Eger Journal of English Studies V (2005) 145–171

The Revival of Traditional Music and Dance in Ireland and Hungary

Endre Abkarovits

1 Introduction

In our industrialised, urbanised, and globalised modern world the traditional cultures of European nations have been under attack for the last two centuries; a situation that accelerated in the latter half of the twentieth century. Though the pace of this process varied from country to country, and even within the same country from region to region, the tendency appeared to be irresistible. There have, however, always been individuals or social groups (and not only in the last century), who have recognized the importance of preserving traditional culture before it disappears. Others, like some great composers, turned to folk culture not necessarily with the intention of saving it, but to draw on the original sources in order to renew their own art. It was usually urban intellectuals who were in the forefront of saving the nation's cultural heritage in the "final" hour - though it turned out several times it was not the "final" hour yet. In the second half of the twentieth century, particularly from the 60s and 70s, new social and age groups became involved in these efforts, particularly the young.

Ireland and Hungary seem to share some characteristics in reviving traditional culture. It is not only because of the rich heritage of their peasant culture, but it is also due to their historical development. Both countries were in some way at the periphery of the mainstream of European development in the 50s and 60s. Ireland is both geographically at the periphery of Europe, and until recently was one of the poorest European countries. Though geographically at the heart of Europe, but as a result of the decades of Communist misgovernment, Hungary was also a poor country, at least until the 70s when the first tentative economic reforms began, but real change was not possible before 1989. One positive aspect of this economic backwardness was that it created favourable conditions for the survival of rural culture. The slower pace of economic development did not bring about such a radical change in the life of villages in Hungary as in several highly developed Western countries. This was even more so in the case of Romania

where until 1989 an at least two-million-strong Hungarian minority lived (which has decreased to 1.5 million by now), sometimes completely isolated from the world under the Communist dictator Ceausescu.

Though some scientists recognised the importance of collecting, describing and reviving our folk treasure as early as the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, the fact that from our economically deprived vantage point we could see how rapidly traditional culture disappeared in more developed countries may have contributed to a very conscious approach of trying to save anything of value from this vanishing world, be it a household object or a piece of music. Recently teams of collectors with sophisticated technical equipment have carried out more ambitious preservation programs like the “Final Hour” project in Budapest.

Besides saving the heritage of the past, Ireland and Hungary have also been successful in so far as the result of this preservation has not simply been a collection of “museum pieces’, but in both countries, though in differing ways, past heritage has been turned into living tradition. A form of renewing tradition was found which makes almost forgotten music, dances an enjoyable way of entertainment for today’s people, and handmade peasant pottery or embroidery a fitting decoration for our modern homes.

Besides some basic similarities between Hungary and Ireland there are also fundamental differences in the way we interpret traditional culture and art - this is what this paper is mainly about. Within the limited length of this essay it is impossible to deal with the fate of the folk cultural heritage of all the peoples of the British Isles. Owing to the slower or faster economic development and geographical isolation there are huge differences between the various parts of Britain. The peoples at the peripheries, who are the farthest from the Continent, seem to have preserved the richest heritage. In particular Irish and Scottish traditions seem to have survived best, and they also demonstrate a lot of similarities, however, I will concentrate mainly on the island of Ireland in this paper, though stressing connections with the rest of the British Isles or the New World will be unavoidable.

But before going into details about the events of the past four decades let us see what we mean by *traditional culture, folk art* in our countries and what other earlier attempts were made at preserving it.

2 Traditional or/and folk culture

The word *culture* itself is a difficult term and it can have very different meanings. Sometimes it is used in a narrow sense meaning only sophisticated things, sometimes as a synonym for “high arts’. But it can also

be used in a very broad sense to cover all important aspects of life, such as housing, schooling, hygiene, dressing, celebrating, entertainment, traditions etc. The same is the case with *traditional culture*. When we speak about *folk art,* for some people it means only the most perfect products, while for others even ordinary household objects, not meant for decoration, may contain aesthetic values, or be representative products of a civilisation.

It is, however, generally accepted in Hungary that by *folk culture, folk art* we mean that of the villages, the traditional culture and art of peasants. This is in direct contrast with the use of the word in England where e.g. a "folk song" often turns out to be the product of a factory hand or a seaman, which is related to the rapid demise of traditional agricultural activities as a result of the Industrial Revolution. In Ireland *folk* also used to be associated mainly with peasantry. For many people the term "folk art" might mean something inferior or prior to "high art". The word was coined in 1894 by Alois Riegl, but by 1898 Hungarian art historian Károly Lyka considered it as art prior to actual art history. "In other words for Lyka the historical objects of ethnography are part of the history of art" (Sinkó 7). A contemporary of his used the word *folk art* only for the most sophisticated pieces of shepherd craftsmanship. Actually, *folk art* applied first rather to folk crafts. As early as 1878 Arnold Ipolyi already warns that Hungarians should rather rise out of their cosmopolitism and pay more attention to the products of the folk of the countryside, since these objects will soon disappear. At that time he followed the German and Austrian official attitudes, according to which museums should collect not what is rare or foreign, but what belongs to the nation's past and identity. This was in direct contrast with the approach of the then director of the National Museum, Pulszky, who thought such a museum should display objects which show the cultural development of the whole human civilization. These examples show that the different interpretations and evaluations of folk art have been around for more than a century, and similarly, also the fears that it might soon disappear.

Béla Bartók said that each folk tune was a model of high artistic perfection and he regarded folk songs as masterworks in miniature, as he did Bach fugues, or Mozart sonatas within the world of larger forms. He held Hungarian folk music in high esteem as early as 1905, even before becoming acquainted with old-style tunes in Transylvania in 1907, which had such a decisive influence on his music, and by 1944 this feeling became overwhelming, as we will see later.

Speaking about *folk art/culture* we have to distinguish two main categories: the material and the spiritual products of the 'folk':

> The concept of 'folk art' (*népművészet*) in Hungarian terminology has been gradually extended to include not only artefacts but also folk music, folk dancing, and folk poetry. Of course, if we use such a general term, we also have to come up with additional terms (e.g. *népi díszítőművészet* 'popular ornamental art', *tárgyalkotó népmûvészet* 'folk-art design') in order to describe the artistic characteristics of the artefacts. (Verebélyi 20)

There have been several revivals in the field of producing folk artefacts since the beginning of the 19th century, as there is one these days, which is perhaps best demonstrated by the Festival of Crafts held in Buda Castle around 20th August every year, when hundreds of craftsmen sell their products to thousands of visitors. Not having space here to discuss the revival of folk-art design, I would like to concentrate only on revival movements (especially that of the last decades) of folk music and folk dance.

