year, the composer travelled to Bratislava to join his mother, and together they went on holiday to St. Johann bei Herberstein, a village in Styria. In the first draft, the second song is dated to July 1900, so it may have already been composed in Bratislava or

F. Molnár
Budapest Music Center & Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music
Budapest, Hungary

email: fanni.m1997@gmail.com

This study is the written version of my paper presented at the sixth edition of the "Sigismund Toduță" International Symposium of Musicology, on 16 May 2023. I would like to express my gratitude to László Vikárius for his comments, which helped me throughout preparing the manuscript, and to Zoltán Farkas, who drew my attention to the first and only performance of Bartók's *Liebeslieder*, which took place on 25 September 2020 at the "Béla Bartók" Memorial House in Budapest. The recording of this concert entitled "*A fiatal Bartók*" ("The Young Bartók") is also available on YouTube.

Styria. In August, the work was interrupted by a serious illness, and on the doctor's instruction, Bartók could not leave St. Johann until mid-September. Afterwards they returned to Bratislava, from where a specialist sent Bartók to Meran in mid-November for recovery. He could not return to the Academy of Music until April 1901. In the meantime, he stayed in correspondence with Felicie, who repeatedly asked him about his progress with the song cycle. Bartók probably completed *Liebeslieder* in the autumn of 1900, during his convalescence.

The last time Felicie Fábián's name appears in Bartók's correspondence is in early 1903. At that time, the muse of the song cycle went on to study with Emil Sauer in Vienna, and since the two students had already become estranged from each other during the 1902/1903 academic year, they did not keep in touch by letters. Felicie died shortly afterwards, probably under tragic circumstances. From 1900 to 1902, however, she is regarded as an almost pivotal figure in Bartók's biography, leaving a profound mark on the young composer's work[1].

Bartók expressed his feelings for Felicie in three musical pieces, of which *Liebeslieder* is the earliest. Here the "muse" is present in a rather secretive way: the final copy does not contain a dedication (although we can indirectly interpret as a dedication the fact that Bartók chose Rückert's poem *Widmung*, which Schumann had also set to music, and placed it at the beginning of the cycle, as will be discussed, even with a modified text). However, there are two musical references to the muse, the leitmotif starting in B flat (Béla) and ending in F (Felicie), and the countersubject in the piano part of Song IV, explained on the edge of the page as „Dieses zweite Thema ist von Fr. F. F. componirt"[2]. Perhaps even less directly, the inscription on the title page of the final copy "Budapest, 1900" is also very telling; the biographical data suggest that Bartók composed the majority of the song cycle outside of the Hungarian capital, but the experiences leading to the composition itself – both musical impulses and the personality of Felicie – are clearly linked to his studies at the Academy of Music and thus to Budapest. For the composer, therefore, the emotional and artistic experience that gave rise to the work overrode fidelity to specific biographical details. This has even more serious implications for the composition of both the text and the music, which I will present later.

Although Schumann's stylistic influence often surfaces in *Liebeslieder*, the basic idea of the second Felicie piece, the Scherzo F. F. B. B., also from 1900, calls Schumann to mind even more. Here, Bartók refers to the source of inspiration quite openly, not only in the musical motto but also in the title, and the piece is accompanied by a textual dedication. Finally, the Variations, written on Felicie's theme (1900-1901) bears witness to their relationship without any secret code. We can assume that all three pieces, which have no opus number at all, also functioned as exercises in composition[3]. However, Koessler's opinion is known only on the Scherzo and Felicie's on the Variations, while nothing similar can be found out for the song cycle, although the correspondence would certainly have left a hint[4]. It is very likely that *Liebeslieder* was kept private between the two of them.

