



Musical and Social Structures: Marxist Interpretations of Popular Music in the 1960s and early 1970s in Hungary and the UK

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Abstract

Popular music studies as a field has been criticized from within for still predominantly favouring sociological approaches, as opposed to offering an analysis of the musical text that incorporates the social. What is missing from such debates, however, is that writings calling for a popular music aesthetic are almost as old as the scholarly study of popular music. Andrew Chester's "For a Rock Aesthetic", published in *New Left Review* in 1970 is an example. Popular music studies, however, also produced works in Eastern Europe at around the same time, building on the results of a new Marxist musicology and sociology of music that drew on both musical and sociological aspects in music analysis. We compare British leftist and Marxist analyses of popular music phenomena of the 1960s and early 1970s with the work of Hungarian scholars such as János Maróthy looking at trends in popular music from a Marxist perspective.

KEYWORDS: Popular Music Studies, Marxism, Eastern Europe, New Left, Maróthy

Calls for a popular music aesthetic

In his 2007 book *Der Wert der Musik: Zur Ästhetik des Populären* (Appen 2007), Ralph von Appen called the aesthetic approach a blind spot of popular music research. And even though it has become increasingly difficult to justify such a

statement today, as more and more researchers of popular music employ aesthetic or musical analysis (notable names include, besides many others, Franco Fabbri, Ian Biddle, Freya Jarman, Allan Moore, Stan Hawkins or André Doehring), a look at international trends in popular music studies still indicates the predominance of sociological approaches, or perspectives grounded in cultural studies, often lacking in-depth engagement with the particularities of music and sound. In response to this trend, one of the most acclaimed international experts of the fields of popular music studies and new musicology, Philip Tagg, created an initiative called Network for the Inclusion of Music in Music Studies (NIMiMS) in 2015. With this step, the founding members of the network admittedly aimed at connecting those placing “music itself”, as opposed to the society consuming and using it, at the centre of scholarly study, in opposition to the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM), which, according to Tagg, is “dominated by scholars (mainly anglophone) from the social sciences and the ‘non-muso’ humanities” (NIMiMS 2015). On the other hand, NIMiMS also positions itself against the studying of music in isolation, without an understanding of its social and cultural embeddedness – mainstream musicology comes to mind here –, and calls for a synthesis and an integration of “the sounds of music into the study of culture and society” (NIMiMS 2015).

While the necessity of maintaining a separate network, besides IASPM, has been debated – at least informally – among popular music scholars, the claim that such a synthesis would be desirable, and that many accounts of popular music lack this, seems undoubtedly justified. What is mentioned less often in the debate is that works first arguing for the establishment of a popular music aesthetics are almost as old as the beginnings of popular music research itself. Andrew Chester’s “For a Rock Aesthetic” (Chester 1970a), published in 1970 in the *New Left Review*, is among the most important works of this kind, along with Chester’s response to Richard Merton’s (1970) commentary on the article (Chester 1970b). Simon Frith, one of the founders of the sociology of pop and rock, and still one of the most frequently quoted popular music scholars, referred to Chester himself. In his 1987 essay titled “Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music” (Frith 2007 [1987]), Frith criticized sociological analysis for generally viewing individual taste and preferences as part of a collective or public taste and having therefore little to say about the effect of music on the individual. He observed, with self-criticism, how we are able to sketch a broad picture of the habits and social background of music consumers with the help of sociological methods, while “we still do not know nearly enough about the musical language of pop and rock” (Frith 2007 [1987]: 43).

From the generation gap existing between researchers of classical music and popular music, through the long-standing, and still existing, hegemony of traditional musicology, which has in essence appropriated the aesthetic sphere, to the simplicity of popular music and the professional incompetence of amateur musicians, there are several popular arguments circulating about why musical components and structure, the analysis of content and form, and the exploration of the aesthetic values of this music have to date been forced to remain in the background. These common explanations, however, do not take full account of the fact that western music sociology was already making attempts to establish a synthetic framework unifying social–sociological and musical–aesthetic aspects in the 1970s, that is, the era of its internationalization.

In essence, this is what John Shepherd called attention to when referring to the existence of a particular direction in his 2015 co-edited volume (Shepherd and Devine 2015). This writing indicates that several directions had existed in the sociology of music decades ago. The direction that Shepherd called “music as

social meaning” primarily incorporated sociologically inclined musicologists following in the footsteps of Simmel, Weber and Adorno. The ideas that the structures of social and cultural formations are inevitably expressed in musical structures and sounds, moreover, that musical structures and musical systems in general have socio-historical aspects, were central to their theories. Shepherd’s own co-authored book *Whose Music? A Sociology of Musical Languages* (Shepherd 1977) was based on the same idea, and, ultimately, this is the direction taken later by Richard Middleton, Philip Tagg and other key figures of new (critical) musicology.

