

“CE ESTE VOCATIVUL?” – GYÖRGY KURTÁG AND ROMANIAN FOLK MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

The Banat, György Kurtág’s birthplace, is a multicultural region, home of several ethnic groups, but with a predominantly Romanian majority already in the first decades of the 20th century. Love for the Romanian language and culture (including folk music) has been constantly present in Kurtág’s life. Nevertheless, the initial childhood experiences appear relatively late in his oeuvre, during the 1970s, in the *Játékok* [Games] series. Kurtág’s relation to Romanian folk music is marked by pieces such as *Hommage à Farkas Ferenc 2 – foszlányok egy kolinda emlékképéből* [Scraps of a Colinda Melody – Faintly Recollected] and *Doina* from the *Játékok* series, the not yet published *...c’astăzi s’a născut... – Márta 90 éves! [...c’astăzi s’a născut... – Márta is 90 Years Old!]* or the violin duet *Triptic* (Op. 45). The most grandiose work in this respect is the *Colindă-Baladă* (Op. 46), a monumental piece for choir and ensemble. Although Romanian folk music is not of central significance in Kurtág’s oeuvre, there are certainly several works inspired by Romanian folk music that play an important role in the development of his life-work. This paper aims to examine these works, and also mentions compositions which contain more indirect references.

Keywords: *Banat, biography, Bartók, berceuse, colinda, folk music, games, memories, mythology*

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György Kurtág’s relation to the Romanian language, culture, and folk music came to the fore in his work entitled *Colindă-Baladă* (Op. 46), completed in 2008. Although the composer is known to refrain from public declarations, in this case he was glad to give interviews to Romanian radio and television stations on the occasion of this work’s premiere in Cluj-Napoca¹, and a few months later during his personal visit to the land of his childhood, Lugoj and Timișoara.² He even gave a presentation at the “Gheorghe Dima” National Music Academy on his own approach to music.³ One of his longest and most personal declarations dates back to the period when this work was composed: the interview *Kulcsszavak* [Keywords] conducted by Bálint András Varga notes several autobiographical details, and also contains information about the genesis of *Colindă-Baladă*.⁴ There might not be any other work about which Kurtág has revealed so many personal aspects through his own declarations.

The available sources indicate that the idea of the *Colindă-Baladă* can be traced back to a study by Felician Brînzeu.⁵ A secondary school teacher in Lugoj, he was Kurtág’s first role model in the field of pedagogy.⁶ The study, entitled “Ce este vocativul?” [What is the vocative?], discusses the grammatical case used to identify a person being addressed, and was passed to the composer by musicologist Ferenc László. Brînzeu’s work reminded Kurtág of the precision and beauty of Bartók and Ligeti’s studies, and together with the news of him becoming an honorary citizen of Lugoj there came a multitude of childhood memories.⁷ The original purpose of the composition was to stand as a souvenir for Lugoj, in gratitude for their gesture, but soon it started to grow and take on a greater form. In the end Kurtág spent one and a quarter year composing the monumental piece for choir and ensemble, based on a Romanian *colinda* collected by Béla Bartók in Hunyad (Hunedoara) county.⁸

The biographical motifs are discussed in detail in the interview with Bálint András Varga. The return of Kurtág to his childhood in Romania cannot be

¹ Irina Vasilescu, *Interviu cu compozitorul György Kurtág* [Interview with Composer György Kurtág], Radio România Muzical, Cluj-Napoca, 2009. 03. 29, accessed 5 February 2020 (<https://www.romania-muzical.ro/articol/interviu-cu-compozitorul-gyorgy-kurtag/236/15/2>).

² N. N., *Vocația muzicii György Kurtág. Români fără frontiere* [György Kurtág. The Vocation of Music. Romanians without Frontiers], TVR3, 2009.10, accessed 5 February 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UXtKhe7rk>).

³ György Kurtág, “On the Romanian Archetype”, in *Musicology Papers*, vol. XXIII, 2009, “Gheorghe Dima” Music Academy, Cluj-Napoca, pp. 10-16.

⁴ Bálint András Varga (ed.), *Kurtág György*, Holnap Kiadó, Budapest, 2009, pp. 43-131 (English version: Bálint András Varga, *György Kurtág. Three Interviews and Ligeti Homages*, University of Rochester Press, Rochester, 2009).