## 2 *Liebeslieder* in the context of Bartók's oeuvre

The assessment of Bartók's only significant German-language song cycle within his oeuvre is fairly uniform. *Liebeslieder* is not a legitimate part of Bartók's canonized oeuvre, nor is it even really part of his early output: it belongs rather to the category of pieces written during his student years. Vera Lampert discusses the works for solo voice in detail (not only at the level of mentioning them) only from the four Pósa songs (1902)[5]. Michael Braun declares that he wishes to study only Bartók's mature vocal compositions, and, since the German Romantic predecessors are clearly recognisable in both the text and musical style of the *Liebeslieder*, he can omit the cycle from his book without great loss[6]. (He does, however, touch on the series in an excursus, to which I will return later.) This attitude is confirmed by the only complete edition of the song cycle to date: the editor, Péter Bartók, points out that, since the composer had no intention of publishing the *Liebeslieder* later in his life and clearly did not count it among his mature works, the facsimile edition is intended to serve solely academic purposes (studying such questions as how Bartók solved certain compositional problems at the age of 19), not to promote rediscovery and performance[7].

Most researchers traced down German Romantic influences in *Liebeslieder*. Vera Lampert, for example, writes that Bartók skilfully imitated the genre and atmosphere of the German Lied, and the fact that he used a text already set to music by Schumann (the poem on which Song I is based is identical to the opening piece of *Myrthen*) is a

1 On the relationship of Bartók and Felicie Fábián, the biographical context and the genesis of the song cycle, see Bónis, "Preface", I.; Bónis, "Bartók Béla: Liebeslieder", 311-313, and 315.; Vikárius, "Musikalische Botschaften für eine junge Frau?", 102-104.

2 See Bartók, *Liebeslieder for voice and piano (1900) – facsimile of the manuscript*, 12.

3 In this period, it is still difficult to distinguish between the stylistic and formal exercises in composition from the original, free compositions, and put them in chronological order, see Wilheim, "Bartók's Exercises in Composition", 70.

4 For excerpts of relevant letters, see Vikárius, "Musikalische Botschaften für eine junge Frau?", 104.

5 Lampert, "Works for Solo Voice with Piano", 387.

6 Braun, *Béla Bartóks Vokalmusik*, 29.

7 Bartók Péter, "Note", without page number.

clear indication of a more tangible musical-artistic model[8]. In addition to the stylistic influence of *Frauenliebe und -leben*, David Cooper sees the influence of Brahms, Hugo Wolf and Richard Strauss in the cycle's "relatively conventional late nineteenth-century Germanic musical vernacular," and suggests that Bartók may have been familiar with Mendelssohn's setting of the text of Song II[9]. The dissertation of Günther Weiss discusses the similarities with certain German Romantic works in detail: for example, he draws parallels between some bars of Song II and the second song in *Frauenliebe*, Schumann's *Mondnacht* and *Waldeseinsamkeit* by Brahms[10]. According to Ferenc Bónis, Bartók embraces the musical language, harmonies and methods of musical setting of the German Romantic masters. A more precise, palpable similarity is, for example, that the motifs in Song I also refers to Schumann's *Widmung*, while the cycle's title could have been inspired by Liszt, who had transcribed Schumann's same song for piano as *Liebeslied*; in the suspenseful, repetitive piano accompaniment of Song III, Bónis suspects a Schubertian model, and he interprets Song V as a reflection of Wagner's *The Valkyrie*[11]. Some scholars have also sought to shed light on the germs of key compositional devices in Bartók's later oeuvre, for example, Halsey Stevens considers the canon-like structure appearing sporadically in Song II quite promising[12].

The most exciting studies emphasise Bartók's strong artistic and creative autonomy even at this young age through certain features of the song cycle, primarily through modifications to the text of the poems. Bónis has also indicated some of Bartók's peculiar alterations[13], and Braun, despite *Liebeslieder* cannot be classified as a mature early work, devotes a short excursus to the song cycle because of its extreme treatment of the text[14]. The full spectrum and significance of the changes to the poetic texts, however, was revealed by Ferenc László, who compared *Liebeslieder* to *Cantata profana*, one of Bartók's later great works. In addition to the final copy of the score, both works have a separate libretto compiled and elaborated by Bartók, and, moreover, although the composer does not yet indicate this in the libretto of the *Liebeslieder*, both works end with the modified return of the first section of the text, becoming a tightly framed cycle. László distinguishes between three types of textual alteration: there are lines in the cycle in which Bartók replaced certain words or even omitted a whole verse in order to adapt the poem to his own life situation and message, there are occasional grammatical errors and slips of the pen, and there are changes that were required only by the musical setting itself, for example to achieve the most advantageous syllable count, but these were not included in the libretto[15]. He concludes that Bartók chose the poems primarily for personal reasons, rather than on the basis of his reading experiences: he sought texts that were related to his current emotional state and life situation, and he attributed an independent artistic value to the musical-dramatic cycle he created from them – to the extent that he did not consider it necessary to include the names of the poets in the final copy or in the libretto (to the great irritation of posterity). He could not have been guided by literary demands, if only because he was able to modify the poems to poetic disadvantage if his message or musical ideas required it; the artistically conceived arc of the libretto, however, would be a credit to any German Romantic master[16].

