

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: A CONDUCTOR'S GUIDE TO
BÉLA BARTÓK'S *CANTATA PROFANA*

Nathan Lofton, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2024

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Béla Bartók composed *Cantata Profana* in 1930, at the height of his interwar European career. Bartók's only major choral-orchestral work, the cantata is a synthesis of Bartók's immersion in Eastern European folk music and his mature compositional aesthetic. *Cantata Profana* is a work of modest scale, approximately twenty minutes in duration, though it is also one that makes considerable musical demands of a double chorus, tenor and baritone soloists, and a full orchestra. Above all, it is a work that is considered by many prominent Bartók scholars to be among the composer's finest creations. Despite all of this, *Cantata Profana* is so infrequently performed that most musicians know it only by reputation or through one of the handful of existing recordings, if they know it at all.

This dissertation gathers the resources a choral conductor needs when preparing to perform *Cantata Profana*. These resources include a brief history of the cantata's genesis and analyses of the work's structure and musical elements. The dissertation examines the required performing forces, choral divisi, Hungarian diction, rehearsal strategies, and programming considerations, and provides possible solutions to these as some of the challenges inherent in the work. The last section of the dissertation considers the interpretation and meaning of the cantata.

Appendices are devoted to a literal English translation and International Phonetic Alphabet transliteration of *Cantata Profana*'s Hungarian text; a selected performance history of the work; and an annotated discography of the available recordings. The ultimate goal of this dissertation is to make *Cantata Profana* a more approachable work, and to encourage more conductors, choruses, and orchestras to undertake its performance.

A CONDUCTOR'S GUIDE TO BÉLA BARTÓK'S *CANTATA PROFANA*

By

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Chapter 1: Historical Background on *Cantata Profana*

Béla Bartók in 1930

In the fall of 1930, when *Cantata Profana* was completed, Béla Bartók was 49 years old, married to his second wife, and had two sons: twenty-year-old Béla, from his first marriage, and six-year-old Peter. In his professional life, Bartók had by this time reached the height of his interwar European career. He enjoyed steady employment as a member of the piano faculty at the Budapest Academy of Music, where he had taught since 1907.¹ He performed regularly as a piano soloist in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, London, and the other major European musical capitals, and he had even undertaken an extended American concert tour two years earlier.² His compositions were being performed routinely by major orchestras, prominent soloists, and chamber ensembles in Europe and the United States. His Third String Quartet had been the recipient, in 1928, of a major American composition prize worth \$6,000 (equivalent to more than \$100,000 in 2024).³ While some of his most enduring compositions — such as *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* and *Concerto for Orchestra* — still lay ahead of him, he had already written other major works that would become a lasting part of his legacy.

The era of *Cantata Profana*'s creation was a productive one for Bartók, with the completion of several other significant compositions. Among these were the Sonata (1926) and *Out of Doors* (1926) for solo piano; two *Rhapsodies* for violin and orchestra (both 1928), and the Second Piano Concerto (1930–1); the Third (1927) and Fourth (1928) string quartets; *Twenty Hungarian Folk Songs* for solo voice (1929) and *Hungarian Folk Songs* for mixed chorus

¹ Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 74.

² Suchoff, *Béla Bartók: Life and Work*, 108.

³ *Ibid.*, 110.

(1930). During the same period, Bartók was also working to publish his multi-volume collection of Romanian folk music, the manuscript for which was completed and submitted to publishers in London and Bucharest in 1926.⁴

Despite Bartók's personal and professional success in the late 1920s, the dawn of the 1930s marked the beginning of a difficult time for the composer's native country. As the Bartók scholar Benjamin Suchoff observed in his biography of the composer:

“At the time the composition of the *Cantata Profana* was undertaken, the calamitous, worldwide depression that had begun with the New York stock market crash in 1929 impacted severely on the Hungarian economy. Nearly a third of the country's industrial workers lost their jobs and were without unemployment insurance. Even the educated classes were afflicted: university graduates were unable to find work, there were few job opportunities for engineers and teachers, and state employees suffered substantial cuts in salary. But of much greater significance was agrarian Hungary's reduction in foreign trade, which had been based on a large volume of agricultural exports and now was reduced to a minimum. Thousands of landed peasants farming small acreage were ruined, and over one million agricultural laborers and farmhands were impoverished, many of them to the point of near starvation. Their plight as well as the encroachment of fascism in Hungarian politics may have been the motivating factors that led to the creation of Bartók's highly expressionist choral work.”⁵

The last point that Suchoff mentions, the rise of fascism in Hungary — along with the rest of Europe — in the early 1930s, is especially important when considering the genesis and early history of *Cantata Profana*. The Hungarian musicologist György Kroó, in his chapter on *Cantata Profana* in *The Bartók Companion*, states that Bartók was among several composers who “felt the cold wind of the approaching night of Fascism,” noting that the same years saw the composition of several other major vocal works: Igor Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* (1930), Arnold Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* (1930–2), and Arthur Honegger's *Cris du monde* (1931).⁶

⁴ Suchoff, *Béla Bartók: Life and Work*, 121.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁶ Kroó, “Cantata profana,” 424.

The political climate in continental Europe may also have contributed, at least in part, to the period of several years between *Cantata Profana*'s completion in late 1930 and its first performance in May of 1934. In a letter to his publisher, Universal Edition, shortly after the cantata's completion, Bartók expressed that he was hesitant to have the work performed in Hungary because of its Romanian subject matter.⁷ It is notable that both the first and second performances of *Cantata Profana* were given in London, and it was not performed in Hungary until 1936.⁸

Bartók's Journey to Ethnomusicology

While the actual composition of *Cantata Profana* took place in the run-up to World War II, the cantata's genesis can be traced to Bartók's research in Eastern European folk music in the years before World War I. For much of his career, Bartók's work in folk music research and composition progressed simultaneously, with elements of the folk music he studied – especially rhythms, meters, and modal scales – finding their way into his original compositions. Writing in the 1941 essay *The Relation Between Contemporary Hungarian Art Music and Folk Music*, Bartók described his use of folk material as falling into three categories:

“One of these categories represents transcriptions where the used folk melody is the more important part of the work. The added accompaniment and eventual preludes and postludes may only be considered as the mounting of a jewel. The second category represents transcriptions where the importance of the used melodies and the added parts is almost equal. In the third category, the added composition-treatment attains the importance of an original work, and the used folk melody is only to be regarded as a kind of motto.”⁹

⁷ Quoted in Vikárius, “*Cantata Profana* (1930): A Reading of the Sources,” 258.

⁸ Budapest Bartók Archives, “Béla Bartók's Compositions.”

⁹ Suchoff, *Béla Bartók Essays*, 351–352.

Cantata Profana falls into the third category. While it is an original concert work in a contemporary musical idiom, its text, dramatic themes, and the molecules that form its musical DNA are deeply rooted in folklore.¹⁰ To fully understand the work, one must also be aware of the professional circumstances and chance encounters that led Bartók to the field of ethnomusicology in the first place.

Bartók graduated from Budapest's Royal Hungarian National Academy of Music, now called the Franz Liszt Academy of Music, in 1903. By the time he graduated, his skill as a pianist had already received enthusiastic notice in the Budapest press, so he left the Academy amid high expectations for his future success.¹¹ In the months following his graduation, with encouragement from the conductor Hans Richter, he worked on completing the tone poem *Kossuth*, his first large-scale orchestral work.¹² The January 1904 premiere of *Kossuth*, by the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra, was the first major event of Bartók's professional career as a composer. The tone poem was performed a second time the following month, with Richter conducting the Halle Orchestra in Manchester, England, marking Bartók's first exposure in the United Kingdom.¹³ Reviews of these performances varied widely depending on the political leanings of the publication, with Budapest's nationalist newspapers offering special praise for the work's Hungarian nationalist subject matter and anti-Austrian message.¹⁴ Despite the mixed reviews, what could not be denied was that these high-profile performances marked the arrival of an important new voice in Hungarian music.

¹⁰ These elements will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 2.

¹¹ Suchoff, *Béla Bartók: Life and Music*, 27.

¹² Gillies, *Bartók in Britain*, 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴ Suchoff, *Béla Bartók: Life and Work*, 39.

Bartók continued to perform, compose, and travel through the remainder of 1904, and it was later in this year that the composer had his first encounter with the type of folk music which would inspire so much of his later creativity. While staying at a house in Gerlicepuszta (modern day Ratková, Slovakia) from May through November of 1904, Bartók heard an eighteen-year-old maid named Lidi Dósa singing a song from her village in Transylvania.¹⁵ Decades later, in a 1970 interview, Lidi Dósa recounted that the composer “liked the tune [...] [and] he wanted to note it down. After he noted it down, he went to the piano and played it, then he asked me whether he played it correctly. Well, it was exactly as I sang it [...] I had to sing continually, however, he only wanted to hear the ancient village tunes!”¹⁶ Shortly after his encounter with Lidi Dósa, Bartók composed a setting of the first song he heard her sing, “Piros alma” (“Red apple”), under the title *Székely Folk Song*. In a December 1904 letter to his sister, Bartók mused about folk music being a potential source of material for future compositions: “I have a new plan now: collect together the most beautiful of Hungarian folk songs, and with the best possible piano accompaniment I will elevate them to the standards of an art song.”¹⁷

Around the same time, Bartók was introduced to another person who would have a major impact on his journey towards ethnomusicology: the Hungarian composer and folklorist Zoltán Kodály, who was in the midst of his doctoral research in Hungarian folk music at the time.¹⁸ While Bartók and Kodály had been contemporaries at the Academy of Music, and even studied with the same composition teacher, it appears their paths did not cross as students.¹⁹ The precise date of their first meeting is unclear, but they are documented to have both been present at the

¹⁵ Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 39.

¹⁶ Quoted in Suchoff, *Béla Bartók: Life and Music*, 42.

¹⁷ Quoted in Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 42.

¹⁸ Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 56.

¹⁹ Suchoff, *Béla Bartók: Life and Music*, 45.

home of Emma Gruber on March 18, 1905.²⁰ The two men soon became close friends, and Bartók took a keen interest in the folk music Kodály collected while traveling to the Galánta region (then in north-west Hungary, now part of Slovakia) in the summer of 1905.²¹

By the end of 1905 Bartók's early professional career had begun to stagnate, if not actually slow. Although he continued to concertize regularly as a pianist and his compositions received some high-profile performances, there had been nothing as prestigious as the Budapest and Manchester performances of *Kossuth* in early 1904. At the time of his March 1905 meeting with Kodály, Bartók was preparing to take part in the fourth Anton Rubinstein Competition, which was held in Paris later the same year. Bartók entered both the piano and composition categories of the competition, hoping recognition in either area would further boost his fledgling career, but he was deeply disappointed not to receive any awards in the competition.²² This career setback, the chance encounter with Lidi Dósa a year earlier, and his new friendship with Kodály all led Bartók to devote more of his energy to exploring Hungarian folk music.

Beginning in the summer of 1906, Bartók made regular collecting trips to different regions of Hungary, sometimes alone and sometimes accompanied by Kodály or others. As a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire prior to World War I, "Greater" Hungary encompassed a large and culturally diverse area, including parts of modern-day Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia.²³ Between 1906 and 1918, Bartók travelled throughout these regions and collected thousands of Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian, Ruthenian, and

²⁰ Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 56. Emma Gruber (1863–1958) was also a composer and folklorist in her own right, who studied with both Bartók and Kodály. She and Kodály were married in 1910.

²¹ *Ibid*, 57.

²² Suchoff, *Béla Bartók: Life and Music*, 46.

²³ Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 3.

Yugoslav folk melodies and texts.²⁴ The study and classification of this vast trove of material would continue to be a focus of Bartók's scholarly energies for the remainder of his life.

Especially important to the genesis of *Cantata Profana* was Bartók's field work in Transylvania, part of modern-day Romania, the majority of which took place between 1914 and 1917. On an early visit to the area, in April of 1914, Bartók was in a rural part of Mureș county²⁵ when he encountered the folk song and texts which would later become the basis for *Cantata Profana*.²⁶ In the course of Bartók's work in Transylvania, he would ultimately collect over 3,600 folk melodies. The bulk of these would be published in various collections during the composer's lifetime, but the complete five volumes of his *Rumanian Folk Music* was not published in its intended form until 1967, more than twenty years after the composer's death.²⁷

In a 1933 essay Bartók explained — given, as Lidi Dósa said, his interest in “the ancient village tunes” — why the isolation of Transylvania was so attractive to him:

“It was there that as recently as twenty years ago [i.e., 1913] the folk music researcher was elated by the opportunity of coming into contact with pure, uncontaminated material [...] For miles on end, in these parts, there are entire villages with illiterate inhabitants, communities which are not linked by any railways or roads; here, most of the time the people can provide for their own daily wants, never leaving their native habitats except for such unavoidable travel as arises from service in the army or an occasional appearance in court. When one comes into such a region, one has a feeling of a return to the Middle Ages.”²⁸

²⁴ Bartók's collections of music from each of these regions, as well as his less extensive explorations of North African, Turkish, and Bulgarian folk music, are discussed in detail in Suchoff's *Béla Bartók: Life and Music*, 163–214.

²⁵ At the time this county was called Mureș-Turda in Romanian, or Maros-Torda in Hungarian, which is what Bartók wrote along with the melody and text in his notebook. Coincidentally, this county is also where Lidi Dósa, the maid Bartók met in 1904, had grown up.

²⁶ Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 68. More about colinde and their origin can be found in Chapter 2 below.

²⁷ Suchoff, *Béla Bartók: Life and Music*, 172.

²⁸ Suchoff, *Béla Bartók Essays*, 119–120.

While Bartók was spending a significant amount of time collecting and studying folk music, he also continued to perform as a pianist and to compose — though the pace of his compositional output slowed somewhat between his disappointment at the 1905 Rubinstein Competition and the early 1910s. When the outbreak of World War I in 1914 began to limit his travel, however, Bartók returned to composition and the second half of the decade saw the completion of several major works: *Bluebeard's Castle* (1911, rev. 1912–17), *The Wooden Prince* (1914–17), the second String Quartet (1915–17), *The Miraculous Mandarin* (1918–19), and — not surprisingly — a large number of folk song arrangements and transcriptions. The successful performances of these works, beginning with the 1917 Budapest premiere of *The Wooden Prince*, led to a significant turn in the public support of Bartók's music and his career as a composer would continue to rise through the 1920s.²⁹

The Composition of *Cantata Profana*

The text of *Cantata Profana* is based on two variants of the same Romanian colindă³⁰ collected by Bartók in 1914. Colinde are folk songs traditionally sung around the Christmas holiday, however their use originated with pre-Christian pagan solstice celebrations. In the preface to Bartók's collection of colinde, written in 1926 but not published until 1935, the composer described the origins of the genre, even making specific reference to the story that would become the basis for *Cantata Profana*.

“We must not think of the *Colinde*, however, in terms of the religious Christmas carols of the west. First of all, the most important part of these texts – perhaps one-third of them – have no connection with Christmas. Instead of the Bethlehem legends we hear about a wonderful battle between the victorious hero and the – until then – unvanquished lion (or stag), we are told the tale of nine sons who – after hunting for so many years in

²⁹ Stevens, *The Life and Music of Béla Bartók*, 52.

³⁰ In the Romanian spelling one of these traditional songs is a “colindă,” the plural being “colinde.” The English spelling for this word is not standardized, so the Romanian spelling convention will be used here.

the forest – have been changed into stags, or we listen to a marvelous story about the sun who has asked in marriage the hand of his sister, the moon, and so on. Thus here are texts truly preserved from ancient, pagan times! One of the main festivals of the pagan peoples was that observed at the time of the winter solstice. Afterwards, by chance or by design, the celebration of Christmas was established at the same time. It is not surprising that in the subconscious mind of Christianized pagan peoples the two holidays have become as one. What is really miraculous is the fact that after so many hundreds of years the pagan texts have been able to survive undisturbed.”³¹

The two colinde which inspired *Cantata Profana* appear as text 4a and 4b in Bartók’s collection of Romanian colinde³² and are also reprinted as an appendix in the 2011 corrected edition of the *Cantata Profana* score.³³ The basic outline of the story is the same in both variants: there is an old man who has taught his sons nothing but how to hunt. The sons go out to hunt and are transformed into the very stags they have been trained to stalk. The father goes to search for the sons and, finding the stags but failing to recognize that they are his children, takes aim at them. The largest of the stags calls out to the father, telling him not to shoot. If he does, the stags will take him upon their antlers and throw him onto stones, breaking him to pieces. The father implores the sons to return home, where their mother is waiting with glasses set on the table. The same stag responds that they cannot go home because their lips no longer drink from glasses but only from springs.

While the two variants share a basic narrative outline, they differ in their details. Text 4a specifies that the sons are hunting stags; that they have become lost in the forest when they are transformed; that the father falls to one knee before aiming his weapon at the stags; that the

³¹ Quoted in Suchoff, *Béla Bartók Life and Work*, 185.

³² Bartók, *Melodien der Rumänischen Colinde*. The melodies, catalogued as 12i and 12bb, appear on pgs.7 and 10, respectively. The texts, along with German translations, are on pgs.132–133. This was Vol. IV in Bartók’s collection of *Rumanian Folk Music*, which was later issued in an English translation, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967).

³³ Bartók, *Cantata Profana* FS 2011, xvi–xvii. This printing includes an English translation of the Romanian texts by E.C. Teodorescu.

largest stag threatens to throw the father from mountain to mountain and from meadow to meadow; that at home the candles are burning and the glasses are filled; and that the stags cannot return home because their antlers will not go through doorways but only through mountains. Text 4b, which is considerably shorter and more fragmentary than 4a, says that there are only two sons rather than nine; that the father taught them no trade; that the mother is sobbing and weeping through the house; and that the stag's bodies no longer wear clothes, but only foliage. Details and imagery from both variants were combined and incorporated by Bartók to create the unified final text of *Cantata Profana*.

Bartók worked on publishing his ethnomusicological collection of Romanian folk music, including the volume of colinde, over a period of decades. In 1926, around the time that the manuscript for the colinde volume was completed, Bartók asked the poet József Erdélyi to create a Hungarian translation of colinde 4a and 4b with the idea of using the texts as the basis for an original composition.³⁴ While Erdélyi's translation was eventually published in a 1930 edition of the Hungarian literary magazine *Nyugat*,³⁵ his work appears to have not been what Bartók had in mind for a musical setting. As László Vikárius explains in his article on the compositional genesis of *Cantata Profana*:

“The rewriting of the poem by Erdélyi [...] could not have fully met the composer's demands as has again and again been concluded by commentators since. In his own copy of [*Nyugat*], Bartók made a number of corrections to the wording of the poem and did not use more than only a few words or lines of this translation when preparing his own Hungarian libretto for the composition.”³⁶

³⁴ Vikárius, “*Cantata Profana* (1930): A Reading of the Sources,” 253–254.

³⁵ Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 246.

³⁶ Vikárius, “*Cantata Profana* (1930): A Reading of the Sources,” 254.

According to Bartók's surviving manuscripts and correspondence from the period, the bulk of the compositional work seems to have taken place during a relatively short period of time in the summer of 1930.³⁷ Bartók wrote to Constantin Brăiloiu, a Romanian colleague who had assisted in the preparation of the *Rumanian Folk Songs* volumes, on July 2, asking him to check the Romanian spelling of a colindă text he was setting to music.³⁸ Given the timing of this letter, the earliest surviving musical sketches for the work, and the later date of the earliest Hungarian-language libretto, Vikárius argues that Bartók must have originally started composing the cantata with a Romanian libretto.³⁹

The next mention of the work in Bartók's surviving letters comes on September 1, when Bartók wrote to his wife that he had finished the draft score on August 30. Given that the manuscript includes a completion date of September 8, it is likely that the orchestration was not completed until that date.⁴⁰ In the September 1 letter, Bartók writes that he had been struggling with how to end the work, having ultimately decided on the recapitulation of the story and musical material that became *Cantata Profana's* short third movement.⁴¹

In mid-September Bartók informed his publisher, Universal Edition, that the work had been completed. A publishing contract for the work was finalized in December 1930, along with plans for the musicologist Bence Szabolcsi to create a German translation of the text for the

³⁷ The single most complete account of the genesis of *Cantata Profana* is László Vikárius's extensive 1993 article "Béla Bartók's *Cantata Profana* (1930): A Reading of the Sources," published in *Studia Musicologica Acedemiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*. What follows is a brief summary of the compositional history of *Cantata Profana* which draws on key points identified by Vikárius. Any scholar or conductor wishing to become fully acquainted with the creation of *Cantata Profana*, as best as it can be reconstructed from the surviving documents and manuscripts, will find Vikárius's article an indispensable resource.

³⁸ Vikárius, "Cantata Profana (1930): A Reading of the Sources," 255.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 267.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 257.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 256.

cantata's first printing.⁴² The publication of the first edition of *Cantata Profana* was repeatedly delayed over the following years, by a combination of production delays in the creation of the German translation and the composer's recurring illnesses. Bartók also delayed the publication of *Cantata Profana* while he considered composing two or three additional cantatas to create a larger cycle⁴³ — something akin to the multiple cantatas that form Johann Sebastian Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*. Bartók ultimately abandoned these plans, at least for the time being, and *Cantata Profana* was finally published by Universal Edition in February of 1934, nearly three and a half years after Bartók had completed it.

Early Performance History of *Cantata Profana*

As mentioned above, due to the political situation in Hungary in the mid-1930s Bartók was opposed to *Cantata Profana* receiving its world premiere in his native country.⁴⁴ The work ultimately received its first performance — in an English translation by Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi⁴⁵ — in a BBC radio broadcast from London on May 25, 1934. The forces in the first performance were the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Wireless Chorus, tenor Trefor Jones, and baritone Frank Phillips.⁴⁶ The premiere took place in the Concert Hall, a large radio studio, at the BBC's Broadcasting House and was conducted by the BBC's Assistant Music Director, Aylmer

⁴² Vikárius, "Cantata Profana (1930): A Reading of the Sources," 257

⁴³ Ibid, 258.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Vikárius, "Cantata Profana (1930): A Reading of the Sources," 258.

⁴⁵ Vikárius, "Bartók Libretti in English Translation," 160. Although Calvocoressi (1877–1944) is only tangentially related to the history of *Cantata Profana*, he was a fascinating individual and one of Bartók's most important contacts in England. Born in France to Greek parents, he was a prominent critic and musicologist in Paris before World War I. He relocated to London in 1914, and used his command of multiple languages as a translator of works by Bartók, Stravinsky, Rachmaninoff, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, among others, into French and English. Calvocoressi's English translation of *Cantata Profana* was based on the German translation in the Universal Edition first printing of the score. Calvocoressi's translation fell out of favor following the creation of Robert Shaw's more vernacular English translation in the early 1950's.

⁴⁶ Gillies, *Bartók in Britain*, 85. For more of the early performance history of *Cantata Profana* see Appendix 2.

Buesst. Bartók wrote to his wife that he was generally pleased with the circumstances for this performance:

“We kept on rehearsing yesterday and today. The orchestra and choir are excellent. The baritone is also very good; the tenor less so. But the conductor is, for sure, nothing wonderful; he’s really only a time-beater. He drags out the tempos. But even so, owing to the excellence of the others, one can gain some kind of picture of the cantata. It’s most fortunate that I can listen to it for the very first time with such a good orchestra and choir.”⁴⁷

While a small group of spectators was able to attend the broadcast in person, the primary audience for the 1934 performance was the one listening over the radio. As misfortune would have it, the 1934 performance happened to take place on the same day and in the same city as the death of the popular English composer Gustav Holst. Malcolm Gillies, in his book on Bartók’s extensive professional connections to the United Kingdom, speculates that Holst’s death may have overshadowed the premiere of Bartók’s cantata in the musical press, and could explain the muted response to the work among critics.⁴⁸

Nearly two years later, on March 25, 1936, the BBC Symphony Orchestra presented the second performance of *Cantata Profana*, again in London, though with a different chorus and soloists. In this second performance, more of an effort was made to create an attractive program for an in-person audience. Rather than presenting the work in a large radio studio, the 1936 performance took place at the Queens Hall, one of London’s preeminent concert halls before its destruction during World War II. The conductor for the 1936 London performance was the BBC

⁴⁷ Quoted in Gillies, *Bartók in Britain*, 85.

⁴⁸ Gillies, *Bartók in Britain*, 85.

Symphony Orchestra's Music Director, Adrian Boult, and the cantata was paired with Beethoven's perennially popular Symphony No. 9.⁴⁹

Several months after the second London performance, on November 9, 1936, *Cantata Profana* was finally performed for the first time in Hungary, by the Budapest Philharmonic Society Orchestra and the Palestrina Choir led by Bartók's long-time friend Ernő Dohnányi, then the Philharmonic's Music Director.⁵⁰ Bartók did not attend this performance, as it coincided with a long-planned ethnomusicological trip to Turkey.⁵¹ *Cantata Profana* was given a total of four additional performances in Budapest during Bartók's lifetime, in 1938, 1943, and 1944.⁵² Bartók was not present for any of these later Hungarian performances of the work, as he was on another trip out of the country in 1938 and permanently emigrated to the United States in 1940. It is likely that the composer only ever heard *Cantata Profana* performed twice, both times in English, at the London performances of 1934 and 1936.

⁴⁹ Gillies, *Bartók in Britain*, 91.

⁵⁰ "Béla Bartók's Compositions," Budapest Bartók Archives, accessed February 15, 2024, <https://zti.hu/index.php/en/ba/bartok-compositions/chronology>.

⁵¹ Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 283.

⁵² "Concert of the Székesfehérvárosi Orchestra," ZTI BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 19, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=1310.

Chapter 2: Text, Structure, and Musical Elements of *Cantata Profana*

Plot and Textual Sources

The story of *Cantata Profana* is that of an old man who has nine sons. The father does not teach his sons to farm or herd, nor any other trade. The only thing he teaches them is to hunt stags. One day all nine sons go out to hunt and venture deep into the thick forest. They become lost and eventually cross a magical bridge which transforms them into the very stags they have been hunting. The father becomes impatient waiting for his sons to return home, so he takes his rifle and goes out to search for them. In the forest he comes to the magical bridge and finds stag tracks nearby. He follows the tracks to a cool spring, where he sees nine giant stags before him. Not recognizing them as his children, he falls to one knee and takes aim at the largest one. The stag, who is the dearest of the father's children, calls out to him and tells him not to shoot. The stag, who addresses the man as their "dear sweet father," warns that they can pierce him with their antlers, throwing him from meadow to meadow, from stone to stone, and from mountain to mountain. The father responds, calling them his "dear sweet children," and imploring them to come home with him. Their mother awaits them at home, he says, where the torches are burning, and the table is set with full glasses of wine. The largest stag tells the father to go home without them, for they will not go back. As the father asks why, the stag explains that their antlers no longer fit through doors; their slender bodies no longer wear clothes; their feet no longer tread on stone floors. Their mouths, he concludes, no longer drink from glasses, but only from cool springs.

When comparing Bartók's Hungarian text to the finished work, it is helpful to approach his text as a poetic outline rather than a complete libretto. While the finished score and the poetic

outline mostly correspond to one another, there are a number of places where the two differ. In Appendix 1 these deviations between the poetic text and the musical setting are enclosed in brackets and described in footnotes. The largest number of such discrepancies can be found in the Movement I hunting scene (m.59–163); the Movement II tenor accompanied recitative (m.42-95); and the coda of Movement III (m.65–93). In most of these places, the deviations between the poetic outline and the musical score are repetitions of words or stanzas for dramatic and rhetorical effect.

The text and translation included as Appendix 1 of this dissertation are based on two of the existing published scores (Table 2.1). The earlier of these is the 1934 first edition of *Cantata Profana*, published by Universal Edition in Vienna. Both the full score and piano/vocal score in this edition are facsimiles of Bartók's manuscript, including both the Hungarian text and a German translation by Bence Szabolcsi. This edition was released in February of 1934, three months before the work's first performance.¹ The latter source is the 2011 corrected edition of *Cantata Profana*, edited by Nelson Dellamaggiore and the composer's son, Peter Bartók, published by the latter's Bartók Records & Publications in Homosassa, Florida. While both the full score and piano/vocal score of the corrected edition are out-of-print as of this writing, dozens of copies of each are available at academic libraries in the United States.² The 2011 edition is based on the earlier Universal Edition printing, with corrections from the composer's sketches, working drafts, and printed copies of the score found in the collection of the New York Bartók Archive.³ This edition includes the text in Hungarian as well as the English translation by Robert Shaw. Both the full score and piano/vocal score include editorial notes on the specific corrections

¹ Vikárius, "Cantata Profana (1930): A Reading of the Sources," 258.

² "Cantata profana: the nine enchanted stags = A kilenc csodaszarvas," WorldCat, accessed December 28, 2023, <https://search.worldcat.org/title/827561205>.

³ Bartók, *Cantata Profana* PV 2011, vii.

that were made. The 1934 Universal Edition and 2011 Bartók Records & Publications printings both include poetic renderings of Bartók’s Hungarian text, either as a preface or appendix to the musical score. These two printings of the Hungarian text are largely identical, with the exception of a few minor typos in the 2011 edition.