⁵ Varga, *op. cit.*, p. 69, Vasilescu, *op. cit.*, *Vocația muzicii...*

⁶ Varga, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁷ Varga *op. cit.*, p. 51, p. 69, Vasilescu, *op. cit.*

⁸ Varga *op. cit.*, p. 69, pp. 130-131.

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considered purely a gesture of “nostalgia for Transylvania”⁹. The strong inspiration must have been provided by the unsettling, contradictory aspects of this topic, by the “resistance of the experience”¹⁰. His years spent in Lugoj and Timișoara have had a lifelong effect, mainly through family background, role models, and friendships, but at the same time we cannot ignore the traumatic experiences of the 1930s and 40s. These memories and experiences came to surface when the town council of Lugoj, in a first round, did not vote in favour of Kurtág receiving the honorary citizenship.¹¹

Banat, in a wider sense the homeland of the composer, is one of the most ethnically diverse regions of the Carpathian Basin. Historically the home of at least eleven ethnicities¹², their cultural coexistence might be considered a symbolic forerunner of the openness and multifacetedness of Kurtág’s oeuvre. Once the seat of Krassó-Szörény (Caraș-Severin) county, Lugoj (and most of Banat) became part of the Kingdom of Romania in 1920, and as the 1930 census states the population’s relative majority was Romanian.¹³ The 1930s, the formative years of the Romanian nation-state, were tumultuous times, tainted by the spread of distorted ideas. In these times Kurtág had contradictory experiences, such as those that he went through while learning *colindas* in secondary school.¹⁴ On the other hand, there was the vivid cultural life and music scene of the Banat, and the relatively advanced public education system. Kurtág recalls Felician Brînzeu, his Romanian language and literature teacher, using modern pedagogical methods by which the pupils learned the structure of the language through games, and became familiar with the greatest authors of Romanian literature, Eminescu and Creangă among others.¹⁵

The childhood setting and the years spent in the Romanian education system created the foundation for this lifelong interest, but its first signs came to surface as late as 1970s, when the first volumes of *Játékok* [Games] were published.¹⁶ [Although, Kurtág has said that while working on the vocal part of *Bornemisza Péter mondásai* [The Sayings of Péter Bornemisza], Op. 7) he spent much time studying Bartók’s *colinda* collection, as well as Beethoven’s late piano sonatas.]¹⁷ He had not heard authentic folk music during his childhood, he did not collect folk music,

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 69.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 100.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 69.

¹² Dr. Sándor Kókai, *A Bánság történeti földrajza (1718-1918)* [Historical Geography of the Banat], Nyíregyházi Főiskola Turizmus és Földrajztudományi Intézete, Nyíregyháza, 2010, p. 402.

¹³ Árpád Varga E., *Erdély etnikai és felekezeti statisztikái a népszámlálás alapján, 1852-2011, Lugos, Temes megye* [Statistics on Ethnicity and Confessions in Transylvania Based on Census Data, Lugoj, Timiș County], Jakabffy Elemér Alapítvány, Media Index Egyesület, Cluj-Napoca, 1999-2004, accessed 5 February 2020 (<http://nepszamlalas.adatbank.transindex.ro/?pg=etnikai&id=3609>).

¹⁴ Varga, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

¹⁵ *Idem*, p. 15.

¹⁶ *Idem*, p. 53.

¹⁷ György Kurtág, personal communication, May 5, 2020.

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nor did he engage in its scholarly study. Folk references in his music can be linked to childhood memories of *colindas* being taught in school, to records heard in adulthood, and to studies of Bartók’s Romanian folk collections.¹⁸

Apart from Kurtág’s personal statements, the most important sources in this respect can be found in the scores. The use of several languages (including Romanian) in the works’ titles, dedications, or in the performance indications are often telling, pointing to an inspirational milieu, to a specific context of cultural history. I had the opportunity to ask the composer himself about some of the issues.¹⁹ Kurtág’s connection to Romanian folk music has not been overlooked by Romanian and Hungarian musicologists. Numerous studies have been written about these works, especially about *Colindă-Baladă*. (See papers of Zoltán Farkas, Ferenc László, Iulia Mogoșan, Constantin-Tufan Stan, Bianca Țiplea Temeș, and Bálint Horváth in the Bibliography). A detailed analysis of all relevant pieces is beyond the scope of this article. In the following pages I will focus on their aspects concerning Romanian culture and folk music, also considering the biographical notes and the inner connections of the oeuvre.