3.1 The Discovery of Hungarian Folk Songs and Tunes and Their Main Types

Until the battle at Mohács in 1526 Hungary had been a strong state, having about the same population as England. When central Hungary was occupied by the Turks for 150 years, the development of Hungary was stopped. The country had had only Hungarian rulers until then, and Hungarian culture had been able to flourish until 1526, now this was mainly reduced to the principality of Transylvania. The central part of the country was quite deserted, and when the Turks were driven out of the country, in many places foreign ethnic groups settled down. The rulers became the Habsburgs, and as usually, foreign rulers never promoted the cause of national culture. Even much of the Hungarian aristocracy came under the influence of foreign education, they often spoke only German, and they also lost their musical native tongue (Für 120-125). The independence war of Rákóczy against the Habsburgs was also crushed at the beginning of the eighteenth century, but many folk songs from this period still play an important part in our folk music treasure. When nationalism became an important factor in Europe from the end of the 18th century, Hungary was under foreign (Austrian) oppression, and even the Hungarian aristocracy was alienated from their own people and its culture. As Verebélyi points out:

> The discovery of folk culture in Europe largely coincided with the formation of nation states. A special interest in folk art objects arose in connection with, and in the wake of, the world exhibition in Vienna. This interest was frequently driven by the goal of teaching domestic but marketable handicrafts to people

> in industrially underdeveloped territories, where the peasantry was unable to make a living from agricultural products. [...] At the same time, folk art, in particular ornamented folk artefacts, came to be considered the source and cornerstone of folk culture. (Verebélyi 21-22)

Similarly, in the Hungary of the 18th and 19th centuries the rise of nationalism, that is, the quest for national identity drew attention to folk art. Some leading poets and writers urged the collection of folk songs, and it was of great merit if a poem of even a famous poet was mistaken for a folk song. In the middle of the 19th century the first collections of Hungarian folk songs were published (often in an unprofessional way), at first only the words, but soon the tunes were also printed, though it was a problem that the collectors could not always distinguish between folk songs and art songs.

Though there are some other components of our folk music treasure, the two most important layers are the old-style and the new-style tunes. Bartók, who distinguished these two main types for the first time, could hear only old women sing old-style tunes at the beginning of the 20th century. He could find a greater number of these songs only in Transylvania, in the Székely region in 1907. The old-style tunes are based on the five-note (pentatonic) scale, which is typical of many Asian peoples, but on the European mainland only the Hungarians used it. While the Hungarian language is a member of the Finno-Ugric family, our musical language is more related to Turkic music, or rather, they both relate to some common Central Asian source. Bartók and Kodály drew a lot on pentatonic music as "its distance from European music of the period from the 15th to the 19th centuries as well as its high aesthetic value justify the attraction it exercised on 20th century composers desirous of evolving a modern art music that broke with impoverished major-minor tonality. [...] it is a basically melody-oriented style, marked by broadly arched melodic lines, [...] rich ornamentation and lyrical words" (Dobszay 12).

On the other hand, new-style tunes, which came into fashion in the 19th century, are the consequence of Western influences. "In Bartók's view these refreshing melodies, their vigorous rhymes reflecting changed self-awareness, were much closer to the spirits of the times than the ancient tunes, which were sometimes melancholic and often alien in mood" (Manga 15). The new-style tunes spread beyond the Hungarian language area and flourished among the Moravians, Slovaks and Ruthenians as well. Many of the new-style tunes make use of the seven-note scales, but pentatonic tunes also occur among them. New-style songs with their strict, dance-step rhythms were well suited for dancing slow and quick *csárdás*, which became the most popular dance forms in villages in the first half of the nineteenth

century. In the twentieth century even new-style songs were losing their vigour and at the same time art songs often turned into folk songs.

A musical type that is still often confused with authentic folk music is the "magyar nóta" (Hungarian song), which has its origins in the 19th century, when patriotic feelings lead a lot of people to compose songs in the style of folk songs. As the composers were not peasants, and they had no real knowledge about the genuine nature of folk songs, the result could not be folk songs, but a kind of popular songs, where popularity also meant simplicity. These popular songs were widely known and recognised as theirs by the middle classes, city-dwellers and the upper strata of village people. As Dobszay says:

> The most effective medium for the spread of the *magyar nóta* was the Gypsy band. Ever since their mass appearance in the 18th century, Gypsy bands had no real repertoire of their own (least of all Gypsy repertoire). They played everything that pleased the merry-making public. [...] The Hungarian part of their repertoire rests on two pillars: *verbunkos* (in which they exhibit the best side of their tradition) and the two main forms of the Hungarian *nóta*: revelling and dance tunes, played with a technique that resembles verbunkos ('*csárdás*') and sentimental sorrowful songs ('*hallgató'* – music for listening). (Dobszay 167)

When Bartók and Kodály began their activity around 1900, the situation was rather hopeless. The most important towns, including the capital, were mainly populated by foreign ethnic groups. Many Hungarian towns were German in character in the 19th century, and the more educated townspeople did not understand, or even despised Hungarian folk culture; rootless cosmopolitism was typical of them (Für 130-132). Unlike literature, leading personalities were missing in the field of music in the 19th century. The fall of the 1848/49 revolution also broke the spirit of the nation. Combined with the feelings of the declining gentry this was reflected by melancholic art songs after 1849, usually composed by dilettanti.

Research into Hungarian folk music instruments also started with Bartók and Kodály, but they considered first only those to be folk instruments, which had been made by the peasants themselves (flute, pipe, zither, Jewish harp, the small, legless kind of cimbalom etc.). The ones made by professional craftsmen were not included, like the fiddle, which was first made in Italy in the sixteenth century, but later became the most important folk music instrument in both Hungary and Ireland. The new kind of cimbalom with legs and metal frame was developed in the 1870s, and the taragot (tárogató) in the 1890s by Józef Schunda in Budapest, which also

became popular folk instruments soon, and not only in Gypsy bands (Manga 56).

A new era in Hungarian folk music research began around the turn of the century. Beginning with field work in 1896, Béla Vikár, though himself not a musician, became the first systematic collector of Hungarian folk music. He made use of the Edison phonograph, because he did not consider his musical training adequate for recording text and music. He recorded 1492 songs on 875 cylinders, the greater part of which was later transcribed by Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. It was, in fact, Vikár's cylinders that induced the two young composers in 1905 to concentrate on folk music research. (Manga 8) By the 1930s 3500 cylinders and 155 gramophone records were in the possession of the Folk Music Collection of the Ethnographical Museum, mainly as a result of the collecting activity of Bartók, Kodály, and László Lajtha. Bartók published his book *Hungarian Folk Music* in 1924, Kodály followed him with his *Folk Music of Hungary* in 1937. In these first works the character of Hungarian folk music was investigated. By 1943 Bartók came to the conclusion that the older-style peasant music is undoubtedly the surviving part of the one-time common knowledge of the whole Hungarian nation, as in earlier centuries there had not been such a huge gap between the music and dances of the ruling class and those of the common people. Bartók writes about their enthusiasm for folk music in 1944: "Our reverence for the Eastern strictly rural music was, so to speak, a new musico-religious faith. We felt that this rural music, in those pieces which are intact, attained an unsurpassable degree of musical perfection and beauty, to be found nowhere else except in the great works of classics" (Suchoff 1976: 393).