Nevertheless, as we intend to demonstrate below, Hungarian, along with other Eastern European researchers representing Marxist musicology and popular music research in the region had by that time, during the 1960s and early 1970s, been working on the establishment of coherent theorizations of the relationship between musical and social structures, and this body of knowledge may offer important parallels with the later work of Tagg, Shepherd or Middleton. Still, Marxist interpretations of popular music published at this time in the West, in particular those associated with the British New Left, predominantly offered sociological analyses, as we will show below. Marxist analysis, moreover, gradually became marginalized in the West after the ground-breaking work on youth and music of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, in line with a general liberal turn in the social sciences. In the East, at the same time, it had all but vanished after the 1989/1990 turn, but for different structural reasons: Marxist thought had so closely been tied to state ideology that the post-socialist intelligentsia entirely broke with this theoretical legacy. There is also a second structural reason behind the invisibility of this body of Eastern European Marxist research, namely the unequal institutional and symbolic structure of international knowledge production resulting from global hierarchies of power, which ensures the central position of western knowledge production at the expense of knowledge production taking place at the global peripheries and semi-peripheries – including Eastern Europe.

Through discovering this tradition and exploring the parallels as well as differences between eastern and western Marxist and leftist popular music research comprising the early history of popular music studies, we intend to contribute to the rehabilitation of a theoretical perspective and a body of knowledge forgotten both in the East and the West, while at the same time pointing to the structural reasons behind this double process of rendering invisible. The latter indicates that this attempt may offer conclusions beyond the debates surrounding popular music research. Moreover, a redeeming of this Eastern European body of knowledge may also complicate the popular birth narrative of popular music studies, according to which it primarily arose from rock music research.

With the selection and comparison of the examples of the UK and Hungary, we are, of course, unable to provide an extensive account of the early history of Marxist and leftist approaches to popular music. Rather, we view the two countries as typical examples of western and eastern perspectives sharing motivations, yet very much differing in methods and cultural background.

The missing tradition

In the articles mentioned, relying exclusively on British and other western examples, Chester himself alluded to pop – as opposed to earlier forms of popular music – being a complex cultural phenomenon, rather than a purely aesthetic one, which to an extent justifies an emerging academic discourse approaching it as such.

However, he also deemed it urgent to begin the establishment of a pop music aesthetics at the moment of his writing, that is, in 1970, arguing that pop music has artistic value of its own and is ripe for becoming an autonomous artistic field. Among the urgent questions of popular music studies, Chester mentioned not only questions aimed at exploring the musical structures of pop and rock, but also at the cultural-social basis of such structures, in other words, questions focusing on the direct relationship between musical and social formations.

In a completely different political, social and academic context, the Hungarian researchers we present below were posing similar questions. Their work was most probably unknown to Chester, at least he did not refer to any Eastern European authors in his writings. Nevertheless, the works of these Hungarian researchers, writing in relative isolation, did not remain entirely without reflection in contemporary western academia. János Maróthy's is a case in point, whose work was known to Middleton as well as Tagg, the latter of whom visited Budapest in 1980 and even dedicated one of his writings to Maróthy's memory in 2001 (Tagg 2001). Maróthy (and his young colleague, Anna Szemere) was also in contact with the East-German Peter Wicke, who, like Chester, worked on establishing a rock music aesthetics, and, along with other Eastern European colleagues, he was also invited decades later to the – to date largest – post-socialist international symposium of Marxist musicology, the *Musikwissenschaftlicher Paradigmenwechsel? Zum Stellenwert marxistischer Ansätze in der Musikforschung* conference held in Oldenburg in 1999 (Stroh and Mayer 2000).

Since this kind of research, belonging to the previous system, was mostly tied to former ideological and cultural policy objectives, its positioning is generally also problematic today. It is worth noting that, as Philip Bounds observes, British Marxists writing about culture before the emergence of British cultural studies in the 1970s, have similarly been written out of the historical record (Bounds 2012: 576). A detailed exploration of the possible reasons behind this forgetting is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the presentations of two German researchers (Rathert 2016; Schmidt 2016) at the 2016 conference of the German Musicological Society (GfM) pointed, through a western example (of the West-German musical and musicological environment after the collapsing of Nazi Germany), to the special significance of an apolitical scientific position in cultural spaces under dictatorship, or in a post-dictatorship era. The distancing from (state) ideologies, deemed harmful and outdated, may signify a subconscious, or even very much conscious, breaking with the past in this context.

