

44-45 HUNGARY IS

The Cradle Of Folk Music

SAYS ATTILA GRANDPIERRE, FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF LEGENDARY COMPOSER BELA BARTOK

By Reka A. Francisk

Grandpierre is one of the figureheads of the revival movement rediscovering Hungary's folk traditions.

► SINCE THE HUNGARIAN DEMOCRATIC CHANGE, Hungarian folk music has been treated as the 'odd one out' among musical genres, due to the displacing presence of classical and pop. Nevertheless, there are several signs indicating a shift in trends to rediscover folk, such as Budapest's Liszt Ferenc Music Academy's recently launching its 'Folk Music Department', and the international tip of the hat to folk music band Muzsikás ('Musician').

Astronomer, musician, poet and writer Attila Grandpierre says folk music taught in Hungarian public schools should reach further back into the source of authentic folk culture, as he believes Hungarian folk music could be one of the world's oldest expressions of musicality, originating thousands of years ago in the Carpathian Basin. "Compared to its historical value, folk music is not appreciated to the extent it should be in its homeland," he told *Diplomacy and Trade*. "The folk music we know today is more of a simplified version of the 'original'. It's clearly marked by a process of modern interpretation by scholars of these folk traditions. Today, Hungarian folk music is undergoing a revival, as research follows the footsteps of world-famous Hungarian composer and ethnomusicologist



Bela Bartok,” Grandpierre continues. But he says even Bartok’s most basic concepts are missing from Hungarian school curriculums. “I want the whole world to appreciate Bartok’s real achievement,” he said. Bartok’s ideas include the concept that ‘true’ folk music is one that surfaces as a natural force, lying dormant in the subconscious, and which is not affected by previously internalized cultural clichés. “This definition shows an illuminating parallel with the magical art of prehistoric times,” Grandpierre argues.

“Again, Bartok states folk music is a powerful, elementary expression of musical instinct, which is a pure and authentic. I found that my special collection of ethnic music shares numerous motifs and themes with Hungarian folk, which suggests that our nation is intimately related to these cultures,” he explained. He claims he has discovered an “organically related” musical culture of Eurasian people. Evidence for this includes the a ‘galloping’ rhythm in Chinese melodies, that he claims to have unearthed in the Hungarian military anthem ‘Rakoczy indulo’, and also a research based on Zoltan Kodaly’s and Bartok’s work, who analyzed folk melodies from 36 nations. “A survey conducted in Germany, counts a total of 6,000 folk songs, while in Hungary, scholars have recorded more than 200,000.” As a performing artist himself, Grandpierre has his own theory on the role of ethnic music. “In prehistoric times, music meant preparing, mobilizing and then accumulating vital force in the oneself and ‘reactivating’ long-



> SHAMANIC PERFORMANCE: Attila Grandpierre is also the frontman of the band ‘Vagtazo Csodaszarvas’. His previous group ‘Vagtazo Halottkemek’, has been termed by Western critics as ‘the best shaman-punk band of all time’.

lost senses and thought processes,” he explained. “If music succeeds in this, it leads to ecstasy, a state in which people see themselves as an independent and total unity at the same time. From my research, this form of music was practiced by the Huns, thought to be the relatives of Hungarians. Hun music echoed from Pannonia, to the Great Wall of China.” Grandpierre believes there are two forms of folk melodies. “One which we encounter every day, that has been subjected to the modification of the last thousand

years, by oppressive regimes.” Grandpierre hopes that real, ancient folk music will be rediscovered by realizing that only a “cosmic power” could have created such a completely pure and purified system, “motivated by natural forces and a spiritual view of the Universe.” Grandpierre admits his personal theories may be unusual to the layman of folk music, but he stresses that he merely follows the path of Bela Bartok. His two albums, ‘Pure Spring’ and ‘Endless Asia’ have gained interest, as he regularly gives concerts spreading his message. His upcoming performance locations include Pecs in April, during the local ‘University Days’, and Budapest’s Petofi Csarnok (PECSA). “When I’m

on tour I feel higher powers inside me. They govern my performance and I hope I can convey some of that to my audience.” <



> SOUL SEARCHING: Grandpierre is also a widely-read writer in Hungary, researching science, philosophy, religion and mythology from a unique perspective in his works.