The first composition alluding to Romanian folk music is *Hommage à Farkas Ferenc* (2) – *foszlányok egy kolinda emlékképeiből* [Scraps of a Colinda Melody – Faintly Recollected] from *Játékok*, vol. 3. It is one of the best-known pieces from the series *Játékok*, and a constant feature of the Kurtág couple’s concerts.²⁰ The composer did not write an orchestral work until his 60s, a fact he referred to when he half-jokingly said about the *Hommage*... “I call this my symphony”²¹. The original tune can be easily identified: it is the one of the best-known Romanian Christmas carols, *O, ce veste minunată*. Kurtág first became acquainted with this melody when learning *colindas* in secondary school in Lugoj, as described above.²² He noted this song in the publication *Kocsis Zoli hangjegyzete* [Zoli Kocsis’s Manuscript Book].²³ This tune has countless musical settings by Romanian composers, and György Ligeti also used it in two of his early piano works.²⁴

¹⁸ Varga, *op. cit.*, p. 52, Vasilescu, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Kurtág, personal communication, May 5, 2020.

²⁰ Recordings by Márta Kurtág, Hungaroton SLPX 11846, ECM 1619.

²¹ Kurtág, personal communication, May 5, 2020, see also: Varga, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

²² Varga, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

²³ György Kurtág, *Kocsis Zoli hangjegyzete* [Zoli Kocsis’s Manuscript Book], Facsimile, Editio Musica Budapest, 2016, p. 25v.

²⁴ Márton Kerékfy, *Népzene és nosztalgia Ligeti György művészetében* [Folk Music and Nostalgia in the Art of György Ligeti], Rózsavölgyi és Társa, Budapest, 2018, p. 33.

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Example 1. *O ce veste minunată* – Romanian carol tune, in György Kurtág,
Kocsis Zoli hangjegyzete (Zoli Kocsis's Manuscript Book),

Facsimile, Editio Musica Budapest, 2016, p. 25v

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The roots of the archaic Romanian *colinda* go beyond the Christian Christmas tradition, and point to pagan antecedents. This is true for both the melodies and the texts of the archaic *colindas*²⁵. *O, ce veste minunată* does not belong to this archaic layer: the functional-tonal melody and the triple metre of the song's first part shows us that it originates in Western art music. It is not a folk song, but still it is an endearing, charming tune.

The rhythm of the musical material in Kurtág's work can be considered a characteristic of Romanian folk music. The gentle alternation of the short and long measures (in a 1:2 ratio) refers to Constantin Brăiloiu's *giusto silabic bicron*, one of the most common rhythmic patterns of Romanian folk music.²⁶ The characteristic rhythm and the berceuse-like intonation recalls Bartók's piano arrangements (*Román kolindadallamok/Romanian Christmas Carols*). Not surprisingly, the influence of the *colindas* thus comes via Bartók's music. [As a side note, the term "colinda rhythm", introduced by Hungarian musicologist Breuer János²⁷, is rather questionable from a folkloric perspective. The *colindas* do not have a uniform rhythm, and none of the common rhythmic patterns of the *colindas* is typical only to them within the Romanian folk genres.]²⁸ *O, ce veste minunată* is not present in its integrity in this

²⁵ Béla Bartók, "Román népzene II" [Romanian Folk Music II], in Szöllősy András (ed.), *Bartók Béla Összegyűjtött írásai (Béla Bartók's Collected Writings)*, Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1966, p. 478.

²⁶ Constantin Brăiloiu, "Giuto silabic", in *Opere I*, Editura Muzicală a Uniunii Compozitorilor din Republica Socialistă România, București, 1967, pp. 173-234.

²⁷ János Breuer, "Kolinda Rhythm in the Music of Bartók", in *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Vol. XVII, 1975, pp. 39-58.