3.2 The Antecedents of the Dance House Movement

Before the last big wave of folk music and dance revival, the 'dance house movement', which started in the 1970s, there had been some others in the Hungary of the 20th century. One was the *Gyöngyösbokréta* (Pearled Bouquet) movement between 1931 and 1944, when village intelligentsia organized village dance groups to perform folk dances and plays in Budapest theatres once a year. In the final years the performances were extended to other towns and more occasions. Townspeople were exposed to authentic folk dances in this way, while villagers recognized the value of their culture. "It is a well-known fact that in towns and villages where so-called *Gyöngyösbokréta* folk dance groups were formed in the 1930s and 1940s, the knowledge of folk dances and costumes was, even after World War II, sustained more intensely than in those villages where there was no such traditionalist movement" (Verebélyi 27). When some parts of historical

Hungary were re-annexed to Hungary for a few years during the war, the peasant culture of these regions became known in the Hungarian capital as well. The village Szék, which played such a vital role later in the 70s in the birth of the dance house movement, sent musicians and dancers to perform in Budapest in 1941 and 1943, where also gramophone recordings were made of them, which, along with his fieldwork, served the compilation of 110 instrumental and vocal pieces of the music of Szék by composer László Lajtha, published in full in 1954 (Martin 32). Their participation in *Gyöngyösbokréta* greatly contributed to the appreciation of local tradition at home, and Kodály also visited Szék in 1943. As a result of all these events, it became clear that a rich and highly developed body of instrumental music was also present in Transylvania. Unfortunately, in the following decades researchers seemed to be always more interested in collecting and examining folk songs and folk ballads, presumably because it was easier to note down or record the former than transcribe the various instruments in a band. It was Béla Halmos in the 80s, who developed a new method for the purpose of noting down the instrumental music of a complete band.

The major enterprise in the field of folk music collection in this period was the Pátria series of records. Bartók, Kodály and others invited singers and musicians to Budapest between 1936 and 1944 to record in the studios of the Hungarian Radio. Several of these recordings were later published under the label *Pátria*, released again in the '50s under the title *Hungarian Ethnographic Recordings* (Martin 33, Kelemen 50). But before that new era, after World War II the communist authorities, who ruled in the name of 'the people', required 'the people' to sing folk songs and dance folk dances in an artificial way: "The result: several generations learned to abhor folk art for the rest of their lives. The decline of folk culture in Hungary dates to that time" (Halmos 35). Hungary was worse in this respect than most other Eastern countries, where communism was combined with some degree of nationalism, and the slogan of "internationalism" did not prevent them from being proud of and cultivating their traditional national culture. In Hungary, quite until the nineties, and sometimes even these days, the cultivation of traditional national culture counted / counts to be something suspicious in certain circles. The pejorative word *magyarkodás* was coined to stigmatise the kind of behaviour if someone openly expressed his or her pride in being Hungarian.

A third revival wave of 'folk' dances was the formation of amateur folk dance groups modelled on Soviet folk ensembles in the late 50s. This meant, however, dancing on stage to a learned choreography, and the dances did not have much to do with authentic folk dances. Very few people knew Transylvanian dances, there were only a few mute films available, dancers

and choreographers had no direct contact with people living in Transylvania. The dances were stylised, the music was re-worked folk music compiled by composers, the musical accompaniment came from a band or orchestra which had no visual contact with the dancers (Abkarovits 2003: 121, 138). Later in the sixties choreographer Ferenc Novák described the dance culture of the Transylvanian village Szék in a monograph, but it was only in 1969 that these dances were recorded with modern camera equipment.

A more genuine revival of folk culture, which really had a mass influence, was a television show *Röpülj Páva* (Fly, Peacock) at the end of the 60s, where talented singers, musicians, bands were given an opportunity to show the real values of folklore. Some of the leading personalities of the dance house movement of the 70s emerged out of this talent show. In spite of the rare efforts to save our traditional heritage the situation of folk culture in Hungary was disastrous up until the 70s. Village life had been changed drastically by cooperative farming and forced urbanisation; folk culture all but disappeared. Folk singing became a school subject, most children hating it. Gypsy musicians in Hungary practically stopped playing folk music, it was almost never played. It is no wonder that when I talk to leading dance house musicians these days, they often recall that they used to suppose the music played by Gypsy bands in restaurants in the 60s to be Hungarian folk music. They had no idea that authentic Hungarian folk music was still alive, mainly outside the borders, primarily in Transylvania.

3.3 The Hungarian Táncházmozgalom (Dance House Movement)

The most successful, present wave of Hungarian folk music and dance revival started in 1972. In that year the dancers of four leading Budapest folk dance ensembles decided that they would dance folk dances not only on stage and to choreography, but also improvisationally off stage for their own fun. Later one of these, Bartók Dance Ensemble under the guidance of choreographer Sándor Timár decided to open to the public and start teaching dances to anyone interested.

Several factors contributed to this revival. As the first urban dance house fiddler Béla Halmos puts it: “Something that a few people do for a hobby will grow into a movement only if the particular activity meets the needs and interests of the majority, and if the political and cultural constellation is propitious for its growing into a movement” (Halmos 36). By the seventies the political climate began to “thaw” in relation to the period of severe repression following the 1956 revolution, a relative economic development gave a rise in the standards of living, travelling to Western countries became reality. It was, however, equally important that Hungarian citizens were allowed to travel to Romania, where the largest Hungarian

minority lived, estimated to be at least two million strong at that time. Many people from Hungary "discovered" the almost intact Hungarian peasant culture in Transylvania, which, like the whole country, had been isolated from the rest of the world. Musicians, dancers, folklorists headed for remote Transylvanian villages to study living folk tradition on the spot. Their way had been paved, as mentioned above, by choreographer Ferenc Novák (who collected the dances of Szék from the 60s), composer László Lajtha (who had collected the instrumental music of Szék), ethno choreologist György Martin (who collected dances and analysed them), Transylvanian folklorist Zoltán Kallós (who, among other things, collected folk songs and folk ballads, and could – and still can – give practical advice to anyone that wanted to do some fieldwork in Transylvania). In their wake young musicians of the first Budapest dance house bands (Béla Halmos, Ferenc Sebő, Péter Éri, Sándor Csoóri Jr., Márta Virágvölgyi etc.) and dancers went to see how the living dance house tradition worked in the village of Szék (Sic), formerly a town with rich heritage in all walks of life.

Táncház (dance house) had a double meaning: it was the place and the occasion for dancing at the same time. Though *táncház* was also known in other parts of Transylvania, it was Szék which set a pattern for the urban dance houses of the initial period in Hungary, in which mainly dances from Szék were taught and danced. "It was only in Szék that the various types of melodies and dances already extinct in other regions could be found in their entire original forms" (Martin 34). The cofounders of the first *táncház* band, Béla Halmos and Ferenc Sebő, also began to study the instrumental recordings in Lajtha's Szék collection in 1971, as well as learning the playing technique of peasant fiddlers both in Hungary and Transylvania. As to the dances, a whole cycle of dances was danced continuously for approximately 30-45 minutes in Szék. Such "a couple of dances" meant a sequence of dances that a couple would dance through together, beginning with slower dances, followed by the lads' solo dances (originally at the beginning of the cycle), continuing with faster csárdás dances, ending with dances originating from other ethnic groups (the Saxon 'seven steps' and the Czech 'porka' (polka)). During a set of dances certain tunes were accompanied by the singing of the dancers, while other sections were only instrumental music. There were, however, other types of folk songs (e.g. folk ballads) or other occasions (in the spinning room, when working at home or in the field) when singing was not accompanied by instrumental music. The order of the dances was faithfully learnt and passed on to dance house-goers in Budapest and provincial towns. Similarly, musicians learnt the technique of playing folk music and the old-style tunes. The typical composition of a Szék band was: fiddle, viola and double bass. Although people in Hungarian