Year	Publisher	Languages	In-print?	Notes
1934	Universal Edition, Vienna (10613)	Hungarian-German	No	Facsimile of Bartok's manuscript
1955	Universal Edition, Vienna (12760)	German-English	No	Engraved, English by Shaw
1955	Boosey & Hawkes, London	German-English	No	Engraved, reprint of UE12760
2008	Univeral Edition, Vienna (34300)	German-English	Yes	Engraved, reprint of UE12760
2011	Bartok Records & Publications (620)	Hungarian-English	No	Engraved

Table 2.1: Published editions of *Cantata Profana*, 1934–2011.

A third printing of *Cantata Profana* also exists, first published by Boosey and Hawkes in 1955 and reprinted by Universal Edition in 2008. This edition, the one most commonly encountered in libraries in the United States,⁴ is based upon the 1934 Universal Edition printing, but was newly engraved rather than being a facsimile of the composer’s manuscript. The 1955 edition includes Bence Szabolcsi’s German text as well as Robert Shaw’s English translation but does not include Bartók’s original Hungarian text. For that reason, it was not used as a primary source for the text and translation included in Appendix 1 of this dissertation.

Form and Structure in *Cantata Profana*

Cantata Profana is divided into three movements, which are performed without a break. These three movements follow the outline of the story: the first movement sets the scene, describes the sons on their hunt, and their transformation into stags; the second movement begins with the father setting off to search for the sons and ends with the confrontation between the

⁴ “Cantata profana: the giant stags,” WorldCat, accessed January 4, 2024, <https://search.worldcat.org/title/1987749>.

father and the largest stag; the final movement is a recapitulation of the story. Within the three-movement structure, various writers have discerned additional subdivisions based on the dramatic arc of the story. Bence Szabolcsi, a Hungarian musicologist who was a friend of Bartók and provided the German text for *Cantata Profana*'s first printing, found in the cantata a five-part structure derived from Classical dramatic form:

“Movement 1. Departure from the ancient world, from the myth, from the vegetational background.

Movement 2. The hunt. Sin, aggression and murder burst into the peaceful primitive world.

Movement 3. Transformation. The punitive interference of nature.

Movement 4. The father finds his sons but they are no longer sons. Encounter and clash between old and new, human and metahuman. The summons to return home and the rejection.

Movement 5. Conclusion and recapitulation. Apotheosis: triumph of the new, free world. Victorious farewell to the ancient world, that of fathers and mothers. ‘The lanterns are lit,’ in vain: victory belongs to the clear sources.”⁵

For the conductor, I propose that a six-section division is the most helpful way to conceive of *Cantata Profana*. The six-section division described below adopts Szabolcsi's movements 1, 2, 3, and 5, but divides his movement 4 into two distinct parts: the father's search for the sons, and his confrontation with them. This additional division takes into account the significant musical and dramatic differences between the narrative choral introduction to Bartók's printed Movement II (m.1–37) and the dialogue of the solo tenor and solo baritone that completes the movement (m.38–215). The American composer and Bartók biographer Halsey Stevens observed that *Cantata Profana*'s three movements are “subdivided into smaller musical forms — canon, fugue, aria, cadenza — but with intricate interrelationships which weld them into a homogeneous whole. In this respect there is a superficial resemblance to Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, where the larger form of the opera is dependent upon a number of rounded and

⁵ Quoted in Kroó, “Cantata Profana,” 430.

recognizable forms within it.”⁶ The six-section division described in more detail below, in addition to conforming to the dramatic outline of *Cantata Profana*, also isolates the “smaller musical forms” which can be found within it.

Section 1: Movement I, m.1–58 (Opening Chorus)

The text of this section encompasses the entire first stanza of the poetic text:

Volt egy öreg apó.	There was an old man.
Volt néki, volt néki	There was to him, there was to him (He had, he had)
Kilenc szép szál fia,	Nine fine strapping sons,
Testéből sarjadzott	Sprung from his body
Szép szál kilenc fia.	Fine strapping nine sons.
Nem nevelte őket	Not educated he them
Semmi mesterségre,	Not any trade to,
Szántásra-vetésre,	Plowing to, sowing to,
Ménesterelésre,	Horse herding to,
Csordaterelésre:	Herding:
Hanem csak nevelte	But only educated
Hegyvet völgyet járni,	Hill vale to wander,
Szarvasra vadászni.	Of stag to hunt. ⁷

The first section of *Cantata Profana* is reminiscent of the opening choruses in the passion-oratorios of Johann Sebastian Bach, particularly the first movement of the *St. Matthew Passion* (1727). Many writers have identified a musical quotation from the *St. Matthew Passion* in *Cantata Profana*⁸ (Fig. 2.1a and 2.1b), but the similarities between the two works extend beyond the direct quotation. Both movements begin with sixteen-measure orchestral introductions; both are in compound triple-meter; both feature stepwise melodic material over sustained pedal-points in the bass line; and both make use of antiphonal double-choruses. Both

⁶ Stevens, *The Life and Music of Béla Bartók*, 169.

⁷ The literal English translation, prepared by the author, can be found in its entirety as Appendix 1.

⁸ Vikárius, “Bartók’s Bach Borrowings,” 86.

movements also feature an ineffable Baroque grandiosity which gives the listener the sense that they are about to hear a monumental story.

Cantata Profana begins with rising and falling scales emerging from a D-natural pedal in the low strings. The quotation from the opening movement of *St. Matthew Passion* is introduced by the woodwinds at m.5 and is intermingled and developed along with the scale motifs through the next dozen bars.



Fig. 2.1a: Bartók, *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.5–7. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.



Fig. 2.1b: Bach, *St. Matthew Passion*, Movement #1, m.1–2.

The first choral entrance, at m.17, is one of the most striking passages of music Bartók writes in the cantata: entering voices step outward above and below a unison D, eventually resulting in a 7-note modal cluster of A-B-C-D-E-F-G in the divided tenors and basses (Fig. 2.2a). This sonority, which is repeated in the high voices at m.22 and again late in Movement II, foreshadows similar modal clusters found decades later in the choral music of Bartók's fellow Hungarian György Ligeti. The similarity is particularly evident in Ligeti's *a cappella* choral works *Éjszaka* (1955) and *Lux Aeterna* (1966).⁹ (Fig. 2.2b)

⁹ Whether there is a direct connection between Bartók's choral writing in *Cantata Profana* and the later choral music of Ligeti, or whether the similarities are coincidental, will require further investigation.

a similar long-short-short-long rhythmic pattern. The original colindă melody, as notated by Bartók in 1914, is also comprised of three groups of three-measure-long phrases.¹¹ In *Cantata Profana*, Bartók preserves this metrical arrangement by first writing his melody in 9/8, a meter comprised of three groups of three eighth notes per bar. A later recurrence of this music, at the beginning of Movement III (Fig. 2.3c), is even more similar to the original colindă melody, notated in 3/4 meter with quarter notes as the basic metric unit.

12
bb.

6+6]6,6+6, 7 7

Parlando, ♩ = 132

F. 1273a, *Urşii de sus* (Mureş, Turda), *Vasile Luciu* (31), II. 1914.

1. str. *

4a. Cel un-tes bă-tră-nă, Cel un-tes bă-tră-nă el - că-șo-da-vu-tă,

2. str.

El - că-șo-da-vu-tă Nou-ă ci-u-șo-ri. El - nu ko'n-vă-tă-tă

Fig. 2.3a: Bartók, *Melodien der Rumänischen Colinde*, melody 12bb.

Fig. 2.3b: Bartók, *Melodien der Rumänischen Colinde*, melody 12bb simplified.

Volt né - ki, volt né - ki Ki - lenc szép szál fi - a volt.

Fig. 2.3c: *Cantata Profana*, Movement III, m.6–12, Choir I Soprano. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

In the first appearance of this melody at m.27 of Movement I, Bartók embellishes the folk material with a highly imitative choral setting, including canons not only between the two choruses but also between the high and low voices within each chorus. (Fig. 2.3d)

¹¹ Bartók, *Melodien der Rumänischen Colinde*, 10.

Fig. 2.3d: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.27–30. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

A new musical idea appears at m.34, a four-note ascending and descending scale motif that is closely related to the string scales which opened the movement. This new motif is passed sequentially between voices in the two choruses, beginning in the altos of Choir II, followed by the altos of Choir I, the sopranos of Choir II, etc. At m.42 there is a notable arrival, with the return of the folk-like melody from m.27, sung by all tenors of both choirs divided into three parts, over an extended pedal B-natural. The section closes with a four-note quartal figure derived from the folk-like melody — D#-A#-G#-D# — first heard at m.50 in both soprano parts. Over the course of the next three bars, this figure moves through the choral voices and the orchestra, descending by a half-step with each new entrance until it arrives at a pedal F# in m.53. In the final measures of the section, the scale motif from m.34 is once again heard, now sung by four solo voices from Choir II.

Section 2: Movement I, m.59–163 (Hunting Scene)

The text of Section 2 includes the first seven lines of the poetic outline's second stanza:

Az erdőket járta

The forests to journey

És vadra vadászott	And of game hunted they
Kilenc szép szál fiú	Nine fine strapping boys.
A vadra vadásztak;	The game hunted they;
Annyit barangoltak	So much they roamed
És addig vadásztak,	And until hunted they, [and hunted until]
Addig-addig, mígnem	Until-until, finally

Section 2 of *Cantata Profana* begins with an *alla breve* fugal exposition, but it is one that — like the nine sons of the story — gradually becomes lost in the forest. After beginning with a strict four-voice opening, complete with tonal answers to the subject, it devolves to free imitative counterpoint, and eventually to homophony interspersed with short canons. As with Section 1, Section 2 begins with an orchestral introduction prior to the first choral entry. At the start of Section 2 we again find a pedal point of D natural as octaves in the horns, further cementing D as the central structural pitch for *Cantata Profana* as a whole. Around the pedal point, the strings and bassoons play a series of quartal rhythmic fragments on the notes Eb-Bb-F which develop into a continuous melodic and rhythmic ostinato by m.70. (Fig. 2.4) The intervallic content of the rhythmic ostinato — stacked fourths — is maintained throughout this section of *Cantata Profana*, even as the ostinato begins to modulate away from its initial pitch center beginning at m.87: first rotating down a fourth to Bb-F-C, later to F-C-G, and beyond.

Fig. 2.4: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.67–71. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

The four-voice fugal exposition, with the two choirs of Section 1 now united into a single chorus, begins at m.74 with a statement of the subject in the tenors. The fugue subject itself

begins with the leap of a fifth: Bb to F. It then falls and rises by step with the chromatic modality shifting as the direction changes, as in a melodic minor scale. In this case it is primarily the Ds that change from flat to natural, depending on whether they are approached from above or below. This subject can also be heard as alternating between two whole-tone pitch collections: Db-Eb-F and Ab-Bb-C-D-E. (Fig. 2.5)

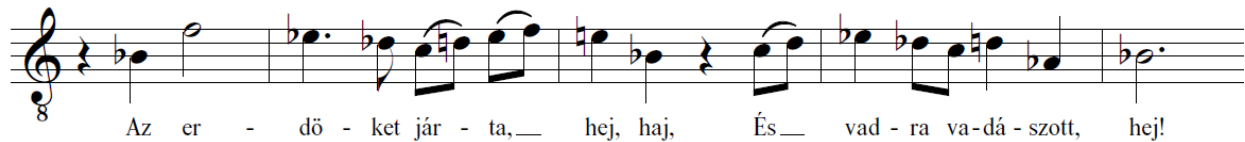


Fig. 2.5: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.74–78. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

The tenor subject is answered by the altos in m.78, with the opening interval tonally altered to F-Bb, as in an 18th-century fugal exposition. The subject is presented again in its original form by the sopranos in m.82, who are answered — one half note earlier than expected — by the basses at the end of m.85. After a false entrance by the sopranos in m.89, a new melodic idea of descending thirds is presented in m.91–92. Free counterpoint, with fragments of the subject passed between the four voices, continues through the downbeat of m.101, at which point the texture abruptly shifts to longer note values and stacked fifths moving between the four voices (Fig. 2.6). These stacked fifths eventually lead to an arrival on a six-note chord in m.108: D-A-E in the lower voices and F#-C#-G# in the upper voices.

ta, de haj - rá - haj, de haj - rá - haj! A vad -
 dö - ket jár - ta haj, haj, haj, haj, haj,
 Ki - lenc fi - ú haj, haj, A vad -
 jár - ta haj, haj, haj, haj, haj - rá

Fig. 2.6: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.100–104. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

By this point, what had been a contrapuntal texture has become entirely homophonic, with the tutti chorus and orchestra alternating quarter note entrances with one another in m.108–112. With the pickup to m.113, the descending third motif first heard in the sopranos at m.91–92 is reintroduced, harmonized by the tutti chorus. This is answered by the orchestra with a restatement of the original quartal ostinato figure, Eb-Bb-F, in the trumpets and horns. These two motifs continue to alternate between the chorus and orchestra through m.132. Beginning at m.132 the fugue subject is reintroduced in the orchestra, first in the tutti upper strings and celli, and at m.136 in the tutti woodwinds. At the same time, starting at m.132, the chorus has once again divided into two separate SATB groups singing quarter-note figurations as a close canon between Choir I and Choir II.

The conclusion of this section, beginning at m.140, can be heard as an extended stretto. The strings and woodwinds repeat the first two measures of the fugue subject in quick succession while at m.142 the chorus sings a new melodic line, in longer note values, that resembles the subject in augmentation (Fig. 2.7). This new melodic line is only loosely related to the original fugue subject — following its rough directional outline — and is not directly paired with or doubled by anything happening in the orchestra.

and 6 of *Cantata Profana*. In Section 5, the same pattern can also be found within each of its shorter subsections.

Section 3: Movement I, m.164–198 (Transformation)

The text of Section 3 includes the last eight lines of the poetic outline's second stanza:

Szép hídra találtak,	Beautiful bridge found they,
Csodaszarvasnyomra.	Magical stag trail.
Addig nyomozgattak,	So long kept tracking they,
Utát tévesztettek,	Path mistook they, [they lost the path]
Erdő sűrűjében	Forest thickness in [in the thick forest]
Szarvasokká lettek:	Stags became they:
Karcsú szarvasokká váltak	Slender stags they were
Erdő sűrűjében.	Forest in the thick. [in the thick forest.]

The third section of *Cantata Profana* is the shortest, at only 35 measures, but musically and dramatically it is also the most important: it covers the point in the narration where the nine sons, who have become lost deep in the forest, are transformed into stags. This section of the cantata does not have a clear formal analogy to an earlier existing work or genre, as other sections of the cantata do, but it can be seen as a microcosm of the full cantata's three-movement form: there is a first subsection, m.164–175, that leads to a pivotal dramatic moment; there is the dramatic moment itself, in m.176–179; and there is a denouement that both recapitulates what has just occurred and closes out the scene, m.180–198.

As with the transition between Sections 1 and 2, there is a direct tempo relationship between Section 2 and Section 3. The last printed tempo marking in Section 2 is half note = 108 b.p.m. at m.127. The section ends with an eight-bar *accelerando*, beginning at m.156. The start of Section 3, in m.164 finds an abrupt shift in metric unit from half-notes to quarter-notes,

however the pulse stays consistent over the bar line with the tempo now returning to quarter-note = 108 b.p.m.

The first subsection begins with a dramatic change in character and musical texture from what came immediately before it. Sharp punctuating chords from the tutti orchestra interrupt a soft, homophonic figuration in the chorus. This figuration consists of triads in the high and low voices moving stepwise in opposite directions. This passage can be heard as a harmonized, homophonic treatment of the two-voice Bach quotation found in Section 1, which is also based on stepwise, contrary motion. (Fig. 2.8)

Fig. 2.8: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.164–167. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

The “tonic” harmonic sonority in this passage, heard in both the orchestral interjections and sustained in the chorus, is a six-note chord consisting of G#-A#-C#-E-G-A. This chord displays intervallic symmetry, a favorite compositional device in Bartók’s mature music.¹² In this instance, the chord is formed from two major seconds in the outer dyads (G#-A# and G-A) surrounding a stack of three minor thirds (A#-C#-E-G). In m.164–170 the chorus gradually steps

¹² Antokoletz, *The Music of Béla Bartók*, 69.

away from and back to this sonority, arriving on it at last in m.171, at which point the orchestra takes up the motif with triads swirling in contrary motion around the mostly static chorus.

Harp glissandi and high string tremolos signal the start of what will be the dramatic crux of the whole cantata, beginning in m.176. In the four measures that follow, Bartók underlines the importance of the moment by ceasing virtually all rhythmic activity in the orchestra and having both choruses sing in unison, with high and low voices each in their own octave: “Erdő sűrűjében/Szarvasokká lettek” (In the thick forest/Stags became they). Bartók musically connects this moment to the hunting fugue of Section 2 by returning to the same scale, which alters chromatically depending on its direction, for the chorus’s unison statement. (Fig. 2.9)

Fig. 2.9: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.178–179. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

At m.180 there is a return to the triple meter that opened the work, though now the 6/8 of Section 1 has become 6/4. The transformation motive, presented as eighth-note duples in m.178, is now treated as a triple-meter canon moving from the high voices to the low voices in the chorus. Bartók embellishes the transformation motive by doubling it at the fourth and superimposes upon it the long-short-short-long rhythm of the colindă folk melody first heard in m.27 of Section 1 (Fig. 2.10). The section, and Movement I of the cantata with it, closes with an orchestral coda beginning at m.188. This coda includes descending whole-tone tetrachords moving from high to low in the orchestra as well as one more allusion to the Bach quotation in the high strings and woodwinds in m.195-198.

Kar - csú szar - va - sok - ká vál - tak, szar - va - sok - ká

Choir 1
Kar - csú szar - va - sok - ká
vál - tak, szar - va - sok - ká

Choir 2
Kar - csú szar - va - sok - ká vál - tak, szar - va - sok - ká
vál - tak, szar - va - sok - ká

Kar - csú szar - va - sok - ká

Fig. 2.10: Bartók, *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.180–183. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Section 4: Movement II, m.1–37 (The Father's Search for the Sons)

The text of the fourth section is the entirety of the poetic outline's third stanza:

Az ő édes apjok	The their sweet father
Várással nem győzte,	Waiting with not could bear
Fogta a puskáját,	Held the rifle his,
Elindult keresni	Departed to search for
Kilenc szép szál fiát.	Nine fine strapping sons his.
Reátalált a szép hídra,	Came upon the beautiful bridge,
Hídnál csodaszarvasnyomra;	At the bridge magical stag tracks upon;
	[At the bridge he came upon the tracks of the magical stag]
Szarvasnyom után elindult,	Stag tracks following continued he,
El is jutott hűs forráshoz,	Arrived too he cool spring to,
	[He went until he arrived at a cool spring.]
Hűs forrásnál szarvasokhoz.	Cool springs at to stags.
	[At the cool spring he came upon some stags.]
Féltérdre ereszkedett,	To one knee sank he,
Hej, egyre rá is célzott.	Hej, one upon too aimed he. [He then took aim at one.]

In Section 4, which covers the first portion of Movement II, the narration shifts from following the actions of the nine sons to the anxiety of the father and his search for the sons. The choral writing in this section relies heavily on short canons, and the overall form of the

movement bears at least a vague resemblance to the opening movement of another work by Johann Sebastian Bach, the motet *Komm, Jesu, komm*, BWV 229. This section of *Cantata Profana* and the Bach motet share a 3/2 meter, canonic writing for double choir, and a tonality of G minor. The similarities are particularly pronounced when comparing this section of *Cantata Profana* to Bach’s highly chromatic treatment of the words “der saure Weg wird mir zu schwer” (“the bitter way is becoming too difficult for me”) at m.44 of the motet (Fig. 2.11 and Fig. 2.14). Bartók is known to have studied Bach’s motets as a student at the Royal Hungarian National Academy of Music, and there is a strong possibility that the composer re-examined Bach’s four double-chorus motets when preparing to write *Cantata Profana*.¹³

The image shows a musical score for two choirs, Choir 1 and Choir 2, in G minor, 3/2 time. The score is a canonic setting of the text "der saure Weg wird mir zu schwer". The lyrics are: "der saure Weg wird mir zu schwer, zu schwer, der saure Weg wird mir zu schwer, mir zu schwer, wird mir zu schwer, zu schwer, zu schwer." The score is in G minor, 3/2 time, and features a canonic setting of the text. The lyrics are: "der saure Weg wird mir zu schwer, zu schwer, der saure Weg wird mir zu schwer, mir zu schwer, wird mir zu schwer, zu schwer, zu schwer."

Fig. 2.11: Bach, *Komm, Jesu, komm*, m.44–49.

The first measures of this section of *Cantata Profana*, m.1–8 of Movement II, continue with a variation of the transformation motif heard in m.178 of the preceding section (Fig. 2.9). Here the motif appears in the violas while the divided celli and basses play an inversion of the viola’s melodic line in thirds below (Fig. 2.12a). The sonority in the orchestral introduction to

¹³ Vikárius, “Bartók’s Bach Borrowings,” 83.

Movement II is reminiscent of the opening bars of *Nuages* from Claude Debussy's *Nocturnes* (1899) as well as the beginning of Igor Stravinsky's opera *Le Rossignol* (1914). (Fig. 2.12b) While Bartók studied and performed a large amount of Debussy's music and was certainly well-acquainted with the French composer's style, there is presently no evidence that he owned a score for *Nuages* at the time he composed *Cantata Profana*. A piano/vocal score for Stravinsky's *Le Rossignol*, on the other hand, is catalogued among Bartók's collection of contemporary scores. While the copyright date on Bartók's copy of *Le Rossignol* is 1914, it is unclear when he acquired his copy of the score.¹⁴



Fig. 2.12a: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.1–3. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.



Fig. 2.12b: Stravinsky, *Le Rossignol*, m.1–2. © Copyright 1914 by Hawkes & Sons Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

The first choral entrance in Movement II of *Cantata Profana* occurs at m.9, and what follows is an eight-measure-long canon between the tenors and basses of Choir I. Additional voices begin to enter at m.17, starting with the altos and then sopranos of Choir I. The melodic

¹⁴ Lampert, "Zeitgenössische Musik in Bartók's Notensammlung," 164.

fragment introduced by the altos at m.17 is a condensed variation of the canon subject found in the tenor and bass at m.9. (Fig. 2.13) This new melodic fragment is also closely related to the fugue subject of the hunting scene in Section 2. (Fig. 2.5, above) Like the earlier fugue subject, this melodic fragment also consists of alternating whole-tone pitch collections: in this case, Ab-Bb-C-D and Bbb-Cb-Db-Eb.



Fig. 2.13: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.17–18, Choir I alto. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Bartók begins to manipulate this new melodic fragment almost immediately, presenting it in inversion in the tenors at m.18. Over the course of the next few measures, the inverted form becomes increasingly prevalent among the successive entrances, with the final statement of the original “prime” form occurring at m.20 in the basses. The voices of Choir II, which have been tacet up to this point, begin to join in m.21, as the entrances of the canon subject become more and more frequent (Fig. 2.14). By the end of m.22, the canonic entrances are occurring on each half-note beat of the measure. At m.25 the entrances begin to sequence upward by whole tone, starting on F in the Choir II basses, G in the Choir I tenors, A in the Choir I basses, B in the Choir II altos, and Db in the Choir II tenors.

Choir 1

ra, Szar-vas-nyom u-tán el-in-dult, El is jú-tott El is jú-tott

Choir 2

Ki-lenc cso-da-szar-vas-nyom-ra, de cso-da-szar-vas-nyom-ra. Szar-vas-nyom u-tán el-in-dult, Szar-vas-nyom u-tán el-in-dult, El is jú-tott hűs-for-is El is

hej, haj, de cso-da-szar-vas-nyom-ra.

Fig. 2.14: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.20–23. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

The next subsection, beginning with a D-natural arrival in the Choir I altos at the end of m.26, brings a new canonic motif in the altos and basses. This new melodic fragment is shorter than the previous one, consisting of a descending whole-tone scale with one filled-in half step: D-C-Bb-Ab-(G)-F#-E-D. The sopranos and tenors answer at the end of m.28 with their own version of the figure, pitched a fourth higher and using a slightly different whole-tone inflected scale: G-F-Eb-(D-C)-B-A-G. The combination of these two scales creates an eleven-note pitch collection, missing only C#. The rhythmic elongation of Gs in the high voices and Ds in the low voices, however, gives the impression of a chromatically extended G-minor tonality, as mentioned in the comparison to Bach's G-minor motet, *Komm, Jesu, komm*, above. The G-minor harmonic implication is undermined and destabilized, however, by a sustained pedal Ab in the orchestra. In the last few bars of the section, from m.33–37, the frequency of the imitative entrances and rhythmic activity in both orchestra and chorus continue to increase. By m.35 new

entrances are occurring at every quarter note, propelling us to a surprise arrival on D# and the start of the next section at m.38.

It must be noted that in all other sections of the cantata the tempo gradually broadens and slows over the course of time. In Section 4 alone this pattern is reversed, and the tempo increases from beginning to end. Movement II begins at an *Andante* tempo of half note = 66 b.p.m.; the tempo increases to half note = 69 b.p.m. at the first choral entrance in m.9; it increases again to half note = 72 b.p.m. as the imitative entrances become more frequent in m.17; it speeds up by means of a *poco a poco agitato* at the end of m.26; and eventually reaches the equivalent of half note = 80 b.p.m.¹⁵ at m.36. This increase in tempo is further heightened by a shift from half-note and quarter-note rhythms in the opening bars of the section to predominantly quarter-note and eighth-note rhythms in the last eight measures of the section. The dramatic justification for this departure from the tempo formula found everywhere else in the cantata is clear: the father's pace increases as he comes closer to the sons, and his pulse speeds up as he takes aim at the largest of the stags. The gradual increase in tempo through only this section must also be considered a dramatic and structural element when interpreting the cantata, and it is one of the reasons why it is preferable to consider this portion of the work a separate section rather than, as Szabolcsi does, a part of the extended dialogue between the father and the largest stag which follows.¹⁶

Section 5: Movement II, m.38–215 (Dialogue Between the Father and the Largest Stag)

Section 5 is the longest portion of *Cantata Profana*, at 178 measures in total. It is, however, divided dramatically and musically into three clear subsections: the largest stag (tenor solo) telling the father not to shoot and threatening him with violence if he attacks them, m.38–

¹⁵ Bartók changes the metric unit at m.36, with a marking of quarter note = 160 b.p.m.

¹⁶ Kroó, "Cantata Profana," 430.

95; the father (baritone solo) imploring his children to return home, m.96–159; and the largest stag explaining why they will never return home as the father continues to plead, m.160–215.

The text of the first portion of Section 5 includes the poetic outline’s entire fourth stanza:

De a legnagyobbik szarvas	But the largest stag
- Jaj, a legkedvesebb fiú –	- Alas, the dearest boy -
Szóval imígy felfelele:	Thus called upwards he:
„Kedves édes apánk,	“Dear sweet father ours,
Ránk te sose célozz!	Upon us never take aim!
Mert téged mi tűzünk	Because you we spear
A szarvunk hegyére	Our antlers tips on [On the tips of our antlers]
És úgy hajigálunk	And thus we toss around
Téged rétről rétre,	You from meadow to meadow,
Téged kőről kőre,	You from stone to stone,
Téged hegyről hegyre,	You from mountain to mountain,
S téged hozzávágunk	And you smash at
Éles kősziklához:	Sharp boulder to:
Izzé-porrá zúzódsz	Particles [and] dust crushed you [will be]
Kedves édes apánk!”	Dear sweet father ours!”

Each of the three subsections in Section 5 is preceded by a brief choral introduction, each time with similar musical material and always at the exact same tempo of quarter note = 132 b.p.m. These choral passages are analogous to the role of the Evangelist in Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*, who often introduces dialogue from Jesus or the other named characters with something to the effect of “Da sprach Jesus zu ihnen” (“Then Jesus said to them”). The choral equivalent in *Cantata Profana*, can first be observed at m.38–41 of Movement II, where the words are: “De a legnagyobbik szarvas,/Jaj! a legkedvesebb fiú,/Jaj! Szóval imígy felfelele.” (But the largest stag/Alas! The dearest boy,/Thus called upwards he.)

The three passages for solo tenor and baritone in Section 5 take the forms of an accompanied recitative, an aria, and a duet, respectively. Aside from the introductory narration that begins each subsection, the chorus is largely silent in Section 5, making only brief

contributions in the baritone aria and in the tenor-baritone duet. All three of the solo passages are characterized by a greater amount of rubato than is heard elsewhere in the cantata, though for the listener some of this is an auditory illusion: particularly in the case of the first tenor accompanied recitative, in m.42–95, the use of frequently shifting meters and minimal rhythmic activity in the orchestral accompaniment makes the tenor’s music sound rhythmically freer and more improvisatory than is actually the case. Melodically, the accompanied recitative constitutes a gradual rising of the tenor’s tessitura, with the concluding tenor figure in m.90 being a re-statement, exactly one octave higher, of the music at the tenor’s first entrance in m.43. Within that gradual ascent, the melodic fragments are a variation on the rising and falling transformation motif heard in Section 3. An additional element of musical text painting in this subsection can be observed in the way the tenor’s melodic line interacts with the major and minor triads in the orchestral accompaniment. The top note of each phrase in the tenor is always a half-step below a chord-tone sounding in the orchestra. This can be interpreted as the stag’s resistance to returning to the more formal world of the father, here musically represented by the triads (Fig. 2.15).