²⁸ Alina Stan, *Limbajul muzical al colindelor din Transilvania* [Musical Language of Colindas in Transylvania], Clear Vision, Cluj-Napoca, 2009, pp. 83-159.

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piece; rather, the original tune is deconstructed by the composer. The characteristic motifs can still be recognised, but the major tonality of the original melody is reduced to an unstable major tetrachord, the song's lines become blurred, and the original rhythm disintegrates:



Example 2. György Kurtág, *Hommage à Farkas Ferenc (2) – Scraps of a Colinda Melody – Faintly Recollected in Játékok*, Vol. III, *Vivace, dolce*, bars 1-5
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As the piece continues, we can discern only fragments from the tune, in the process of a particular variation form. More and more sounds disappear from the melody, as if sounds or phrases were removed one by one, while the dynamics and the transposition of the tune change as well:



Example 3. György Kurtág, *Hommage...*, *Vivace, dolce*, bars 6-22
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Starting from the sixth line the broken pieces of the melody are already hard to identify. The final reduction of the melody happens in the tenth line: at this point it is represented only by a perfect fourth:



Example 4. György Kurtág, *Hommage...*, m. 38-39
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After a longer fermata follows a short, alienated, yet recognisable reprise.

This compositional process points to a basic trait in Kurtág's way of thinking: while the predictable, well composed form slows down the creative mind, the blurred, fragmented form pushes it forward²⁹. Thus this small piano piece joins one of the oeuvre's main themes, the group of works which are the "fragments".³⁰

The tune of the *O, ce veste minunată* appears explicitly too in Kurtág's oeuvre, in the piano piece entitled *...c'astăzi s'a născut... – Márta 90 éves!* [*...c'astăzi s'a născut... – Márta is 90 years old!*] written almost 40 years later. The piece has not been published to date, nor is it part of the newly issued ninth and tenth volumes of *Játékok* series. The title (a fragment of the *O, ce veste minunată*) refers both to the nativity story and to Márta Kurtág's birthday. The form can be divided into two equal parts of 12 bars each. The first part is a choral-like harmonic progression, in the typical style of Kurtág's late works (*pianissimo*, *quasi fanfare*):

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piano piece. At the top left, there is a date and edition note: "2017 Edit.". The title of the piece, "...c'astăzi s'a născut... – Márta 90 éves!", is written in cursive above the staves. The score is written on two staves, one with a treble clef and one with a bass clef. The tempo marking "Sostenuto" is written above the first staff. There are various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "pp". A performance instruction "Calmare un ped." is written below the first staff. The score is annotated with circles and lines, possibly indicating specific musical features or performance instructions.

Example 5. György Kurtág, *...c'astăzi s'a născut... – Márta is 90 years old!*, unpublished piano piece, *Sostenuto*, bars 1-12

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The second part contains all the sounds of the *O, ce veste...* tune, but combined with a counterpoint which alienates the tonal material to the point where it is barely recognisable. The melody itself stays intact, but the twelve-tone counterpoint and the broad changes in register put it in a distinctive light:

²⁹ Varga, *op. cit.*, p. 100, p. 115.

³⁰ *Idem*, pp. 74-78.

The image shows two systems of handwritten musical notation for piano. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The notation is dense and complex, featuring numerous accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals), slurs, and dynamic markings such as 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte). The first system includes a 'poco' marking. The second system includes a 'Sostenuto' marking. The handwriting is in black ink on white paper.

Example 6. György Kurtág, ...c'astăzi s'a născut..., *Sostenuto*, bars 13-18

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One of the more emblematic pieces of volume six of *Játékok* is entitled *Doina*. In its original sense the *doina* is a widespread and varied vocal genre of Romanian folk music, which is basically improvised, constructed of more or less constant patterns.³¹ At first sight, in Kurtág's material the *doina* might refer to the rich ornamentation, to the caesuras of the sigh-like motifs, the unpredictable melody line, and the structure, which is typically constructed of three parts and which is freely varied within each individual section. (Example 7)

In addition to these features, the main character of the movement is similar to the main character of the *doinas*. Still, the composer points out that the movement was in fact inspired by an archive recording of a *klezmer* tune, of unknown origin; he even used direct motifs from it.³²

³¹ Tiberiu Alexandru, *Romanian Folk Music*, Musical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1980, pp. 49-55.