It is only a new generation of researchers emerging in the 1980s – Anna Szemere, Miklós Hadas, János Kőbányai, among others – whose work survived into the era after the 1989 changes impacting the spheres of politics, society as well as academia. Following the closing of the Institute of People's Education (*Népművelési Intézet*), which had been home to the work of Iván Vitányi, the 1996 closing of the Department of Music Sociology within the Institute of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which had been led by Maróthy, and the retirement of researchers pursuing popular music-related topics within the Department of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, such as Ágnes Losonczi, the academic research of popular music and the sociology of music essentially stopped. The only area of continuity was perhaps the area of youth subculture studies drawing in part on the tradition of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, emerging in Hungary in the 1980s and continuing into the early 2000s, associated primarily with the work of József Rácz and later Magda Szapu (Barna 2017: 7-9). This tradition, however, had little to offer in the way of musical

analysis. Finally, a new wave of popular music studies emerged in the late 2000s with the *Zenei Hálózatok* (Music Networks) conference in 2008, which saw the founding of the Hungarian IASPM branch along with a Hungarian-language popular music journal (*Zenei Hálózatok Folyóirat*), and a growing number of young scholars acquiring PhDs in the area of popular music studies at western universities. This new wave of work thus largely drew on western popular music research, with a strong media studies and cultural studies focus, ahistorically presenting itself and being perceived as a young, western-influenced discipline. This tendency fits into a more general “moral geopolitics” (Böröcz 2006) arising from the global logics of dependency, which positions western knowledge at the centre of the cultural hegemonic structure, while reinforcing a discourse of catching up on the semi-peripheries. This might explain why within this wave, practically no ties were attempted to be made to the Hungarian popular music research of the 1960s or 1970s.

Within the musicological research taking place within the mentioned institutions from the 1960s onwards, popular or everyday musical genres were not present as research objects in their own right, but rather as part of broader research into music history or music aesthetics with a social or sociological focus. This might be explained with the researchers’ classical music education, as well as with the uncertainty regarding the aesthetic valuation of entertainment music, understood to be of lower quality within the hegemonic value regime. At the same time, these researchers generally attempted to make responsible claims on the musical life as a whole with the consideration of aesthetic, sociological and historical aspects, and to establish a general perspective according to which the phenomena of art, popular and folk music cannot be understood in themselves, without an extensive knowledge about the other spheres.

Working-class heroes? Marxist and leftist approaches to popular music in the UK in the 1960s and 1970s

Simon Frith’s *The Sociology of Rock*, published in 1978, and *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*, published in 1983, laid the foundations for a scholarly study of popular music that is at once of a sociological nature and quality, and sensitive to the aesthetic particularities of pop-rock music. We can thus view Frith’s work as the first step taken towards realizing the programme set by Chester. Frith’s first books, however, had been preceded by the emergence of youth subculture research linked to the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), which has had a powerful and lasting effect on popular music studies, youth sociology and beyond. The works of the CCCS aimed at analyzing and interpreting the social position, aspirations, the expressions of class and generation conflicts of post-war British youth groups such as Teddy Boys, mods, rockers, skinheads, and later hippies and punks (for example, Cohen 1972; Hall and Jefferson 1993; Willis 1978; Hebdige 1979). The focus here was on the group’s “resistant, radical mode of *consumption*” (Middleton 2000: 53; italics in original). As Middleton summarizes in his contribution to the mentioned 1999 Oldenburg conference, the CCCS explicitly drew on Marxist (and Gramscian) theory through the work of Stuart Hall. (Later on, through the 1980s, and especially with the growing dominance of US-based cultural studies, which was more closely aligned with identity politics, these Marxist roots were gradually lost.)

Middleton, however, also observes here that the British New Left had provided a political context for the emergence of the CCCS's work on youth subcultures. Before the publication of this corpus, thinkers belonging to the New Left tradition had already been concerned with popular music, in particular the revolutionary potential of rock music, and the relationship between rock music and class. The rock 'n' roll boom, moreover, was preceded by a post-war folk revival, which, according to Middleton, was strongly associated with the British Communist Party, as well as other left-wing movements such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (Middleton 2000: 52).

The song-collecting, recording, radio work and writing of Euan [sic] McColl, A.L. Lloyd and others constituted an important intervention, establishing, at the very moment of the beginnings of a pop music culture, that self-made music – a 'people's music' in a different sense – survived. (ibid.)