Fig. 2.15: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.47–51. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

The text of the next subsection includes all but the last three lines of the poetic outline’s fifth stanza:

Az ő édes apjok	Their sweet father
-----------------	--------------------

Hozzájuk így szólott,
És híva hívta,
És őket hívó szóval hívta:
„Édes szeretteim,
Kedves gyermekeim,
Gyertek, gyertek haza,
Gyertek vélem haza,
Jó anyátok vár már!

Jöjjetek ti vélem
A jó anyátokhoz,
A ti jó anyátok
Várva vár magához.
A fáklyák már égnek,
Az asztal is készen,
A serlegek töltve.
Az asztalon serleg,
Anyátok kesereg; -
Serleg teli borral,
Jó anyátok gonddal.

A fáklyák már égnek,
Az asztal is készen,
A serlegek töltve...”

To them thus spoke he,
And keening called he,
And them with calling word called he:
“Sweet loved ones mine,
Dear children mine,
Come, come home,
Come with me home,
Good your mother waits already!
[Your good mother waits!]
Come you with me
The good mother yours to, [to your good mother]
Your good mother
Waiting waits to her you.
The torches already burn,
The table also ready,
The chalices filled.
The table on chalice, [The chalice on the table]
Your mother grieves;
Chalice full of wine,
Good mother yours worries with.
[Your good mother is full of worry.]
The torches already burn,
The table also ready,
The chalices filled...”

This subsection begins with choral narration in m.96–102. Both this section of choral narration and the previous one at m.38–41 are characterized by paired thirds in the high and low voices. However, whereas the earlier passage was entirely homophonic, the return of this material is set as a canon between the high and low voices. The repetition of this music is also set over a slowed-down version of the quartal string ostinato from the hunting scene in Section 2 (Fig. 2.4, above), now with the original pitches of Eb-Bb-F enharmonically respelled as D#-A#-E#. (Fig. 2.16)

Chorus

Az ö é - des ap - jok Hoz - zá - jok így szó - lott És hí - va hív - ta, És ö - ket hí - vó szó - val

Az ö é - des ap - jok Hoz - zá - jok így szó - lott És hí - va hív - ta, ö - ket hí - vó

Orch.

Bsn., Tba., Vel., Cb.

Fig. 2.16: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.98–101. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

The solo baritone aria begins at m.103, with the father repeating the canon motif from the beginning of Section 4.¹⁷ As in the earlier treatment, the motif consists of alternating whole-tone tetrachords (Fig. 2.13, above). This music and the father’s words imploring the sons to return home are repeated by the chorus in m.108–113, a moment which constitutes a departure from what has otherwise been the chorus’s dramatic role in the cantata. Up to this point, the chorus has acted exclusively as the narrator, but here its dramatic function shifts to commenting on the action rather than merely narrating it.

The baritone aria continues at m.115, with music that references the earlier tenor accompanied recitative. A direct parallel between the two solo passages can be found when comparing m.71–74 of the tenor recitative (Fig. 2.17a) and m.117–121 of the baritone aria (Fig. 2.17b). While the melodic contours and enharmonic pitch content of the two phrases are remarkably similar, their meaning could not be more different: in the first, the tenor threatens

¹⁷ Most printed scores of *Cantata Profana* contain a misprint at m.103 which impacts how this section relates to the earlier appearance of the same music. The 1934 Universal Edition and 1955 Boosey & Hawkes editions of *Cantata Profana* incorrectly give the tempo marking at m.103 as quarter note = 76–80 b.p.m. However, in preparing the 2011 Bartók Records & Publications corrected edition, the editors of that volume found that Bartók corrected the tempo to half-note = 76–80 b.p.m. by hand in his own copy of the facsimile edition. The discrepancy is addressed in the critical notes that accompany the Corrected Edition’s full score, page xi.

that the stags will “smash at” the father; in the second, the baritone pleads with them to think of their “good mother” awaiting them at home.



Fig. 2.17a: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.71–74. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.



Fig. 2.17b: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.117–121. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

The meter of this passage, from m.115 all the way to m.159, is entirely in 3/4, in contrast with the metric instability of the tenor recitative. The combination of the quick tempo and steady triple-meter gives the impression that Bartók may be invoking a Waltz, particularly as the father sings of the comforts of domesticity awaiting the sons at home: torches burning, the table set, and full glasses of wine. At m.140 there is an echo in the woodwinds and high violins of the lilting, long-short-short-long colindă rhythm that was first heard in Section 1, m.27 (Fig. 2.3d), at the words “Volt néki, volt néki/ Kilenc szép szál fia” (He had, he had/Nine fine strapping sons). At the close of the section, in m.150–159, the baritone repeats a descending phrase outlining a CMaj7 chord three times, always starting and ending on C. In contrast to the harmonic tension in the tenor recitative, where the solo voice was always arriving a half-step away from a diatonic triad in the orchestral accompaniment, here each of the baritone’s final notes are in consonance with a triad in the orchestra: C minor in m.153, A minor in m.156, and F minor in m.159.

The text of the final portion of Section 5 includes the final three lines of the poetic outline’s fifth stanza and all of the sixth stanza:

A legnagyobb szarvas,
- Legkedvesebbik fiú –
Szóval felfelvévén

The biggest stag,
- dearest boy -
Word with answering upward [called up to him]

Hozzá imígy szóla:
„Kedves édes apánk,
Te csak eredj haza
A mi édes jó anyánkhoz!
De mi nem megyünk!
De mi nem megyünk:
Mert a mi szarvunk
Ajtón be nem térhet,
Csak betér az völgyekbe;
A mi karcsú testünk
Gunyában nem járhat,
Csak járhat az lombok közt;
Karcsú lábunk nem lép
Tűzhely hamujába,
Csak puha avarba;
A mi szájunk többé
Nem iszik pohárból,
Csak hűvös forrásból.”

To him thus said:
“Dear sweet father ours,
You just head home
To our sweet good mother!
But we will not go!
But we will not go:
Because our antlers
The door into must not pass through,
Only pass into the vales;
Our slender bodies
In clothes cannot be,
Only wanders the leaves between;
Slender legs ours do not tread
The hearth’s ashes into,
Only soft fallen leaves in;
Our mouths no longer
Not drink glass from,
Only cool spring from.”

The choral narration is once again heard in m.160–167, though in this third iteration the orderliness of the previous two appearances — paired thirds in the first instance, a canon in the second — has devolved and fragmented: the sopranos and altos now sing disjointed melodic fragments in eighth notes over metrically independent quarter notes in the tenors and basses (Fig. 2.18).

Fig. 2.18: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.163–166. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

A tenor arioso begins in m.168. As in the tenor accompanied recitative in m.43–95, the orchestration primarily consists of tremolos in the strings and echoes of the tenor figurations in the woodwinds. The passage leads to an arrival in m.186 on a harmony of stacked fourths in the woodwinds: G-C-F-Bb-Eb. The solo tenor, unaccompanied, then adds an additional fourth below this sonority, low D, and utters the dramatically critical words: “De mi nem megyünk!” (But we will not go!). The following five measures, m.188–192, see the chorus once again commenting on the refusal just spoken by the stag as the father repeatedly asks “Mért?” (Why?). (Fig. 2.19) The choral writing in m.188–192, sung *a cappella*, is a repetition of the diatonic cluster sonority heard in the very first choral entrance at m.17 of Movement I¹⁸ (Fig. 2.2a, above).

Fig. 2.19: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.188–192. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

The passage that follows, m.193–215, is a duet between the tenor and baritone soloists. Dramatically, it is a heartbreaking moment, as the stag explains why the sons will never return home and the father repeatedly questions and begs them. The orchestral writing gradually

¹⁸ The musical, textual, and dramatic connection between these two moments is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

becomes more active, with the woodwinds continuing to echo fragments of the tenor's melodic lines. Finally, at m.210 there is a cessation of rhythmic activity and an arrival on stacked fifths in the orchestra, F#-C#-G#, as the stag gives the final reason they cannot return home: because their mouths no longer drink from glasses but only from cool springs. The tenor's final melodic figuration, in m.212, is an allusion to the Bach quotation from Section 1, and it is repeated and sequenced by the woodwinds in m.213–215. (Fig. 2.20)

Fig. 2.20: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.212–215. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Section 6: Movement III (Conclusion)

The words of Section 6 are the entirety of the poetic outline's final stanza. This stanza is a compressed retelling of the complete story of the cantata, repeating grammatically altered lines from the preceding stanzas:

Volt egy öreg apó.
 Volt néki, volt néki
 Kilenc szép szál fia.
 Nem nevelte őket
 Semmi mesterségre,
 Csak erdőket járni,
 Csak vadat vadászni.
 És addig-addig
 Vadászgattak, addig:
 Szarvassá változtak
 Ott a nagy erdőben.

There was an old man.
 There was to him, there was to him [He had, he had]
 Nine fine strapping sons.
 Not educated he them
 Not any trade to
 Only forests to walk,
 only wild hunting.
 And until, until
 Hunted around, until:
 Stags changed into
 There the large forest in.

És az ő szarvuk	And their antlers
Ajtón be nem térhet,	The door into cannot pass through,
Csak betér az völgyekbe;	Only go into the vales;
A karcsú testük	The slender bodies theirs
Gunyában nem járhat,	In clothes cannot be,
Csak járhat az lombok közt,	Only walk the leaves between;
A lábuk nem lép	Their feet do not tread
Tűzhely hamujába,	Hearth's ashes into,
Csak a puha avarba;	Only the soft fallen leaves in;
A szájuk többé	Their mouths no longer
Nem iszik pohárból,	Do not drink glass from,
Csak tiszta forrásból.	Only pure spring from.

The sixth and final section of *Cantata Profana* encompasses the entirety of Movement III. The dramatic narrative of the cantata concludes at the end of Movement II, and this final movement serves as a dramatic and musical recapitulation of what has come before. The text for Movement III, the final stanza of the poetic outline, likewise repeats lines found earlier in the cantata – mostly from Sections 1, 2, 3, and 5. As these lines recur in Movement III, Bartók also reprises the musical ideas with which the lines of text had earlier been linked.

The final section opens with the colindă-inspired choral music first heard in m.27 and m.180 of Movement I. (Fig. 2.3d, above) In Section 6 this music is introduced by the tenors and basses of the chorus over sustained pedal-points in the orchestra and answered by the sopranos and altos in m.6. (Fig. 2.21a) The juxtaposition of high and low voices singing as separate groups creates an 8-part texture that is somewhat reminiscent of the one found in Richard Strauss's (1864–1949) 16-voice motet *Der Abend* (1897), a copy of which Bartók is known to have owned and personally annotated.¹⁹ (Fig. 2.21b)

¹⁹ *Der Abend* is the first motet in Strauss's *Zwei Gesänge*, Op. 34. A copy of it is catalogued among the contemporary sheet music owned by Bartók in Lampert, "Zeitgenössische Musik in Bartóks Notensammlung," 164.

Choir 1
 Volt egy ö - reg a - pó. Volt né - ki, volt né - ki, Volt,
 Volt né - ki, volt né - ki

Choir 2
 Volt egy ö - reg a - pó. Volt né - ki, volt né - ki, Volt,
 Volt né - ki, volt né - ki

Fig. 2.21a: *Cantata Profana*, Movement III, m.1–8. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

S 1-4
 der strah - len - de ruht,

A 1-4
 Phö - bus ruht, der lie - ben - de

T 1-4
 der strah - len - de Phö - bus, der strah - len - de Phö - bus ruht, der lie - ben - de

B 1-4
 Phö - bus Phö - bus

Fig. 2.21b: Richard Strauss, *Der Abend*, Op. 34, #1, m.146–150.

/

The repetition of previously heard lines of text and musical ideas continues through the movement: at m.9, the four-note ascending motif from m.34 of Movement I on the words “Nem nevelte őket” (Nothing educated he them); at m.21 a rhythmically-altered version of the fugue subject from m.74 of Movement I at the words “Csak erdőket járni” (Only forests to walk); and at m.30 the transformation motif from m.178 of Movement I with the words “Szarvassá változtak/Ott a nagy erdőben” (Stags changed into/There in the large forest). The compressed musical recapitulation is stopped at m.35 by the introduction of a new four-part canon in the

chorus. The material that this canon is based upon is somewhat obscure at first, but with successive entrances the contours of the Bach quotation, as transformed in the solo tenor's last arioso and especially the figurations at m.212–215 of Movement II, begin to emerge.

A series of ascending whole-tone tetrachords in m.58–64 lead us to an arrival on B-flat major over a D pedal and a final statement of the colindă-inspired melody in m.65. The folk melody is repeated, modulating downward until it lands on C# minor in m.73. The tenor solo emerges from this texture, at last in consonance with the triad that supports it. The coda of the cantata begins at m.79, as scales in the strings grow out of a pedal D — just as they had at the beginning of the work. The chorus's final statement is a second-inversion D major triad, repeating the final words of the stag: “Csak hűvös forrásból” (Only from cool springs). The final sound of the cantata is a solo timpani note, on the structural pitch of D.

Compositional Devices

There are a number of excellent articles, book chapters, and dissertations that examine *Cantata Profana* from a theoretical and analytical perspective, and which delve into the musical elements and compositional construction of the work. For that reason, I will not spend a great deal of time discussing those components of the work in this dissertation. However, one particular compositional device is critically important to understanding the musical language of *Cantata Profana* and must be allotted some attention here. That element is the use, manipulation, and modal transformation of non-diatonic scales.²⁰

²⁰ A thorough examination of this topic can be found in Elliott Antokletz's chapter “Modal Transformation and Musical Symbolism in Bartók's *Cantata Profana*,” contained in *Bartók Perspectives: Man, Composer, Ethnomusicologist*.

As analyzed by the musicologist and Bartók scholar Elliott Antokoletz, the prime form of the scale which forms the musical basis for *Cantata Profana* can be found in its purest form near the end of the work, beginning with the tenor solo in m.72–77 of Movement III. (Fig. 2.22)



Fig. 2.22: *Cantata Profana*, Movement III, m.72–77. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Antokoletz describes the prime scale as a modified Lydian scale with a lowered seventh degree: D-E-F#-G#-A-B-C.²¹ This scale, used in whole and in part, provides Bartók with a large number of harmonic and modal possibilities. When the lower tetrachord of this scale is combined with its seventh scale degree, a five-note whole-tone scale fragment is created: (C)-D-E-F#-G#. When the upper tetrachord is combined with the adjacent third and first scale degrees, a six-note octatonic scale fragment is created: (F#)-G#-A-B-C-(D). In addition to these non-diatonic modes, the prime scale also contains a five-note fragment of the diatonic scale: E-F#-G#-A-B. All of these constituent modes can be found at various points throughout *Cantata Profana*. While it is late in the work before we hear an unadulterated version of the prime scale, it can also be found very early in the work, embedded in the Bach quotation that is introduced at m.5–9 of Movement I²² (Fig. 2.23).



Fig. 2.23: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.5–9. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

²¹ Antokoletz, “Modal Transformation and Musical Symbolism in Bartók’s *Cantata Profana*,” 62. Other theorists refer to this as a form of the “Harmonic” scale, i.e. a scale comprised of the first seven pitch classes found in the harmonic series.

²² Antokoletz, “Modal Transformation and Musical Symbolism in Bartók’s *Cantata Profana*,” 67.

Throughout *Cantata Profana*, Bartók manipulates the prime scale by means of modal modulation: keeping the same collection of seven pitches (or, more accurately, the collection of whole-steps and half-steps between them) but tonicizing different scale degrees to create various modes. This is the same concept behind the Medieval “Church Modes:” Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, etc. The fifth rotation of this scale, when transposed to begin on F, includes the pitches F-G-Ab-Bb-C-D-E. These are the same pitches contained in the original colindă melody Bartók collected in 1914, which is illustrated above in Fig. 2.3a and Fig. 2.3b. The string scales that form the introduction to the cantata, m.1–4 of Movement I, are the third rotation of the prime scale, equivalent to Phrygian Church mode: F#-G#-A-B-C-D-E. Transposed down a major third to a D tonic, this scale becomes D-E-F-G-Ab-Bb-C (Fig. 2.24).



Fig. 2.24: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.1–4. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

This opening scale, which is prevalent throughout the cantata, is also related by inversion to the prime scale described above. (Fig. 2.25) The scale that opens the work contains the same whole-tone and octatonic constituents but reversed: the lower tetrachord can be heard as part of an octatonic scale fragment (D-E-F-G-Ab-Bb) and the upper tetrachord as part of a whole tone scale fragment (Ab-Bb-C-D-E).



Fig. 2.25: Bartók, *Cantata Profana*, prime and inverted prime scales.

Antokoletz argues that the transformation of the opening scale (D-E-F-G-Ab-Bb-C-D) into the closing scale (D-E-F#-G#-A-B-C-D), the whole-tone constituents of which combine to create a complete whole-tone scale (D-E-F#-G#/Ab-Bb-C-D), is one way in which Bartók musically illustrates the dramatic arc of the cantata. Notably, the moment in *Cantata Profana* with the greatest concentration of whole-tone sonorities is the orchestral coda to Movement I, immediately after the nine sons have been transformed into stags.

For a conductor to effectively rehearse, interpret, and perform *Cantata Profana*, they must first have a thorough understanding of the work's construction and musical building blocks. Bartók is tremendously economical in the way he uses a limited number of musical ideas as a basis for the whole of *Cantata Profana*, and it is this economy which allows for the close relationship between each of the structural sections and musical gestures contained in the work. Once the conductor has intellectually mastered the architecture of *Cantata Profana*, they are ready to deconstruct it in the rehearsal process and begin to confront the many practical challenges outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Practical Considerations for Performing *Cantata Profana*

Chorus Size

When one is planning to perform *Cantata Profana*, among the first things to consider is the size of chorus to be used. The easiest way to calculate the minimum number of singers required for the performance of any given work is to find the passage with the greatest number of independent parts. In *Cantata Profana* that passage happens to be the first music the chorus sings, from m.17–26 of Movement I. In this section of the work, the chorus is notated in sixteen separate parts, with divided sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses in each of two choirs. Bartók does not use all sixteen of these voices at any given time, however. Rather, the largest number of simultaneous independent (i.e., not doubled) parts, eleven in total, occurs in m.25. Even so, taking Bartók’s notation at face value and assuming a minimum of four singers¹ for each of the sixteen vocal parts, a choral ensemble of at least 64 singers is needed to perform *Cantata Profana*.

Table 3.1 below shows the number of singers used in a dozen performances of *Cantata Profana* between 1934 and 2022, with a mixture of student, volunteer, semi-professional, and fully professional ensembles represented. While this data shows that several fully professional and “select” volunteer ensembles — such as the Atlanta Symphony Chamber Chorus, the Gächinger Kantorei, and the Netherlands Radio Choir — have performed the work with close to the minimum number of singers needed, most ensembles use at least 100 total singers. An

¹ While *Cantata Profana* is scored for an orchestra of approximately 70 players (12 woodwinds; 10 brass; 4 timpani, percussion, and harp; and a string section of at least 40 players), the orchestration in this specific passage is transparent: *pianissimo* sustained strings and horns, with the quotation from Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* (discussed in Chapter 2) in solo woodwinds. Depending on the strength of the individual voices and the acoustics of the particular concert venue, this passage would be possible with a small number of singers on each voice part. The orchestration and approaches for balancing this passage are described in greater detail below.

ensemble consisting of 100 singers, assuming an equal distribution of voices among the parts, allows for at least six singers on each line when the chorus is divided into 16 parts.

Year	Ensemble	Total	S/A/T/B
1934	BBC Wireless Chorus	42 ²	11/11/10/10 ³
1966	Univ. of S. California Concert Choir	100 ⁴	25/25/25/25
1966	Los Angeles Master Chorale	110 ⁵	28/28/27/27
1971	Atlanta Symphony Chamber Chorus	71 ⁶	24/14/15/18
1982	Chicago Symphony Chorus	170 ⁷	43/43/42/42
1997	Atlanta Symphony Chorus	205 ⁸	54/55/46/50
2004	Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia	145 ⁹	41/39/26/39
2010	BBC Symphony Chorus	120 ¹⁰	40/30/20/30
2011	Gächinger Kantorei	70 ¹¹	19/19/16/16
2011	La Jolla Symphony Chorus	117 ¹²	38/28/20/31
2018	London Symphony Chorus	116 ¹³	32/29/26/29
2022	Netherlands Radio Choir	66 ¹⁴	18/16/16/16

Table 3.1: Choral forces for selected performances of *Cantata Profana*, 1934–2022.

The significant outlier in this table is the BBC Wireless Chorus, forerunner of the modern BBC Singers, which presented the world premiere of *Cantata Profana* in 1934. While that fully-professional ensemble performed *Cantata Profana* with only 42 singers, allowing for just two or three voices per part in the opening of Movement I referenced above, that performance took the form of a radio transmission from the Concert Hall of the BBC’s Broadcasting House in

² Gillies, *Bartók in Britain*, 85.

³ Italicized numbers are estimates, assuming an even distribution of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass singers in the chorus.

⁴ Arlen, “Bartok’s ‘Cantata Profana’ Given West Coast Premiere.”

⁵ Bernheimer, “Shaw’s Choral Direction Makes Obstacles Look Easy.”

⁶ Georgia State University Library Digital Collections, “Atlanta Symphony Orchestra concert program, 1971-11-17/1971-11-19.”

⁷ Von Rhein, “CSO, Chorus excel with Bartok, Kodaly.”

⁸ Georgia State University Library Digital Collections, “Atlanta Symphony Orchestra concert program, 1997-11-13/1997-11-15.”

⁹ Email to the author from Michael Moore, archivist for the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia, September 12, 2023.

¹⁰ Email to the author from Stephen Jackson, retired director of the BBC Symphony Chorus, February 20, 2024.

¹¹ Yumpu, “Akademie Konzert 2.”

¹² Email to the author from David Chase, retired director of the La Jolla Symphony Chorus, February 15, 2024.

¹³ Email to the author from Simon Halsey, former director of the London Symphony Chorus, February 6, 2024.

¹⁴ Email to the author from Paul Krämer, guest chorusmaster for the Netherlands Radio Choir, March 16, 2024.

London.¹⁵ In that performance, unlike in most other live performance circumstances, audio enhancements would have been possible to help balance the chorus with the orchestra. In most other situations, a chorus of 100–120 singers may provide the greatest degree of dynamic and vocal flexibility without being too large to achieve the musical and dramatic nuance required in *Cantata Profana*.

Double Choir Writing in *Cantata Profana*

Once the total number of singers desired for a performance of *Cantata Profana* has been decided, another consideration for the choral conductor must be the different ways those singers will be subdivided. Bartók takes a variety of approaches to dividing the choral forces in *Cantata Profana*, and a significant portion of the work, including the opening and concluding sections, use double-choir arrangements. While Bartók's use of antiphonal double-choirs in *Cantata Profana* has analogies in both earlier Western art music and traditional Romanian folk music, the diversity of choral divisions found in *Cantata Profana* is unusual in the choral-orchestral repertoire and presents one of the primary practical challenges in performing the work.

Compositions for multiple choirs, with and without orchestra, are common throughout music history, from the late renaissance through the 20th century. Bartók is known to have owned scores for several such works, including Bach's double-choir motets,¹⁶ Richard Strauss's sixteen-voice motet *Der Abend*, and Arnold Schoenberg's massive oratorio *Gurre-Lieder*.¹⁷ While it is unknown which, if any, of these scores Bartók may have studied immediately before composing *Cantata Profana*, it is possible that all of these earlier compositions existed

¹⁵ Gillies, *Bartók in Britain*, 85.

¹⁶ Vikárius, "Bartók's Bach Borrowings," 83.

¹⁷ Lampert, *Zeitgenössische Musik in Bartóks Notensammlung*, 162.

somewhere in Bartók's mind as he wrote the cantata in 1930. It is also notable, given that *Cantata Profana* features a prominent quotation from Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, that Bach's *Passion* oratorio is itself scored for double chorus. However, despite their comparable scoring, there are few other similarities between Bach's choral writing in *St. Matthew Passion* and Bartók's in *Cantata Profana*.

In addition to the double-chorus parallels in the classical canon, the use of antiphonal choral groupings in *Cantata Profana*, as with so many other aspects of the work, has connections to the folk music Bartók studied in his ethnomusicological research. In the preface to his volume of Romanian colinde, Bartók explained how the folk songs that inspired *Cantata Profana* would have been traditionally performed:

“A group of eight or ten boys and girls, under the leadership of a chief, set out on a caroling tour of the village (in Maramureş County, the groups are separated according to sex). [...] In Hundoara and Alba, the carolers divide themselves into two teams and sing alternately in antiphonal fashion: that is, the team of singers divides into two groups, each one singing in turn a verse of the song.”¹⁸

In this quotation Bartók is describing two different divisions of a choral group: “according to sex,” with high voices forming one group and low voices forming the other; and one where the high and low voices are each divided in two to form a pair of equal-voiced antiphonal groups. Bartók adopts both antiphonal approaches at different times in the choral writing of *Cantata Profana*. Two mixed groups of high and low voices can be found in m.27–33 of Movement I (Fig. 2.3d), and antiphonal groups separated by gendered voice part can be seen at the beginning of Movement III (Fig. 2.21a).

¹⁸ Quoted in Suchoff, *Béla Bartók Life and Work*, 182.

Regardless of Bartók’s inspiration when composing the choral music in *Cantata Profana*, it is fair to say that the amount and variety of choral divisi increases the challenge for performers in ways that the composer may not have fully realized. Unlike his friend Kodály, Bartók was not an especially prolific choral composer. Out of 128 works assigned “BB” numbers in the Béla Bartók Thematic Catalog, only eleven are choral works, with virtually all of those being folk song arrangements.¹⁹ Remarking on the complexity of the writing in *Cantata Profana* in a 1996 letter to the Atlanta Symphony Chorus, the American conductor Robert Shaw lamented “Bartók’s own carelessness or thoughtlessness about the circumstances of [its] performance.”²⁰ Shaw was perhaps the greatest American exponent of the work, conducting at least a dozen performances of it between 1952 and 1997, lending his critical thoughts about the challenging choral writing in *Cantata Profana* particular weight.

Divisi and “Roadmapping”

The number of independent choral parts called for in *Cantata Profana* varies widely through the piece, ranging from sixteen in the opening choral measures to an effective unison near the end of the first movement. Table 3.2 below follows the evolution of the divisi through the cantata, illustrating how most divisi arrangements — particularly in Movement I — last no more than a few measures.

¹⁹ Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 382–391.

²⁰ Blocker, *The Robert Shaw Reader*, 145.

Mvt.	Sect.	Mm.	Hungarian Text	English Text ²¹	Voicing	
I	1	17–26	Volt egy öreg apó...	Once there was an old man...	SSAATTBB/SSAATTBB	
		27–31	Volt néki, volt néki...	Whose treasure, whose treasure...	SAATTB/SAATTB	
		31–33	Testéből sarjadzott...	Seed of his own body...	SATB/SATB	
		34–38	Nem nevelte őket...	Naught of work he taught them...	SATBB/SATBB	
		38–41	Nem nevelte őket...	Naught of work he taught them...	SATB/SATB	
		42–45	Nem nevelte őket...	Naught of work he taught them...	SATB/SATTB	
		46–53	Semmi mesterségre...	Neither trade nor farming	SATB/SATB	
			53–59	Hanem csak nevelte...	Only this he taught them...	Solo SATB (Choir II)
	2	74–107	Az erdőket járta...	Through forest aroving...	SATB	
		108–131	Annyit barangoltak...	Farther still they wandered...	SSATTB	
		132–134	Addig, hej, haj...	Longer, hej, haj...	SAATBB/SAATB	
		134–136	Hej, haj, addig...	Hej, haj, longer...	SSATTBB/SSATTBB	
		137–140	És addig vadáztak...	So long they hunted there...	SSATTB	
		141–163	És annyit barangoltak...	And farther still they wandered...	SATB	
3		164–174	Szép hídra találtak...	Deep lay a haunted bridge...	SAATBB ²²	
	176–179	Erdő sűrűjében...	Lost in forest shadows...	SATB		
	180–189	Karcsú szarvasokká váltak...	Slender stags, enchanted roving...	SATB/SATB		
II	4	9–20	Hej, de Az ő édes apjuk...	Hey, at last the loving father...	SATB (Choir I)	
		21–37	Szarvasnyom után elindult...	Swiftly then their trail he followed...	SATB/SATB	
	5	38–41	Jaj! De a legna gyobbik szarvas...	Ah! But the largest stag gave answer...	SATB	
		98–102	Az ő édes apjuk...	Then the loving father...	SATB	
		108–113	Menjetek ti véle...	Go thou now and follow...	ATTBB	
		164–166	A legnagyobb szarvas...	Yet again the leader...	SATTB	
	188–192	De ők nem mennek...	Never can they go back...	Solo SATB/SATB ²³		
III	6	1–34	Volt egy öreg apó...	Once there was an old man...	SATB/SATB	
		35–59	És az ő szarvuk...	And so their antlers...	SAT/SATB ²⁴	
		60–64	Csak tiszta forrásból...	from cooling mountain springs...	SATB	
		65–76	Az ő szájuk többé...	Now their mouths no longer...	SATB/SATB	
		78–93	Csak tiszta forrásból...	From clear and cooling springs...	SATB/SAT	

Table 3.2: Divisi in *Cantata Profana*

²¹ This chart references the Robert Shaw translation of the English text because it is the one most frequently used in performance.