towns meant to imitate carefully what the musicians or the dance instructors had seen and learnt in Transylvania, because of the differing surroundings and conditions, a lot of things functioned in a quite different way in the urban dance houses. I would summarize the most important features based mainly on the description of Béla Halmos (Halmos 31-35):

	a typical village dance house in Transylvania	**a typical urban dance house in Hungary**
location	a room in a private house in winter or the barn in summer	a club or a cultural centre
musicians	a local Gypsy band, or one from a nearby village (exceptionally a band of Hungarians)	Hungarian musicians
status of musicians	semi-professional, they may have other jobs as well	semi-professional, they normally have a job or they may be students.
musical training of the musicians	taught by their elders, they cannot read music	often with some music school training at classical music; they learnt to play folk music from fellow-musicians and village fiddlers just through observation.
organisation of the dance house	by some lads (‘underwriters’)	by members of the band or dance instructors
dances danced	local dances	dances of various Hungarian regions and those of other countries (normally a dance house is specialised in either the dances of one or several Hungarian regions or in another nation’s dances)
musicians’ repertoire	the music of the local ethnic group(s) and that of the ethnic groups of nearby villages	they are either specialised in one or two musical dialects or know the music of a wide range of regions in historical Hungary; some Hungarian bands also play the music of other ethnic groups in or outside Hungary, or even specialise in them
dancers	only unmarried people	anybody, but mainly young people corresponding to the age groups of the original village dance houses

dance instruction	not in the dance house, but for children at 'the tiny ones' dances' before it, for grown-ups elsewhere	in the dance house by instructors, who are often a couple of dancers
financing	dancers share the costs	there are entrance fees, but these do not cover the expenses, so a lot depends on state subsidy or sponsors
singing	the band has no singer, only a few exceptionally talented fiddlers can sing while playing; it is the dancing people who sing	many dance house bands have a singer, who sings solo or along with some other members of the band on stage

After the initial period the dance repertoire in Budapest dance houses was soon extended to those of other regions in Transylvania (Kalotaszeg, Mezőség, Küküllő mente, Székelyföld). Though the idea of the dance house originated from Transylvania, the urban dance houses were started there on the pattern of the Budapest ones only with a five-year delay. Some fine bands were set up, two – *Bodzafa* and *Barozda* – excelling. Just like members of Hungarian bands they started their activity with fieldwork, collecting folk songs and tunes in villages, following the instructions of folklorist Zoltán Kallós, the mastermind behind the whole movement. Transylvanian bands were also permitted to release a few records between 1980 and 1984. The Transylvanian dance house movement was, however, short-lived. The growing repression of the Ceausescu regime forced most of the musicians and singers to leave the country by the mid 80s. Only a few remained until the beginning of the nineties, who were employed in showcase dance ensembles, but were not allowed to play in dance houses. Some formerly leading Transylvanian musicians play an important role in Hungary's cultural life, others are scattered around the world, mainly in Germany and Sweden. Only a few remained in Romania, like the best-known singer, Kati Panek, who is a well-known actress in Cluj. Since 1989 some new bands of young musicians were set up from time to time, but the really good musicians (like those of the *Üsztürü*) have tended sooner or later to move over to Hungary. There are some professional Hungarian dance ensembles in Transylvania (*Hargita, Háromszék, Maros*), which try to cultivate dancing and musical traditions in spite of all hardships (Abkarovits 2003: 145–160).

In Hungary musicians recognised in the meantime that traditional music and dances have survived not only in Transylvania, but also in today's Hungary and in other neighbouring countries as well. The music and dances

of Szatmár, Rábaköz, Sárköz, Palócföld, Bodrogköz etc. (all ethnic regions in today's Hungary) have become almost as popular in the dance houses as the Transylvanian ones. The music of the Easternmost groups of Hungarians, that of the Csángó people living in and beyond the Eastern Carpathians in the Gyimes Pass and in Moldava seems to attract a lot of young people. As some of their dances are the most archaic chain dances, and are relatively easy to learn, such dance houses seem to attract more visitors these days than some other Hungarian dance houses where more complicated (cycles of) dances, among them couple dances, are taught. The number of dance house bands is estimated at 60–70, so a few dance houses struggle to survive because of the competition.

The instrumental and vocal heritage of folk music has left the halls of dance houses, and almost from the beginning it has also appeared at concerts and on recordings, which has made the performance of genres other than dance music also possible. Concerts and records provide chances of getting known even for such groups which have no dance house of their own or do not play folk dance music, or it is only part of their repertoire. Unfortunately, the number of concerts is fairly restricted and the distribution of records is far from being perfect. From among the many excellent records very few are seen in record shops, and even those are mixed up with other musical genres. In most music shops sellers do not seem to have any idea of what authentic folk music is.

An important development in the field of saving instrumental music was the 'Final Hour' program. This was modelled on the *Pátria* recording program of the 30s and 40s, and that is why the record series released for the public is called accordingly *New Pátria*. The leader of the original Transylvanian part of the project was László Kelemen, who arranged in 1997 and 1998 for forty-six folk bands to be invited to Fonó ('Spinnery') Music Hall in Budapest, where approximately 650 hours of music were recorded mainly for further research, but a CD from each group is gradually released for the public. As there are only minor differences in the instrumental music played by Hungarian, Romanian and Gypsy bands of any given village in Transylvania, not only Hungarian music or Hungarian bands were recorded. The recordings also testify to the unitary instrumental folk-musical language in Transylvania. In two follow-up projects first the music of folk bands from historical Upper Hungary (today's Slovakia) playing Hungarian, Slovak, Ruthenian and Goral music, then the music material of 'Lesser Hungary' (today's Hungary, plus some other regions outside the border that had not been parts of the previous projects) was recorded (Kelemen 51).

Another favourable development related to the dance house movement is the multiplication of summer dance camps, especially in Hungary and Transylvania, but also in other neighbouring countries. In these camps young people can learn both local dances and music, and sometimes those of other regions, moreover, some handicrafts are also taught in these camps usually. The fact that these camps are attended by young people from all over the world has contributed to the inspiring of the interest and pride in the local dances, and in some villages local people have begun to learn their own dances again. The highlight of dance house events is the annual National Dance House Festival, usually held in the biggest sports hall in Budapest, a two-day extravaganza attracting some 15000 participants from all corners of the Carpathian Basin.

Besides the urban dance houses and summer dance camps there is hardly any folk dancing today. Even in those remote Transylvanian villages like Szék, where the whole movement started from, there are no more regular dance houses and even on festive occasions like weddings, where the whole event used to be accompanied by folk music and the night (often two or three consecutive days) was spent dancing authentic dances, such a celebration has become a rarity in the past fifteen years. Even at those weddings where the young couples are willing to dress up in folk costumes, only some short period is dedicated to the traditional dances for the sake of the elders. Now it seems that urban musicians can master their authentic music much better than some local bands. It was a symbolic event in the 90s when a Budapest band, Kalamajka, consisting of three scientists with PhD degrees in different academic disciplines, were playing music to dancing for two days at a wedding in Szék. The fiddler was the same as that of the first urban dance house band, Béla Halmos.