## 3 Possible models

German Romantic music, indeed, played a decisive, almost exclusive role in the musical universe of the young Bartók, if only because of Koessler's well-known orientation (but not only due to this influence). Fortunately, this is also confirmed by important sources: until 1903, the composer kept detailed lists of all the works he had studied, had heard and wanted to study in the future. The majority of these lists was published by Denijs Dille. Lieder appear in the list of pieces Bartók had already studied or known from the spring of 1898 onwards; before that, Bartók does not mention any works in this genre at all, and from the end of 1900 – by the time he finished *Liebeslieder* –, the Lied again disappears almost completely (apart from a couple of works by Brahms and Richard

8 Lampert, "Works for Solo Voice with Piano", 387.

9 Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 17. Cooper praises the youthful song cycle for its technical and emotional maturity, its visibly controlled structure, its use of harmonies and its effective vocal and piano writing.

10 Weiss, *Die frühe Schaffensentwicklung Béla Bartóks*, 238.

11 Bónis, "Bartók Béla: Liebeslieder", 320.; Bónis, "Preface", II., IV. and V.

12 Stevens, "Some 'Unknown' Works of Bartók", 39.

13 Bónis, "Bartók Béla: Liebeslieder", 317.

14 Braun, *Béla Bartóks Vokalmusik*, 22-25.

15 László, "Bartók és dalszövegei", 417-422.

16 László, "Bartók és dalszövegei", 426-427. A passage in a letter also confirms this determined, specific search, which could have been in line with a musical-dramatic concept already conceived in Bartók's mind, but did not allow the composer to insist on the highest literary achievement. Bartók wrote to his mother in February 1900: "It would be very nice to have Goethe here, because I am in need of poems now, but I have nothing (but Lessing) here, so I had to buy works by Heine". See Bartók Jr. and Gomboczné Konkoly, *Bartók Béla családi levelei*, 29.

Strauss)[17]. It seems as if *Liebeslieder* crowned a period in which, on the one hand, Bartók was deeply immersed in the German Lied genre and song cycles as part of his studies, and in which, on the other hand, the experience of his relationship with Felicie gave him a personal impulse to try to express himself in this specific format. However, having crafted his individual great contribution, Bartók seems to have lost interest in the Lied: he left the strictly defined German song genre behind for the rest of his life, as the Pósa songs and the op. 15 and op. 16 cycles do not fall within this category by any means.

Since by the end of 1900 the young composer had become familiar with several songs or song cycles by Schubert and Schumann, certain songs by Brahms, and even Wagner's *The Valkyrie*, it is not surprising that many scholars revealed similarities between these works and *Liebeslieder*. The names of Hugo Wolf, Richard Strauss and Franz Liszt, however, do not appear in the lists until well after the completion of the song cycle, so in their case, we can rather speak of coincidental similarities and common stylistic bases, instead of artistic and musical influences. The German songs included in Bartók's list of known or studied works up to the end of 1900 are listed in Table 1.

| | |
|---|---|
| Robert Schumann | *Myrthen*, *Frauenliebe und -leben*, *Dichterliebe*, *Liederkreis* (no opus number) |
| Franz Schubert | *Erlkönig*, *Die schöne Müllerin* |
| Johannes Brahms | *Lieder* (nothing more specific) |
| Ludwig van Beethoven | *Der Kuss*, *Adelaide*, *Sechs Lieder* op. 48, *Acht Lieder* op. 52, *Drei Gesänge* op. 83, *Sechs Gesänge* op. 75, *Das Glück der Freundschaft*, *An die ferne Geliebte*, *Der Mann von Wort*, *Merkenstein* |