²² In some editions of the score, including the 2011 Corrected Edition, m.171–174 are printed as eight-voice double choir (SATB/SATB). However, this notation obscures the practical divisi: the two soprano parts and two tenor parts double each other, so the voicing continues to be SAATBB.

²³ The 2011 Corrected Edition of *Cantata Profana* directs that these measures should be sung by a solo octet, based on a hand-written marking in Bartók's own copy of the facsimile score. This marking does not appear in any other printed editions of the score, and the passage is typically performed by the full choir.

²⁴ Despite the seven-voice double choir notation (SAT/SATB), the two soprano and alto parts double each other throughout. This makes the effective divisi for this passage SATTB. This passage is discussed further below.

The large-scale structure of these changes becomes clearer when the divisi is viewed through the context of the six-section subdivision of *Cantata Profana* outlined in Chapter 2:

- Section 1 (Mvt. I, m.1–58): Antiphonal double chorus, gradually decreasing from sixteen-part to eight-part writing.
- Section 2 (Mvt. I, m.59–163): Single chorus, mostly four-part and six-part, with just four measures of antiphonal twelve-part and fourteen-part writing.
- Section 3 (Mvt. I, m.164–198): Single chorus, four-part and six-part, expanding to eight-part chorus in the final measures.
- Section 4 (Mvt. II, m.1–37): Antiphonal double chorus, eight-part throughout.
- Section 5 (Mvt. II, m.38–215): Single chorus, mostly four-part and five-part, with just five measures of eight-part (possibly solo) double chorus.
- Section 6 (Mvt. III): Mostly eight-part chorus, notated as double chorus but predominantly not antiphonal.

Given this overall shape and the specific divisi demands outlined in Table 3.2, a choral ensemble performing *Cantata Profana* will need four sets of divisi assignments to navigate through the work:

1. Four-part, standard SATB
2. Six-part, upper and lower voices each divided as high/middle/low (i.e., SSATTB)
3. Eight-part, arranged high to low (i.e., SSAATTBB)
4. Eight-part, evenly divided between Choir I and Choir II (i.e., SATB/SATB)

Common four-part and six-part subdivisions of the choir, default settings for most groups, will serve an ensemble well through most passages in the cantata. The six-part division requires flexibility on the part of those singers assigned to each of the middle voices, however, as Bartók is inconsistent in the way he notates six-part divisi in *Cantata Profana*. At times throughout the work, the high voices appear variously as SSA or SAA, while the lower voices can be notated as either TTB or TBB. Even so, the tessitura of the middle voices remains consistent despite the changing notation, so it is appropriate to have the same singers assigned to the middle parts regardless of their label at any given moment.

In some passages it may be necessary to use two different divisions simultaneously. One such passage is m.163–166 of Movement II (Fig. 3.1), in which the upper voices are divided in two parts (soprano and alto) while the lower voices can use a three-part divisi (high, middle, and low). Depending on the choir, the balance of numbers assigned to each voice part, and the relative strengths of the tenor and bass sections, this passage could also be performed as notated with divided tenors and unison basses. However, in most performing situations, an even distribution of the tenor and bass voices across the three printed parts will result in the best balance.

A leg-na-gyobb szar-vas, Leg-ked-ve-seb-bik fi-ú, Szó-val fel-fe-lel-vén Hoz-zá im-így szó-la:

A leg - na - gyobb szar - vas im - így szó - la. Szó - val im - így szó - la:

Fig. 3.1: *Cantata Profana*, Mvt. II, m.163–166. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

In addition to the divisi plans described above, a choir will need two versions of an eight-voice division as two distinctly different eight-part textures are called for at different points in *Cantata Profana*. For example, passages including m.180–189 of Movement I; m.1–34 of Movement III (Fig. 3.2); and m.65–93 of Movement III find the first voice parts within each section (i.e., Soprano 1) in a consistently higher range than the second voice parts (i.e., Soprano 2). Other passages, by contrast, require the sections of Choir I and Choir II to be comprised of equal voices. This is particularly true in the portions of the cantata with the most imitative writing, such as m.17–53 of Movement I and m.9-37 of Movement II (Fig. 3.3). Balance issues

This is especially important in passages like m.27–30 of Movement I, the first appearance of the recurring colindă-derived melody, in which each of the two choirs sings antiphonally in six-part divisi. (Fig. 3.4)

The image shows a musical score for two choirs, Choir 1 and Choir 2, in a six-part divisi arrangement. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "Volt né - ki, volt né - ki, Ki-lenc szép szál fi - a volt, Hej, Volt né - ki, volt né - ki, Ki-lenc szép szál fi - a". The notation features complex chordal textures with many accidentals, characteristic of Bartók's style. The two choirs sing antiphonally, with Choir 1 starting and Choir 2 responding.

Fig. 3.4: *Cantata Profana*, Mvt. I, m.27–30. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Once divisi schemes are created for the choir, a “roadmap” is recommended to assist individual singers in finding their way through the work. The roadmap for *Cantata Profana* is mostly straightforward, with the bulk of the choral writing fitting neatly into one of the four divisi plans described above. However, there are a few instances where Bartók’s choice of notation obscures the number of independent vocal lines present in a given passage. One such example occurs in Movement III, from m.35–64. Here, Bartók notates the choir in eight parts, as SATB/SATB double chorus. In practice, though, there are only four vocal lines present for much of the passage: the sopranos of both choirs singing in unison; the altos of both choirs singing in unison; the tenors of Choir I; and the tenors and basses of Choir II singing in octaves. (Fig. 3.5)

In addition to the places where the notation is somewhat unclear, there are also passages in *Cantata Profana* where a revision of the part assignments can clarify Bartók’s apparent intent. This is particularly true for ensembles in which there are not an equal number of singers on each

voice part, as is the case in many volunteer choruses. When performing *Cantata Profana* with such an ensemble, it might be advisable to revoice a passage like the one shown in Fig. 3.7 to place all tenors on the Choir I tenor part while reassigning the Choir I basses — who are otherwise tacet through this section — to sing the Choir II tenor line.

Fig. 3.5: *Cantata Profana*, Mvt. III, m.52–57. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

A similar adjustment could be made in the canon that opens Movement II, where the first twelve measures of choral music (m.9–20) are assigned to Choir I only. If the numbers in any given section are out of balance with the rest of the choir and the orchestra, or if this melodically treacherous passage can be executed with greater confidence by more voices, singers from Choir II could be used to supplement Choir I.

The very first measures the chorus sings in *Cantata Profana* can similarly benefit from judicious revoicing in certain circumstances. This passage, in which each of the two choruses is divided into eight separate parts (Fig. 3.6a) can leave a very small number of singers assigned to each of the individual voice parts, as mentioned in the discussion of choir size above. Even in a

choir of 100 voices with equal numbers of singers on each part, only six or seven singers would be singing each of the successive choral entrances in this passage. While such small numbers would not be problematic for an ensemble made up of professional singers, if performing *Cantata Profana* with an amateur chorus — a class of ensembles which is, almost by definition, comprised of singers with varying levels of both ability and confidence — revoicing this passage to place more singers on each line may be preferable.

The image shows a musical score for two choir parts, Choir 1 and Choir 2, for measures 17-21 of the first movement of Bartók's *Cantata Profana*. Each choir part consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The time signature is 6/8, and the key signature has one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "Volt egy ö-reg a pó." The score shows staggered entrances for each part, with Choir 1 starting in measure 17 and Choir 2 starting in measure 18. The piano accompaniment provides a rhythmic and harmonic foundation for the vocal lines.

Fig. 3.6a: *Cantata Profana*, Mvt. I, m.17–21. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Such an exposed entrance, particularly *pianissimo* and in the vocal *passagio* for tenors and basses, may be subtly revoiced to have each section sing the entrance prior to their own, in addition to their own. (Fig. 3.6b) Making this small change doubles the number of singers on each of the entrances, potentially increasing the confidence of amateur singers, without dramatically changing Bartók's intended timbre. Such a change also has the benefit of not requiring extensive rewriting of the printed vocal score.

The image shows a musical score for two choirs, Choir 1 and Choir 2, in 6/8 time. The score is divided into five measures. The lyrics are: "Volt egy ö-reg Volt egy ö-reg a pó,". The score includes vocal lines for both choirs and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Volt egy ö-reg Volt egy ö-reg a pó,". The score includes vocal lines for both choirs and piano accompaniment.

Fig. 3.6b: *Cantata Profana*, Mvt. I, m.17–21, with suggested revoicing by Nathan Lofton. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Vocal scores used in performances by Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony Chorus in 1996²⁵ show similar subtle re-voicings. The score excerpt below (Fig. 3.7), from Movement II, shows how Shaw would use singers in the extremes of their part’s range to reinforce passages in adjacent sections (i.e. low altos being added to a high tenor line). Borrowing singers from one section to reinforce important lines in another was common practice for Shaw and other conductors of his generation, and the technique is now a routine part of choral performance practice in choral-orchestral repertoire.

²⁵ The Robert Shaw Website, “Choral Scores,” accessed March 12, 2024, https://issuu.com/shawwebsite/docs/bartok_cantata_profana?e=21911481/46814578.

Fig. 3.7: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.108–110. Markings from Robert Shaw, Atlanta Symphony Chorus, 1996. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Seating Plans

Choral seating charts are one of the chorusmaster's most time-consuming responsibilities. While critical to the success of a choral-orchestral collaboration, seating plans are often influenced by such mundane factors as the heights of the individual singers, the relative strength or weakness of each section, and the amount of space available on stage or in a choir loft. When one is designing a seating chart for *Cantata Profana* specifically, one must also consider the optimal way to group together the various sections in their four-, six-, and eight-part divisi arrangements, and to differentiate between Choir I and Choir II. For these reasons, every performing situation will be slightly different. Two possible seating plans are offered here.

Robert Shaw proposed one possible solution in a 1996 letter to the Atlanta Symphony Chorus, which is reprinted in *The Robert Shaw Reader*.²⁶ Shaw’s plan (Table 3.3) calls for a chorus in six horizontal rows across the stage, divided into eight vertical double-columns. The four columns on stage right are Choir I, with sopranos furthest right, altos to their left, and tenors and basses closest to center stage. Choir II occupies the stage left columns, with their arrangement mirroring that of Choir I.

CHOIR I								CHOIR II							
S1	S2	A1	A2	T1	T2	B1	B2	B2	B1	T2	T1	A2	A1	S2	S1
S1	S2	A1	A2	T1	T2	B1	B2	B2	B1	T2	T1	A2	A1	S2	S1
S1	S2	A1	A2	T1	T2	B1	B2	B2	B1	T2	T1	A2	A1	S2	S1
S1	S2	A1	A2	T1	T2	B1	B2	B2	B1	T2	T1	A2	A1	S2	S1
S1	S2	A1	A2	T1	T2	B1	B2	B2	B1	T2	T1	A2	A1	S2	S1
S1	S2	A1	A2	T1	T2	B1	B2	B2	B1	T2	T1	A2	A1	S2	S1

ORCHESTRA

Table 3.3: Seating plan for Atlanta Symphony Chorus performances of *Cantata Profana*, adapted from *The Robert Shaw Reader*.

This arrangement allows for a stereophonic division of the two choirs in the most antiphonal sections of *Cantata Profana*, such as m.27–53 of Movement I and m.21–37 of Movement II. However, dividing the soprano, alto, and tenor sections in half and placing them on opposite sides of the stage may not produce an ideal sound in passages that are eight-part high to low divisi (i.e. SSAATTBB), such as the beginning of Movement III. This seating plan, as reprinted in *The Robert Shaw Reader*, does not specify exactly where the high, middle, and low six-part divisions are physically located, but it is clear from the rest of Shaw’s letter and his marked score that the singers in the Atlanta Symphony Chorus at this time already knew their assignments in such passages.²⁷ The other drawback of this seating plan is that it makes it nearly

²⁶ Blocker, *The Robert Shaw Reader*, 146.

²⁷ The Robert Shaw Website, “Choral Scores,” accessed March 12, 2024, https://issuu.com/shawwebsite/docs/bartok_cantata_profana?e=21911481/46814578.

impossible to “borrow” singers from one choir or the other to accomplish the type of re-voicing shown in Fig. 3.6b above. That may not have been too much of a concern for Shaw in these performances, however. According to Table 3.1, the 1996/1997²⁸ Atlanta Symphony Chorus performances of *Cantata Profana* involved more than 200 singers, so even with sections divided on opposite sides of the stage there would still have been many individual singers assigned to each voice part in each group, making such re-voicings less of a necessity.

Another seating approach (Table 3.4), suggested by Amy Kaiser, former director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, seats the chorus in four columns (SATB, stage right to stage left) with Choir I in the front rows and Choir II in the back rows.²⁹ This arrangement is ideal for a choir with equal numbers of singers in each voice part, as it allows physical proximity for singers as they navigate any of four-voice (SATB), six-voice (high-middle-low/high-middle-low), or eight-voice (SSAATTBB) divisi groups. This arrangement also allows for Choir I and Choir II to have equal distributions of singers from each of those divisi subgroups in the antiphonal passages. By placing musically adjacent vocal parts (i.e. Alto 2’s and Tenor 1’s) physically next to each other on stage, this arrangement also makes the kinds of subtle re-voicings described above simpler. The main drawback of this seating arrangement, as opposed to one that places Choir I and Choir II on opposite sides of the stage, is that it does not allow for a stereophonic effect in the antiphonal passages.

²⁸ Shaw’s performances and recordings of *Cantata Profana* were originally scheduled to occur in the fall of 1996. However, a labor dispute and subsequent strike by the orchestra musicians of the Atlanta Symphony caused *Cantata Profana* to be postponed to the 1997-1998 season. All of the letters concerning *Cantata Profana* in *The Robert Shaw Reader* are from the fall 1996 preparations for the concerts that were ultimately cancelled. Kozinn, “Atlanta Symphony Settles After a 10-Week Strike,” *The New York Times*, December 5, 1996, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/12/05/arts/atlanta-symphony-settles-after-a-10-week-strike.html>.

²⁹ Amy Kaiser, interview with the author, February 18, 2024.

Prioritizing an antiphonal placement of Choirs I and II is not recommended, as it is likely to have a negligible sonic impact on audiences in most concert venues. It is common practice in virtually all concert halls to place the choral forces along the far upstage wall of the venue. This placement has the benefit of blending the choral sound into a cohesive unit, but it can also minimize the aural effect of antiphonal placements. An instrumental analogy can be made with the practice of dividing the first and second violins on stage right and stage left in 18th century orchestral music, such as Mozart and Haydn symphonies. While this can be sonically effective when the violin sections are placed at the front of the stage, close to the audience, the division would make for a far less noticeable sonic effect if the violins were placed along the back wall of the stage.

CHOIR II	S1- H	S1- H	S1- H	S2- H	S2- M	S2- M	A1- M	A1- M	A1- L	A2- L	A2- L	A2- L	T1- H	T1- H	T1- H	T2- H	T2- M	T2- M	B1- M	B1- M	B1- L	B2- L	B2- L	B2- L
	S1- H	S1- H	S1- H	S2- H	S2- M	S2- M	A1- M	A1- M	A1- L	A2- L	A2- L	A2- L	T1- H	T1- H	T1- H	T2- H	T2- M	T2- M	B1- M	B1- M	B1- L	B2- L	B2- L	B2- L
CHOIR I	S1- H	S1- H	S1- H	S2- H	S2- M	S2- M	A1- M	A1- M	A1- L	A2- L	A2- L	A2- L	T1- H	T1- H	T1- H	T2- H	T2- M	T2- M	B1- M	B1- M	B1- L	B2- L	B2- L	B2- L
	S1- H	S1- H	S1- H	S2- H	S2- M	S2- M	A1- M	A1- M	A1- L	A2- L	A2- L	A2- L	T1- H	T1- H	T1- H	T2- H	T2- M	T2- M	B1- M	B1- M	B1- L	B2- L	B2- L	B2- L
ORCHESTRA																								

Table 3.4: Hypothetical *Cantata Profana* seating arrangement for 96-voice chorus.

Hungarian Language and Diction

Published vocal scores for *Cantata Profana* exist in multiple languages: Hungarian, German, and two versions in English (translations by Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi and Robert Shaw). The work has also been recorded in Italian and Romanian,³⁰ although as of this writing scores in those languages are not available for purchase or rental from Universal Edition or Boosey & Hawkes, Bartók’s two main publishers. The Hungarian, German, and Calvocoressi English translations were all created during Bartók’s lifetime, and for that reason – while the

³⁰ See Appendix 3.

“original” language of the work is Hungarian – the conductor preparing to present *Cantata Profana* has the benefit of several composer-sanctioned languages from which to choose.³¹

Many conductors in English-speaking countries have opted to perform the work in English. Robert Shaw, for example, created his own English translation for the United States premiere of *Cantata Profana* in 1952, and he was still using the same English translation when he recorded the work with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra forty-five years later.³² Indeed, a majority of American and British performances of *Cantata Profana* were presented in English until relatively recently, with even major ensembles like the New York Philharmonic and Chicago Symphony Orchestra performing the work in English as late as the 1970’s and 1980’s.³³ Some conductors who have prepared the work have suggested that performing *Cantata Profana* in English can still be a good strategy, particularly for ensembles made up of amateur singers who are unaccustomed to singing in foreign languages, as it removes one layer of complexity from what is already a difficult work.³⁴ Regardless of the performing language selected, projected supertitles in the vernacular language are highly recommended to assist audience members with following the story as the work progresses.

The earliest U.S. performance of *Cantata Profana* in Hungarian documented in Appendix 2 took place in 1962, when it was performed by the Amherst and Smith College Glee Clubs.³⁵ Subsequent Hungarian-language performances were given in the United States during decades to follow, with Hungarian-language performances becoming the norm around the 1990’s. This is

³¹ In this sense, *Cantata Profana* is like Stravinsky’s *Les Noces*, performances of which the composer himself conducted in Russian, French, and English.

³² See Appendix 2 for the 1952 performance details and Appendix 3 for notes of the 1997 recording.

³³ See Appendix 2 for a selected performance history of *Cantata Profana*.

³⁴ David Chase, former Director of the La Jolla Symphony Chorus, email to the author, February 15, 2024.

³⁵ Amy Kaiser, retired director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, informed the author of this performance and it was confirmed by the Smith College Special Collections.

especially the case among major orchestras, which now perform almost all choral-orchestral works in their original languages.³⁶ Stephen Jackson, former director of the BBC Symphony Chorus, stated that “original language performance is *de rigueur* in British concert life [...], certainly among the big symphony choruses who, though amateur, perform in a professional setting.”³⁷ For David Robertson, former Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony, performing works in their original language is a matter of artistic integrity because “the musical language and the style of a musical culture comes out of the language.”³⁸

Even though Hungarian is unfamiliar to most choral singers outside of Hungary, the language has certain characteristics which make it approachable for singers: it is a largely phonetic language in which most characters correspond to a single sound; vowel and consonant sounds are not dependent on their position within a word; and most vowel and consonant sounds encountered in Hungarian are also found in Germanic and Romantic languages, with which singers are likely to have some familiarity. The table below catalogues the various vowel (Table 3.5), single-consonant (Table 3.6), and double-consonant (Table 3.7) phonemes found in Hungarian, based on a similar document created by the Hungarian-American diction coach Livia Racz.³⁹

Preparers of choral works in Hungarian should be aware of differing pronunciations of the vowel “e,” [æ] and [ɛ], stemming from rural dialects of Hungarian in which there are two distinct pronunciations of the “e” vowel. Some linguists use differentiated characters for these

³⁶ Simon Halsey, former director of the London Symphony Chorus, email to the author, February 6, 2024.

³⁷ Stephen Jackson, email to the author, February 20, 2024.

³⁸ David Robertson, interview with the author, March 27, 2024.

³⁹ Livia Racz, email to author, October 29, 2023. Livia Racz is a native of Hungary who now lives in the Boston area. While she is professionally a mechanical engineer, Dr. Racz is also an experienced choral singer, diction coach, and translator. She is a long-time member of the Boston Symphony’s Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and frequently serves as diction coach for that ensemble’s performances in Hungarian and German.

vowels, “e” and “ë,” as is shown in the vowel chart below (Table 3.5). The differentiation between these vowels is not found in the Budapest dialect of Hungarian, but both Kodály and Bartók were proponents of clearly defining these two vowels sounds – particularly in each composer’s vocal music drawing from rural folk sources.⁴⁰ These vowel sounds occur in the text of *Cantata Profana*, in such text as “egy” [ɛj] (Movement I, m.17) and “lettek” [lɛt:tæk] (Movement I, m.179). Existing resources on the pronunciation of Hungarian do little to explore the proper treatment of each “e” vowel, so I am immensely grateful to Livia Racz for her input on the transliteration included in Appendix 1.

Special attention should be paid to differentiating between the single-consonant “s” and the double-consonants containing the letter “s”: sz, zs, and cs, the phonetic sounds of which are denoted by different characters than their equivalents in English. As with any challenging choral text, a clear explanation of the pronunciation rules followed by slow and rhythmic repetition is the best way to teach the language of *Cantata Profana* to a chorus.

Having a knowledgeable language coach present for rehearsals is critical to the successful preparation of *Cantata Profana* in Hungarian. Multiple choral conductors interviewed by the author stressed the importance of language coaches being both native Hungarian speakers and, perhaps equally importantly, trained musicians. While it should be possible to find Hungarian speakers in most metropolitan areas, the International Phonetic Alphabet transliteration of the Hungarian text included in Appendix 1 of this dissertation is intended as a reference for conductors and choral singers, particularly those who are not able to obtain a language coach for their rehearsals.

⁴⁰ Livia Racz, email to the author, January 20, 2024.

Character		IPA
a	ɒ	Equivalent
á	a:	English: "gnaw" but without the diphthong
e	æ	English: "mad"
ë (e)	ɛ	German: "erste"
é	e:	English: "bet"
í	i	English: "stay"
í	i:	English: "pit"
o	o	English: "feet"
ó	o:	English: "hope" (short)
ö	ø	English: "toe" (long)
ő	ø:	German: "Mönch"
u	u	German: "schön"
ú	u:	English: "noon" (short)
ü	y	English: "shoe" (long)
ű	y:	German: "Mücke"

Table 3.5: Hungarian vowels

Character	IPA	Equivalent
b	b	English: "boy"
c	ts	English: "fits"
d	d	English: "door"
f	f	English: "father"
g	g	English: "garden"
h	h	English: "hard" (never silent)
j	j	English: "yes"
k	k	English: "kiss"
l	l	English: "listen" (very forward)
m	m	English: "mother"
n	n	English: "north"
n before g, gy, k, c, or cs	ŋ	English: "bang"
p	p	English: "pear"
r	r	English: "trap" (flipped or rolled)
s	ʃ	English: "shut"
t	t	English: "split" (dental)
v	v	English: "very"
x	ks	English: "fix"
z	z	English: "zip"

Table 3.6: Hungarian single-consonants.

Character	IPA	Equivalent
cs	tʃ	English: "chair"
gy	ɟ	English: "adjust" (no diphthong) ⁴¹
ly	j	English: "yes" (equivalent to "j" above)
ny	ɲ	English: "lenient"
sz	s	English: "sister"
ty	c	British English: "capture"
zs	ʒ	English: "pleasure"

Table 3.7: Hungarian double-consonants.

Targeted Warm-Up Strategies for *Cantata Profana*

A conductor preparing any choral ensemble for performances of *Cantata Profana* can lay the groundwork for teaching the cantata by using choral warm-ups derived from the musical elements found within the work. While the unique strengths and weaknesses of each chorus will require different rehearsal strategies for approaching *Cantata Profana*, warm-up exercises like the ones offered below would be useful for any ensemble.

The musical material of *Cantata Profana*, as described in greater detail in Chapter 2, is largely derived from a small number of musical elements, principally fragments of modal and whole-tone scales. The most important scale to introduce to the chorus in a warm-up is found in the original colindă melody collected by Bartók in 1914. This scale is equivalent to a diatonic major scale with a lowered third degree (Fig. 3.8a). In *Cantata Profana* this scale does not usually appear in its unaltered “prime” form, but instead is modally rotated to begin on its sixth scale degree (Fig. 3.8b), as seen in m.1-4 of Movement I. A choral warm-up could begin with

⁴¹ This compound consonant is also slightly palatalized, similar to the French word “*adieu*.”

singing these two scales (the prime form and the rotated form) either on a neutral syllable (such as “no”) or on moveable-“do” solfege syllables, depending on what the group is accustomed to.⁴²

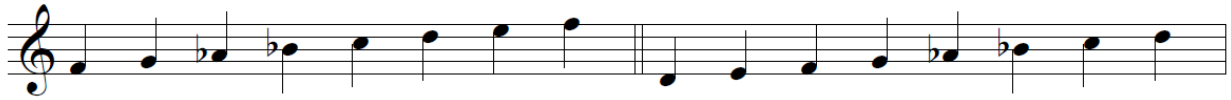


Fig. 3.8a and 3.8b: Prime form of the folk scale collected by Bartók in 1914, starting on F; rotated form of the folk scale, as it appears in *Cantata Profana*, starting on D.

Once the rotated scale (Fig. 3.8b) has been introduced, a tuning exercise involving this scale is recommended: all singers should start on the same pitch in the same octave, D4 one whole step above middle-C. From there, the sopranos and altos should ascend the scale while the tenors and basses descend, stopping on each successive note, until they arrive again on D (Fig. 3.9). As the goal of this exercise is accurate intonation and blend, the chorus should sing no louder than *piano* throughout, sustaining each pitch on a neutral syllable, and breathing as often as necessary to keep the sound supported.

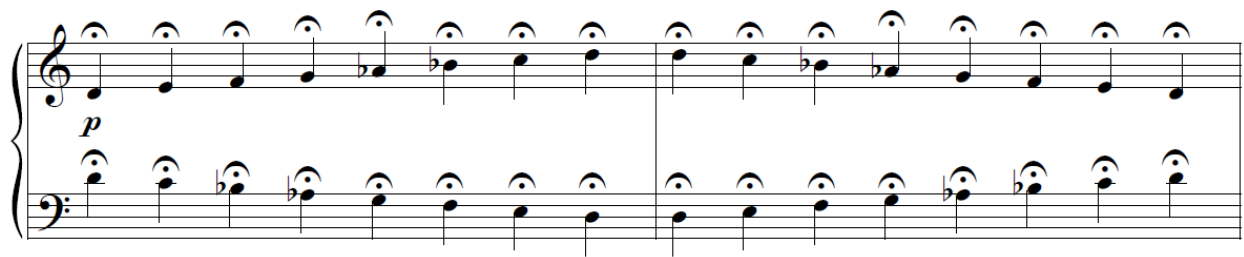


Fig. 3.9: Choral tuning exercise based on folk scale.

⁴² Solfege syllables can be a useful tool for sight-reading choirs, however solfege is a tool that requires routine use and maintenance to be effective. If a particular choir is not accustomed to singing in solfege, adding the syllables in a situation like the one described here may detract from the intended benefit of the exercise.

The same exercise can be varied, with sopranos and tenors ascending and altos and basses descending. This exercise is directly derived from the choral passage in Mvt. II, m.188–192 (Fig. 3.10) and is also related to the first choral entrance of the piece, Mvt. I, m.17–26.

Fig. 3.10: *Cantata Profana*, Mvt. II, m.188–192. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Not all of the vocal music in *Cantata Profana* is strictly modal, and a common feature in the work’s stepwise melodic lines is a change of chromatic modality based on direction. These chromatic changes are akin to the chromatic alteration of the 6th and 7th scale degrees in an ascending and descending melodic minor scale, a scale form with which even many amateur singers will likely be familiar. Bartók’s use of such chromatic alterations can be found in the transformation motive that ends Movement I (Fig. 3.11), among numerous other places in the cantata.

Er - dö sü - rü - je - ben Szar - va - sok - ká let - tek.

Fig. 3.11: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.178–179. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Patterns like this one can be adapted to create vocal exercises of various lengths, such as those illustrated in Fig. 3.12, Fig. 3.13, and Fig. 3.14 below. In addition to building familiarity with the scale patterns found in *Cantata Profana*, these excerpts can also be adapted to incorporate Hungarian vowel sounds, build dynamic consistency across ranges, differentiate articulations, and improve choral blend.

/i/ /i/

Fig. 3.12: *Cantata Profana* scale pattern warm-up #1.

/i/ /e/ /a/ /i/ /e/ /a/

Fig. 3.13: *Cantata Profana* scale pattern warm-up #2.