³² Kurtág, personal communication, May 5, 2020.

Example 7. György Kurtág, *Doina*, in *Játékok*, vol. VI, *Parlando, con moto*, bars 5-15
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During the composition process, Judit Frigyesi, an internationally known researcher of Eastern European Jewish folklore, gave several archive recordings of *klezmer* music to Kurtág. These recordings were unpublished at the time, passed on among the people interested in this topic. Kurtág was profoundly moved by these recordings. One of them was a particular *klezmer doina* for violin and piano, which had an especially big impact on the composer. This elementary experience led to the piano piece entitled *Doina*³³. To date, the *klezmer* tune mentioned has not been identified with complete certainty.

By remarkable coincidence, another Hungarian composer chose to write a piece inspired by the same folk genre, very close in time to Kurtág's *Doina*. The first movement of György Ligeti's *Viola Sonata*, the *Horă Lungă*, is based on a regional variety of the *doina* genre (from Maramureş county). But a comparison of the two pieces tends mostly to reveal the differences between them. Márton Kerékfy's specific observations show that Ligeti's piece is much closer to the original folk tunes; the motifs used and their development maintain a firm relationship with the original material of the *horă lungă*.³⁴

³³ *Idem*.

³⁴ Kerékfy, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-189.

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Earlier studies have already linked some characteristic motifs in Kurtág’s music to *colindas*³⁵. These phrases are typically diatonic, with a small range and an asymmetric rhythm (*giusto silabic bicron*). Their tone and expressivity represent a fragile, volatile beauty, and they form a sharp contrast with the dense, chaotic, twelve-tone material. Similar motifs can be found in the fifth movement of *Hommage à Mihály András – Tizenkét mikrolúdium vonósnégyesre* [12 Microludes for string quartet] (Op. 13) and in the fourth movement of *...quasi una fantasia...* (Op. 27/1).



Example 8. György Kurtág, *Hommage à Mihály András 12 Microludes for string quartet* (Op. 13), Mov. 5, *Lontano, calmo, appena sentito*, bars 1-3

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Example 9. György Kurtág, *...quasi una fantasia...* (Op. 27/1), Mov. 4, *Lontano, calmo, appena sentito*, bars 1-2

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In the *Lebenslauf* (Op. 32) we can read the instruction “Wie eine Colinda-Melodie”:

³⁵ Zoltán Farkas, “The Path of a Hölderlin Topos. Wandering Ideas in Kurtág’s Compositions”, in *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, LXIII, No. 3-4, 2005, pp. 289-310.
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Allegretto innocente [Wie eine Colinda-Melodie]

Z. 13 967

Example 10. György Kurtág, *Lebenslauf* (Op. 32),

Allegretto innocente [Wie eine Colinda-Melodie], bars 46-51

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The composer's original plan was to base the final movement of *...concertante...* (Op. 42) on a *colinda*, as well.³⁶ As mentioned above, this lullaby-like, idyllic atmosphere is not typical of the performance of archaic Romanian *colindas*³⁷, but rather of more recent Christmas songs (*cântece de stea*) and of some of Bartók's piano arrangements.

We have arrived at two closely related compositions which contain direct references to Romanian folk music. The magnum opus of this topic is definitely the *Colindă-Baladă*. Kurtág himself considers this imposing work to be a salient piece in his oeuvre. As a "document of his biography", he placed this work in line with *Bornemisza Péter mondásai* [The Sayings of Péter Bornemisza] and *A boldogult R. V. Truszova üzenetei* [Messages of the Late Miss R. V. Troussova] (Op. 13).³⁸ We might say that this statement is somewhat biased by the author's memories. However, besides the fact that this work is unique in the oeuvre (with the consistent presence of the folkloric material), it is also an important milestone in the process started in the mid-1980s, in which the composer puts greater emphasis on integrated largeforms. [The premiere of the piece was on March 29, 2009 at the Cluj Modern festival, performed by the Transylvania State Philharmonic Orchestra, the AdHOC

³⁶ Varga, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

³⁷ Béla Bartók, *Melodien der rumänischen Colinde (Weihnachtslieder)*, Universal Edition, Wien, 1935, pp. XXX-XXXI.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, 130.