**Table 1**. German songs and song cycles already studied or known by Bartók by the end of 1900.

As can be seen from this table, the scholarly writings I have examined have disregarded a composer who was inescapable for the young Bartók not only in symphonic, chamber and piano music, but was heavily represented in the genre of the Lied as well: Beethoven. There is, moreover, another list, which Dille did not publish, but named as "d-list" and gave a description of its contents. This list provides further evidence of the relationship between Bartók and Felicie, the composer's "year of song" and his main musical influences at that time. Bartók prepared this list in Meran in 1900, and sent it to Felicie in a letter. He listed the works he considered as a must-know from the history of music, indicating which of them he has not studied yet. Among masterpieces he already knew, he pinpointed Beethoven's song *Adelaide* and the song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*, while for Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms he only wrote Lieder (which could also mean that he had already studied all their eligible works). However, the songs of several other composers – like Mendelssohn, Robert Franz, Liszt and Grieg –, still mentioned only as Lieder, fall into the category of works he should study in the future[18].

At first glance and listening, *An die ferne Geliebte* and *Liebeslieder* seem to be in stark contrast. Beethoven's song cycle was deeply influenced by the contemporary German ideal of folksong-like artlessness[19], while Bartók's composition is grand, full of Romantic excess, complexity, and passion. The biographical background to their genesis is also very different: in a difficult phase of his life, Beethoven sings of a love that had passed or is hopeless, while Bartók is still young and at the beginning of a relationship with uncertain outcome. However, if we examine the two works in detail, we find that the exuberant late Romantic musical language of the young Bartók hides a Beethoven-like model in the deep and takes it further.

Beethoven's song cycle is often referred to as the first true representative of the genre. In fact, *An die ferne Geliebte* is not the first song cycle in the literal sense; there had been earlier pieces that were composed to poems on the same topic, or that extracted lines from a story written in verse, or that developed a narrative from successive songs. The greatest achievement of Beethoven's piece is that it laid the foundations for a branch of the genre that would become dominant in the second half of the 19th century, especially with the work of Schumann: the musically constructed song cycle. In this type, the coherence of the songs and the arc of the cycle derive not so much from the poems as primarily from the musical setting[20]. We cannot claim, then, that *An die ferne Geliebte*

17 Dille, *Thematisches Verzeichnis der Jugendwerke Béla Bartóks*, 229-233.

18 Bartók Estate, in a bunch of sheets entitled "Különféle" (Miscellaneous), Gábor Vásárhelyi's collection, BH I/46/24, photocopy: Budapest Bartók Archives, Institute of Musicology, Research Centre for the Humanities. I am sharing the data here kindly provided by László Vikárius.

19 See Kerman *et al.*, "Beethoven, Ludwig van"; Böker-Heil *et al.*, "Lied".

20 Bingham, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Song Cycle", 104. During the 19th century, the main features of song cycles based on a similar model were expanded to include: Liederkreis or Liedercyclus in the title, a central theme, using a lyric cycle as text, a tonal key scheme, thematic return and musical connections between the individual songs. See Bingham, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Song Cycle", 115.

is the very first example in a series of musically constructed song cycles, but it is important to bear in mind that Bartók was already working in the context of the nineteenth-century cult of Beethoven; since by the late 19th century, Beethoven's position as the greatest German master, the source of all great music, and the first Romantic genius had been established, his song cycle eclipsed all other works that could have served as models or references for composers.

*Liebeslieder* and *An die ferne Geliebte* both consist of six songs, and even if we regard this as a coincidence, the striking cyclical return and motivic work displayed in them certainly cannot be considered as a superficial similarity. At the end of Song VI, both works return to the opening material of Song I, and both composers develop the section with the technique of variation. Beethoven further extends it into an operatic, vehemently erupting coda, while Bartók's music comes to a rest.