Singing folk songs outside the dance houses is also rare. Most singers' activity is connected to some dance house band or some professional dance group, even if they also perform solo or with other bands. For example, Márta Sebestyén, the best-known Hungarian folk singer, who usually performs with the best-known band, Muzsikás, also performs with many other bands and has countless recordings. There are a few relatively well-known singers who are not so much connected to one band or ensemble, and they usually do not sing in dance houses (e.g. András Berecz, Katalin Szvorák, Mária Maczkó etc.). There are, however, a number of talented, mainly female, singers who are almost unknown to the wider public: Ágnes Herczku, Ágnes Szalóki, Kata Horváti, Marianna Majorosi, Kinga Hajdú, Ferenc Németh etc.

There are some bands whose leading musicians also started as members of dance house bands, but in the meantime they have changed their styles.

Ghymes or Kormorán, for example, play mainly their own compositions, introducing several new musical instruments while retaining some traditional ones. Their story is the most similar to that of the bands of the Irish revival, with the difference that in Hungary they are not considered to be folk musicians any more, but the music they play is described either as folk rock (Kormorán), or world music (Ghymes).

4.1 Irish Folk Music in the Past Few Centuries

These days we can often see records with titles *Celtic Music* or *Gaelic Music*, though they usually contain songs composed recently by a known artist, sung in English in the majority of the cases, accompanied by musical instruments, some of which were not known even a few decades ago in Ireland. Even an author who uses this term admits: “it’s true that a substantial part of the current Celtic ‘scene’ has little to do with authentic Celtic tradition. Even those who purport to play some form or another of Celtic music seem to have forgotten their roots. Packaging of traditional music is commonplace. Quite often the musical mingling of completely different cultures, such as African or Cajun, seems a bit forced, contrived, artificial. Yet, in the right hands [...] musical cross-fertilization can be a quite healthy and exhilarating experience, for musician and listener, alike” (Sawyers 2). This is true, but the result is not *folk* music. Irish musicians are aware of this and tend to avoid using the word ‘folk’; they use ‘traditional’ instead. Nevertheless, they still call it ‘Celtic’ or ‘Gaelic’, which suggests that it must be something ancient, but it is not.

Has ‘Celtic’ really become synonymous with ‘traditional’? To a certain degree yes, though some people claim it is just due to the American usage of the word (Abkarovits 2005: 33). Unfortunately, I am afraid, it is more widespread than that. The use of ‘Celtic’ has been strongly connected with the singer Enya, whose ethereal voice and enigmatic songs represent a type which might associate these songs with the mysterious Celts, who arrived in Ireland from mainland Europe around the fifth century BC. Besides, Enya comes from an Irish family, she began to sing along with her sister and brothers in the group Clannad, which has been one of the most successful Irish groups for a long time. Her family, the Brennans cultivate Irish traditions and also speak Gaelic; they sometimes also use the Gaelic forms of their names. (Eithne Ni Bhraonain – Enya, Maire Ni Bharaonain – her sister)

There are 6 or 7 Celtic nationalities: the Irish, the Scots, the Manx, the Welsh, the Bretons, the Cornish, and the Galicians in Spain can also be added. It seems that the kind of music coming from their lands and having some connection with their traditions, though often very little, is labelled

'Celtic'. What they have in common is mainly the use of some traditional musical instruments, especially the pipe, and a kind of 'Celtic spirit', which is full of emotions like joy and sadness, sorrow and delight. But it was not always clear even for Irish or Scottish people what they should consider as their own music. As Scottish fiddler Aly Bain puts it: "Music has always given the Scots their identity, but when I was a kid, nobody knew what our music was, so the identity wasn't there. Our identity is always going to hinge on our music and our culture, and if you don't preserve it, then we will just become another European satellite" (Sawyers 5). This is very similar to the thought of Kodály, who emphasised that each generation has to re-create its own national culture, otherwise national identity will be lost. As I have mentioned in the introduction, I will mainly concentrate only on the Irish branch of the Celtic tree in the rest of my paper.

But what happened to the old folk songs and music of Ireland? And, in general, to Irish traditional culture? As the majority of the population do not speak Irish Gaelic any more, those particular musical genres that are very strongly connected to the spoken word have lost a lot. For example, Irish ballad tradition is a mainly English-speaking one, very few ballads have survived in the Irish tongue. As music - instrumental, but, to a certain extent, also vocal music – was not heavily dependent on language, and though it must have gone through a lot of changes, it might still preserve many traits from earlier centuries.

Irish music has its roots in the bardic tradition. The bards' activity was still encouraged when the Normans went to Ireland in 1169, and the aristocracy patronized bards. The bards had to memorize heroic literature, but they also wrote original verses. First they were accompanied by musicians, but later, from the seventeenth century, the two roles merged and the bards themselves accompanied the poems on harp. Irish was a literary language and a lingua franca between the Irish and the Scots from the 13th to the 17th century. Only men could be bards, but women also composed poems and folk songs. The Normans appreciated Irish musical traditions and also influenced them through the courtly love songs of the troubadours. There were intermarriages and also a cultural intermingling between the Irish and the Normans. The Welsh historian Giraldus Cambrensis, who did not have otherwise a good opinion about the Irish, wrote in the 12th century:

> I find among these people commendable diligence only on musical instruments, on which they are incomparably more skilled than any other nation I have seen. Their style is quick and lively. It is remarkable that, with such rapid fingerwork, the musical rhythm is maintained and that, by unfailingly disciplined art, the integrity of the tune is fully preserved

> throughout the ornate rhythms and the profusely intricate polyphony. (Ó hAllmhuráin 23)

The continual English invasions, however, changed this in the following centuries as there were efforts from the 14th century onwards on the part of the English to restrict Irish language and customs. In 1366 the Statute of Kilkenny prohibited the Normans from using Irish laws, language and customs. "There could be no alliance between Norman and Gael, either by marriage, fostering of children or concubinage. It also became an offence to entertain native bards, pipers and harpers 'since they spy out secrets'" (Ó hAllmhuráin 24). Later the Tudors, fearing that Catholic Ireland might ally with Spain, began to bring Ireland to its knees. Elisabeth decreed in 1603 that bards and harpers should be executed 'wherever found' and their instruments be destroyed. "Two musical cultures coexisted under English denomination: the music of the native Irish-speaking community and that of the colonial ruling class – essentially the music of Western Europe. The Gaelic heritage found expression in its folk songs and tunes, the Anglo heritage in European music, perhaps epitomized by the performance of Händel's Messiah in Dublin in 1742" (Sawyers 22). In the 18th century these laws became less stringent, and it was even possible to organize the Belfast Harp Festival in 1792, which gave an opportunity to Edward Bunting to transcribe the airs played by the last Irish harpers, and compiled one of the most important collections of Irish tunes to this day. Unfortunately, the same happened what we have seen in connection with 19th century Hungarian collectors: Bunting was not really versed in authentic transcribing because of his different musical education. His training in classical music did not enable him to note down the closely connected rhythms of Irish music and poetry. Bunting visited all the harpers in their home after the festival and took down more music. Some of the pieces came from the most famous harper Turlogh O Carolan (1670-1738), who was a blind musician, as most of the harpers at the Belfast Harp Festival were.