After this movement had lost momentum, another notable initiative emerged in the UK that was reinforced ideologically by the New Left and the countercultural spirit of 1968 ("black consciousness, the feminist movement, the gay and lesbian movement, the student uprisings protesting against the Vietnam War and the H-Bomb" all provided a political context; Higgins 2008: 24), namely the so-called community music movement. This movement still exists today (McKay and Higham 2011), even if the central concerns and ideology are different. The early community music movement of the 1960s and 1970s grew out of the broader community arts movement, an initiative that responded to the loss of traditional working-class neighbourhoods in the post-war era, with a large segment of the working-class population having to relocate into the so-called new towns (Higgins 2008). The state created the institution of community workers with the aim of assisting working-class people in this new social environment, and the movement of community education, and later community arts subsequently developed (ibid.). In particular in its early form, these movements, including community music, were explicitly (working) class politics-oriented and critical of the western bourgeois value regime favouring high arts such as classical theatre, art galleries and opera (Higgins 2008: 25). The movement believed in co-authorship of creative work and in the creative potential of all sections of the community, and, at least for some enthusiasts, the belief that community arts, and music "could provide a powerful medium for social and political change" (Higgins 2011). It is no surprise that the movement found inspiration in the countercultural movements of the late 1960s, as well as the punk movement of the 1970s.

In the following, we present two prominent debates on the British left relating to popular music. The argumentation within these debates seems to justify Chester's diagnosis: apart from a few exceptions, the leftist critique of popular music was largely thematized within the broader framework of youth culture, and not on its own. Also, sociological aspects dominated the debate. The impact of the perspective of such early cultural studies scholars as Richard Hoggart, founder of the CCCS in 1964, who was amongst the first scholars to regard the culture of working-class youth as worthy of serious enquiry, is also evident in the debates. In this sense, they may be considered as precursors to the rich British youth subculture research subsequently unfolding during the mid- and late seventies.

On the British left of the time, a distinction needs to be made between the Labour Party and a variety of Marxist, Leninist, and Maoist-oriented organizations. Oded Heilbroner describes how the first debate related to the cultural and political orientation, the "ambivalent radicalism" of the Beatles was already in place in 1964

(Heilbrunner 2011: 87), the year of the first US visit and the release of *A Hard Day's Night*, film and album. During the sixties, the Marxist and leftist critique of British popular music and youth culture, perhaps unsurprisingly, paid particular attention to interpreting the role and impact of the Beatles. Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm's commentary – who had also published a book on jazz (Hobsbawm 1959) – on the band was positive (Gould 2008: 169; quoted in Heilbrunner 2011: 87), while literary theorist Terry Eagleton dedicated an entire article to them in the April 1964 issue of *Blackfriars* journal (Eagleton 1964). Here, Eagleton compared the Beatles with working-class pop stars popular just before the rise of the band, arguing that the ambivalent class attachments of the group – Cliff Richard, Marty Wilde or Billy Fury had all been going to secondary modern schools, while Lennon had been to the Liverpool College of Art and McCartney and Harrison to the Liverpool Institute, a grammar school – enabled them to function as a cultural bridge between working-class youth and university students.

Such, more (in the case of Hobsbawm) or less (in the case of Eagleton) optimistic views were accompanied by a stronger pessimism, articulated, among others, by Noel Coward (actor, singer, and editor of the leftist *New Statesman*), the writer and historian Paul Johnson and the writer and composer Anthony Burgess (Heilbrunner 2011: 87). They envisioned in the Beatles phenomenon a destructive effect on youth of a cheap and popular consumer culture, of bad taste. These are not the voices of the Marxist left, however. According to Heilbrunner, the British Marxist left, similarly to the left in continental Europe, supported and appreciated working-class youth culture as the authentic expression of their exploitation and despair (ibid.: 89). At the same time, the pessimistic view was also present in this circle on the basis that youth culture at the same time provided tools for bourgeois hegemony – the “youth culture's capitalistic spirit”, American or Americanized capitalist consumer culture is reprehensible in this sense (ibid.). The view of the British Labour Party, which, at the time, represented a much more cautious, reform-centric programme in relation to the New Left, could be summarized as the following: American rock 'n' roll, like British pop music, is a legitimate cultural form of articulation for working-class youth. It fits the communal, collective ideology of British socialism, factory workers, trade unions and football supporters, and from this perspective, it can be viewed as the continuation of the traditional leisure culture of the working class (Heilbrunner 2011: 90).

The second debate, taking place between 1973 and 1975 on the pages of *Marxism Today*, the official theoretical journal of the Communist Party of Great Britain, was primarily concerned with youth culture and its directions. The debate began with a longer article with the title “Trends in Youth Culture” by Martin Jacques, later editor-in-chief of the journal, which was followed by several shorter responses about the youth culture of the sixties as a potential “site of political struggle” (Worley 2016: 506), reflecting at the same time on the changing role of the Beatles and British pop music, and the political activism of John Lennon and, to a lesser extent, George Harrison in the early seventies.