As far as the motivic work is concerned, Joseph Kerman and Christopher Reynolds managed to derive all the songs of *An die ferne Geliebte* from the first ten bars. The motivic links forge the cycle into an extremely strong musical unity; they almost transform it into a well-disguised variation form, from the context of which no song can be extracted for the purpose of autonomous performance[21]. Beethoven, moreover, composed all six songs in a varied strophic form, and each piece follows the previous one *attacca*, which further enhances the sense of musical continuity. In the case of *Liebeslieder*, I could find no trace of such a meticulously calculated musical plan. Here, the individual songs or groups of songs contrast with each other in character and form; the immediately defined mood of each piece is more reminiscent of *Dichterliebe*. Songs I and II are in three-part form with a varied return, Song III is through-composed, Song IV is the simplest possible varied strophic structure, Song V seasons the three-part form already used in the first two songs with a sneaky false return, and Song VI is through-composed. It is, however, no coincidence in which song the motto or leitmotif appears. Beethoven linked Songs I and VI more closely by means of the thematic framework, and Songs III and IV by means of the same tonal centre. Bartók retained the use of the thematic framework to create the "shell" of the song cycle, but linked Songs III and IV, the core of the cycle, by recalling the motto instead of tonality.

There are also fundamental similarities between the two song cycles in terms of the tonal plane. In the case of *An die ferne Geliebte*, the dominant is blatantly absent, with the emphasis falling on the subdominant, the mediant and the submediant. In *Liebeslieder*, the same tendency can be noticed. The dominant is completely eliminated, but the systematic and quite unusual tonal plane of the cycle thoroughly explores the territory of the mediant and subdominant, as can be seen in Table 2.

| Tonal plane of *An die ferne Geliebte* | Tonal plane of *Liebeslieder* |
|---|---|
| I. E flat major | I. B flat major |
| II. G major | II. E flat minor |
| III. A flat minor | III. D minor |
| IV. A flat major | IV. E flat major |
| V. C major / C minor | V. D major |
| VI. E flat major | VI. D major / B flat major |

**Table 2**. The tonal plane of *An die ferne Geliebte* and *Liebeslieder*.

The subtitle still reminds us that Beethoven's piece started out as a "Liederkreis". (Bartók was not necessarily aware of this, but the final title may have been motivated, on the one hand, by the creation of a musical cycle, and, on the other hand, by the need to find a more saleable name for it[22]). In my opinion, it is not likely that Bartók would have modelled the title of his own cycle on Liszt's *Liebeslied*[23]; indeed, the title *Liebeslieder* differs from Liederkreis only in that it refers to the central poetic theme of the composition. Just as Beethoven's piece lacks any kind of narrative, but the composer develops the metaphor of the spatial-temporal distance between the beloved and the lyrical subject[24], Bartók illuminates different aspects of the same phenomenon and feeling in songs of different character[25]. It is a huge difference between the two cycles, of course, that *An die ferne Geliebte* consists

21 Reynolds, "The Representational Impulse in Late Beethoven, I", 43-61.; Kerman, "An die ferne Geliebte", 123-157.

22 See Youens, "Song cycle".

23 As stated by Bónis in "Preface", IV.

24 Reynolds, "Separated Lovers and Separate Motives", 49-55.

25 According to Ferenc László, the arc of the song cycle leads in a unique way from an individual feeling of love to devotion and trust in God, see László, "Bartók és dalszövegei", 421.

of poems by the same artist, Alois Isidor Jeitteles, while *Liebeslieder* is composed of texts by multiple poets, just like *Myrthen* by Schumann[26]. It is not certain that Bartók was aware of this fact, but the way in which he treated the text is quite close to Beethoven's method: the poems of Jeitteles do not exist as a poetic cycle in themselves, but were presumably written for the composer, and Joseph Kerman points out that Beethoven probably even changed the poetic texts as an active collaborator[27]. Bartók does not seem to have had anyone to write poems for him, or he did not want to choose this option, so he picked out German poems that best suited his life situation and artistic purposes, and independently made the changes he saw necessary.