/nu/ /a/ /nu/ /a/ /nu/ /a/ /nu/ /a/ /nu/ /nu/ /a/ /nu/ /a/ /nu/ /a/ /nu/ /a/ /nu/

Fig. 3.14: *Cantata Profana* scale pattern warm-up #3.

Each of these exercises also includes whole-tone fragments, which likewise occur frequently in the cantata. Whole tone scales can be introduced to the choir in the same manner as the folk scale described above, with the ensemble singing together on a neutral syllable. Once the chorus has gained some familiarity with the scale form, additional whole-tone derived exercises may be useful. One such exercise, based on the canon subject from Movement II (Fig. 3.15) is given below (Fig. 3.16).



Fig. 3.15: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.17–18. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

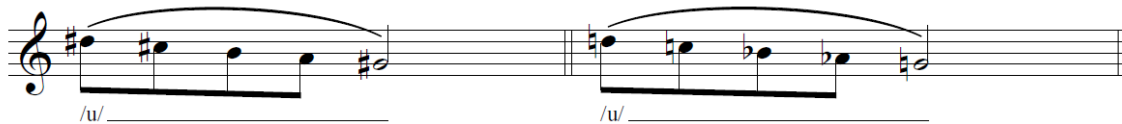


Fig. 3.16: Whole-tone tetrachord warm-up.

Alterations to the Solo Tenor Part in *Cantata Profana*

The execution of the solo tenor part in *Cantata Profana* is critical to a successful performance. The solo part is so important, in fact, that one conductor who has a long history with the piece will only program it if an excellent tenor soloist is available to sing.⁴³ The tenor part is famously punishing, requiring a singer with comfort in their extreme high register, assurance of pitch in music that defies tonal expectations, and the ability to sustain very long legato lines. For this reason, a few alterations which can make the solo tenor part somewhat less

⁴³ David Robertson, interview with the author, March 27, 2024.

taxing have become part of the performance practice for *Cantata Profana*.⁴⁴ The first of these alterations comes from Bartók himself, who offered in a 1936 letter that an alternate melodic line was acceptable in m.84–85 of Movement II (Fig. 3.17a).⁴⁵ This change, which avoids the first of the two high-C's in the solo tenor part, is reprinted as an *ossia* in the 2011 corrected edition of the score. (Fig. 3.17b) While this change was sanctioned by the composer himself, there is only one recording listed in Appendix 3 (USSR State Philharmonic Orchestra/Rozhdestvensky, 1957) in which the tenor soloist sings the optional lower line.



Fig. 3.17a: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.84–85, solo tenor as printed. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.



Fig. 3.17b: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.84–85, solo tenor with *ossia* suggested by Bartók. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Two other common alterations to the solo tenor part involve adjusting the text underlay to add breaths in particularly long phrases. While these alterations are not documented to have come from Bartók himself, they can be heard on recordings by a generation of Hungarian conductors who knew the composer personally: Antal Doráti, János Ferencsik, and György Lehel. The first of these occurs at the end of Movement II, m.213-214, in which the tenor is asked to sing an extended crescendo on a high F# at the mid-point of a long phrase. (Fig. 3.18a)

⁴⁴ While the solo baritone part has its own challenges, no such alterations have become standard for it.

⁴⁵ Demény, *Béla Bartók Letters*, 252.

If sung with the printed tempi, this eight-measure-long phrase is nearly twenty seconds in duration – a length that, given the dynamic shape of the phrase, is difficult even for singers with the most secure technique to execute. To make this phrase more technically and musically manageable, some tenors have adjusted the rhythm for the purposes of adding a breath. (3.18b) This can be heard in several early Hungarian-language recordings of the work listed in Appendix 3, including all three recordings by the Hungarian tenor József Réti (Hungarian Radio and Television Orchestra/Lehel, 1965; Budapest Symphony Orchestra/Ferencsik, 1967; Budapest Symphony Orchestra/Doráti, 1970).⁴⁶

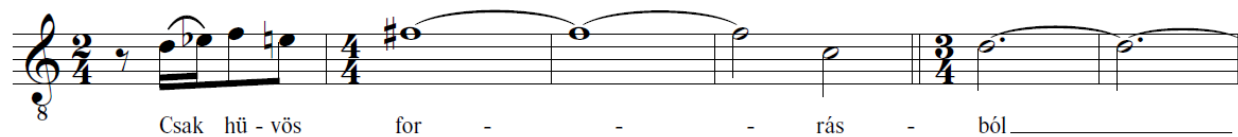


Fig. 3.18a: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.212 – Movement III, m.2, as printed. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

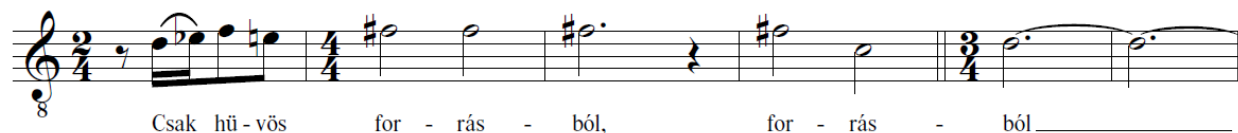


Fig. 3.18b: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.212 – Movement III, m.2, as sung by József Réti. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

A similar alteration can be heard in several recordings of the last phrase the tenor sings, at m.72-83 of Movement III. (Fig. 3.19a) Here the solo tenor is required to sing an even longer line, which is nearly twenty-five seconds long if sung at the printed tempi. In this place some tenors, including Réti, alter the text underlay to add a breath half-way through the line. (Fig. 3.19b)

⁴⁶ In addition to the three recordings of Réti in Appendix 3, he is also listed in Appendix 2 as having sung the *Cantata Profana* solo part in at least eight performances of the work between 1963 and 1971.

While many of the recordings listed in Appendix 3 do not make these alterations, in those cases the solo tenors often must shorten the final notes of these phrases instead.

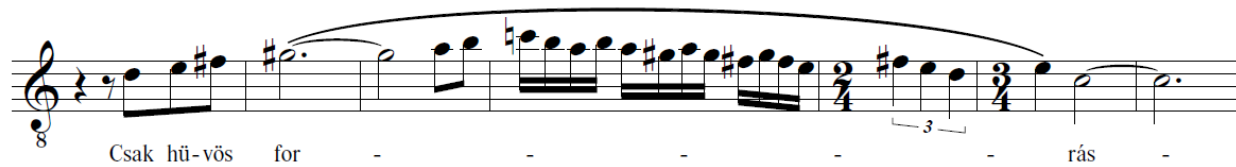


Fig. 3.19a: *Cantata Profana*, Movement III, m.72–78, as printed. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.



Fig. 3.19b: *Cantata Profana*, Movement III, m.72–78, as sung by József Réti. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Programming Considerations

When programming *Cantata Profana* for performance, one must consider the required rehearsal time in relation to the performance duration of the work. The cantata is about twenty minutes in duration, less than half of a standard concert length, yet requires more preparation and rehearsal from the chorus than is usually necessary for a piece of similar length. Because of this, concert presenters have taken a variety of approaches to programming around the cantata. Appendix 2 of this dissertation includes a representative sampling of program information from more than sixty performances of *Cantata Profana* between the 1934 premiere and 2023, the most recently concluded concert season as of this writing. In comparing these programs, a few trends become apparent.

In more than 40% (27) of the programs catalogued in Appendix 2, *Cantata Profana* is the only choral work featured. A significant number of these programs were all-Bartók, and many

were memorial concerts presented around the anniversary of the composer's September 26, 1945, death. Other programs have paired *Cantata Profana* with major orchestral works by Brahms, Debussy, Liszt, Mozart, Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky, and others. The orchestration of *Cantata Profana*, calling for a typical large modern orchestra (Table 3.8), makes it a comparatively versatile work to program around. David Daniel's reference book *Orchestral Music* lists hundreds of works, from composers as early as Berlioz, with similar orchestrations.⁴⁷

In some cases, the choice to make *Cantata Profana* the only choral work on a program is a deliberate one on the part of the presenting organization or conductor. David Robertson, former Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony, who led performances of *Cantata Profana* with mostly volunteer choruses there and with the BBC Symphony, indicated that he would only consider programming *Cantata Profana* alongside another choral work if the chorus involved were professional.⁴⁸

When *Cantata Profana* is performed alongside other choral works, as is the case in 58% (38) of the programs in Appendix 2, they are predominantly from the 20th century. Three such works that recur several times in the concert listings are Debussy's *Nocturnes* (1899), Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus* (1923), and Orff's *Carmina Burana* (1936). All three of these works have similar orchestrations to *Cantata Profana* (Table 3.8), though they make very different uses of the choral forces. The Kodály and Orff works prominently feature the chorus, but the Debussy calls only for a wordless chorus of soprano and alto voices in its final movement. Additional parallels between these works can be found in their use of vocal soloists: *Psalmus Hungaricus* includes a prominent tenor solo, while *Carmina Burana* includes a significant amount of music

⁴⁷ Daniels, *Orchestral Music*, 652–655.

⁴⁸ David Robertson, interview with the author, March 27, 2024.

for baritone soloist and a single aria for tenor. The extreme tessitura called for in both the *Cantata Profana* and *Carmina Burana* tenor solos creates yet another convenient pairing.

	<i>Cantata Profana</i>	Debussy <i>Nocturnes</i>	Kodály <i>Psalmus</i> <i>Hungaricus</i>	Orff <i>Carmina Burana</i>
Flutes	3 (2/3 dbl. Picc.)	3 (3 dbl. Picc.)	3	3 (2/3 dbl. Picc.)
Oboes	3	3 (3 = EH)	2	3 (3 dbl. EH)
Clarinets	3 (3 dbl. Bcl.)	2	2	3 (2/3 dbl. Bcl., Eb)
Bassoons	3 (3 dbl. Cbsn.)	3	2	3 (3 = Cbsn.)
Horns	4	4	4	4
Trumpets	2	3	3	3
Trombones	3	3	3	3
Tuba	1	1	n/a	1
Timpani	1	1	1	1
Percussion	2	2	1	5
Harp	1	2	1	
Piano/Kybd.	n/a	n/a	Opt. Org.	3 (3 = Cel.)
Violin I	12 ⁴⁹	16 ⁵⁰	16	16
Violin II	10	14	14	14
Viola	9	12	12	12
Cello	8	10	10	10
Bass	6	8	8	8

Table 3.8: Orchestrations of *Cantata Profana*, Debussy's *Nocturnes*, Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus*, and Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

Beyond their performing forces, these four works share additional musical and textual connections. Bartók is known to have carefully studied Debussy's music as early as 1907, and the opening of *Cantata Profana*'s second movement bears some resemblance to the first

⁴⁹ This string count for *Cantata Profana* is based on the number of orchestral musicians described in Gillies, *Bartók in Britain*, 85. Gillies says that 71 orchestra musicians were involved in the first performance in 1934. There are 26 woodwind, brass, percussion, and harp parts, meaning there would have been 45 total strings. The specific numbers given here are an estimate based on a standard distribution of players among the five string parts. This should be considered a minimum number of strings, given the wind and brass complement, and the larger string section given for the other works in this table may be more appropriate for *Cantata Profana*, depending on the concert hall and the size and strength of the chorus.

⁵⁰ The string counts here and in Table 3.9 and Table 3.10 below are estimates, using the average number of string players on the 2023–2024 rosters of several major American and European orchestras. The smaller string counts provided for the 18th century and 19th century works in Table 3.9 and Table 3.10 are based on the common practice in major professional orchestras of using reduced string sections for repertoire from these periods.

movement of *Nocturnes*, though this may be coincidental.⁵¹ Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus* is a setting of a Hungarian paraphrase of Psalm 55 and, like *Cantata Profana*, incorporates scales, rhythms, and other musical elements drawn from folk music. Bartók was certainly familiar with Kodály's composition prior to writing *Cantata Profana*, as Bartók's own *Dance Suite* (1923) was premiered in the same November 1923 concert as *Psalmus Hungaricus*.⁵² Even so, the connections between *Cantata Profana* and *Psalmus Hungaricus* are mostly circumstantial, and there are few obvious parallels between the aesthetics of the two works or in how the two composers use the vocal and instrumental forces at their disposal.

The perceived connections between *Cantata Profana* and *Carmina Burana* are worth extended comment, given that it is easy to see a link between Bartók's work and Orff's "cantiones profanae," as *Carmina Burana* is subtitled. Both works dress secular, or "profane," texts in quasi-sacred garb: a cantata in the case of Bartók, and an oratorio in the case of Orff. The two works were composed within six years of each other, use a large chorus, a strikingly similar orchestra (see Table 3.8 above), and comparable soloists. All of that said, the two works are very different pieces. Where Bartók's libretto is an allegorical folk story about generational conflict, Orff's is a collection of medieval poetry about fate, intoxication, and lust. Bartók's musical language, inflected with artifacts of traditional folk music, melds classical forms with a modernist musical language. Orff's compositional style, marked by strophic phrases and unadorned tonal relationships, is unmistakably conservative. While the pairing has proved attractive for some concert presenters, at least one prominent choral conductor has warned against performing *Cantata Profana* and *Carmina Burana* together. Amy Kaiser, recently retired

⁵¹ This connection is also discussed in Chapter 2. For more on Bartók's study of Debussy's music see Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 72.

⁵² Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 200.

director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, cautions that the two works both require a great deal of vocal and mental stamina from the chorus, and that performing them back-to-back is “abusive to [the choral] singers.”⁵³

In addition to the major 20th century choral works listed above, *Cantata Profana* has often been programmed alongside earlier works from the 18th and 19th centuries. Among the works from these musical eras that appear multiple times in Appendix 2 are Bach’s Magnificat in D (1733), Beethoven’s Mass in C (1807) and Symphony No. 9 (1824), Brahms’s *Nänie* (1881), Haydn’s “Lord Nelson” Mass (1798), and Verdi’s *Quattro Pezzi Sacri* (1886-1897). The comparative orchestrations for these works and *Cantata Profana* are listed in Table 3.9 and Table 3.10 below. While this list of works is varied, there are shared attributes. For example, Bach’s Magnificat, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, Brahms’s *Nänie*, Haydn’s “Lord Nelson” Mass, and Orff’s *Carmina Burana* are all — like *Cantata Profana* — tonally centered around D.

Additionally, Bach’s Magnificat, which presenters as far back as 1944 have paired with Bartók’s cantata, allows the concert presenter to highlight the Bach quotation and references found in *Cantata Profana*. As discussed in Chapter 2, the specific quotation in question comes from Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*. However, for reasons of length and orchestration, most presenters would find it impractical to perform Bartók’s cantata along with Bach’s complete passion setting in a single performance.

⁵³ Amy Kaiser, interview with the author, February 18, 2024.

	<i>Cantata Profana</i>	Bach Magnificat (BWV 243)	Beethoven Mass in C	Haydn “Lord Nelson” Mass ⁵⁴
Flutes	3 (2/3 dbl. Picc.)	2	2	1
Oboes	3	2 (1/2 dbl. d'am.)	2	2
Clarinets	3 (3 dbl. Bcl.)	n/a	2	2
Bassoons	3 (3 dbl. Cbsn.)	1	2	2
Horns	4	n/a	2	2
Trumpets	2	3	2	3
Trombones	3	n/a	n/a	n/a
Tuba	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
Timpani	1	1	1	1
Percussion	2	n/a	n/a	n/a
Harp	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
Piano/Kybd.	n/a	Cont.	Org.	Org.
Violin I	12	8	12	8
Violin II	10	6	10	6
Viola	9	4	8	4
Cello	8	4	8	4
Bass	6	2	6	2

Table 3.9: Orchestrations of *Cantata Profana*, Bach’s Magnificat in D, Beethoven’s Mass in C, and Haydn’s “Lord Nelson” Mass.

Another program, performed by the Hungarian Radio and Television Orchestra and Choir in 1969, took a different approach to placing Bartók alongside Bach by grouping *Cantata Profana* with two of the Baroque composer’s sacred cantatas: BWV 12 (“Weinen, klagen, sorgen, sagen”) and BWV 56 (“Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen”).⁵⁵ BWV 12, one of Bach’s early Weimar cantatas, includes prominent arias for alto, tenor, and bass as well as two choral movements. BWV 12 was also the basis for a set of piano variations composed by Liszt in 1859, and later performed several times in Bartók’s piano recitals.⁵⁶ BWV 56, largely a solo cantata for baritone with just a closing chorale for the chorus, would provide another opportunity to feature *Cantata Profana*’s baritone soloist while giving the chorus only a small amount of additional

⁵⁴ Haydn’s “Lord Nelson” Mass exists in multiple orchestrations. The instrumentation included here is the largest of the options listed in Daniels, *Orchestral Music*.

⁵⁵ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=12715.

⁵⁶ Vikárius, “Bartók’s Bach Borrowings,” 83.

music to learn. The major drawback to pairing *Cantata Profana* with any of Bach's church cantatas is the disparity in performing forces needed. While Bartók's cantata, as discussed above, ideally requires a large chorus of about 100 voices, the current performance practice for Bach's cantatas routinely has them performed by much smaller ensembles. For this reason, perhaps the Magnificat — an extended “festival” work with a comparatively large orchestra, at least by Bach's standards — remains the better choice for a pairing with *Cantata Profana*.

Much like the shorter *Cantata Profana*, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 is another notoriously difficult work to pair on a concert program, given its unusual length. At approximately seventy-five minutes in duration, it is too long to be the second half of a traditional (i.e. overture; concerto; intermission; symphony) orchestral concert, but also too short to be the only work on a program with no intermission. Several concert presenters have opted to pair Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with *Cantata Profana*, starting with the cantata's second performance in 1936.⁵⁷ Beethoven's symphony is vocally demanding, but the chorus only sings for a short time at the very end of the fourth movement. If a concert were to begin a concert with *Cantata Profana*, the chorus would have at least forty-five minutes to rest before singing their first notes in the Beethoven symphony. Beethoven's earlier Mass in C, a work more in the model of Haydn's late masses, involves a greater volume of choral music than the Symphony No. 9, but is considerably less taxing for the chorus. Pairing *Cantata Profana* with the Mass in C, or Haydn's “Lord Nelson” Mass, also highlights the classical forms (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2) that are embedded within *Cantata Profana*.

⁵⁷ “BBC Symphony Orchestra 1930–1948,” Concert Annals, accessed February 12, 2024, <https://concertannals.blogspot.com/2009/05/bbc-symphony-orchestra-1930-1948.html>

Two late 19th-century choral pairings found in Appendix 2 are worthy of additional comment: Brahms's short choral-orchestral work *Nänie* and Verdi's *Quattro Pezzi Sacri*. The Brahms work, composed fifty years before *Cantata Profana*, shows some surprising parallels to Bartók's composition: In addition to the key relationship mentioned above, the two are predominantly in compound triple-meter, feature extensive use of imitative writing for the chorus, and set allegorical texts. The two works are also similar in length and could potentially be combined to create a cohesive concert half. Robert Shaw did just that in two of his many performances of *Cantata Profana*: in 1958 with the Cleveland Orchestra and Chorus, and in 1966 with the Los Angeles Master Chorale.

	<i>Cantata Profana</i>	Beethoven Symphony #9	Brahms <i>Nänie</i>	Verdi <i>Quattro Pezzi Sacri</i>
Flutes	3 (2/3 dbl. Picc.)	3 (3 dbl. Picc.)	2	3
Oboes	3	2	2	3 (3 = EH)
Clarinets	3 (3 dbl. Bcl.)	2	2	3 (3 = Bcl.)
Bassoons	3 (3 dbl. Cbsn.)	3 (3 = Cbsn.)	2	4
Horns	4	4	2	4
Trumpets	2	2	n/a	3
Trombones	3	3	3	4
Tuba	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
Timpani	1	1	1	1
Percussion	2	3	n/a	1
Harp	1	n/a	2	1
Piano/Kybd.	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Violin I	12	12	14	16
Violin II	10	10	12	14
Viola	9	8	10	12
Cello	8	8	8	10
Bass	6	6	6	8

Table 3.10: Orchestrations of *Cantata Profana*, Beethoven Symphony No. 9, Brahms's *Nänie*, and Verdi's *Quattro Pezzi Sacri*.

Verdi's *Quattro Pezzi Sacri* has fewer obvious parallels to *Cantata Profana*, though it appears, in whole or in part, on three programs listed in Appendix 2. Verdi's work is a collection

of four unrelated sacred choral works, two of which are unaccompanied, composed in the last years of the composer's life. The primary link between *Cantata Profana* and *Quattro Pezzi Sacri* is that they require very similar choral and orchestral forces. While Verdi's set also involves a large amount of singing for the chorus, rehearsing the Verdi and Bartók works simultaneously would allow for a great deal of musical variety within each rehearsal session.

Former St. Louis Symphony Music Director David Robertson uses metaphors to talk about his general approach to concert programming:

“When you have put a program together the right way, it's either like an evening at the theater where there are multiple themes you can follow, or it's like going into a beautifully worked out room in a major gallery where the curators have said, ‘I'm going to have these four or five pictures talk to each other, even though one is by [Joan] Miró, one is by [Jacques] Chardon, one is a Dutch Old Master, and another one is a French Impressionist.’ And you go, ‘Oh wow, it had never occurred to me that...,’ and if you talk to the person next to you, they will point out yet something different, because there are so many things going on.”⁵⁸

Examining the programs included in Appendix 2, it is clear that many conductors and concert presenters have taken the second approach described by Robertson, placing Bartók's work alongside those by composers representing different eras and styles. This can especially be seen in the 1971 Atlanta Symphony Orchestra performances under Robert Shaw, in which *Cantata Profana* was paired with works by Matthew Locke, Brahms, and Bach; and in the 1972 New York Philharmonic performances under Pierre Boulez, which grouped the Bartók work with sacred music by Heinrich Schütz and Hector Berlioz.

⁵⁸ David Robertson, interview with the author, March 27, 2024.

Regardless of the programming decisions that are made, it is critical to program *Cantata Profana* in a way that is thoughtful and reaches audiences when they are most receptive.

Robertson observed that *Cantata Profana*:

“...[Is] like a piece of contemporary music. And by that I mean [that] if you load the program up with things that are not going to make it clear that there are connections as to why the *Cantata Profana* is in there, the audience won't be able to understand it. It is a piece that requires a special kind of atmosphere, so you can't have a real barn burner right before it or you kill the opening. It is not a piece that can close a concert, I don't think. [...] So you want to have it close the first half. You might be able to open with it, but I think with modern concert audiences by the time everybody gets settled and is ready, you're going to lose a lot of the people.”⁵⁹

⁵⁹ David Robertson, interview with the author, March 27, 2024.

Chapter 4: Interpretation and Meaning of *Cantata Profana*

The story of *Cantata Profana* is an allegory, and a particularly cryptic one at that, which can be interpreted to hold several meanings. Bartók himself had a strong connection to the colindă text that forms the basis of *Cantata Profana*, as evidenced by the way he returned to it repeatedly over the course of several decades. As discussed in Chapter 1, Bartók alluded to the story that inspired *Cantata Profana* as a compelling example of the colindă genre in the 1926 forward to his volume of collected Romanian colinde.¹ Around the same time, the composer felt so strongly about conveying the proper meaning and character of the Romanian colindă texts that would be used in *Cantata Profana*, that he rejected a poet's first attempt at a Hungarian translation, ultimately choosing to translate them himself.² After emigrating to the United States in the last years of his life, Bartók returned to the same text yet again and created a new poetic English translation, nearly fifteen years after *Cantata Profana*'s completion. The Bartók scholar László Vikárius notes that this late English version of the text was created “probably without any practical purpose” but that it showed “how [Bartók] was still attached to this ballad text.”³

Musicologist Bence Szabolcsi, whose connections to the composer and this work specifically are detailed in Chapter 1, recalled Bartók describing *Cantata Profana* as his “most profound credo.”⁴ Bartók's meaning is further illuminated in a frequently quoted letter he wrote to the Romanian folklorist Octavian Beu in January 1931, shortly after *Cantata Profana*'s completion:

“My own idea, however — of which I have been fully conscious since I found myself as a composer — is the brotherhood of peoples, brotherhood in spite of all wars

¹ Suchoff, *Bela Bartók Life and Work*, 185.

² Vikárius, “Béla Bartók's *Cantata Profana*,” 254.

³ *Ibid*, 263.

⁴ Quoted in Kroó, “*Cantata Profana*,” 430.

and conflicts. I try — to the best of my ability — to serve this idea in my music; therefore I don't reject any influence, be it Slovakian, Rumanian, Arabic, or from any other source. The source must only be clean, fresh, and healthy!"⁵

The parallel between Bartók's letter and the text of *Cantata Profana* is unmistakable: the last words the chorus sings in the cantata are that the sons could not return home because their mouths now only drink from "pure springs," much as a "clean, fresh" source becomes tantamount to the composer's consciousness.

Elliott Antokoletz, in his article on *Cantata Profana* in *Bartók Perspectives*, ties together the recollection of Szabolcsi, the humanist values stated in Bartók's 1931 letter to Beu, and *Cantata Profana*'s musical quotation from Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* to argue that the cantata represents an "expression of [Bartók's] humanistic philosophy of the brotherhood of nations." Antokoletz continues that Bartók's use of material drawn from sacred and folk sources appears "to point to a parallel between the Crucifixion-Resurrection of the 'Son of God' and the physical transformation and freedom of the 'sons' of Hungary, these transformations signifying freedom from sin and oppression, respectively."⁶

Other scholars have similarly found religious symbolism within the text and music of *Cantata Profana*. Tibor Tallián, in a 1995 article in *The Hungarian Quarterly*, speculated that the cantata's *St. Matthew Passion* quotation and the father's offer of cups of wine upon the table at home form a link with the biblical Gospel of Matthew itself. While Bartók was an avowed atheist from an early age,⁷ as an adult he owned bibles in English, French, Italian, Romanian, Slovak,

⁵ Demény, *Béla Bartók Letters*, 201.

⁶ Antokoletz, "Modal Transformation and Musical Symbolism in Bartók's *Cantata Profana*," 75.

⁷ Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 77.

and Spanish.⁸ Bartók used these bibles, at least in part, as a means of studying and comparing related languages. Tallián writes:

“[Bartók] collected the Bible primarily for its prose, because so many translations exist and they can be compared. It is worth noting too that although he owned the Bible in six languages, there was no Bible in Hungarian or German, his two ‘native languages.’ [...] One may perhaps conclude that, albeit the six copies suggest that the text of the Bible was important to Bartók, it was nevertheless a text that was so to speak remote to him as were — from a Central European point of view — some of the languages in which he owned them.”⁹

In the course of comparing his bibles, Bartók made some marginal notes on the text itself, underlining key phrases and passages. Tallián points to two such passages that may have later resonated in Bartók’s mind as he composed *Cantata Profana*, both involving the imagery of the cup of wine. The first of these passages is at the Last Supper, Matthew 26:27–29, when Jesus takes the cup of wine and says: “Drink ye all of it: For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” The second passage, Matthew 26:39–42, finds Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane: “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” In both cases, Tallián writes that the metaphor of “drinking and not drinking” symbolizes “acceptance and rejection.”¹⁰ Jesus ultimately takes the cup of wine, symbolizing acceptance of His Father’s will. By contrast, when the father in *Cantata Profana* offers the sons “chalices full of wine,” the largest stag answers by rejecting even the premise of returning to domestic life: their mouths no longer drink from cups.¹¹

⁸ Tallián, “Let this cup pass from me...”, 56.

⁹ Ibid, 56–57.

¹⁰ Ibid, 60.

¹¹ Ibid, 60.

Other writers have found that, rather than a quasi-religious statement, *Cantata Profana* represents Bartók's artistic and political credo, namely a rejection of Germanic formalism and a desire for the artistic freedom represented by the "pure streams" of folk music. Hungary was a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire for the first half of Bartók's life, and although Bartók's formal musical training took place in Budapest, his education was firmly rooted in the Germanic musical tradition.¹² This duality can be seen in early compositions like *Kossuth*, a Straussian tone poem that tells a Hungarian nationalist story, in which Bartók wrestles with the competing influences of Germanic form and Hungarian substance. While Bartók's study of folk music eventually led him to find his compositional voice by way of "clean, fresh, and healthy" sources, the composer's struggle with Germanic influence can still be found in the music of *Cantata Profana*.

At the time of Bach, music in 2/2 and 3/2 meters was associated with the archaic "stile antico" of the Renaissance, and Bartók uses this same musical symbolism in *Cantata Profana* to distinguish between the archaic world of the father and the naturalistic world the sons come to inhabit as stags. The father's presence is felt most strongly in the hunting scene, as the sons take part in the only activity their father has ever taught them. Their hunt takes the form of a four-voice fugue in 2/2 meter, but the counterpoint breaks down as the sons venture deeper into the forest and farther away from their father's influence. After the sons have transformed into stags at the end of Movement I, the narrative shifts back to the father's anxiety and his search for the sons at the beginning of Movement II, musically represented by imitative canons in 2/2 and 3/2 meter. Bartók further connects this music to the earlier hunting scene by means of closely related melodic (Fig. 4.1a and 4.1b). As the father gets closer to the stags, and his instinct — perhaps his

¹² Cooper, *Béla Bartók*, 17.

compulsion — to hunt takes over, the canons become ever faster and stricter, blurring beyond the point of recognition (Mvt. II, m.35–37).