One focus of the debate was the year 1968, as a key moment in the changing relation between youth culture, politics and society. The contributors, while expressing – some of them, at least – their respect towards the “radical values” of 1963-64, when the Beatles still “expressed the youth and workers' protest against the capitalist system” (Heilbrunner 2011: 87), when arriving at 1968, criticized what they viewed as a reactionary attitude signified by the song “Revolution” (1968) (2011: 91). The Beatles, in their view, played into the hands of the elite:

'But if you want money for people with minds that hate / Then all I can tell you is brother you have to wait.' Some 'revolution' this! No doubt the sort of revolution the ruling class will welcome at any time. (Walker 1974: 217)

Behind the undoubtedly strong criticism, even claims of betrayal, on the part of the left lies the expectation that the Beatles, as representatives of working-class youth, should clearly articulate a revolutionary stance, and the disappointment that this never happened. While the middle-class Rolling Stones seem to have fulfilled this expectation with their song "Street Fighting Man" (1968) (Heilbronner 2011: 88, 91). It is worth noting here that contributors to the debate, while taking what is partly a sociological stance, as well as looking at song lyrics, fail to consider the embeddedness of Lennon and McCartney, largely social, and to a lesser extent, aesthetic, into the intellectual scene of the London underground left, through for instance, their connection with John Dunbar and underground magazine *International Times*, the publication of which was funded by McCartney (Miles 1998), and which, along with *OZ* magazine, is regularly cited by contributors to the *Marxism Today* debate as significant countercultural media.

Heilbronner helpfully summarizes participants' contributions as centring around the following points: from 1967 onwards, British youth culture became more heterogeneous, which is a result of three factors: the first is the deterioration of the economic position of the working class, which strengthened the class conflict again; the second is the decline of the bourgeois university student movement, which alienated their former allies, namely the working class; the third is the fragmentation of the underground and the so-called utopian society, still influential in 1967 (Heilbronner 2011: 91). Central to the debate in relation to interpreting this change taking place during the sixties is an observation important from the point of popular music research, namely that it was the homogeneity, the general comprehensibility of popular music in the first half of the decade, at the time of the British Invasion, which brought young people belonging to different social classes closer together (this is also the basis of Eagleton's (1964) contemporary interpretation). Later, in the second half of the sixties, this was replaced by an aesthetic heterogeneity that divided the market (again) into niche audiences, breaking, once and for all, the illusion of classlessness. A strong symbol of this shift is the Beatles' experimental concept album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), as well as, among others, the Rolling Stones' *Their Satanic Majesties Request* (1967). As Jacques writes, popular music by this time "could no longer evoke and command the same kind of 'across-the-board' spontaneous and emotional response: the lyrics were more complicated, the rhythm less dominant and thus the relationship between the performer and the audience more individual and reflective" (Jacques 1973: 273). The musical analysis, nevertheless, does not go much deeper than such general aesthetic observations, despite the fact that Jacques argues in the same article for the importance of formal characteristics – this stance remains largely on the level of argumentation.

Hungary: political and historical background

Hungarian research at the time was not centred around western trends. Moreover, research into everyday musical genres was connected to the trickling of the Soviet musicological approach into Hungary following the communist takeover and was thus already present from the beginning of the 1950s. In this era, it was the doyen and spiritus rector of Hungarian musicology, Bence Szabolcsi, that called attention

to the significance of researching everyday music. Long before the communist takeover, Szabolcsi had depicted a musical culture in his essays in which individual creation and historical progression were intertwined with the collective culture of folk music. Szabolcsi remained all the way a lifelong student of the role of musical vernacular, that is, of the everyday language of music, and role of folk and popular musical phenomena at the major turning points of western music history. At the time Szabolcsi was operating with rather abstract and idealized concepts of folk and folk music, greatly missing their historical and social dimensions. He was the first, however, to progressively draw the attention of the musicological community to those Soviet works that focused on the process of transmission between the two musical spheres and the importance of the intermediate genres, forms and types of intonation which could possibly be used to build bridges between classical music and folk music, or individual and collective compositions (Szabolcsi 1954; Szabolcsi 1966).

After the 1956 revolution, the one-sided following of the Soviet paradigm was discontinued. Within the eastern bloc, Hungarian musicology and music sociology increasingly became one of the most important locations for new experimentation. Moreover, the new research projects, unfolding during the early 1960s, were not connected to fans or rock musicians, but rather to academic scholars in their forties from important institutions of the Hungarian music world. Science and politics under state socialism were inseparable in popular music research as well may be illustrated by the fact that the main scholars frequently made their voices heard at political and public fora, and they also argued for the political significance of scholarly work in their writings.