Besides the harp, traditional musical instruments in Ireland are the tin whistle, the uilleann or union pipe, the fiddle, the bodhran, and the flute. The flute is a woodwind, and has a warm tone. The tin whistle is older in Irish traditional music than the flute, and is said to be the most democratic instrument as it is very cheap. The uilleann pipes emerged in the eighteenth century and completely replaced the original mouth-blown pipes by the end of the nineteenth century. It takes years to master this instrument, and it has a broader range than the Highland war pipes of Scotland. It is hard to believe that this most Irish of musical instruments was threatened with complete disappearance at the beginning of the twentieth century. "The fiddle, being well-suited for dance music, was popular throughout Ireland by the

eighteenth century. Indeed, much of Irish dance music was composed by fiddlers. Scots fiddle music also had a great influence on Irish fiddling tradition [...]" (Sawyers 59). It is said that you can recognize through the style which region a fiddler is from. Donegal, which is perhaps the biggest stronghold of Gaelic traditions, is said to use less ornamentation and a loud, driving technique. It is similar to Cape Breton in America, where Irish emigrants have also preserved an old style. Other traditional music instruments in Ireland are the melodeon, the concertina, and the accordion, which are also called free-reed instruments.

> Despite Continental influences, though, traditional Irish music never really died. The people of the countryside continued to keep it alive over the centuries with their love songs (the most common), vision poems (called *aisling*), laments, drinking songs, and work songs. [...] During the changeover from Irish to English, many songs were lost, and other songs lost their distinctive Irish qualities. Still, they retained much of the Irish character in both their subject matter and their robust sense of humour. (Sawyers 7)

As leading Irish musician Andy Irvine told me in an interview last year, it is mainly the ornamentation and the rhythm that distinguishes the music of one nation from the others (Abkarovits 2005: 34). Ornamentation can apply to songs and tunes, which is very important in Irish music: "When applied to singing, *ornamentation* means slightly varying the notes or stopping or prolonging them. The singer may stretch certain syllables. [...] In traditional Irish songs, it is the words that are of paramount importance. *Sean-nós* is a distinctive Irish singing, highly ornamented and owing much to the ancient bardic tradition, when poems were transmitted orally from generation to generation" (Sawyers 7). "*Sean-nós*, or old-style singing, as it is called, is sung a capella and tends to stress the lyrical over the narrative [...] the decoration of *sean-nós* bears a striking resemblance to Arabic music" (Sawyers 100-101). "There is no display of emotion or dramatics in *sean nós*. The singer is expected to vary each verse using improvisation, an implicit musical skill which requires subtle changes in rhythm, ornamentation and timbre" (Ó hAllmhuráin 12). When the old Gaelic order collapsed in the 17th century under English power, the demand for these songs diminished, but they did not completely disappear.

Like throughout Europe, ballads have also been popular in the Celtic lands. They are narrative poems, which are usually sung. Folk ballads were sung by ordinary people, and the more popular a ballad was, the more variants it had. They were meant to be entertaining, they had topics accordingly: tragic love, murder, betrayal, unrequited love, adultery etc. Irish

folk music – just like Hungarian – falls primarily into two categories: songs and dance tunes. It is estimated that there are more than six thousand dance pieces including jigs, reels, and hornpipes. The jig is the oldest surviving dance music and has three main variants: the single jig (6/8), the double jig (6/8) and the slip jig (9/8). Most Irish jigs are native, but some of them were borrowed from England. Many reels, played in 4/4 time, come from Scotland. Hornpipes are also played in 4/4 time, but at a slower pace than the reel: "The vast majority of the airs and tunes we know today were composed during the last three hundred years, most during the latter half of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth. [...] The earliest instrumental music dates back to the sixteenth century" (Sawyers 9).

Of course, certain instruments had been in use before that. The harp players, for example, had a professional status from the eleventh to the sixteenth century, harp music was the art music of Ireland's Gaelic culture. After the Tudors' decrees, however, harpers became travelling musicians turning from court musicians into folk musicians, struggling to survive. Traditional singing was usually performed unaccompanied. Though the musical traditions of Scotland and Ireland are in many ways alike, there are song types (waulking – working – songs) and dance types (strathspay), which are typical only of Scotland. Also the musical instruments are somewhat different (uilleann – elbow – pipe in Ireland, bagpipe in Scotland). It is also interesting that much of traditional Celtic music is pentatonic, which, as already mentioned, is otherwise a living tradition only with Hungarians in Europe (Sawyers 14).

Classical music has been around in Ireland at least since the 18th century, and just as it has been the case in many countries, classical composers have often turned to folk music to renew their art. For some composers Ireland's isolation was rather an advantage than disadvantage. Composer Patrick Cassidy writes: "For two centuries we were a peasant nation [...] For me as an Irish composer now, that's almost an advantage, because there is so much unexplored territory: I think it made it a lot easier for me to find a voice than if I had been born a German composer, or an Italian composer, with the weight of all that tradition bearing down on me!" (Sawyers 40)

4.2 Dancing Occasions until World War Two

While history has left a lot of accounts of music in pre-Norman Ireland, we have none of dancing. There was not even a native Irish word for dancing. The two words for dancing, *rince* from English *rink* and *dahmsa* from French *danse,* were not used in Irish until the sixteenth century. The earliest

written evidence for dancing dates from 1413. (Ó hAllmhuráin 26-28) It is, however, not likely that there was no dancing before this.

As to folk dancing, in later centuries it was done on domestic grounds, in the house, or the barn, or the courtyard, depending on weather. The more ancient (18th century) dances we know about are those corresponding to the dancing tunes of jigs, reels and hornpipes; more recent, "foreign" dances are polkas, mazurkas, waltzes, and others. But perhaps the best-known Irish dance in the world is step dance, which may have reached Ireland from Scotland in the 18th century. At that time dancing masters appeared in Scotland and Ireland, who behaved like gentlemen of the countryside. Travelling around in their own district in the company of a musician (a piper or a fiddler), for a while they stayed with farmers and taught dances in houses or at crossroads. In the seventeenth century Irish dancing tended to be of a communal nature – the group dancing or the country dancing of the countryside. In the eighteenth century, though, an altogether different type of dance emerged – the solo, or step dance – which changed the face of the Irish dancing tradition and became, in the words of journalist Sam Smith, "the single most important development in the history of Irish dance" (Sawyers 49). Bodies had to be kept rigid, motion was restricted to the hips down. This dancing ideal – minimal body movement with fancy footwork – remained the model until Riverdance's revolution in 1994.

In the 19th century the Catholic Church began a campaign against dancers and musicians. Priests kept breaking up cross-road dances and house parties. The situation was not better in the first half of the 20th century either as during an anti-dancing hysteria in the 1930s the Gaelic League also banned set dancing and encouraged only solo competitions (mainly for girls). A law in 1936 declared dancing not only sinful (as the Church did), but also illegal:

> House dances, the breeding ground of authentic Irish music, were outlawed in most areas of rural Ireland. Thus the only legitimate venue for dancing was the church hall. [...] Many traditional musicians chose to emigrate to England or, more often, start all over again in America. Another consequence of the Dance Halls Act and the clergy-controlled dance halls was the founding of the ceilidh (or ceili) bands, a sort of compromise between church-sanctioned oppression and the people's love of good time. (Sawyers 53)

One of the few advantages of these big bands was that they kept a lot of musicians employed. The dance was also called ceilidh dancing and the bands played all kinds of popular songs of the day. Sometimes several

thousand people were dancing in a hall, but this did not have much to do with folk dance.