Fig. 4.1a: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.74–76, tenor. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.



Fig. 4.1b: *Cantata Profana*, Movement II, m.17–18, Choir I alto. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

This metrical connection with the world of the father is contrasted by the eighth-note and quarter-note based meters that make up the naturalistic world of the forest. Strings of eighth-note modal scales in the opening of *Cantata Profana* creep and grow like vegetation, compositionally and thematically distant from the strict counterpoint of the father. At the moment the nine sons are transformed into stags — and thus from hunters to hunted — a corresponding metrical transformation occurs, from the half-note pulse of the hunting scene to the quarter-note pulse of the forest realm. The music of the transformation scene is structurally ambiguous, with one musical idea growing organically into the next rather than adhering to the strict contrapuntal statements and answers of the hunting scene and the father’s search.

Other significant themes in *Cantata Profana* are the loss of home and the younger generation’s rejection of their parents’ world. The father has taught his sons what he believes is needed to succeed in the world he inhabits. The sons take this knowledge and go forth into that

world, where they become transformed, their antlers no longer fitting through their father's doorways, nor their reality into his. This interpretation of the parable can be applied on a larger societal scale: Bartók was composing *Cantata Profana* in 1930, a decade after the post-World War I Treaty of Trianon. This treaty broke apart the Hungary that Bartók had known for most of his life, ceding many of the areas where he had collected folk music – including the counties where the story of *Cantata Profana* had originated — to other countries. Perhaps Bartók, who would himself become increasingly alienated by the rise of fascism in Hungary in the years to come, also felt that he had lost the world of his parents.

The last overarching themes in *Cantata Profana* are of fate and inevitability. While there is a great deal of economy in Bartók's use and development of musical material in *Cantata Profana*, there are only a few instances where Bartók repeats a musical idea without also repeating the text with which it had first been associated. However, in m.17–21 of Movement I (Fig. 4.2a) and the middle of the tenor-baritone duet, m.188-192 of Movement II (Fig. 4.2b), Bartók does attach two different lines of text to the same musical idea of modal tone clusters growing outward from a central pitch as new vocal parts enter.

colindă-inspired rhythm and polyphonic texture heard near the beginning of the cantata (Fig. 4.3a) onto the transformation motive from m.178–179 of Movement I. (Fig. 4.3b)

Fig. 4.3a: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.27–29, Choir I. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

Fig. 4.3b: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.178–179. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

The resulting passage (Fig. 4.3c) ties together the two musical ideas, simultaneously invoking the folk-like music that opened the work and the transformation motif. Once again, comparing the lines of text associated with these two spots is instructive as to Bartók’s reasons for linking these two musical ideas: at the beginning of Movement I, “Volt néki, volt néki / Kilenc szép szál fia” (He had, he had / Nine fine strapping sons); at the end of Movement I, “Karcú szarvasokká váltak” (Slender stags they were).

Kar - csú szar - va - sok - ká vál - tak, szar - va - sok - ká

Choir 1
Kar - csú szar - va - sok - ká
vél - tak, szar - va - sok - ká,

Choir 2
Kar - csú szar - va - sok - ká vál - tak, szar - va - sok - ká
Kar - csú szar - va - sok - ká
vél - tak, szar - va - sok - ká,

Kar - csú szar - va - sok - ká

Fig. 4.3c: *Cantata Profana*, Movement I, m.180–183. © Copyright 1934 by Boosey & Hawkes. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes. Solely for use by Nathan Lofton.

By attaching different lines of text to these repeated musical ideas, Bartók implies an overarching truth of the allegorical story: that the ending was predetermined. The sons were always going to leave, for children will always abandon the world of their parents. The father’s sons were stags already, they just needed to escape his influence in order to become their true selves. Once he found them in the forest, there was nothing the father could have offered to convince his sons to come home. Having experienced freedom, they would never return. If the story of *Cantata Profana* represented Bartók’s “most profound credo,” perhaps he believed that we are all destined to become transformed “deep in the forest,” unable to truly return to the world from which we came.

Cantata Profana is a work with a reputation for difficulty, and the ambiguity of its meaning only adds to this aura. But it is this ambiguity that makes the cantata a great work of art, even if on close examination it never fully reveals its secrets. I hope that this dissertation will allow some light to break through the dark forest that is *Cantata Profana* and will encourage more musicians to undertake the work’s performance.

Appendix 1 – *Cantata Profana* Hungarian Text, IPA, Literal English Translation,
and Poetic English Translation

I.

[m. 1–59]

CHORUS

volt ɛʃ 'øɾæg 'apo:

Volt egy öreg apó.¹

There was an old man.

Once there was an old man

volt 'ne:ki, volt 'ne:ki

Volt néki, **volt** néki

There was to him, there was to him (He had, he had)

One who treasured nine sons

'kilænts se:p sa:l 'fiɒ

Kilenc szép szál **fia,**

Nine fine strapping sons,

Fair and sturdy,

'tæfte:bø:l 'ʃɒrjɒdzot:t

Testéből sarjadzott

Sprung from his body

Seed of his own body,

se:p sa:l 'kilænts 'fiɒ

Szép szál **kilenc** **fia.**

Fine strapping nine sons.

Nine fair and sturdy fellows.

nɛm 'nævæltæ 'ø:kæt

Nem nevelte **őket**

Not educated he them

Naught of work he taught them

¹ “There are two pronunciations of the vowel “e”: /ɛ/ and /æ/. In archaic [rural] Hungarian, the former used to be spelled *ë*, but that is no longer in use, so there is no way to distinguish the two in modern writing. Most Hungarian IPA sources don’t bother to distinguish them either [using only /ɛ/], but Hungarians will pronounce them differently.” Livia Racz, email to the author, October 29, 2023. For more on this, see Chapter 3.

'ʃem:mi 'mæʃtərʃe:græ
Semmi mesterségre,
Not any trade to,
Neither trade nor farming,

'sa:nta:ʃrɒ 'væte:ʃræ
Szántásra - vetésre,
Plowing to, sowing to,
Ploughing not, nor sowing,

'me:nɛʃtæræle:ʃræ
Ménesrelésre,
Horse herding to,
Naught of handling horses

'tʃɔrdɒtæræle:ʃræ
Csordaterelésre:
Herding:
Nor the care of cattle.

'hɒnɛm tʃɒk 'nævæltæ
Hanem csak nevelte
But only educated
Only this he taught them:

'hɛjæt 'vɒljæt 'ja:rni
Hegy völgy jární,
Hill vale to wander,
Hill and vale to wander

'sɔrvɒʃrɒ 'vɒda:sni
Szarvasra vadászni.
Of stag to hunt.
Hunting the noble stag.

[m.74–163]

ɒz 'ærdø:kæt 'ja:rto hæj hɔj
Az erdőket járta hej-haj!
The forests to journey, hej-haj!
Through forest a-roving, hey-yah!

e:ʃ 'vɒdrɒ 'vɒda:sot:t hæj
És vadra vadászott hej!
And of game hunted they, hej!
They bounded a-hunting, hey!

o 'vɒdɒt 'vɒdɑ:stɒ
[A vadat vadászta]²
 The game hunted he
As huntsmen hunting, hey!
*Huntsmen all a-hunting,*³

mind o 'kilænts se:p sa:l 'fiu:
[Mind a]⁴ **Kilenc szép szál fiú**
 All the Nine fine strapping boys.
All nine sons and sturdy brothers

ɒz 'ærdø:kæt də 'ja:rto də høj ra: høj
[Az erdõket de járta de haj rá haj]⁵
 The forests but to journey, but haj on them haj!
Through forest a-roving, hey-yah!

æz o 'kilænts 'fiu: høj-høj
[Ez a kilenc fiú, haj-haj!]⁶
 These nine boys, haj-haj!
The sturdy brothers.

o 'vɒdrɒ 'vɒdɑ:stɒk
A vadra vadásztak;
 The game hunted they;
Nine huntsmen all hunted.

dæ 'ɒŋ:nit 'bɒrɒŋgoltɒk
[De]⁷ **Annyit**⁸ **barangoltak**
[But] So much they roamed
And farther still they wandered

² Both the 1934 Universal Edition full score and the 2011 Bartok Records & Publications corrected edition piano/vocal score of *Cantata Profana* include printings of Bartok's Hungarian poetic text as either preface or appendix to the musical score. Discrepancies between the poetic text as it appears in these locations and the musical setting are noted in subsequent footnotes. When there is a discrepancy between only one poetic source or the other, they will be identified as 1934 FS or 2011 PV, respectively. This line is set in the Soprano and Alto lines, m.86-95, but does not appear in the Hungarian poetic text. The corresponding line in the Robert Shaw translation is also set in the score but is absent from Shaw's English poetic text.

³ These two lines of the Shaw translation are used interchangeably in m.86–95.

⁴ The bracketed words are missing from the poetic text but are set in the score in repetitions of this line, m.90–95.

⁵ This line is missing from the poetic text but is set in m.96–103. 2011 PV gives “hajráhaj” as one word in m.100–101 of the Soprano line, whereas 1934 FS divides this as “haj-rá haj.”

⁶ This line is missing from the poetic text but is set in the Tenor line, m.99–101.

⁷ This word is not included in the poetic text but is set repeatedly in m.109–123.

⁸ In the musical setting the word “Annyit” is broken into its two syllables, rhythmically separated by a rest. Because of this, the word is spelled “Any-nyit.” “In normal writing, a 2-character consonant, when doubled, only doubles the first of the consonants, i.e. ‘annyit.’ However, when hyphenating across two lines of text, or syllabifying in a musical setting, the consonant is doubled as, ‘any-nyit.’” — Livia Racz, email to the author, December 26, 2023.

e:j 'od:dig 'voda:stok
És addig vadásztak,
 And until hunted they, [and hunted until]
They hunted on and on, hey-yah!
*So long they hunted there, hey-yah!*⁹

e:j 'oɲ:nit 'boroŋgoltok
[És annyit barangoltak]¹⁰
 And so much they roamed
And farther still they wandered

'od:dig 'od:dig 'mi:gɲem
Addig - addig, mígnem¹¹
 Until-until, finally
Until, until, until

'omi:g mi:g 'mi:gɲem
[Amíg, míg, mígnem]¹²
 as long as, while, until finally
Until, until, until

[m. 164–189]

se:p 'hi:dro 'tola:ltok
Szép hídra találtak,
 Beautiful bridge found they,
Deep lay a haunted bridge

'tʃodɔsɔrvɔʃɲomro
Csodaszarvasnyomra.¹³
 Magical stag trail.
Wondrous stags had crossed it,

'od:dig 'ɲomozgot:tok
Addig nyomozgattak,
 So long kept tracking they,
Heedless on they followed,

⁹ This line of the Shaw translation, set in m.136–142 of the score, does not correspond directly to a line of the Hungarian text.

¹⁰ This line is repeated, with the initial word “de” (“but”) changed to “és” (“and”) in m.142–145.

¹¹ Printed as two words, “míg nem,” in 2011 PV.

¹² This text is set in m.154–163 in place of the line above it, however it does not correspond to the texts included in either the 1934 or 2011 scores. The discrepancy receives no mention in the critical commentary included with 2011 PV.

¹³ Pogány, *The Hungarian Fairy Book*, 239–243. Csodaszarvas is a mythical stag from Hungarian folklore, the hunt for which is said to have led the ancestors of the Hungarian (Magyar) people to their homeland.

'utot 'te:væstet:tæk
Utat tévesztettek,
Path mistook they, [they lost the path]
Nor knew where they wandered

'ærdø: 'fj:ry:je:bæn
Erdő sűrűjében¹⁴
Forest thickness in [in the thick forest]
Lost in forest shadows,

'sɔrvɔjok:ka: 'let:tæk
Szarvasokká lettek:
Stags became they:
All were changed to stags
*There in the forest shadows,*¹⁵

'kɔrtʃu: 'sɔrvɔjok:ka: 'va:ltok
Karcsú szarvasokká váltak
Slender stags they were
Slender stags, enchanted rowing

ɔz 'ærdø: 'fj:ry:je:bæn
[Az]¹⁶ **Erdő sűrűjében.**
[The] Forest in the thick. [in the thick forest.]
*Through the deep enshadowed forest.*¹⁷

¹⁴ The diacritical marks on the word “sűrűjében,” both here and three lines later, are erroneously printed as “sürűjében” in the poetic text. However, the word appears with the correct spelling in the musical setting at m.177–178 and m.184–186.

¹⁵ This line, which does not have a direct equivalent in the Hungarian text, is added in the Robert Shaw translation to preserve the rhythm and syllabification in m.176–179.

¹⁶ The article “Az” is set in the score, m.183–186, but not included in the poetic text.

¹⁷ This line in the Shaw translation is given in different forms in the published scores. The critical commentary in 2011 PV (pg. viii) states that the line was “The deep and shadowed forest” in the first appearance of Shaw’s translation, the concert program for a Carnegie Hall performance in 1952. All subsequent printed editions of the translation give the line as “The deep enshadowed forest.”

II.

[m. 1–41]

hæj dæ ɒz ø: 'e:dɛj 'ɒpjok
[Hej, de]¹⁸ **az ő édes apjok**¹⁹
 Hey, but the their²⁰ sweet father
Hey, at last the loving father

va:ra:ʃɒl nɛm 'jø:ztæ
Várással nem győzte,
 Waiting with not could bear
Could abide no longer;

'fogtɒ ɒ 'puʃka:ja:t
Fogta a puskáját,
 Held the rifle his,
Straight he took his rifle

'æɫɪndult 'kæræʃni
Elindult keresni
 Departed to search for
And set forth to find them,

'kilænts se:p sa:l 'fi:t
Kilenc szép szál fiát.
 Nine fine strapping sons his.
Hey, his nine fair childrean.

'rɛa:tola:lt ɒ se:p 'hi:drɒ
Reátalált²¹ **a szép hídra,**
 Came upon the beautiful bridge,
On he roamed to where the bridge lay,

'hi:dna:l 'tʃɒdɒsɒrvɔʃnɒmro
Hídnál csodaszarvasnyomra;
 At the bridge magical stag tracks upon; [At the bridge he came upon the tracks of the magical stag]
Found where wondrous stags had crossed it

¹⁸“Hey, de” is set in the score, m.9-10, but missing from the poetic text. Including these words disrupts the 6-syllable meter of the text.

¹⁹ The 2011 PV poetic text misspells this word as “apjuk.”

²⁰ “Including both ‘the’ and ‘their’ is a way to create poetic emphasis.” — Livia Racz, email to author, November 6, 2023.

²¹ “Reátalált” is erroneously divided into two words (“Reá talált”) in the 2011 PV poetic text.

'sɔrvɔʃnɔm 'uta:n 'æɫɪndult
Szarvasnyom után elindult,
 Stag tracks following continued he,
Nine enchanted stags he passed there

æɫ ɪʃ 'jutot:t hy:ʃ 'for:ra:ʃhoz
El is jutott hűs forráshoz,
 Arrived too he (arrived)²² cool spring to, [He went until he arrived at a cool
 spring,]
Swiftly then their trail he followed

hy:s 'for:ra:ʃna:l 'sɔrvɔʃokhoz
Hűs forrásnál szarvasokhoz.
 Cool springs at to stags. [At the cool spring he came upon some stags.]
*Reached at last a cooling wellspring,
 There beheld nine stags astanding.²³*

'fe:lte:rdræ 'æræskɛdɛt:t
Féltérdre ereszkedett,
 To one knee sank he,
Falling down on one knee,

hæj 'ɛjɾæ ra: ɪʃ 'tse:lzot:t
Hej, egyre rá is célzott.
 Hej, one upon too aimed he. [He then took aim at one.]
Hey, he sighted on the leader.

jɔj dæ ɒ 'lægnɔʃɔb:bɪk:k 'sɔrvɔʃ
[Jaj]²⁴ De a legnagyobb szarvas
 Alas But the largest stag
Ai! But the largest stag gave answer,

jɔj ɒ 'læɡkædvæʃæb:b 'fiu:
- Jaj, a legkedvesebb fiú –
 - Alas, the dearest boy –
Ai! Of all the sons the dearest,

²² “‘Eljutott’ is a compound verb with a separable prefix that has its own meaning; it means to get to or arrive at. German and Italian have these too – their meanings can be very different from the verb without the prefix.” — Livia Racz, email to author, November 6, 2023.

²³ This line is added in the Robert Shaw translation, m.25–27. In the 2011 PV the line is editorially changed to “There beheld nine stags all standing.” This change is noted in the critical commentary that accompanies the score (pg. viii)

²⁴ The exclamation “Jaj” is set in the score, m.38, but not included in the poetic text.

jɔj 'so:vɔl 'imi:ʃ 'fɛlfæ:læ
[Jaj]²⁵ **Szóval imígy felfelele:**
 Alas thus called upwards he:
Ai! Called in answer to his father:

[m.43–95]

TENOR

'kædvæʃ 'e:dɛʃ 'ɒpa:ŋk
„Kedves édes apánk,
 “Dear sweet father ours, [Our dear sweet father]
“Dearest, loving father,

ra:nk tɛ 'ʃɔʃɛ 'tse:loz:z
Ránk te sose célozz!
 Upon us never take aim!
Aim not at thy children!

mært 'te:gɛd mi 'ty:zɪnk
Mert téged mi tüzünk
 Because you we spear
Or surely our antlers

ɒ 'sɔrvuŋk 'hɛjɛ:ræ
A szarvunk hegyére
 Our antlers tips on [On the tips of our antlers]
Must pierce thee and pin thee,

e:ʃ u:ʃ 'hɔjiga:lʊŋk
És úgy hajigálunk
 And thus we toss around
Must hammer and hurl thee,

'te:gɛd 're:trø:l 're:træ
Téged rétről rétre,
 You from meadow to meadow,
Crashing valley to valley,

'te:gɛd 'kø:rø:l 'kø:ræ
Téged kőről kőre,
 You from stone to stone,
And boulder to boulder,

²⁵ The exclamation “Jaj” is set in the score, m.40, but not included in the poetic text.

'te:gɛd 'hɛ:ɾø:l 'hɛ:ɾæ
Téged **hegyról** **hegyre,**
You from mountain to mountain,
And mountain to mountain,

'bizɔŋ 're:trø:l 're:træ
[Bizony **rétról** **rétre]**²⁶
Truly meadow to meadow
From valley to valley

e:j 'kø:rø:l 'kø:ræ
[És **kőról** **kőre]**
And stone to stone
And boulder to boulder

e:j 'hɛ:ɾø:l 'hɛ:ɾæ
[És **hegyról** **hegyre**
And mountain to mountain
and mountain to mountain

e:j 'te:gɛd 'hoz:za:va:ɟuŋk
[És **téged** **hozzávágunk]**
And you smash at
Will dash thee, smash thee, slash thee,

'ʃte:gɛd 'hoz:za:va:ɟuŋk 'hoz:za:
S téged²⁷ **hozzávágunk** **[hozzá]**²⁸
And you smash at at
Crashing cliff to crater,

'e:lɛʃ 'kø:sikla:hoz
Éles **kősziklához:**
Sharp boulder to:
Flesh be paste and bones be powder,

'iz:ze: 'por:ra: 'zu:zo:ds
Izzé - porrá **zúzódsz**
Particles (and) dust crushed you (will be)
Naught but dust survive thee,

²⁶ The four bracketed lines (“Bizony” through “hozzávágunk”) are set in the score, m.64–70, but do not appear in the poetic text. While these lines are mostly repetitions of the preceding stanzas, the word “Bizony” does not appear anywhere else in *Cantata Profana*.

²⁷ “S téged” is a contraction of “és téged”, as seen in the previous line.

²⁸ “Hozzá” is set in the score, m.74, but does not appear in the poetic text.

'kædvæʃ 'e:dɛʃ 'ɒpɑ:nk
Kedves **édes** **apánk!**"
Dear sweet father ours!"
Dearest loving father,

'iz:ze: 'por:ra: 'zu:zo:ds
[Izzé - porrá zúzódsz!]²⁹
Particles (and) dust crushed you (will be)
Naught but dust survive thee."

[m.98–159]

CHORUS

ɒz ø: 'e:dɛʃ 'ɒpjɔk
Az ő édes apjok
Their sweet father [He their sweet father]
Then the loving father

'hoz:za:juk i:j 'so:lot:t
Hozzájuk így szólott,
To them thus spoke he,
Called to his children,

e:j 'hi:vɒ 'hi:vɒ
És hívta hívta,
And keening called he,
And grieving answered,

e:j 'ø:kæt 'hi:vɒ: 'so:vɒl 'hi:vɒ
És őket hívó szóval hívta:
And them with calling word called he:
Pleading called unto his children:

BARITONE

'e:dɛʃ 'særæt:tæim
„Édes szeretteim,
“Sweet loved ones mine,
“Oh, my dearest loved ones,

'kædvæʃ 'jærmekæim
Kedves gyermekeim,
Dear children mine,
Oh, my darling children,

²⁹ This line is repeated in m.78–83 and m.90–95 of the score, but it appears only once in the poetic text.

'jærtək 'jærtək 'hɔzɒ
Gyertek, gyertek haza,
Come, come home,
Come, oh come, and follow,

'jærtək 've:læm 'hɔzɒ
Gyertek vélem haza,
Come with me home,
Follow home now, come now,

jo: 'ɒnɑ:tɒk va:r ma:r
Jó anyátok vár már!
Good your mother waits already! [Your good mother waits!]
Your sweet mother waits you.

CHORUS

'mæŋ:nætək ti 've:læ
[Menjetek ti véle!]
Go you with him!
Go thou now and follow!

BARITONE

'jɔj:jætək ti 've:læm
Jöjjetek ti vélem
Come you with me
Come with me, my children,

ɒ jo: 'ɒnɑ:tɒkhoz
A jó anyátokhoz,
The good mother yours to, [to your good mother]
Your mother stands waiting,

ɒ ti jo: 'ɒnɑ:tɒk
A ti jó anyátok
Your good mother
Lonely, loving, grieving,

'va:rɒvɒ va:r 'mɒgɑ:hoz
Várva vár magához.
Waiting waits to her you.
all to herself alone.

ɒ 'fa:kjɑ:k ma:r 'e:gnæk
A fáklyák már égnek,
The torches already burn,
The lanterns are lit,

oʒ 'oʃtɔl ɨʃ 'ke:sæn
Az asztal is készen,
The table also ready,
The table is set,

o 'ʃærlægek 'tøltvæ
A serlegek töltve.
The chalices filled.
The glasses are filled.

oʒ 'oʃtɔlon 'ʃærlæg
Az asztalon serleg,
The table on chalice, [The chalice on the table]
As glasses stand waiting,

'oʒa:tok 'kæʃæreg
Anyátok kesereg; -
Your mother grieves;
So does your mother stand,

'ʃærlæg 'tæli 'bor:rɔl
Serleg teli borral,
Chalice full of wine,
As wine in them brimming,

jo: 'oʒa:tok 'goŋd:dɔl
Jó anyátok gonddal.
Good mother yours worries with. [Your good mother is full of worry.]
So too your mother's eyes.

o 'fa:kja:k ma:r 'e:gnæk
A fáklyák már égnek,
The torches already burn,
The lanterns are lit,

oʒ 'oʃtɔl ɨʃ 'ke:sæn
Az asztal is készen,
The table also ready,
The table is set,

o 'ʃærlægek 'tøltvæ
A serlegek töltve..."
The chalices filled..."
The glasses are filled...

[m.163–192]

CHORUS

o 'lægnɔjɔb:b 'sɔrvɔj
A legnagyobb szarvas,
The biggest stag,
Yet again the leader;

'læɡkædvæʃæb:bik 'fiu:
- Legkedvesebbik fiú –
- dearest boy -
Dearest of all the children

'so:vɔl 'fɛlʃæləvɛ:n
Szóval felfelelvén³⁰
Word with answering upward [called up to him]
Called aloud and answered thus

'hoz:za: 'imi:ʃ 'so:lɔ
Hozzá imígy szóla:
To him thus said:
Unto his father:

TENOR

'kædvæʃ 'e:dɛʃ 'ɔpɑ:ŋk
„Kedves édes apánk,
“Dear sweet father ours, [Our dear sweet father,]
“Dearest loving father,

tɛ tʃɔk 'æɾædj 'hɔzɔ
Te csak eredj³¹ **haza**
You just head home
Go back, oh, go home now

o mi 'e:dɛʃ jo: 'ɔpɑ:ŋkhoz
A mi édes jó anyánkhoz!
To our sweet good mother!
To our lonely, dear, sweet mother

³⁰ The 2011 PV poetic text misspells this word “felfelelve,” leaving off the final “n.” It is spelled correctly at its occurrence in m.165 of the musical score.

³¹ “‘Eredj’ is a somewhat harsh way to say ‘get out of here.’” — Livia Racz, email to author, November 6, 2023.

dæ mi nɛm 'mɛjɲk
De mi nem megyünk!
But we will not go!
But we cannot go!

CHORUS

dæ øk nɛm 'mɛn:næk jɔj nɛm
De ök nem mennek, jaj nem.
But they do not go, alas do not.
Never can they go back, never, ah, never!

BARITONE³²

me:rt nɛm 'jøn:næk me:rt
Mért nem jönnek, mért?
Why do not they come, why?
Why not come now?

o: me:rt nɛm 'jɔt:tøk me:rt
Ó mért nem jöttök, mért?
Oh why do not you come, why?
Oh, why not come?

[m.193–215]

TENOR

dæ mi nɛm 'mɛjɲk
De mi nem megyünk:
But we will not go:
We shall never return!

mært ɔ mi 'sɔrvɲk
Mert a mi szarvunk
Because our antlers
Because our antlers

'ɔjto:n bæ nɛm 'te:rhæt
Ajtón be nem térhet,
The door into must not pass through, [Cannot go through the door,]
Cannot pass thy doorway,

tʃɔk 'bæte:r ɔz 'vøljækbæ
Csak betér az völgyekbe;
Only pass into the vales;
Only roam the forest groves:

³² These two lines for the baritone are set in m.188–207 but are not included in the poetic text.

o mi 'kɔrtʃu: 'tæftɪŋk
A mi karcsú testünk
Our slender bodies
And our slender bodies

'gɒnɒ:bɒn nɛm 'ja:rɒt
Gunyában³³ nem járhat,³⁴
In clothes cannot be, [Do not wear clothes,]
Ne'er in clothes can wander,

tʃɔk 'ja:rɒt ɒz 'lɒmbok køzt
Csak járhat az lombok közt;
Only wanders the leaves between; [Only go between leaves;]
Only wear the wind and sun;

'kɔrtʃu: 'la:bɒŋk nɛm le:p
Karcsú lábunk nem lép
Slender legs ours do not tread [Our slender legs do not tread]
And our dainty legs can

'ty:zhæj 'hɒmuja:bɒ
Tűzhely hamujába,
The hearth's ashes into,
Never stand the hearthstone,

tʃɔk 'puhɒ 'ɒvɔrɒbɒ
Csak puha avarba;
Only soft fallen leaves in;
Nor tread but leafy mold;

o mi 'sa:jɒŋk 'tøb:be:
A mi szájunk többé
Our mouths no longer
And our mouths no longer

nɛm isik 'poha:rɒbɔ:l
Nem iszik pohárból,
Not drink glass from,
Drink from crystal glasses,

³³ In modern Hungarian the noun for “clothes” includes a long first vowel, spelled “gúnya.” However, in the older peasant Hungarian that Bartok is invoking here, the word had a short first vowel and is thus spelled without an accent on the “u.” In the 1938 recording of Bartok speaking the text of *Cantata Profana*, the composer can be heard pronouncing the word with a short first vowel. László Vikárius, email to the author, January 5, 2024.

³⁴ “This is a wordplay. ‘Gúnyában jár’ is an old way of saying wear clothes; it has nothing to do with wandering or going, but then in the next stanza ‘járni’ [to walk] is used in its more usual sense.” — Livia Racz, email to author, November 6, 2023.

tʃɔk 'hy:vɔʃ 'for:ra:ʃbo:l
Csak hűvös forrásból.
 Only cool spring from."
But only mountain springs."

III.

[m.1-34]

CHORUS

volt εʃ 'ø:ræg 'apo:
Volt egy öreg apó.
 There was an old man.
Once there was an old man

volt	'ne:ki,	volt	'ne:ki
Volt	néki,	volt	néki
There was	to him,	there was	to him (He had, he had)

Whose treasure, whose treasure

'kilænts	se:p	sa:l	'fiɔ
Kilenc	szép	szál	fia.
Nine	fine	strapping	sons

Nine sons fair and sturdy was.

nɛm 'nævæltæ 'ø:kæt
Nem nevelte őket
 Not educated he them
Naught of work he taught them.