The practice of political application of analyses also resulted in the academic directives of the party naming a double function for academic research: a so-called exploratory or representational function serving scientific inquiry, and a so-called ideological function, assisting the transformation of consciousness. Ideally, these two functions complemented each other, in a sense that exploration would prepare the way for the unfolding of a theoretically and ideologically grounded work relying on the results of empirical inquiry (MSZMP 1969). In practice, this separation more typically meant a coexistence, and besides research based on the principles of Marxist philosophy, it also enabled less ideologically determined descriptive work to be produced. This duality was also present in Hungarian popular music research. Research in state socialist Hungary aimed at exploring and describing the reactions of listeners, as well as the mechanisms of distribution, and the presentation of a social history of music and the social conditions of musical creation is connected first and foremost to Ágnes Losonczi. At the same time, Marxist music sociology aiming to connect sociological interpretation and traditional musical-aesthetic analysis was represented in part by János Maróthy and the Department of Music Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Musicology led by him, and in part by Iván Vitányi, who worked at the Institute of Popular Culture and the Research Centre of Mass Communication, along with the working groups he organized.

Sociological questions related to music had otherwise gained central significance in the entire musicological world of the Soviet bloc (Nowack 2006). We can even state that the music sociological approach had emerged as the flagship of Marxist musicology. International Marxist musicology seminars organized for the harmonization of the musicological discourses of Eastern European countries also regularly addressed the relationship between the social-historical conditioning of the work of art and musical construction. These discussions, most likely taking

place with the participation of, among others, János Maróthy, the Czechoslovak Antonín Sychra and Jaroslav Jiranek or the East German Günther Mayer and Georg Knepler, contributed to the attention paid to sociological questions on the part of Eastern European musicology.

Out of the first important Hungarian researchers of popular music, we now focus on the work of Maróthy, who is probably the most well-known internationally. It is in his work that the effect of Marxist philosophy and ideology could be felt strongest. Through his example, we want to emphasize, again, that even in state socialist Hungary, the principles of Marxist philosophy were not automatically put into practice by everyone: from the late 1960s, sociology was actually one of the disciplines which provided the most space for the establishment of a scholarly thinking quasi-independent of state ideology.

Outside the world of art music: the work of János Maróthy

It is worth beginning by stating that we cannot speak of autonomous popular music research in Maróthy's case either: any relevant piece written by him can only be understood by being placed into the music history theory he was building for decades. And ultimately, they are also closely connected to his cultural policy objectives. Maróthy's primary goal was to elaborate a social, historical and aesthetic framework necessary for the establishment of a socialist music culture.

Maróthy also turned towards such analytic and research methods thanks to Soviet musicology and his teacher, Bence Szabolcsi. Moreover, his work was assisted by the fact that after 1956, research took a turn within the Soviet Union itself, and this created an even better environment than before for the exploration of musical spheres outside the world of art music.

A couple of years later, Iván Vitányi summarized this turn as follows: a new definition of folk music as music of certain classes, which reflects on the struggle of these classes; discovering the value of urban folk music and independent musical culture of workers, differing in form and social background from village peasant folk music; and finally, the realization of dialectical interaction between oral and written musical culture (Vitányi 1964: 630-632). We may also mention András Pernye's definition of the epoch's key (Marxist) musicological concept, that is, intonation, as a melting pot of the typical elements of everyday musical genres, and his praise of the Soviet Boris Asafyev for criticizing those music historiographical models that concentrate only on masterpieces and pay no attention to minor artists and average compositions (Pernye 1962: 5-22).

It was the same idea that set off Maróthy in the elaboration of his theory. Musical genres and styles of making music excluded from the traditional music history canon, connected first and foremost to workers and proletarians, therefore gained particular attention in his work. Maróthy stated that workers' music culture ensures the continuation of a collective popular-folk tradition in individualist bourgeois culture, and that it develops in a parallel manner to official, or officially recognized folk and popular music phenomena until the birth of a socialist society (Maróthy 1960, Maróthy 1974 [1966]).