4.3 The Revival of Traditional Music from the Sixties

In the late 50s a new kind of music was being performed throughout Britain: called *skiffle*, it combined elements of folk and jazz and was based on and inspired by American music. After a short time, skiffle splintered into folk on the one hand and rock on the other; moreover, folk clubs were also beginning to form. Though the American influence did not stop, singers began to be interested in their own culture while the songs often had a political charge. Scottish singer Ewan McColl played an important role in this folk revival. This was a grassroots (ordinary people's) revival, unlike some earlier 'academic' revivals. Another key figure was American Woody Guthrie, who wrote a lot of protest songs, and used traditional melodies for his lyrics. He influenced an entire generation of singers from Pete Seeger to Bob Dylan, from Donovan to Joan Baez. But when the acoustic guitars were replaced by electric ones, and when the Beatles started their career, the folk boom was over and folk began to merge with rock. Many musicians, however, went on experimenting with combining musical genres, traditional and electric instruments. The short-lived, but influential Irish *Sweeney's Men* was an electric folk band, also playing traditional ballads.

The first really important group of the Irish traditional music revival, *Planxty* was formed in 1972, the same year when the Hungarian dance house movement started. They combined traditional music with their own compositions and they remained primarily acoustic. The band's members (Andy Irvine, Liam O'Flynn, Christy Moore, Paul Brady, Dónal Lunny) have ever since remained outstanding representatives of Irish revival in various other formations. The leading personality of the group, Christy Moore, was a folk singer committed to tradition. But they played both traditional (bodhran, uilleann pipe) and new (guitar, bouzouki, mandolin) instruments. "In essence *Planxty* gave tacit permission for later generations to experiment and explore within the previously confined box of traditional music. [...] With their fresh approach [...] *Planxty* changed forever the way Irish music was heard and the way people, especially younger generations perceived it. No longer would it be the music of an older generation; rather it became a living and vibrant music of Irish youth" (Sawyers 225). Andy Irvine told me in the above mentioned interview that a few decades before it would have been unthinkable that a traditional Irish fiddler would have accepted bouzouki accompaniment, which turned out to be one of the sources of their success (Abkarovits 2005: 35).

Another important group was *The Bothy Band* (1975-1979). They also mixed traditional and modern musical instruments: the melody section being traditional (pipes, flute, whistles, fiddles), while the rhythm mainly modern (guitars, bouzouki, along with traditional bodhran). Among the members of their first formation and in the later line-ups, we can find such leading musicians as Matt Molloy on flute, Dónal Lunny on bouzouki, Donegal fiddler Tommy Peoples and another fiddler, who joined them later, Kevin Burke. Both *Planxty* and *The Bothy Band* helped popularise Irish folk music by introducing a minimum of electric instruments (electric keyboard with *Planxty* and electric clavinet with *The Bothy Band*) and innovative arrangements. Later on some members of these two groups (Irvine, Burke, Lunny), complemented by further outstanding musicians, formed another supergroup, *Patrick Street*, which has been active until the present day. A series of young singers, especially females, as in Hungary, have emerged in the past decades: Dolores Keane, Mary and Frances Black, Karen Matheson, Maire Brennan, Maura O'Connel, Maighread and Triona Ni Dhomnaill, Niamh Parson etc. Many of them also sing in Gaelic, and there are singers, like Ireland's top female singer Mary Black, who sings at least as many songs of other genres as traditional ones.

The group that millions of people worldwide associate Irish traditional music with for four decades has, however, been *The Chieftains*. Its origins go back to another group. Before the sixties traditional music in Ireland was rather a solo art. In 1963 composer Ó Riada composed the film soundtrack of *The Playboy of the Western World.* He had put an ensemble together some time before it, the *Ceoltoiri Chualann*, who were to play the music for this film. He combined traditional with classical instruments, and his aim was to return traditional Irish music to the people. Some of the members of this group formed the basis of *The Chieftains* (uilleann piper Paddy Moloney, fiddlers Seán Keane and Martin Fay). They were joined later by harper Derek Bell, bodhran player and singer Kevin Coneff and flutist Matt Molloy. Since 1979 their line-up has not changed, which may be one of the secrets of their success. They have attracted fans not only from the Celtic corners, but musicians of other genres from Mick Jagger to Paul McCartney. By 1979 they had become so popular that they performed before an estimated crowd of 1.35 million in Dublin (Sawyers 253). The leading personality of the band, Paddy Moloney managed to make *The Chieftains* not only the best traditional Irish band in the world but also the best known. They were the first Western group to perform on the Great Wall of China, for example and in 1989 they were named Ireland's official musical ambassadors.

In the 80s and 90s a new generation of Irish musicians emerged. Among those which look for the traditional roots, *Altan* is generally acknowledged

to be the best group. Their flute and whistle player Frankie Kennedy died at an early age, but his wife Nairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, a native Donegal fiddler, who also sings mostly in Irish, has proved to be an outstanding leader of the band. This ongoing experimentation over the years has created a cross-fertilization between musical genres. At the same time it is more and more difficult to recognize what is traditional. A chart for *world-music* was first introduced by Billboard in 1990 and by 1995 two-thirds of toppers were Celtic. The term *Celtic music* now functions as an umbrella just like *world-music.*

It is, however, a bit misleading if we examine the development of Irish music only through that of bands that have become internationally famous. They have only a few musicians in their line-up who can play or sing in the traditional way. In *Planxty*, for example, Liam O'Flynn plays the uilleann pipe in the traditional way, and Andy Irvine can sing in the so called Anglo-Irish traditional manner – that is Irish songs in English, which would have made their appearance from the 18th century onwards when the Irish language began to be suppressed. But until the 60s there had not been any harmony and accompaniment to traditional instrumental music, which were then introduced. Nevertheless, not all groups and solo musicians have followed their way. There are far more excellent fiddlers, uilleann pipers, flute and tin whistle players nowadays than there were ever before, and this is largely to do with the popularity of bands like *Planxty*, *The Bothy Band*, *De Dannan*; so, they have functioned rather as catalysts. Liam O'Flynn and Paddy Keenan on the pipes, Sean Keane, Frankie Gavin, Tommy Peoples, Kevin Burke and Paddy Glackin on the fiddle and Matt Molloy on the flute could be mentioned as the best examples of musicians preserving traditional music.

While there had been a lot of experimenting in the field of traditional music since the sixties, traditional Irish dance remained unaltered until Jean Butler and Michael Flatley turned it into a freer, more sensuous performance in the seven-minute interlude of the Eurovision Song Contest in 1994. It was a very successful combination of traditional step dancing and American tap dancing (which is also often traced back to Irish dancing) accompanied by Bill Whelan's fantastic music. Michael Flatley conquered the world with his dance shows *Lord of the Dance* and *Feet of Flames:* "Michael Flatley's theatrical extravaganza *Lord of the Dance* derives much of its material from the formulaic step dancing initiated by Gaelic League revivalists in the late nineteenth century" (Ó hAllmhuráin 13).

The worldwide popularity of Irish traditional music is also due to the great number of Irish people in other countries; some forty million Irishmen live abroad, mainly in America. This means a huge market as well, which

can finance the travellings, recordings and performances of many Irish bands. Irish Americans have always influenced the musical fashions in America, so many Americans of no Irish origin are also ready to buy Irish music. And what is fashionable in America will be fashionable in Europe sooner or later. Ireland itself has also become an attractive target for tourists with its pubs, beer and music. Though it is not authentic folk music that the tourists get, but rather drinking songs, such encounters might lead to a deeper interest in traditional Irish music.