'ʃɛm:mi 'mæʃtɛrʃe:græ
Semmi mesterségre,
 Not any trade to
Neither trade nor farming,

tʃɔk 'ærdø:kæt 'ja:rni
Csak erdőket jární,
 Only forests to walk,
But only to wander as

tʃɔk 'vɔdɔt 'vɔda:sni
Csak vadat vadászni.
 only wild hunting.
Nine huntsmen a-hunting.

e:j 'vɒdɒt 'vɒdɑ:stɒk
[És vadat vadásztak]³⁵
and wild they hunted
As huntsmen a-hunting,

e:j 'ɒd:diɡ 'ɒd:diɡ
És addig - addig
And until, until
And farther, farther,

'vɒdɑ:sgɒt:tɒk 'ɒd:diɡ
Vadászgattak, addig:
Hunted around, until:
On and on they wandered.

'sɒrvɔʃɑ: 'va:ltoztɒk
Szarvassá változtak
Stags changed into [they turned into stags]
All were changed to stags then,

ɒt:t ɒ nɔʃ 'ærdø:bæn
Ott a nagy erdőben.
There the large forest in.
There in the forest shadows.

[m.35–64]

e:j ɒz ø: 'sɒrvuk
És az ő³⁶ szarvuk
And their antlers
And so their antlers

'ɒjto:n bæ nɛm 'te:rhæt
Ajtón be nem térhet,
The door into cannot pass through, [Cannot go through the door,]
Cannot pass through doorways,

tʃɒk 'bæte:r ɒz 'vøljækbæ
Csak betér az völgyekbe;
Only go into the vales;
Only roam the forest groves;

³⁵ This line of text is set in the Alto 1 and Alto 2 parts, m.24–26, but it is not included in the poetic text.

³⁶ The 2011 PV poetic text uses incorrect diacritical marks, spelling this “ő” instead of “ö.” The character is correct in the score, beginning at m.35.

o 'kɔrtʃu: 'tæftɪk
A karcsú testük
The slender bodies theirs
Their slender bodies

'gɒnɑ:bɒn nɛm 'ja:rɦɔt
Gunyában³⁷ nem járhat,
In clothes cannot be, [Do not wear clothes,]
Ne'er in clothes can wander

tʃɔk 'ja:rɦɔt ɔz 'lɒmbɔk køzt
Csak járhat az lombok közt,
Only walk the leaves between; [Only go between leaves;]
Only wear the wind and sun,

o 'la:buk nɛm le:p
A lábuk nem lép
Their feet do not tread
Their dainty legs

'ty:zhæj 'ɦɒmuja:bɒ
Tűzhely hamujába,
Hearth's ashes into,
Can never stand the hearthstone,

tʃɔk o 'puɦɔ 'ɒvɔrɔɔ
Csak a puha avarba;
Only the soft fallen leaves in;
Only tread the leafy mold;

o 'sa:juk 'tøb:be:
A szájuk többé
Their mouths no longer
Their mouths no longer

nɛm 'isik 'pɔɦɑ:rɔɔ:l
Nem iszik pohárból,
Do not drink glass from,
Drink from crystal glasses,

³⁷ See footnote 33 above.

tʃok 'hy:vøʃ 'tisto 'for:ra:ʃbo:l
Csak [hűvös]³⁸ tiszta forrásból.
Only cool pure spring from.
Only from cooling mountain springs.

[m.65–76]

NB: The following lines, all variations on those found above, are not included in the poetic text. The 8-part chorus is divided into three groups, each with different stanzas of the text.

CHORUS GROUP 1 (Soprano 1, Alto 1, Soprano 2)

oz o: 'sa:juk 'tøb:be:
Az ő szájuk többé
Their mouths no longer
Their mouths no longer

nem 'isik 'poha:rbo:l
Nem iszik pohárból,
Do not drink glass from,
Drink from crystal glasses,

tʃok 'tisto 'for:ra:ʃbo:l
Csak tiszta forrásból.
Only pure spring from.
Only from cooling mountain springs.

CHORUS GROUP 2 (Alto 2)

oz o: 'la:buk nem le:p
Az ő lábuk nem lép
Their feet do not tread
Now their dainty legs

'ty:zhæj 'hømuja:bo
Tűzhely hamujába,
Hearth's ashes into,
Can never stand the hearthstone,

CHORUS GROUP 3 (Tenor 1, Bass 1, Tenor 2, Bass 2)

oz o: 'tæʃtyk 'tøb:be: hæj
Az ő testük többé, hej
Their bodies no longer, hey
Now their slender bodies, hey!

³⁸ This word is set in m.56 but is not included in the poetic text.

'gɒnɒ:bɒn nɛm 'jɑ:rɦɒt
Gunyában³⁹ **nem járhat,**
In clothes cannot be, [Do not wear clothes,]
Never clothed do wander

tʃɒk 'jɑ:rɦɒt ɒz 'lɒmbok køzt
Csak járhat az lombok közt.
Only walk the leaves between. [Only go between leaves.]
Only roam the forest groves.

[m.72–94]

TENOR and CHORUS

tʃɒk 'hy:vøʃ 'tistɒ 'for:ra:ʃbo:l
Csak [húvös]⁴⁰ **tiszta forrásból.**
Only cool pure springs from.
From clear and cooling mountain springs.

Literal translation and IPA transliteration by Nathan Lofton, with corrections by Livia Racz (2023).

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³⁹ See footnote 33 above.

⁴⁰ The word “Húvös” is set in the score, m.72 and m.83–84, but is absent from the poetic text.

Appendix 2 – Selected Performance History of *Cantata Profana*, 1934-2023

1934 May 24. Concert Hall, Broadcasting House, London, UK.¹ [World Premiere]

BBC Symphony Orchestra; Aylmer Buesst, conductor [71, string 12-10-8-8-6?]

Wireless Chorus; conductor? [42, 10/10/11/11?]

Béla Bartók, piano

Trefor Jones, tenor

Frank Phillips, baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Two Portraits*

Bartók — Second Piano Concerto

Bartók — *Cantata Profana* [Sung in English]

1936 March 25. Queens Hall, London, UK.²

BBC Symphony Orchestra; Adrian Boult, conductor

BBC Choral Society

Laelia Finneberg, soprano

Astra Desmond, contralto

Parry Jones, tenor (Bartók)

Walter Widdop, tenor (Beethoven)

Arnold Matters, bass (Bartók)

Norman Walker, bass (Beethoven)

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana* [Sung in English?]

Intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven — Symphony No. 9 in D Major

November 9. Opera House, Budapest, HU.³

Budapest Philharmonic Society Orchestra; Ernő Dohnányi, conductor

Budapest Palestrina Choir; Viktor Vaszy, conductor

Endre Rösler, tenor

Imre Palló, baritone

Program:

Anton Bruckner — Symphony No. 5

Ottorino Respighi — *The Birds Suite*

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

¹ Gillies, *Bartók in Britain*, 85.

² “BBC Symphony Orchestra 1930–1948,” Concert Annals, accessed February 12, 2024, <https://concertannals.blogspot.com/2009/05/bbc-symphony-orchestra-1930-1948.html>

³ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=854.

1938 November 10. Pesti Vigadó [Vigadó Concert Hall], Budapest, HU.⁴
Székesfővárosi Orchestra [now the Hungarian National Philharmonic]; Viktor Vaszy, conductor
Chorus?
Soloists?

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Ludwig van Beethoven — Symphony No. 9

1943 March 6. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.⁵
Ensemble? Conductor?
Soloists?

Program:

Béla Bartók — Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs
Bartók — *Two Pictures*, Op. 10
Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Zoltán Kodály — *Psalmus Hungaricus*

May 31. Opera House, Budapest, HU.⁶
Budapest Philharmonic Society Orchestra; Béla Endre, conductor (Veress); János Ferencsik, conductor (Bartók)
Ferenc Liszt Choir; Emil Laskó, conductor
Tibor Udvardy, tenor
György Losonczy, baritone

Program:

Sándor Veress — *Miracle Flute Suite*
Intermission
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

1944 January 9. Location Unknown, Budapest, HU.⁷
Székesfővárosi Orchestra; Emil Laskó, conductor
Ferenc Liszt Choir
Miklós Szabó, tenor
György Littasy, baritone

Program:

Johann Sebastian Bach (Arr. Tausig) — Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue (BWV 564)
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

⁴ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 19, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=1310.

⁵ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=5289.

⁶ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=21399.

⁷ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=11792.

Intermission
Bach — *Magnificat* (BWV 243)

1948 October 20. Unknown Location, Budapest, HU.⁸
MÁV Symphony Orchestra; Tibor Szöke, conductor
Ferenc Liszt Choir
Tibor Udvardy, tenor
Miklós Bencze, baritone

Program:

Giuseppi Verdi — *Stabat Mater*
Ferenc Farkas — *St. John's Well*
Intermission
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

October 29. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.⁹
Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra; Károly Garaguly, conductor
Ferenc Liszt Choir
Endre Rösler, tenor
Miklós Bencze, baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Divertimento*
Bartók — Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion
Intermission
Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

November 30. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.¹⁰
Székesfővárosi Orchestra; Miklós Forrai, conductor
Budapest Choir; Miklós Forrai, conductor
Miklós Szabó, tenor
Lajos Katona, baritone

Program:

Johann Sebastian Bach — *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3* (BWV 1048)
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Bach — *Magnificat* (BWV 243)

⁸ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=17187.

⁹ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=17210.

¹⁰ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=17455.

1952 January 6. Carnegie Hall, New York City, NY.¹¹ [US Premiere]
RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra; Robert Shaw, conductor
Robert Shaw Chorale
William Moonan, tenor
Benjamin DeLoache, baritone

Program:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart — *Requiem*
Claude Debussy — *Trois Chansons de Charles d'Orléans*
Maurice Ravel — *Trois Chansons*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana* [Sung in English]

1955 January 15. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.¹²
Hungarian State Concert Orchestra; Miklós Forrai, conductor
Budapest Choir; Miklós Forrai, conductor
Tibor Udvardy, tenor
Lajos Katona, baritone

Program:

Henry Purcell — *Dido and Aeneas* [Sung in Hungarian]
Intermission
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

September 26. McMillin Academic Theater, Columbia University, New York City, NY.¹³
Symphony of the Air; Robert Shaw (*Cantata Profana*), Tibor Serly (other works)
Robert Shaw Chorale
Joseph Szigeti, Violin
Leslie Chabay, Tenor
Mack Harrell, Baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Concerto for Orchestra*
Bartók — Rhapsody No. 1
Bartók — *First Portrait*
Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

1957 April 29. Venue? London, UK.¹⁴
London Philharmonic Orchestra; Janos Ferencsik, conductor
London Philharmonic Choir; choir?
Eric Greene, tenor
Owen Brannigan, baritone

¹¹ “Choral Masterworks Series: Robert Shaw Chorale and Concert Orchestra,” Carnegie Hall, accessed February 12, 2024, https://www.carnegiehall.org/About/History/Performance-History-Search?q=&dex=prod_PHS&event=5405&cmp=B%C3%A9la%20Bart%C3%B3k_&w=Cantata%20profana.%20B%20100

¹² “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=13191.

¹³ Howard Taubman, “Music: Columbia Bartok Memorial,” *New York Times*, September 27, 1955, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1955/09/27/83375006.html?pageNumber=40>

¹⁴ “Concerts with the London Philharmonic Orchestra,” London Philharmonic Chorus, accessed February 12, 2024, https://lpc.org.uk/pdf/LPC_LPO_Concerts.pdf

Program:

Modest Mussorgsky — *A Night on the Bare Mountain*
Carl Orff — *Carmina Burana*
Leos Janacek — *Sinfonietta*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

1958 March 13, 15, 23. Severance Hall, Cleveland, OH.¹⁵

Cleveland Orchestra; George Szell, conductor (*Impresario*, Brahms Concerto)/Robert Shaw, conductor (*Magic Flute*, Mendelssohn, Bartók, Beethoven, Brahms)
Cleveland Orchestra Chorus; Robert Shaw, conductor
Rudolf Serkin, piano
David Arben, violin
James Wainner, tenor
Melvin Hakola, baritone

Program:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart — Overture to *The Impresario* [March 13, 15]
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart — Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* [March 23]
Johannes Brahms — Piano Concerto No. 2 [March 13, 15]
Felix Mendelssohn — Violin Concerto [March 23]
Intermission
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Ludwig van Beethoven — “Choral” Fantasy [March 13, 15]
Johannes Brahms — *Nänie* [March 23]

1961 May 8. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.¹⁶

Hungarian State Concert Orchestra; Miklós Forrai, conductor
Budapest Choir; Miklós Forrai, conductor
Alfonz Bartha, tenor
András Faragó, baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Georgy Sviridov — *Pathetic Oratorio* [Sung in Hungarian]
Intermission
Zoltán Kodály — *Psalmus Hungaricus*

1961 September 27. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.¹⁷ [Part of Liszt/Bartók festival. Review published in November]¹⁸

Hungarian State Concert Orchestra; János Ferencsik, conductor

¹⁵ Email to the author from Andria Hoy, archivist of the Cleveland Orchestra, February 19, 2024.

¹⁶ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=16589.

¹⁷ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=16735.

¹⁸ Everett Helm, “Liszt and Bartok, Disparate Yet Similar: Striking Contrast,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 11, 1961, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/510256816/7657914DEB74BBAPQ/6?accountid=14696&sourcetype=Historical%20Newspapers>

Budapest Chorus; Miklós Forrai, conductor
Sviatoslav Richter, Piano
Alfonsz Bartha, tenor
András Faragó, baritone

Program:

Ferenc Liszt — *Tasso*
Liszt — Piano Concerto No. 2
Liszt — *Hungarian Fantasy*
Intermission
László Lajtha — Symphony No. 3
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

1962 March 16. John M. Greene Hall, Smith College, Northampton, MA.¹⁹

Smith-Amherst Symphony Orchestra; Edwin London, conductor
Smith and Amherst College Glee Clubs; Iva Dee Hiatt, conductor
James Wainner, tenor
Ramón Gilbert, baritone

Program:

Ernst Krenek — *Two Choruses on Elizabethan Poems*
Edwin London — *Three Settings of Psalm XXIII*
Peter Schickele — *After Spring Sunset*
Intermission
Alvin Etler — *Triptych*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana* [Sung in Hungarian]

1963 September 28. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.²⁰

Hungarian State Concert Orchestra; György Lehel, conductor
Budapest Choir; Miklós Forrai, conductor
József Réti, tenors
András Faragó, baritone

Program:

Henry Purcell (Arr. Britten) — Chaconne in G minor
Pál Kadosa — *Pian e forte*
Arthur Honegger — Symphony No. 3
Intermission
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

1965 April 7. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.²¹

[Recorded as Deutsche Gramophone 138-873 SLPM?]
Hungarian Radio and Television Orchestra; György Lehel, conductor
Hungarian Radio and Television Choir; Ferenc Sapszon, conductor

¹⁹ Email to the author from Amy Kaiser, Director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus (ret.), February 17, 2024.
Program also provided by the Smith College Special Collections.

²⁰ "Concert Database," MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024,
http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=15933.

²¹ "Concert Database," MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024,
http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=13389.

József Réti, tenor
András Faragó, baritone

Program:

Georg Friedrich Handel — *Firework Suite*, HWV 351
Ludwig van Beethoven — Piano Concerto No. 4
Intermission
Endre Szervánszky — *Variation for Orchestra*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

1966 January 16. Bovard Auditorium, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.²²

University of Southern California Symphony Orchestra; Ingolf Dahl, conductor
University of Southern California Concert Choir; conductor? [100]
John Fleming, tenor
William Vennard, baritone

Program:

Franz Joseph Haydn — *The Storm*
Halsey Stevens — *The Ballad of William Sycamore*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana* [Sung in English]

March 6. Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles, CA.²³

Los Angeles Master Chorale; Robert Shaw, conductor [110]
Marie Gibson, soprano
Margery MacKay, mezzo
Ken Remo, tenor
George Gibson, baritone

Program:

Johannes Brahms — *Nänie*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana* [Sung in English?]
Arnold Schoenberg — *Friede auf Erden*
Franz Josef Haydn — “Lord Nelson” Mass

March 17. Carnegie Hall, New York City, NY.²⁴

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; Max Rudolf, conductor
University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory Chorus; Conductor?
Lorin Hollander, Piano
Charles Bressler, Tenor
Malcolm Smith, Baritone

Program:

²² Walter Arlen, “Bartok’s ‘Cantata Profana’ Given West Coast Premiere,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1966, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/155348392/fulltextPDF/7657914DEB74BBAPQ/2?accountid=14696&source=Historical%20Newspapers>

²³ Martin Bernheimer, “Shaw’s Choral Direction Makes Obstacles Look Easy,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 8, 1966, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/155372398/fulltextPDF/7657914DEB74BBAPQ/65?accountid=14696&source=Historical%20Newspapers>

²⁴ Harold C. Schonberg, “Music: Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra,” *New York Times*, March 18, 1966, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1966/03/18/79976442.html?pageNumber=31>

Gunther Schuller — American Triptych: Three Studies in Texture

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

Richard Strauss — *Burleske*

Intermission

Johannes Brahms — Symphony No. 4 in E minor

September 26. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.²⁵

[Recorded as Hungaroton SLPX 11510]

Hungarian State Concert Orchestra; János Ferencsik, conductor

Budapest Choir; Miklós Forrai, conductor

Men's Choir of the Hungarian National Army Central Art Ensemble; István Kis, conductor

Alfonz Bartha, tenor

József Réti, tenor

András Faragó, baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

Intermission

Ferenc Liszt — *Faust* Symphony

1967 October 6. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.²⁶

MÁV Symphony Orchestra; Miklós Lukács, conductor

Ferenc Liszt Choir of Pécs; György Antal

József Réti, tenor

Kolos Supala, baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

Intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven — Symphony No. 9

October 24. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.²⁷

Hungarian Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra; János Ferencsik, conductor

Hungarian Radio and Television Choir; Ferenc Sapszon, conductor

József Réti, tenor

András Faragó, baritone

Program:

Zoltán Kodály — *Dances of Galanta*

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

Intermission

Imre Vincze — *Rapsodia concertante*

Modest Mussorgsky (Arr. Ravel) — *Pictures at an Exhibition*

²⁵ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=16821.

²⁶ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=13775.

²⁷ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=13790.

1969 January 26. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.²⁸

Hungarian Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra; György Lehel, conductor
Hungarian Radio and Television Choir; Ferenc Sapszon, conductor
József Réti, tenor
András Faragó, baritone

Program:

Johann Sebastian Bach — Cantata BWV 12 “Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Sagen”
Bach — Cantata BWV 56 “Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen”
Intermission
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

1970 February 11. Erkel Theater, Budapest, HU.²⁹

[Recorded as Hungaroton HCD 31503]
Hungarian State Concert Orchestra; Antal Doráti, conductor
Budapest Choir; Miklós Forrai, conductor
József Réti, tenor
József Gregor, baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Bartók — *Concerto for Orchestra*

July 23. Blossom Music Center, Cuyahoga Falls, OH.³⁰

Cleveland Orchestra; Pierre Boulez, conductor
Blossom Festival Chorus; Clayton Krehbiel, conductor
Christoph Eschenbach, piano
Ken Remo, tenor
Roger Havranek, baritone

Program:

Giovanni Gabrieli — Canzone della *Sacrae Symphoniae*
Claude Debussy — *Nocturnes*
Intermission
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart — Piano Concerto No. 26, K.537
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

1971 September 27. Erkel Theater, Budapest, HU.³¹

Hungarian State Concert Orchestra; János Ferencsik, conductor
Budapest Choir; Miklós Forrai, conductor
József Réti, tenor
András Faragó, baritone

²⁸ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=12715.

²⁹ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=15066.

³⁰ Email to the author from Andria Hoy, archivist of the Cleveland Orchestra, February 19, 2024.

³¹ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=17842.

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Concerto for Orchestra*

Intermission

Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

November 17, 18, 19. Atlanta, GA.³²

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra; Robert Shaw, conductor

Atlanta Symphony Chamber Chorus; Donald Neuen, conductor [24/14/15/18]

Seth McCoy, Tenor

Peter Harrower, Baritone

Program:

Matthew Locke — *Music for His Majesty's Sackbuts and Cornetts*

Johannes Brahms — *Serenade No. 2 in A major, Op. 16*

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

Intermissio

Johann Sebastian Bach — *Magnificat* in D major, BWV 243 [Christmas additions, BWV 243a]

1972 October 5, 6, 7, 10. Philharmonic Hall, Lincoln Center, New York, NY.³³

New York Philharmonic; Pierre Boulez, conductor

Westminster Symphonic Choir; Joseph Flummerfelt, conductor

Boys Choirs of The Little Church Around the Corner and Trinity School; Stuart Gardner, conductor

Newark Boys Chorus; James McCarthy, conductor

Ken Remo, Tenor

John Shirley-Quirk, Baritone

Program:

Heinrich Schütz — “Fili mi, Absalom.” *Sinfoniae Sacrae*, Part I, No. 13.

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana* [Sung in English]

Intermission

Hector Berlioz — *Te Deum*, Op. 22 [with March for the Presentation of Colors]

1976 September 27. Erkel Theater, Budapest, HU.³⁴

Hungarian State Concert Orchestra; János Ferencsik, conductor

Budapest Choir; Miklós Forrai, conductor

Sándor Palcsó, tenor

András Faragó, baritone

Program:

³² “Atlanta Symphony Orchestra concert program, 1971-11-17/1971-11-19,” Georgia State University Library Digital Collections, accessed February 13, 2024,

<https://digitalcollections.library.gsu.edu/digital/collection/aso/id/14983/rec/280>.

³³ “1972 Oct 05, 06, 07, 10 / Subscription Season / Boulez,” New York Philharmonic Digital Archives, accessed February 13, 2024, <https://archives.nyphil.org/index.php/artifact/fff610f2-a82e-47b0-b9ab-551c8e72e2e4-0.1/fullview#page/1/mode/2up>.

³⁴ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=18831.

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Bartók — *Concerto for Orchestra*

1981 January 9. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.³⁵

Hungarian Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra; Ervin Lukács, conductor
Hungarian Radio and Television Choir; Ferenc Sapszon, conductor
Dénes Gulyás, tenor
Lajos Miller, baritone

Program:

Johannes Brahms — Symphony No. 2
Intermission
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

March 6, 7. Bridges Hall of Music, Pomona College, Claremont, CA.³⁶

Pomona College Symphony; Raphael Metzger, conductor
Choirs of the Claremont Colleges
Janice McVeigh, soprano
Val Stuart, tenor (?)
Marvin Hayes, baritone (?)
Phillip Strassle, violin
Peter Hewitt, piano

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Three Village Scenes*
Bartók — *Two Portraits*
Bartók — *Rhapsody*
Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

October 1. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.³⁷

Hungarian Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra; György Lehel, conductor
Hungarian Radio and Television Choir; Ferenc Sapszon, conductor
Dénes Gulyás, tenor
Sándor Sólyom-Nagy, baritone

Program:

András Szöllösy — 3rd Concerto
Witold Lutoslawski — *Gordon Kaverseny*
Intermission
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

³⁵ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=20715.

³⁶ “Pomona College Symphony to Present All-Bartok Concert,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1981, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/152723395/fulltextPDF/7657914DEB74BBAPQ/18?accountid=14696&sourcectype=Historical%20Newspapers>.

³⁷ “Concert Database,” MTA BTK Institute of Musicology, accessed February 21, 2024, http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=21343.

November 8. California State University, Fullerton. Fullerton, CA.³⁸

CSU Fullerton University Orchestra; Keith Clark, conductor
CSU Fullerton University Singers; David Thorsen, conductor
Mark Feiner, tenor
Rodney Gilfry, baritone
David Berfield, piano
Mary Zeyen, piano
Todd Miller, percussion
Wallace Snow, percussion

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana* [Sung in English]
Bartók — Concerto for Two Pianos and Percussion
Bartók — *Two Pictures*

1982 March 18. Academy of Music, Philadelphia, PA.³⁹

Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia; Tamara Brooks, Music Director.
Concerto Soloists of Philadelphia [later Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia]
Gurcell Henry, Soprano
Gene Tucker, Tenor
David Evitts, Baritone (Bartók)
David Arnold, Baritone (Brahms)

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana* [Sung in Hungarian]
Intermission
Johannes Brahms — *Ein Deutsches Requiem*

November 18, 19, 20. Orchestra Hall, Chicago, IL.⁴⁰

Chicago Symphony Orchestra; Georg Solti, conductor
Chicago Symphony Chorus; Margaret Hillis, conductor [170]
Elisabeth Trompeter, soprano
Dennis Bailey, Tenor
David Arnold, Baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana* [Sung in English]
Zoltán Kodály — *Psalmus Hungaricus* [Sung in English]
Intermission
Giuseppe Verdi — Quattro Pezzi Sacri

³⁸ John Henken, "Bartok Feted In Song At College," *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 1981, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/152953423/fulltextPDF/7657914DEB74BBAPQ/16?accountid=14696&source=Historical%20Newspapers>.

³⁹ Daniel Webster, "A marriage of language and music," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 19, 1982.

⁴⁰ John Von Rhein, "CSO, Chorus excel with Bartok, Kodaly," *Chicago Tribune*, November 19, 1982, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/175619009/fulltextPDF/7657914DEB74BBAPQ/5?accountid=14696&source=Historical%20Newspapers>.

1988 November 6. Venue unknown. London, UK.⁴¹

London Philharmonic Orchestra; Georg Solti, conductor
London Philharmonic Choir; conductor?
Lydia Mordkovitch, violin
Andras Schiff, piano
Neil Howlett, tenor
Justin Lavender, baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Two Portraits*
Bartók — Piano Concerto No. 2
Bartók — *Divertimento for Strings*
Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

1990 May 10, 11, 12. Orchestra Hall, Chicago, IL.⁴²

Chicago Symphony Orchestra; Margaret Hillis, conductor
Chicago Symphony Chorus
Michael Murray, organ
Marvis Martin, soprano
Karen Brunssen, mezzo
Gary Bachlund, tenor
Kurt Link, bass

Program:

Franz Josef Haydn — Organ Concerto in C Major
Béla Bartók — *Three Village Scenes*
Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Haydn — “Lord Nelson” Mass

1991 December 12, 17. Orchestra Hall, Chicago, IL.⁴³

[Recorded for Deutsche Gramophone 435 863-2]
Chicago Symphony Orchestra; Pierre Boulez, conductor
Chicago Symphony Chorus; Margaret Hillis, conductor
John Aler, tenor
John Tomlinson, bass

Program:

Shulamit Ran — *Chicago Skyline*
Claude Debussy — *Nocturnes*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

⁴¹ “Concerts with the London Philharmonic Orchestra,” London Philharmonic Chorus, accessed February 12, 2024, https://lpc.org.uk/pdf/LPC_LPO_Concerts.pdf

⁴² Howard Reich, “Symphony Chorus serves ‘Nelson’ Mass with gusto,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 11, 1990, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1466924108/fulltextPDF/7657914DEB74BBAPQ/134?accountid=14696&source=Historical%20Newspapers>.

⁴³ John Von Rhein, “Boulez, CSO ride currents of Europe in early 1900s,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 13, 1991, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1638008086/fulltextPDF/7657914DEB74BBAPQ/48?accountid=14696&source=Historical%20Newspapers>. Additional details provided by Frank Villella, director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s Rosenthal Archives.

Arnold Schoenberg — *Variations for Orchestra*
Maurice Ravel — *La Valse*

1995 August 19. Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY.⁴⁴
American Symphony Orchestra; Leon Bottstein, conductor
Chorus?
Bion Tsang, Cello
Tenor?
Baritone?

Program:

Ernst von Dohnányi — *Konzertstück in D for Cello and Orchestra*
Ferenc Erkel — *Festive Overture*
Béla Bartók — *Four Pieces for Orchestra*
Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

1997 June 23-26? Venue unknown. Budapest, HU.
[Recorded for Decca 458 929-2]
Budapest Festival Orchestra; Georg Solti, conductor
Choir of Hungarian Radio and TV; Kalman Strausz, conductor
Tamas Daroczy, tenor
Alexandru Agache, baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
[Other works?]

November 13, 14, 15. Atlanta, GA.⁴⁵
[Recorded for Telarc CD-80479]
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra; Robert Shaw, conductor
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus; Norman Mackenzie, conductor [29/25;28/27;23/23;25/25]
Dominique Labelle, Soprano
Richard Clement, Tenor
Nathan Gunn, Baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Samuel Barber — *Prayers of Kierkegaard*
Intermission
Ralph Vaughan Williams — *Dona Nobis Pacem*

⁴⁴ Barrymore Laurence Scherer, "The Sounds of Summer: From Modernist Bartók," *Wall Street Journal*, August 24, 1995,
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/1023805785/7657914DEB74BBAPQ/7?accountid=14696&sourcetype=Historical%20Newspapers>.

⁴⁵ "Atlanta Symphony Orchestra concert program, 1997-11-13/1997-11-15," Georgia State University Library Digital Collections, accessed February 13, 2024,
<https://digitalcollections.library.gsu.edu/digital/collection/aso/id/524/rec/381>.