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Ensemble, and conductor Cornel Groza. Several events were organised linked to this occasion: a symposium, a masterclass, also at this time the composer received the Doctor Honoris Causa award of the Gheorghe Dima National Music Academy, and later on in autumn he revisited the scenes of his childhood in Banat]³⁹

We cannot ignore the direct references to Bartók's work in *Colindă-Baladă*. The tune was collected in Hunyad (Hunedoara) county by Bartók, and it appears in his folk collection.⁴⁰

Example 11. Béla Bartók, *Colinda A II. c.*, in *Melodien der rumänischen Colinde (Weihnachtslieder)*, Universal Edition, Wien, 1935, p. 3

The text is one of the three most valuable *colinda* lyrics, as ranked by Bartók. (Of course, the second is the story of the boys who turned into stags, and the third is the mythical fight with a lion, or, in another version, with a stag⁴¹). Unlike the story of *Cantata Profana*, the love between the Sun and the Moon, brother and sister, the wedding of the celestial bodies is a widespread motif present in many varieties of the Romanian *colindas*; it has links to Eurasian folklore, and its origins point to antique mythology.⁴²

This folkloric text, full of surreal and symbolic elements, and with a plot rich in psychological references, is an ideal subject for a dramatic, illustrative interpretation. Besides the text the composer used the original melody, which has a simple structure and undecorated motifs. This simplicity made it suitable for varied (especially counterpoint-like) treatment, and for use as a kind of a ritornello. The usage of the *toacă*, an instrument characteristic of the orthodox liturgy, adds another reference to Romanian culture.⁴³

³⁹ Francisc László, *Prefață*, in Constantin Tufan-Stan, *György Kurtág. Reîntoarcerea la matricea spirituală* [Return to the Spiritual Source], MediaMusica, Cluj-Napoca, 2009, pp. 5-7.

⁴⁰ Bartók, 1935, *Colinda A II. c.*, p. 3.

⁴¹ Bartók, 1966, p. 478.

⁴² i. e. Oszkár Mailand, *A nap és hold-mythos a román népköltészetben* [The Myth of the Sun and the Moon in the Romanian Folk Poetry], in *Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny*, 1886, pp. 593-602.

⁴³ Constanța Cristescu, *Chemări de toacă* [The Calling Voice of the Toacă], Editura Academiei Române, București, 1999.

Colindă-Baladă

3 Molto misurato, pesante, giusto
 4 [♩ = cca52]

Kurtág György
op. 46

Tenore 1
 Basso 1
 Tenore 2
 Basso 2
 Toaca *

* + ad lib. Marimba

Example 12. György Kurtág, *Colindă-Baladă* (Op. 46), *Molto misurato, pesante, giusto*, bars 1-5

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The folkloric tune is part of a large-scale cultural reference system, but undoubtedly the most important reference is to Bartók's *Cantata Profana*: the theme, the scale of the work, the symbolic significance of the double choir, and the Sun personified by the tenor solo. The *Colindă-Baladă* has a relatively extensive literature. A detailed analysis of the work and its references to cultural and music history can be found in several papers (see Bibliography), including one of my earlier studies⁴⁴.

The violin duet *Triptic* (Op. 45) is a "byproduct" of, and at the same time a study piece for the *Colindă-Baladă*. The piece naturally consists of three movements. In the first and third movements we can detect the *colinda* tune already familiar from *Colindă-Baladă*. The first movement is a passacaglia-like arrangement, while the third one has a freer, more rhapsodic form. The shaping of the material (the contrapuntal techniques) and some direct musical material suggest that the *Triptic* is in fact a preliminary study for the *Colindă-Baladă*. Still, it is an important composition in its own right, with its own opus number. The second movement (*Mesagiu ...harmadik szigorúan magánlevél Szöllősy Andrásnak – Mesagiu ...the third, strictly private and confidential letter to András Szöllősy*) also contains references to folkloric materials,

⁴⁴ Bálint Horváth, *A kolinda és megjelenési formái a huszadik század román és magyar műzenéjében* [Colinda and its Appearance in the 20th Century Romanian and Hungarian Art Music], DLA Doctoral Thesis, "Liszt Ferenc" Academy of Music, Budapest, 2016, pp. 93-107.