5 Conclusions

If we look at the history of the folk music and dance of Hungary and Ireland, we see a number of similarities. Both nations had a very rich folk culture, with some elements going back to ancient times, though the majority of the surviving folk songs and dances date from the last three centuries. In both countries there is an older layer, which is called old-style. This old-style music is pentatonic, which seems to have been wide-spread in various ancient civilisations around the world from China to the North American Indians, but which has survived only in these two countries in Europe.

Folk music used to be interpreted in both countries as that of the village communities. This interpretation has not changed in Hungary, but in Ireland it is usually replaced by the term *traditional* these days, and the content of that is quite different. Folk music used to be vocal and instrumental. It seems it was more common in Ireland than in Hungary that singing was not accompanied, and it was not usual either that a whole band of various instruments played together. It was usually just a piper or a fiddler who played to the dance. In historical Hungary it was, however, quite common that bands, usually from some lower layer of society, played for different ethnic groups living together. Initially there may have been many Hungarian bands, but in time it was mainly Gypsies (sometimes Jews) who made up such bands. It often happens as a result that songs or tunes of one ethnic group survive in the hands of another; e.g. a Hungarian song already forgotten among the Hungarians lives on among the Gypsies. As the whole Carpathian basin has musical dialects of different nationalities which are very close to each other, in some villages where e.g. Hungarians, Romanians, Gypsies live together, it is sometimes very difficult to separate the music of one ethnic group from that of another, especially for non-professionals. For instance, when you listen to the excellent Transylvanian *Szászcsávás Band*, Romanian tunes can easily be mistaken for Hungarian ones, or the other way round.

In Ireland the mixing of various ethnic groups was not typical, as there was normally just one. The Irish, living on the fringes of Europe, preserved their Celtic/Gaelic traditions for a long period and it was mainly the other Celtic nation, the Scots who influenced their music and dances, especially through the contact which was provided by the seasonal fieldwork of many Irish people in Scotland. When the English occupied Ireland and the Irish ruling class impoverished or left the country, Irish culture became the exclusive property of the common people. It was censured from time to time, sometimes it was completely forbidden to use folk music instruments or to dance folk dances. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Church of Ireland and the Gaelic League also prevented Irish people from cultivating their own folk culture. In Hungary this was not the case, and it was only industrialisation and urbanisation, which made the intelligentsia fear that folk culture might disappear. From the nineteenth century the collecting of folk songs and tunes was started in both countries, but, unfortunately, usually not by experts, but by enthusiastic patriots. Later musicians and composers also recognized the importance of this. Hungary excels in the whole world in this respect, namely the way how folk music was saved by great composers like Bartók and Kodály, who also used folk tunes in their own compositions. Kodály's famous music instruction methods are widely known all over the world.

In the sixties and seventies, though both countries were still underdeveloped in relation to some leading countries of Europe, there was a real danger of the extinction of folk culture. This lead to the revival of folk music in both countries, but the approaches were quite different and the result similarly. In Ireland the internationally best-known groups rather used folk music to renew popular music, and an experimenting of mixing old and new began, which is still going on. They had bands of various folk music instruments for the first time in the sixties and most bands have had traditional instruments along with new, foreign ones ever since. They have played both traditional songs and their own compositions while many singers have sung in both Gaelic and English, but the latter is more common. Unlike Hungary, the revival of traditional music was not accompanied by that of dances in urban areas in Ireland: the songs have often been written in jig time, but they are almost never danced to. The Irish revival of folk music did not trigger other folk arts (crafts) either.

Hungary was in a more favourable position in several respects. On the one hand the technically advanced collecting of Hungarian folk songs began at the end of the nineteenth century, and was carried on systematically by such genii as Bartók, Kodály and Lajtha. (Lajtha also compiled a collection of the instrumental music of Szék and Kőrispatak). On the other hand,

Hungary had rich resources outside its present borders, especially in Transylvania and Moldova, where old-style, archaic folk music has been preserved until the present day, but at the moment it is vanishing rapidly. At the beginning of the seventies young folklorists, dancers and musicians from Budapest recognised the great opportunity. As it was likely that folk music would disappear in villages as soon as the peasants were in a position to improve their living conditions, and their isolation came to an end, it was a brilliant idea on the part of the initiators of the first Budapest dance houses to transplant the village dance house into an urban setting. The historical situation was also favourable for this as the regime did not dare to ban this new movement, which had the character of a slight political protest by emphasising the national in a communist environment based on internationalism. Furthermore, young people did not have such a wide range of opportunities for entertainment at that time. So, they were happy to dance our national dances to live music in the company of like-minded youngsters. However, it has recently become a problem for many dance houses that young people are distracted by so many other entertainment opportunities from them. For the musicians and the dancers the aim has been from the beginning to reproduce the dances and the music of villages as authentically as possible. Though there have always been bands which have experimented with blending different musical genres, they have never been in the mainstream. The focus of the revival has always been the urban dance house, where bands play authentic music on traditional folk music instruments, and where mainly the folk dances of the various regions of historical Hungary are taught, though there are some Irish, Greek, Serbian etc. dance houses as well. Bands that have swapped folk instruments for modern ones and play mainly their own compositions are also popular, but their music is no longer referred to as *folk*.

Works Cited

Abkarovits Endre. "Ír sztár Magyarországon – Beszélgetés Andy Irvine-nal." In *folkMAGazin*, 2005/3. Budapest, 2005.

Abkarovits Endre. *Táncházi portrék*. Budapest: Hagyományok Háza, 2003.

Carson, Ciaran. *Irish Traditional Music.* Belfast: Appletree Press Ltd., 1999.

Dobszay László. *A History of Hungarian Music*. Budapest: Corvina, 1993.

Für Lajos. *"Ne bántsd a magyart!" – Bartók és Kodály történelemszemlélete.* Budapest: Kairosz, 2004.

Halmos Béla. "The *Táncház* Movement." In *Hungarian Heritage*, Volume 1. Budapest: European Folklore Institute, 2000.

Kelemen László. “The ‘Final Hour’ Folk Music Project.” In *Hungarian Heritage*, Volume 1. Budapest: European Folklore Institute, 2000.

Manga János. *Hungarian folk songs and folk instruments.* Corvina, Budapest, 1969.

Martin György. “Discovering Szék.” In *Hungarian Heritage*, Volume 2. Budapest: European Folklore Institute, 2001.

Ó hAllmhuráin, Gearóid. *O’Brien Pocket History Of Irish Traditional Music.* Dublin: The O’Brien Press, 1998.

Sawyers, June Skinner. *The Complete Guide to Celtic Music*. London: Aurum Press, 2000.

Sinkó Katalin. “Changes in the Meaning of the Concept of ‘Folk Art’ between 1852 and 1898.” In *Hungarian Heritage*, Volume 5. Budapest: European Folklore Institute, 2004.

Suchoff, Benjamin ed.. *Béla Bartók Essays.* London: Faber & Faber, 1976.

Verebélyi Kincső. “Does the peasantry have its own art?” In *Hungarian Heritage*, Volume 5. Budapest: European Folklore Institute, 2004.