2001 April 12. Pesti Vigadó, Budapest, HU.⁴⁶

Hungarian National Philharmonic; Mátyás Antal, conductor

Hungarian National Choir; Mátyás Antal, conductor

Attila Kiss B., tenor

Viktor Massányi, baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók (Arr. Szervánszky) — Four Slovak Folk Songs

Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

October 13. Millenáris Park, Budapest, HU.⁴⁷

Hungarian National Philharmonic; Zsolt Hamar, conductor

Hungarian National Choir; Mátyás Antal, conductor

Dezső Ránki, piano

András Molnár, tenor

Viktor Massányi, baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — Piano Concerto No. 3

Bartók — *Burlesque*, Op. 8

Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

2004 March 28. Verizon Hall, Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, Philadelphia, PA.⁴⁸

Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia; Alan Harler, Music Director. [41/39/26/39]

Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia

Carol Chickering, Soprano

Glenn Siebert, Tenor

Robert Orth, Baritone

Program:

Jay Krush — *Fanfare Felix* [World Premiere]

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana* [Sung in Hungarian]

Intermission

Carl Orff — *Carmina Burana*

2006 September 25, 26. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.⁴⁹

Hungarian National Philharmonic; Zoltán Kocsis, conductor

Hungarian National Chorus; Mátyás Antal, conductor

Sándor Nagy, viola

Dezső Ránki, piano

Attila Fekete, tenor

Viktor Massányi, baritone

Program:

György Kurtág — Viola Concerto

Béla Bartók — Piano Concerto No. 2

⁴⁶ Email to author from Rita Kaizinger, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra Librarian, February 22, 2024.

⁴⁷ Email to author from Rita Kaizinger, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra Librarian, February 22, 2024.

⁴⁸ Email to author from Michael Moore, Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia, September 12, 2023.

⁴⁹ Email to author from Rita Kaizinger, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra Librarian, February 22, 2024.

Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

2007 April 12, 13. Powell Symphony Hall, St. Louis, MO.⁵⁰

St. Louis Symphony Orchestra; David Robertson, conductor
St. Louis Symphony Chorus; Amy Kaiser, conductor
Deborah Voigt, soprano
Nicholas Phan, tenor
Ian Greenlaw, baritone

Program:

Richard Wagner — Overture and Bacchanale from *Tannhäuser*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Richard Strauss — “Ich kann nicht sitzen” from *Elektra*
Strauss — *Dance of the Seven Veils* from *Salome*
Strauss — Final Scene from *Salome*

2008 August 6, 14, 18, 23. Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, AT.⁵¹

Vienna Philharmonic; Peter Eötvös, conductor (6, 14, 18); Gregory Vajda, conductor (23)
Concert Association of the Vienna State Opera Chorus; conductor?
Lance Ryan, Tenor
Falk Struckmann, Baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — Vier Orchesterstücke, Op. 12
Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Bartók — *Bluebeard's Castle*

2009 March 25. Béla Bartók National Concert Hall, Müpa Budapest, Budapest, HU.⁵²

Hungarian National Philharmonic; Zoltán Kocsis, conductor
Hungarian National Choir; Mátyás Antal, conductor
Barnabás Kelemen, violin
Szabolcs Brickner, tenor
Mihály Kálmándi, baritone

Program:

Claude Debussy — *Jeux*
Béla Bartók — Rhapsody No. 1
Bartók — Rhapsody No. 2
Intermission
Bartók — Four Orchestral Pieces
Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

⁵⁰ Email to author from Cacia Meeks, February 12, 2024.

⁵¹ “Salzburg Festival 2008: Vienna Philharmonic — Peter Eötvös,” Salzburg Festival Archives, accessed February 15, 2024, <https://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/en/p/vienna-philharmonic-peter-eotvoes-2008>.

⁵² Email to author from Rita Kaizinger, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra Librarian, February 22, 2024.

2010 August 22. Royal Albert Hall, London, UK.⁵³ [Prom 50]
BBC Symphony Orchestra; David Robertson, conductor
BBC Singers [director?]
BBC Symphony Chorus; Stephen Jackson, conductor [120: 40/30/20/30]
Richard Goode, Piano
Nicholas Phan, Tenor
Ashley Holland, Baritone

Program:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart — Overture to *The Magic Flute*
Béla Bartók — Piano Concerto No. 3
Intermission
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Franz Josef Haydn — Symphony No. 102 in B-flat Major “London”

2011 January 25. Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, BE.⁵⁴
Hungarian National Philharmonic; Zoltán Kocsis
Hungarian National Choir; Mátyás Antal, conductor
Dezső Ránki, piano
István Horváth, tenor
Gábor Bretz, baritone

Program:

Ferenc Liszt — *Les Préludes*
Liszt — Piano Concerto in A major
Béla Bartók — Slovak Folk Songs for Men’s Chorus, BB78
Bartók — *Three Village Scenes*
Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

2011 February 10. Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, London, UK.⁵⁵
Philharmonia Orchestra; Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor
Coro Gulbenkian; Jorge Matta, conductor
Attila Fekete, Tenor
Alexandru Agache, Baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Bartók — Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta
Intermission
Igor Stravinsky — *Le Sacre du printemps*

November 19, 20. Beethoven-Saal, Liederhalle Stuttgart, Stuttgart, DE.⁵⁶
Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz; Celso Antunes, conductor

⁵³ “2010 Prom 50: Mozart, Bartok, Haydn — Part 2,” BBC, accessed February 15, 2024, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00tgyp4>.

⁵⁴ Email to author from Rita Kaizinger, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra Librarian, February 22, 2024.

⁵⁵ “Concert Event: Philharmonic Orchestra,” BachTrack, accessed February 15, 2024, <https://bachtrack.com/concert-event/philharmonia-orchestra-philharmonia-orchestra-southbank-centre-royal-festival-hall-10-february-2011/45983>.

⁵⁶ “Akademie Konzert 2,” Yumpu, accessed February 15, 2024, <https://www.yumpu.com/de/document/read/2678468/bartok-cantata-profana-die-zauberhirsche-orff-carmina->.

Gächinger Kantorei; Helmuth Rilling(?) [10/9;8/11;8/8;8/8]
Robin Johansen, Soprano
Martin Schalita, Tenor
Daniel Schmutzhard, Bass

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Carl Orff — *Carmina Burana*

December 3, 4. Mandeville Auditorium, San Diego, CA.⁵⁷

La Jolla Symphony; Steven Schick, conductor (Lang, Ligeti, Stravinsky)
La Jolla Symphony Chorus; David Chase, conductor (Bartók) [38/28/20/31]
Chad Frisque, Tenor
Philip Larson, Baritone

Program:

David Lang — *Grind to a Halt*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Gyorgy Ligeti — *Poème Symphonique* for 100 Metronomes
Igor Stravinsky — *Les Noces*

2013 September 9. KKL, Lucerne, CH.⁵⁸

Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra; Pablo Heras-Casado, conductor
SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart; conductor?
Yeree Suh, Soprano
Attila Fekete, Tenor
Baritone?

Program:

Anton Webern — Kantate No. 2, Op. 31
Webern — *Variationen für Orchester*, Op. 30
Webern — Kantate No. 1, Op. 29
Alban Berg — *Lyric Suite*
Luciano Berio — *Corale* (Sequenza VIII)
Igor Stravinsky — *Le roi des étoiles*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

2016 March 8. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.⁵⁹

Hungarian National Philharmonic; Mátyás Antal, conductor
Hungarian National Choir
Ágnes Szalai, soprano
Attila Fekete, tenor
Alexandru Agache, baritone

⁵⁷ Email to author from David Chase, retired director of the La Jolla Symphony Chorus, February 16, 2024.

⁵⁸ “Lucerne Festival: Chorklassiker der Moderne,” SRF, accessed February 15, 2024, <https://www.srf.ch/audio/weltklasse-auf-srf-2-kultur/lucerne-festival-chorklassiker-der-moderne?id=10272191>.

⁵⁹ Email to author from Rita Kaizinger, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra Librarian, February 22, 2024.

Program:

Giuseppe Verdi — *Quattro Pezzi Sacri*
Péter Eötvös — *Ima*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

June 9. Academy of Music, Budapest, HU.⁶⁰

Hungarian National Philharmonic; Zoltán Kocsis, conductor
Hungarian National Choir; Csaba Somos, conductor
Zoltán Kocsis, piano
István Horváth, tenor
Gábor Bretz, baritone

Program:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart — Symphony No. 34, K.338/409
Mozart — Piano Concerto No. 8, K.246
Intermission
Béla Bartók — Four Hungarian Folk Songs
Bartók — *Cantata Profana*

December 10. Béla Bartók National Concert Hall, Müpa Budapest, Budapest, HU.⁶¹

Hungarian National Philharmonic; János Kovács, conductor/Péter Eötvös, conductor (Bartók)
Hungarian National Choir; Csaba Somos, conductor
Krisztián Kocsis, piano
Miklós Perényi, cello
István Horváth, tenor
Miklós Sebestyén, baritone

Program:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart — “Confutatis” and “Lacrymosa” from Requiem, K.626
Mozart — Piano Concerto No. 20, K.466
Sergei Rachmaninoff (Arr. Kocsis) — *Vocalise*
Intermission
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Bartók — Four Orchestral Pieces, Op. 12

2017 January 19, 20. Reduta Bratislava Concert Hall, Bratislava, SK.⁶²

Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra; George Pehlivanian
Slovak Philharmonic Choir; Mátyás Antal
Gustáv Beláček, Tenor
István Horváth, Baritone

Program:

Sergei Rachmaninoff — *The Isle of the Dead*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Sergei Rachmaninoff — *Capriccio on Gypsy Themes*

⁶⁰ Email to author from Rita Kaizinger, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra Librarian, February 22, 2024.

⁶¹ Email to author from Rita Kaizinger, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra Librarian, February 22, 2024.

⁶² “Cantata Profana (Bartok) Bratislava 2017,” Opera on Video, accessed February 15, 2024,
<https://www.operaonvideo.com/cantata-profana-bartok-bratislava-2017-gustav-belacek-istvan-horvath/>.

Sergei Prokofiev — *Scythian Suite*

2018 November 11. Barbican Hall, London, UK.⁶³

London Symphony Orchestra; François-Xavier Roth, conductor
London Symphony Chorus; Simon Halsey, conductor [116: approx. 32/29/26/29]
Camilla Tilling, Soprano
Adèle Charvet, Mezzo
Julien Behr, Tenor
Christopher Purves, Bass
William Thomas, Bass (Bartók)

Program:

Gyorgy Ligeti — *Lotano*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Franz Josef Haydn — “Lord Nelson” Mass

2022 April 15. TivoliVredenburg, Utrecht, NE.⁶⁴

Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra; Karina Canellakis, conductor
Netherlands Radio Choir; Paul Krämer, conductor [18/16/16/16]
Iwona Sobotka, Soprano
Virginie Verrez, Mezzo
Benjamin Bruns, Tenor
Adam Kuntty, Baritone

Program:

Igor Stravinsky — *Chant funèbre*
Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Intermission
Ludwig van Beethoven — Mass in C

2023 April 17. Béla Bartók National Concert Hall, Müpa Budapest, Budapest, HU.⁶⁵

Hungarian National Philharmonic; János Kovács, conductor (Bartók, Liszt)/György Vashegyi, conductor (Brahms)
Hungarian National Choir; Csaba Somos, conductor [26/21/18/19]
Dézsó Ránki, piano
László Boldizsár, Tenor
Gábor Bretz, Bass-Baritone

Program:

Béla Bartók — *Cantata Profana*
Franz Liszt — Piano Concerto No. 2 in A major
Intermission
Johannes Brahms — Symphony No. 1 in C major

⁶³ “Haydn Nelson Mass, London Symphony Orchestra/François-Xavier Roth,” Barbican, accessed February 15, 2024, <https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2018/event/london-symphony-orchestrafrancois-xavier-roth-nelson-mass>.

⁶⁴ “Beethoven Mass in C,” Radio Filharmonisch Orkest, accessed February 15, 2024, <https://www.radiofilharmonischorkest.nl/en/concerten/beethovens-mis-in-c-2/>.

⁶⁵ Email to author from Rita Kaizinger, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra Librarian, February 22, 2024.

Appendix 3 – Annotated Discography of *Cantata Profana*, 1951–2023

1951 Deutsche Gramophone 289 457 756-2¹

RIAS Symphony-Orchestra Berlin; Ferenc Fricsay, conductor (1914–1963)

Chor des St. Hedwig-Kathedrale; conductor unknown

RIAS Kammerchor; Herbert Froitzheim, conductor (?)

Helmut Krebs, tenor; Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, baritone

Recording location: Jesus-Christus-Kirche, Berlin

Recording dates: September 1951

Release date: 1994

Original Format: CD

Repertoire: Bartók *Bluebeard's Castle*; Bartók *Cantata Profana*

Cantata Profana language: German

Cantata Profana duration: 18:42

I: 7:26

II: 8:13

III: 3:03

Availability: Naxos Music Library

Notes: Ferenc Fricsay was a student of Bartók's at the Academy of Music in Budapest, and so it could be assumed that his interpretation is informed by his direct contact with the composer. In general, the recording does a good job of capturing the overall dramatic architecture of the work, even though some of the specific tempi and musical choices differ considerably from what is printed in the score. Both the chorus and orchestra have moments of sloppy ensemble, and the sound of the chorus — which sounds like it was a small ensemble composed of large voices — is not well blended. The most attractive aspect of this recording is the two soloists. The legendary Fischer-Dieskau, recorded here at only 26-years-old, navigates the baritone's vocal lines with agility and grace while exhibiting crystal-clear diction. Krebs, less known today but also a major mid-20th century singer, has a heavier voice than is often heard in

¹ “Béla Bartók – Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau – Hertha Töpper – Helmut Krebs / Ferenc Fricsay – Herzog Blaubarts Burg – Cantata Profana,” Discogs, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.discogs.com/release/21716857-B%C3%A9la-Bart%C3%B3k-Dietrich-Fischer-Dieskau-Hertha-T%C3%B6pper-Helmut-Krebs-Ferenc-Fricsay-Herzog-Blaubarts-B>

this tenor part. Unfortunately, the two high Cs in the tenor solo lie just outside of his comfortable range. This is not an ideal study reference, due to the language, balance, and ensemble issues, but it is a compelling reading of *Cantata Profana*.

1954 AS Disc NAS 2508 (“Legendary Performers Vol. 9: The Unpublished Karajan”)

Orchestra Sinfonia di Milano RAI; Herbert von Karajan (1908–1989)

Coro della RAI; conductor unknown

Antonio Pirino, tenor; Mario Boriello, baritone

Recording location: Milan, IT

Recording dates: 1954 or 1949? (Live concert recording)

Release date: 1995

Original Format: CD

Repertoire: Bartók *Cantata Profana*; Bartók Piano Concerto No. 3

Cantata Profana language: Italian

Cantata Profana duration: 21:41

I: 9:07

II: 8:54

III: 3:40

Availability: YouTube²

Notes: This recording suffers from very poor sound quality, so it is difficult to fully evaluate its virtues. There is also some uncertainty about whether this live concert recording was captured in 1949 or 1954, as the disc’s packaging states both dates. The language in the choral passages is nearly impossible to decipher, largely because of the sound quality. The soloists, however, enunciate more clearly, demonstrating that this performance was in fact given in Italian. Despite the audio issues, what does come through in this recording is an excellent orchestra and a chorus of operatic voices who sing nearly everything *forte*. This recording is primarily interesting as a curiosity, as it is Karajan’s only recording of *Cantata Profana* and also the only recording of the work in Italian.

² “Bartók ‘Cantata Profana’ Herbert von Karajan,” YouTube, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTeOdWSZXA4>

1956 Bartók Records BR 312

New Symphony Orchestra; Walter Susskind, conductor (1913–1980)

New Symphony Chorus; conductor unknown

Richard Lewis, tenor; Marko Rothmüller, baritone

Recording location: Kingsway Hall, London, UK

Recording dates: 1955

Release date: 1956

Original Format: LP

Repertoire: Bartók *Cantata Profana*; Bartók *Four Slovak Folk Songs*; Bartók Eight Songs from *Twenty-Seven Choruses*.

Cantata Profana language: English

Cantata Profana duration: 20:05

I: 8:17

II: 8:16

III: 3:32

Availability: Spotify

Notes: This recording was the first to use Robert Shaw's English translation, which had been created just a few years earlier in 1952. Susskind's tempi stay remarkably close to those printed in Bartók's score, clearly demonstrating the intended tempo relationships throughout the work. The chorus sounds small, but over-sings to compensate, leading to muddy textures, forced tone, and ensemble issues at various points. Despite the singers' efforts, there are still numerous balance issues between orchestra and chorus, with the voices being largely covered for much of the second half of Movement I and the beginning of Movement II. Balance issues of a different kind are found in the solo sections, with the tenor and baritone soloists recorded at a much louder volume than the orchestra. While this recording is a great example of Bartók's intended pacing, it is not recommended as a study reference for choral singers.

1957 Period Records SPL 757/PRST 2757

USSR State Philharmonic Orchestra; Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, conductor (1931–2018)

USSR State Philharmonic Chorus; conductor unknown

Soloists unknown

Recording location: Great Hall, Moscow Conservatory (?)

Recording dates: unknown

Release date: 1957 (?)

Original Format: LP

Repertoire: Prokofiev *Zdravitsa*; Bartók *Cantata Profana*
Cantata Profana language: Hungarian
Cantata Profana duration: 19:43

I: 8:05

II: 8:16

III: 3:22

Availability: YouTube³

Notes: Poor sound quality is the only hindrance here, in what is otherwise a superb live concert recording. The chorus is sufficiently large to achieve the intended texture in the opening music, as well as to create a full sound in the louder passages without becoming strident. The Hungarian diction from both the chorus and the, sadly unidentified, soloists is very clear. While the tempos in a few places are slower than marked, the overall pacing is quite good. Some liberties are taken with the tenor solo line, including the *ossia* that avoids the first high-C in Movement II.⁴ While this alternate tenor line (Movement II, m.84–85) was written by Bartók himself, this is the only recording of *Cantata Profana* that makes use of it. There are also two places, at the end of the second movement and in the third movement, where the rhythm and text underlay of the tenor are altered to give the soloist an extra breath in particularly long phrases. Overall, this is a very good recording, if one can get past the sound quality.

1957 VOX PL 10.480

Vienna Symphony Orchestra; Heinrich Hollreiser, conductor (1913–2006)

Vienna Chamber Choir; conductor unknown

Murray Dickie, tenor; Edmond Hurshell, baritone

Recording location: unknown

Recording dates: unknown

Release date: February 18, 1957

Original Format: LP

Repertoire: Bartók *Concerto for Orchestra*; Bartók *Cantata Profana*

Cantata Profana language: English

Cantata Profana duration: unknown

³ “The Nine Enchanted Stags, Sz. 94: Cantata Profana,” YouTube, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oh2VNYLN2g>

⁴ These alterations are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Availability: Limited

Notes: A copy of this recording could not be located.

1965 Deutsche Gramophone 138-873 SLPM

Hungarian Radio and Television Orchestra; György Lehel, conductor (1926–1989)

Hungarian Radio and Television Chorus; Ferenc Sapszon, conductor

József Réti, tenor; András Faragó, baritone

Recording location: Academy of Music, Budapest, HU (?)

Recording dates: April 1965? Record release is dated 1964, but corresponding performances in Appendix 2 took place in 1965.

Release date: 1964?

Original Format: LP

Repertoire: Bartók *The Miraculous Mandarin*; Bartók *Cantata Profana*

Cantata Profana language: Hungarian

Cantata Profana duration: 19:46

I: 8:44

II: 7:53

III: 3:09

Availability: YouTube⁵

Notes: This recording has very clear sound quality and is the first of the *Cantata Profana* recordings listed here to employ stereo technology in separating the antiphonal choirs. The improved sound quality allows for a large amount of detail in the orchestration to come through, particularly in the orchestral introduction to Movement I. Unfortunately, the sound quality also makes ensemble, blend, and intonation issues that much clearer later in the work. The Hungarian diction of the chorus and soloists is excellent throughout, helped by mostly slower-than-average tempos, so this recording is a good option as a language study recording for ensembles learning *Cantata Profana* in Hungarian. On the other hand, the choral tone and balance are not always ideal, particularly in the densest polyphonic sections. The solo tenor rhythm and text underlay alterations mentioned in the 1957 USSR State Philharmonic recording can also be found here.

1967 Hungaroton SLPX 11510

⁵ “Cantata profana (A kilenc csodaszarvas) Sz. 94 (1930),” YouTube, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZhMPJeT-jg>

Budapest Symphony Orchestra; János Ferencsik (1907–1984)
Budapest Choir; Miklos Forrai, conductor
József Réti, tenor; András Faragó, baritone
Recording location: Matthias Church, Budapest, HU
Recording dates: September 1966 (?)
Release date: 1967 (?)
Original Format: LP
Repertoire: Bartók *Cantata Profana*; Bartók *Five Hungarian Folk Songs*; Bartók *Three Village Scenes*; Bartók *Seven Choruses with Orchestral Accompaniment*
Cantata Profana language: Hungarian
Cantata Profana duration: 19:35
I: 8:19
II: 8:03
III: 3:13
Availability: Naxos Music Library

Notes: This recording is characterized by brisk tempos, particularly in the Movement I hunting scene, but both chorus and orchestra struggle to keep up with the pace set by Ferencsik. The chorus is at its best in soft passages, such as the beginning and end of the work. Elsewhere, there are issues with the chorus's diction, intonation, and tone. The solo tenor József Réti, who sang the work on three of the recordings listed here, gives his weakest performance in this release, briefly losing his pitch center near the end of the first tenor solo section. Overall, this recording achieves excitement through speed, though often at the expense of accuracy. For this reason, it is not recommended as a study aide.

1970 Hungaroton HCD 31503

Budapest Symphony Orchestra; Antal Doráti (1906–1988)
Hungarian Radio and Television Chorus; Ferenc Sapszon, conductor
József Réti, tenor; József Gregor, baritone
Recording location: Erkel Theater (?), Budapest, HU
Recording dates: February 1970
Release date: 1995 (?)
Original Format: CD (?)
Repertoire: Bartók *Cantata Profana*; Kodály *Psalmus Hungaricus*
Cantata Profana language: Hungarian
Cantata Profana duration: 20:37
I: 8:33
II: 8:48

III: 3:16

Availability: Naxos Music Library

Notes: This release includes a historical recording of Bartók reading the text of *Cantata Profana*. The tempos are overall much slower than in other recordings, but Doráti still maintains the proportional tempo relationships indicated in Bartók's score. Because of these slightly calmer tempi and a relatively small professional chorus, the Hungarian diction and musical details in this recording are very clear. This is particularly true in the canon that begins Movement II, a passage where balance problems are commonly found in other recordings. The customary alterations to the tenor line at the end of Movement II and in Movement III, discussed above and in Chapter 3, are also made here. The overall clarity of this recording makes it an excellent option as a study material.

1972 Weitblick SSS0025-2

Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Leipzig; Herbert Kegel, conductor (1920–1990)

Rundfunkchor Leipzig; Horst Neumann, conductor

Eberhard Büchner, tenor; Günther Leib, baritone

Recording location: Kongreßhalle Leipzig

Recording dates: September 29, 1972 (Live concert recording)

Release date: 2002

Original Format: CD

Repertoire: Bartók *Cantata Profana*; Bartók *Concerto for Orchestra*

Cantata Profana language: Hungarian?

Cantata Profana duration: 19:48

I: 8:19

II: 7:48

III: 3:41

Availability: Limited

Notes: A copy of this recording could not be located.

1981 Electrecord F.E. 81-011

Festivalul George Enescu Orchestra Simfonica; Iosif Conta, conductor (1924–2006)

Corul Filarmonia Moldova; A. Grigoras, conductor

Corul R.T.V. Romane; I. Pavalche, conductor

Soloists: unknown

Recording location: Grand Palace Hall (?), Bucharest, RO

Recording dates: September 1981 (Live concert recording)
Release date: 1981
Original Format: LP
Repertoire: Enescu *Vos Maris*; Bartók *Cantata Profana*
Cantata Profana language: unknown
Cantata Profana duration: unknown
Availability: Limited
Notes: A copy of this recording could not be located.

1992 Deutsche Gramophone 435 863-2

Chicago Symphony Orchestra; Pierre Boulez, conductor (1925–2016)
Chicago Symphony Chorus; Margaret Hillis, conductor
John Aler, tenor; John Tomlinson, baritone
Recording location: Orchestra Hall, Chicago, IL
Recording dates: December 1991
Release date: 1992
Original Format: CD
Repertoire: Bartók *Cantata Profana*; Bartók *The Wooden Prince*
Cantata Profana language: Hungarian
Cantata Profana duration: 18:04
I: 6:58
II: 8:00
III: 3:06
Availability: Naxos Music Library

Notes: This is easily one of the best orchestral readings of *Cantata Profana*, with every instrumental detail executed at the highest possible standard. The excellent Chicago Symphony Chorus does their level best to keep up, but they are simply overwhelmed by the power of the orchestra in numerous places. This recording seems to favor blend and overall impact over clarity of diction in the vocal parts, and so the Hungarian is difficult to discern at times. The tempi are brisk throughout this recording, with the first movement, in particular, being over one minute faster here than in most other recordings of the work. While both vocal soloists are superb singers, this work is not an ideal fit for either. Tenor John Aler's lyric voice is too light to compete with the orchestra, and the baritone part sits high for the Wagnerian bass John Tomlinson.

1997 Decca 458 929-2

Budapest Festival Orchestra; Georg Solti, conductor (1912–1997)

Choir of Hungarian Radio and TV; Kalman Strausz, conductor

Tamas Daroczy, tenor; Alexandru Agache, baritone

Recording location: Italian Institute, Budapest, HU

Recording dates: June 23–26, 1997

Release date: 1997

Original Format: CD

Repertoire: Bartók *Cantata Profana*; Kodály *Psalmus Hungaricus*; Weiner *Serenade*

Cantata Profana language: Hungarian

Cantata Profana duration: 18:48

I: 7:05

II: 7:55

III: 2:48

Availability: Naxos Music Library

Notes: A very clean recording overall, both in terms of the orchestral sound and the Hungarian diction. Tempi are on the faster side of what is printed, and balance between chorus and orchestra is mostly kept in check. The soloists are good, if not great, though the tenor loses pitch slightly at the very end of Movement II. This is a perfectly fine option as a study aide, though there are other recordings here that are better both for clearly hearing the language and getting a general sense of the work.

1998 Telarc CD-80479

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra; Robert Shaw, conductor (1916–1999)

Atlanta Symphony Chorus; Norman Mackenzie, conductor

Richard Clement, tenor; Nathan Gunn, baritone

Recording location: Symphony Hall, Woodruff Arts Center, Atlanta, GA.

Recording dates: November 15–16, 1997

Release date: 1998

Original Format: CD

Repertoire: Barber *Prayers of Kierkegaard*, Bartók *Cantata Profana*, Vaughan-Williams

Dona nobis pacem

Cantata Profana language: English

Cantata Profana duration: 19:41

I: 7:32

II: 8:52

III: 3:23

Availability: Naxos Music Library

Notes: The English diction in this recording is extremely clear throughout, helped by slower tempi in the second and third movements and a default choral articulation that is more detached than what is found in other recordings of *Cantata Profana*. The precision of the hunting scene, in both the chorus and the orchestra, lends the music and almost Baroque feeling, with careful balancing of the successive fugal entrances. Some passages, like the baritone solo in Movement II, would have benefited from a faster tempo. There are also a number of instances where Shaw adjusts the wording or text underlay of the English translation he created four decades before this recording was made. The clarity of the text and music make this a good study aide for those learning *Cantata Profana* in English, but there are other recordings that do a better job of capturing the drama of the piece.

2023 Pentatone Records; PTC 5187071⁶

Transylvanian State Philharmonic Orchestra; Larence Foster, conductor (b. 1941)

Transylvanian State Philharmonic Choir; Cornel Groza, conductor

Ioan Hotea, tenor; Bogdan Baci, baritone

Recording location: Recording Studio of Radio Cluj; Cluj, Romania

Recording dates: May 2–6, 2022

Release date: November 3, 2023

Original Format: SACD

Repertoire: Kodály *Budavári Te Deum*; Kodály *Psalmus Hungaricus*; Bartók *Transylvanian Dances*; Bartók *Cantata Profana*.

Cantata Profana language: Romanian

Cantata Profana duration: 18:39

I: 7:36

II: 8:16

III: 2:47

Availability: Spotify

⁶ “Kodály and Bartók: Works for chorus and orchestra,” San Francisco Classical Recording Company, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.sanfranciscocre.com/recording/kodaly-bartok-works-for-choir-and-orchestra.html>

Notes: The primary interest of this recording is that it is sung in Romanian, the language of the colindă source texts and possibly the language in which Bartók began composing the work.⁷ Despite the excellent recording quality, this is otherwise a throwback recording with a relatively small orchestra and a small chorus of large, operatic voices, making it similar to the earliest *Cantata Profana* recordings from the 1950's. The interpretation ignores many of Bartók's explicit tempo markings and intended tempo relationships, and thus steamrolls through some of the score's best moments. The performance also has numerous intonation, balance, and pitch accuracy issues. While it is a curiosity because of the language, this recording is not recommended as a study aide.

⁷ See the discussion of *Cantata Profana*'s genesis in Chapter 1.

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