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but no direct quotation. (*Triptic* has been revoked by the composer, so at the moment I’m not allowed to display excerpts from it.)

Generally, when Kurtág refers to Romanian folk idioms he often chooses the same forms of expression, or even the same exact melodies. The folk effects cannot be traced in an evident form, contrary to Ligeti’s work (who dealt with Eastern European folk music in a scholarly capacity as well)⁴⁵. Some of the folk tunes have personal relevance for Kurtág, and thus also a symbolic power. Kurtág’s interpretations are reflections on certain musical subtypes, “archetypes”⁴⁶. Sometimes these are not even original folk songs (such as the *O, ce veste minunată*), or they refer to Romanian folk music in an indirect way (*Doina*). An example would be the motifs I call “pseudo-colindas”: the diatonic melodies, with a small range and asymmetric rhythm (*giusto silabic bicron*). The folkloric references found in the volumes of *Játékok* or in the *Jelek-Játékok-Üzenetek* [Signs-Games-Messages] series are also often linked to personal experiences: to a distinguished folk musician or to a memorable performance (for example to Mihály Halmágyi, the brilliant violinist from Gyimes, or to the excellent performer of the folk song *Szerelem, szerelem...* from Hungary, Somogy county). They also link the pieces to the Bartókian “mother tongue”, as the composer puts it.⁴⁷

The felicitous constellation of events (Kurtág’s reacquaintance with his homeland, the inspiration provided by Felician Brînzeu’s study, the encounter with the text) play an important role in the authentic approach to Romanian folk music in *Triptic* and *Colindă-Baladă*. These led to the unfolding of a grandiose musical form, which plays a key role in the further development of the composer’s oeuvre.

Three musical instructions of *Colindă-Baladă* (*cu dor, cu mult dor*) can be an open reference to the term *dor*, an untranslatable word, a specific notion in Romanian folk music and literature. (It can be described as a strong feeling of longing and pain, a creative power present in the formation and interpretation of the archaic *doinas* and ballads⁴⁸.)

⁴⁵ Kerékfy, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-37.

⁴⁶ Kurtág, 2009.

⁴⁷ Hartmut Lück, “Zene a kimondhatatlanról” [Music About the Inexpressible], in *Holmi*, VII, No. 2, February, 1995, p. 207.

⁴⁸ Lucian Blaga, *Spațiul mioritic* [The Mioritic Space], Editura Oficial de Librărie, București, 1936.

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9 Berceuse-Siciliano [cu mult dor]

93 *con amore*
A - na, A - na, A - - na, A - na! A - - - - na Săn - zi - a - na,
A - na, A - na, A - - na, A - na! A - na, A - na Săn - zi - a - na,
A - na, A - na, A - na, A - na, A - na! A - na - - , A - na Săn - zi - a - na,
A - na, A - na, A - na, A - na, A - na! A - na, A - na Săn - zi - a - na,
A - na, A - na, A - na, A - na, A - na! A - na, A - na Săn - zi - a - na,
A - na, A - na, A - na, A - na, A - na! A - na, A - na Săn - zi - a - na,
A - na, A - na, A - na, A - na, A - na! A - na, A - na Săn - zi - a - na,
A - na, A - na, A - na, A - na, A - na! A - na, A - na Săn - zi - a - na,

Example 13. György Kurtág, *Colindă-Baladă, Berceuse-Siciliano*, 93-96

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12 sciolto
8 *sempre dim. - - al quasi niente*
203 *cu mult dor [con ardore]*
T Solo
A - no, A - no, A - no, A - no...
3 Parlato, con moto
8

Example 14. György Kurtág, *Colindă-Baladă, sciolto*, bars 203-204

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We might go so far as to say that in addition to the childhood memories, this was the most tangible connection to Romanian folklore. The most intense musical moments of the *Colindă-Baladă* can be linked to the feeling of *dor*, but also to the gesture of invocation, making connection (see the aria of the tenor solo embodying the Sun). In this perspective we may try to understand how the *Colindă-Baladă* gives a striking and permanent answer to the question formulated decades ago: "Ce este vocativul?" – What is the vocative?

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