A common feature of Beethoven's and Bartók's oeuvre and attitude is that they both composed primarily in instrumental genres. Perhaps it is not too surprising that in *An die ferne Geliebte*, the piano part plays a much greater role than was usual at the time. In the first edition, we read that *An die ferne Geliebte* is "Ein Liederkreis [...] mit Begleitung des Piano-Forte in Musik gesetzt", while in the second edition Beethoven places the piano part to the same rank as the vocal part: "für Gesang und Piano-Forte"[28]. Bartók goes even further when, on the title page of the final copy, he reverses the expected order of the two parts: "für Klavier und eine Singstimme". This may also have been due to the fact that the piano was a much more natural and familiar medium for the young pianist-composer than the voice. By 1900, he had already written a considerable number of piano pieces, while he had hardly composed anything for voice. However, the importance of the piano part and this linguistic emphasis are also justified by several musical features of the song cycle. Apart from the returning section of Song VI, the motto appears exclusively in the piano part (Songs III and IV, which I have already mentioned), and even its last utterance belongs to the pianist after the vocal part had ended. The pianist has no easy task in this song cycle, as the part is extremely dense and technically challenging. (The same can be said of the singer, by the way, because of the range spanning more than two octaves, the numerous high notes and the leaps of more than an octave.)

Moreover, at the beginning of Song VI, Bartók assigns a lengthy prelude to the piano, which goes well beyond the boundaries of the Lied genre, organically growing from the atmosphere of Song V. As Ferenc Bónis put it: "nice but inappropriate music, which condemns the singer to a long period of inactivity at a dramatically important point in the cycle"[29]. Bartók's early compositions are characterised by a certain flamboyance, loquaciousness and crossing between genres anyway[30], but this gesture is not without (Beethoven-like) precedents either, only we have to look for the roots of the musical language in the style of different opera composers. Beethoven developed a fervent, extroverted coda reminiscent of eighteenth-century opera from the returning theme, so that *An die ferne Geliebte* ends on the climax of mood, exploiting the opportunities offered by the text. Bartók switched over into something like Wagnerian opera not at the very end of the cycle, but at the end of Song V and the prelude to Song VI. Although in the eyes of many scholars, this is an abnormal extrusion similar to Beethoven's coda, it still feels more integrated than Beethoven's unexpected stylistic turn after the most immediate simplicity. Moreover, in *Liebeslieder*, the topic of the next poem, or more precisely its religious overtones, even requests for this exalted outburst, so that the overheated emotions can spill over. Then, order is restored, and in keeping with the recurring textual content of Song I, *Liebeslieder* comes to a lyrical conclusion. It does, however, share the massive finale structure with Beethoven's work. Since the prelude to Song VI begins with the melody of Song V with an almost attacca feeling, Bartók might have been tempted by the Beethoven's concept of continuity as well.

## Conclusions

Investigating musical influences often seems a slippery territory to me. Whether suggested by the composers themselves or other sources, or not confirmed at all, we cannot always track back and – what is even more difficult – distinguish between conscious references, influences operating on a rather subconscious level of creative minds, or possible coincidences. In the case of Bartók's early works, scholars can fortunately count on his characteristically meticulous lists, which give away important information on what could have influenced him in some ways and what may have not (yet).

Bartók, both as part of his official studies and private endeavours, deeply studied German Romantic music literature, intertwined with all kinds of references to and influences originating with Beethoven, so *An die ferne Geliebte* may have reached him through many undercurrents not examined here, like the famous quotation of Song VI in Schumann's *Fantasy in C Major* and *Frauenliebe und -leben*. However, it is an indispensable fact that

26 Bartók made it very difficult for researchers to shed light on the poets, but Ferenc László finally succeeded in identifying the authors of all the poems: I. Friedrich Rückert, II. and III. Johann Nikolaus Lenau, IV. Friedrich Martin von Bodenstedt, V. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, VI. Friedrich Rückert. See László, "Bartók és dalszövegei", 416. (*Myrthen* was composed to poems by Goethe, Rückert, Heinrich Heine, George Byron, Robert Burns and Thomas Moore.)

27 Kerman, "An die ferne Geliebte", 126.

28 Kerman, "An die ferne Geliebte", 154-155.

29 My translation. See original in Hungarian: Bónis, "Bartók Béla: Liebeslieder", 318.

30 See Kodály, "Bartók Béla", 428.

the young composer was also familiar with the musical source itself. Although the overall musical language of *Liebeslieder*, and some of the songs in particular, show seemingly overwhelming similarities with pieces by German Romantic composers, already pointed out by several scholars, I believe that as a song cycle model, *An die ferne Geliebte* was at least as relevant for the young Bartók as the works of Schumann, Brahms or even Wagner. This kind of subtle and at the same time grounding influence surfaces primarily in the structural features of the *Liebeslieder*, including the tonal plane, the use of other unifying elements, and the heightened significance of the piano part. We can also find shared phases in the compositional process, like the treatment of poetic texts, which may have remained hidden from Bartók at that time, but which are, perhaps, even more intriguing.