Maróthy looked upon genres and musical styles collected under the term proletarian folk music – music made by people socially oppressed and exploited – as having countercultural aims. That is, artistic articulations that fit into a movement – as opposed to bourgeois forms of mass music, which are aimed at entertainment and leisure. The development of proletarian folk music can primarily be traced in

the increasing political consciousness of workers. Maróthy attempted to explore these processes in musical works with the scholarly analysis of composition and performance techniques. In the spirit of methodological innovation and an openness towards Marxist musicology, he not only used social aspects as a framework for musical analysis, but rather looked for instances of direct correspondence between social and musical structures. Thus to Maróthy, the most adequate musical form for individualist and sentimental bourgeois musical culture was the lyrical song, characterized by a metric, rhythmic and harmonic monotony. In contrast, musical expressions of the collective proletarian folk culture, which satirized bourgeois society and destroyed its myths to replace old and fake ideals with new and positive ones, were found in the restoring of the value of collective music making, in the inner dynamism of the formal and temporal frames of the song-like structure, and the combination of elements of composed music and folk music with collective origins. That is, for instance, in off-beats, polyrhythms, polytonality, the use of modal and pentatonic scales, and the use of collective improvisation and variation formulae (Maróthy 1974 [1966]).

To Maróthy, so long as a society remains bourgeois-capitalistic in structure, proletarian folk culture is only able to step out of the shadows if it itself becomes the object of what it does to bourgeois music: if in some form it is used or reused under capitalistic-imperialistic relations. In capitalism, however, everything is subjugated to economic and business interests. Thus, in such a social and economic system, proletarian folk culture can only be maintained if it is linked to business interests: if it serves the filling of the empty form of official music culture with new content and quality. This requires its exotisation, ensuring its sellability. For this reason, in the 20th century, particularly after the emergence of a modern entertainment industry, any bottom-up, popular-originated musical movement, from jazz (Maróthy 1961:5) to early rock music (Maróthy 1969) falls victim to big business and necessarily becomes commercialized, which also results in a loss of the original musical characteristics, or at least some of these. It is worth pointing to the parallel here with points made by some of the participants of the *Marxism Today* debate: "Of course, the monopolies are cashing in on youth culture, similarly they are cashing in on working class culture. What else would one expect under capitalism?", writes Imtiaz Chounara in 1974 (Chounara 1974: 317). Modern popular culture begins to function like a two-stroke engine: artistic innovation and message always emerges from the bottom up, which is then followed by an emptying out from above – from the direction of the establishment – and commercialization. The process then begins anew: popular creativity always results in new musical forms and is always interested in finding new formulae for self-expression. This is the pattern according to which Maróthy attempts to reinterpret the entire popular music history of the 20th century.

Right in the middle of the so-called beat music fever of the 1960s, a movement emerged that promised the possibility of a renewal of youth culture along socialist principles to Maróthy, who by that time had become disillusioned with the commercial version of beat music. This was none other than the movement including folk, protest song, and so-called 'pol-beat', the most important western representatives of which, to Maróthy, were Pete Seeger, Joan Baez and Bob Dylan (Maróthy 1967).

Maróthy soon emerged as one of the first Hungarian propagators of the mentioned directions, and launched a systematic collection of related documents and audio recordings at the Department of Music Sociology founded at the Institute

of Musicology.⁽¹⁾ This collection, along with the partly overlapping workers' song research, as well as with the temporary working group commissioned by him and jazz pianist János Gonda to explore the early history of Hungarian jazz, is a good indicator of Maróthy's role and the directions of his research interest at the start of Hungarian popular music studies. For Maróthy, it was evident, and, as argued above, also scientifically proven, that for the socialist cultural policy advocating the artistic mobilization of the masses, the liberation of their creative energies and the making of music into public property, the ideal genre was to be found somewhere around the origins of the protest song and pol-beat, genres conforming with the system in their lyrics. From 1966, when the first amateur followers of the protest movement appeared and gained popularity in Hungary, ostensibly everything was given for putting Maróthy's theory into practice through an institutional support of young singers with guitars, and for the socialist state to become a supporter of what was in theory a bottom-up movement (for example, Maróthy 1965). The first Hungarian pol-beat festival, organized in 1967 partly upon Maróthy's initiative, promptly indicated the contradictions between state ideology and economic interests. At the same time, it also showed that Maróthy's ideological concept, drawing on the educational goals originally set by communists, does not, or no longer, meet the needs of those in power at the time. The festival was not utilized for assisting (politically) motivated amateurs. On the contrary, the majority of competitors were already successful and popular beat bands embedded in the national music institutional structure. The organizers hoped that the beat bands and the lyrics ordered from the best-known and most widely employed lyricist, István S. Nagy, would make the genre more attractive to masses of young people. The festival failed, however, to achieve the desired success, and the following year, in 1968, was met with complete disinterest. Thus, the official media and the leaders of cultural policy quickly gave up supporting pol-beat. This case showed once and for all that concepts offering purely theoretically and ideologically based explanations of, and solutions to, problems were beginning to be less and less aligned to the long-term sustaining of the state-socialist system. But also, that Maróthy paid little attention to the real needs of (Hungarian) listeners when developing his concept: he joined a movement that, in its amateur manifestations, offered a leftist critique of the system, and could therefore hardly count on state support, while in its professionalized and domesticated forms, drew no interest from the public at all. At the same time, the failure of pol-beat and the public debates around youth music that soon reached national levels provided a good opportunity for Maróthy to present a broad critique of the detrimental aspects of the national cultural policy and the institutional structure of music that he believed to have uncovered, as well as its increasingly spectacular profit-orientation. Maróthy, who became increasingly isolated politically, deemed the overly enthusiastic support of professionalism a mistake, along with the stand against dilettantism and amateurism (Maróthy 1969: 1-5). As late as the early 1980s, he was of the opinion that a socialist country should be expected to support bottom-up initiatives, moreover, to assist them through the establishing of spaces for creative work and create the conditions for the survival of folk movements against commercial directions (Maróthy 1980).

