

## MHL 603 – ART-POP-FOLK-2

### 1. Review folk music – nationalism – modernism

- Construction of “folk” music in 19<sup>th</sup> century – research, publishing, composition activities – Borrowing folk melodies for new compositions - Folk music as emblem of nation
- Nationalist tradition continued into 20<sup>th</sup> century by Vaughan Williams, Copland, Bartok, many others
- Bartok: “there is no other solution but a complete break with the 19<sup>th</sup> century” – Folk music as basis of modernism: modes instead of M/m; simple, direct expression; new timbres; new rhythms, etc
- Stravinsky Rite as example of folk music as modernism: melodies from village are sliced, diced, recombined, juxtaposed, harmonized with much dissonance
- Modernism in Bartok Improvisations is mostly derived from the folk tunes – In Copland, Billy the Kid the dissonance and odd rhythms seem less closely related to folk tunes – in Crumb “Wayfaring Stranger” they seem almost arbitrary

### 2. Popular music and modernism

- Previous examples all borrowed from “traditional,” village, “folk” music – Bartok and others looked down on urban “pop” music – Seen as homogeneous, inauthentic
- Fad in 1920s and 30s for jazz in modern music – Copland, Stravinsky, Debussy, Ravel, et al. – In US it sounded “national”; in Europe it sounded “exotic”
- Pop music more threatening than folk – Perhaps because to upper-class music-lovers the urban proletariat seems more dangerous than farmers in a village – Pop music signifies ethnicity and social class rather than the nation [But some popular styles signify the nation, e.g. Tin Pan Alley, Sousa marches]

### 3. Bela Bartok (1881-1945)

- B. was introduced to folk music study by Zoltan Kodaly – Bartok didn’t just exploit printed collections like Stravinsky – B. did a great deal of collecting in the field with wax cylinders – Then transcribed what he had recorded – Not just in Hungary – he began there, but also collected in Rumania, Serbia, Turkey, Morocco - "By the end of his life he had recorded and transcribed about 8,000 tunes" (Austin, p.225)
- For Bartok, folk music served as a means of freeing himself from inherited traditions, especially harmonic traditions - The modes of Hungarian folk music de-emphasized tonic-dominant and chromatic harmonies and led in the direction of non-tonal music in which the scale degrees had equal importance
- Contrast with Liszt or Brahms who took Hungarian (or Gypsy) folk tunes and set them with common-practice harmonies – Bartok insisted that harmonizations be derived from the melodies themselves
- Bartok’s 3 categories
  - From article on “The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music” (1931) – “The question is, what are the ways in which peasant music is taken over and becomes transmuted into modern music?”
  - 1) Take melody unchanged and create an accompaniment – Bach Chorale
  - 2) Composer invents his own melody in imitation of a peasant melody – Stravinsky?
  - 3) No melodies but “pervaded by the atmosphere of peasant music” – Kodaly, (Bartok!)
- SOLICIT category for Dives and Lazarus – category 1
  - Billy “Street” – category 1
  - Billy “Prairie” – category 3
- Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs, Op. 20 (1922)
  - Each based on a collected tune – settings are imaginative and extravagant, yet faithful to melodies and modes
- HANDOUT #4 –
  - PLAY Bartok recording of original: “The girl goes through the vineyard”
  - PLAY Bartok arrangement – How has he set?
    - keep melody shape, mode, start and stop
    - modulate (derived from tune m.7?)
    - decoration like flute
    - chords? – I can’t hear them as derived from tune or mode
- (if time) play #7

Tribute to Debussy for same collection as Stravinsky chorale  
Seems to combine village tune with Debussy harmonies (and voice leading)  
Do they co-exist or interact? – i.e. what is relation of village music to modernism?

#### 4. William Bolcom – Songs of Innocence and Experience (1984)

Assimilates several pop music styles – also several “classical” styles and (arguably) “folk” styles as well  
– It has been labeled “polystylistic” and “postmodern”

Bolcom’s experience with pop music

piano study with Eubie Blake – Bolcom composed several excellent rags of his own

Performance of 19<sup>th</sup>-century American song repertory with Joan Morris

Cabaret songs (lyrics by Arnold Weinstein)

Songs of Innocence and Experience is a large-scale cantata on poems by William Blake (1757-1827) –

Blake as visionary, romantic, revolutionary poet and artist - Songs of Innocence, 1789; Songs of Experience, 1794 - illuminated engravings

Songs of Innocence are optimistic nostalgia for traditional English life; Songs of Experience are pessimistic critique of industrial revolution

READ The Shepherd

PLAY – To me this reeks of inauthenticity

Compare Copland Billy the Kid (!) – Irony in Bolcom’s setting – Is this a comment on the nostalgia of the text?

How viable is this in a concert setting? – Remember that it’s surrounded by songs in many other styles

Play Introduction (“Piping down the Valleys Wild”)

Juxtaposition of 12-tone idiom with English folk idiom – What is message of juxtaposition?  
[distance from innocence?]

Is this likewise ironic? – If so the irony is directed as much at 12-tone music as at “folk” music

READ – PLAY – “The Little Black Boy”

Difficult poem to set because of political baggage and because of change in attitudes since Blake’s time – Does this make you uncomfortable?

Bolcom is more familiar and comfortable with jazz-gospel style than with C & W

This seems most successful of the three – Why?