## Bibliography

Bartók, Béla Jr. and Adrienne Gomboczné Konkoly, eds. *Bartók Béla családi levelei* [*Family letters of Béla Bartók*]. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1981.

Bartók, Péter. "Note". In *Bartók Béla: Liebeslieder for voice and piano (1900) – facsimile of the manuscript*, without page number. Homosassa: Bartók Records, 2002.

Bingham, Ruth O. "The Early Nineteenth-Century Song Cycle". In *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*, edited by James Parsons, 104-119. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Bónis, Ferenc. "Bartók Béla: Liebeslieder – Budapest, 1900". In *Mozarttól Bartókig: Írások a magyar zenéről* [*From Mozart to Bartók: Writings on Hungarian music*], edited by Bónis Ferenc, 310-323. Budapest: Püski, 2000.

Bónis, Ferenc. "Preface". In *Bartók Béla: Liebeslieder for voice and piano (1900) – facsimile of the manuscript*, I-V. Homosassa: Bartók Records, 2002.

Böker-Heil, Norbert, David Fallows, John H. Baron, James Parsons, Eric Sams, Graham Johnson, and Paul Griffiths. "Lied". In *Grove Music Online*, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.16611.

Braun, Michael. *Béla Bartóks Vokalmusik: Stil, Kontext und Interrelation der originalen Vokalkompositionen*. Regensburg: Conbrio Verlagsgesellschaft, 2017.

Cooper, David. *Béla Bartók.* New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2015.

Dille, Denijs. *Thematisches Verzeichnis der Jugendwerke Béla Bartóks, 1890-1904*. Kassel – Basel – London: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1974.

Kerman, Joseph. "*An die ferne Geliebte*". In *Beethoven Studies 1*, edited by Alan Tyson, 123-157. New York: W. W. Norton, 1973.

Kerman, Joseph, Alan Tyson, Scott G. Burnham, Douglas Johnson, and William Drabkin. "Beethoven, Ludwig van". In *Grove Music Online*, https://doi.org/ 10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40026.

Kodály, Zoltán. "Bartók Béla". In *Visszatekintés 2* [*Retrospection 2*], edited by Bónis Ferenc, 426-434. Budapest: Argumentum, 2007.

Lampert, Vera. "Works for Solo Voice with Piano". In *The Bartók Companion*, edited by Malcolm Gillies, 387-412. London: Faber & Faber, 1993.

László, Ferenc. "Bartók és dalszövegei". *Magyar Zene* 42, no. 3-4 (2004): 415-429.

Reynolds, Christopher. "Separated Lovers and Separate Motives: The Musical Message of *An die ferne Geliebte*". *The Beethoven Newsletter* 3, no. 3 (1988): 49-55.

Reynolds, Christopher. "The Representational Impulse in Late Beethoven, I: *An die ferne Geliebte*". *Acta Musicologica* 60, no. 1 (1988): 43-61.

Stevens, Halsey. "Some 'Unknown' Works of Bartók". *The Musical Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1966): 37-55.

Vikárius, László. "Musikalische Botschaften für eine junge Frau? Béla Bartóks Meraner Variationen für Klavier". In *Meran und die Künstler: Musiker Maler Poeten in einem Modekurort 1880-1940*, edited by Ewald Kontschieder and Josef Lanz, 99-112. Bozen: Verlagsanstalt Athesia, 2001.

Weiss, Günther. *Die frühe Schaffensentwicklung Béla Bartóks im Lichte westlicher und östlicher Traditionen*. Dissertation from Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, 1970.

Wilheim, András. "Bartók's Exercises in Composition". *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 23, no. 1/4 (1981): 67-78.

Youens, Susan. "Song Cycle". In *Grove Music Online*, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.26208.