Conclusions and future directions

British leftist and Marxist thinkers concerned with the popular music of the sixties primarily viewed music as a crucial element, even driving force of youth culture.

Their approach was characterized by the dominance of a class-based sociological perspective, while the analysis of popular music was largely restricted to song lyrics, at times certain elements of performance. The period characterized by the rise of the Beatles was predominantly viewed positively, the pop music of the British Invasion was interpreted as a bridge between working-class and middle-class youth. They also celebrated the working-class origin of the members of the Beatles, which the musicians expressed in a kind of carefree and (self-)ironic manner unknown in pop music until then. In the second half of the sixties, they valued the strengthening of the counterculture and the accompanying increase in political consciousness in pop culture. At the same time, they were also aware of the fact that the pop music mainstream – in particular the Beatles – had been gaining increasing artistic autonomy, and as a result, became increasingly distant both from the politicized (primarily middle-class, university student-based) radical youth movement and the working class. Parallel to this, youth culture became commodified, with major record labels – as we are aware – making huge profits from star performers of the 1960s.

In contrast, on the other side of the Iron Curtain, building on the results of a new Marxist musicology and music sociology, scholars were aiming at the joint integration of musical and sociological aspects into the analysis of music. Besides this, it is of key importance that the majority of the first Hungarian popular music research projects was motivated by cultural policy objectives such as the forming of the taste and aesthetic sensibility of the audience and the aiding of young people towards the reception of music deemed valuable by those in power. The theory of Maróthy presented here is only one possible interpretation of western popular music in state socialism, although we would like to bring attention to the parallels between this and contemporary Western European interpretations (including the British debates here discussed), in the sense that Maróthy looked upon the countercultural protest song genre, born in opposition to the commercial direction of beat music, as a state-of-the-art and politically adequate popular music genre that deserved state support. On a different note, Maróthy soon found himself alone with this approach, and more pragmatic perspectives were favoured instead. With the gradual loosening of the ties between politics and academia, Marxist theories were also gradually marginalized, even forgotten after the collapse of the state socialist system.

Beyond the detailed exploration of the reasons behind forgetting, we would like to point out a number of possible directions for further research. Remaining with the examples of the UK and Hungary, it would be worth looking into Marxist or leftist conceptions on using popular music in music education and pedagogy. In the context of the UK, an exploration of the community music movement referred to above could provide such a case. While in Hungary, the state-funded dance music composition school (*tánczeneszerzői tanfolyam*) operating for a short period in the Stalinist era (Ignácz 2018: 143-144), or even the work aimed at the studying of generative musical abilities in the 1970s, are directions through which the relationship between everyday musical genres and music education may be studied.

However, international comparisons may not only be performed on western and eastern examples. It would be worth paying particular attention to the interrelations among research taking place within Eastern European countries, and a number of such attempts – even if this is a relatively small number – have taken place within the last twelve years, for instance, in relation to Soviet and East-German relations (Nowack 2006).

The historical analysis of studies of workers' songs and urban folklore could form another important part of this research, as these works offer evidence for sociological and analytical approaches to popular music genres and jazz beginning from the late 1950s. In addition, thanks to a few western scholars (such as the British A. L. Lloyd) or scholars emigrating to the West (such as Karbusicky, who emigrated to the German Federal Republic from Czechoslovakia), international encounters between researchers of workers' songs and folklore showed that Marxist scholars were already taking steps towards cooperation, and the dismantling of the cultural boundaries of the world divided by the Iron Curtain, at the very beginning of the peaceful coexistence of the two blocs.

Endnotes

(1) See the Maróthy estate of the Archive for 20th and 21th Century Hungarian Music, Institute of Musicology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

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