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Playing with Anthems: the Formation of the Cult of Empress Elisabeth in Hungarian Music

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Abstract

In this paper I reveal how the cult of Empress Elisabeth affected the reception of three different volumes of Hungarian music. These three works are: *Erzsébet-emlény* (*Elisabeth Memorial Album*, 1854) edited by Kornél Ábrányi; *Erzsébet* (*Elisabeth*, 1854) opera by Károly Doppler, Ferenc Doppler and Ferenc Erkel; and *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* (*The Legend of Saint Elisabeth*, 1865) by Franz Liszt. In spite of their high artistic level, the first two works were banned by the cultural elite who interpreted them as Habsburgian political music after the downfall of the dual state. On the other hand, the intentionally apolitical oratorio by Franz Liszt was regarded by the same cultural elite as the highest standard of artistic representation of the Empress. As a consequence of parallel distribution of both imperially and nationally constructed memories, a strange diffusion appeared in the social sphere, especially in Hungarian cultural memory. Conflicting memories emerged due to the discrepancy between the original Hungarian political myth (Kossuth-myth) and Empress Elisabeth's cult. Using the terminology introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss, I have labeled this situation as the clash of the cold and hot society in Hungary during the 19th century.

Keywords

Empress Elisabeth, Sissi, Erzsébet, Franz Liszt, Hungarian cultural elite

“O Ungarn, geliebtes Ungarnland!
Ich weiß dich in schweren Ketten.
Wie gern böt ich meine Hand,
Von Sklaverei dich zu retten!”
O könnt ich Euch den König geben!

Empress and Queen Elisabeth, 1886.²

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² The title of the poem is *O könnt ich Euch den König geben!* (*I wish I could give you the King!*) The quoted poem is not included in the publication of Empress Elisabeth's *Das poetische Tagebuch* (*The Poetic Diary*; Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984). I found it in: Wallersee 1935: 255. Here is a rough English translation: “*Oh, Hungary, beloved Hungarian land, / I know you in heavy chains. / How I'd scratch my hands / You to save from slavery.*”

Introduction

This article sheds the light on the musical pieces aimed at creating and spreading the cult of Empress Elisabeth in Hungary. While various facets of this cult have been discussed, the representation of Empress Elisabeth in contemporary music of that period has rarely been touched upon. I am focusing on Hungarian sources to discuss three volumes of music: *Erzsébet-emplény (Elisabeth Memorial Album, 1854)* edited by Kornél Ábrányi (1822–1903); *Erzsébet (Elisabeth, 1854)* opera by Károly Doppler (1825–1900), Ferenc Doppler (1821–1883) and Ferenc Erkel (1810–1893); and *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth (The Legend of Saint Elisabeth, 1865)* by Franz Liszt (1811–1886). These three works became the standard cannon pieces of her cult until the downfall of the dual state. In order to compare the relevance of Hungarian subjects I will apply some aspects of Claude Levi-Strauss' cultural memorial studies.

This is the first part of an ongoing research on the Austro-Hungarian imperial political images present in music. Thus, I refer both to some already known and speculative sources, documents and items. I begin with a short introduction on Empress Elisabeth's image in music and cultural memory; afterwards I present some examples of how Austrian Imperial Anthem was included in the pieces named after her; finally, I discuss the aforementioned works of Hungarian music dedicated to her.

Empress Elisabeth's Image in Music

There have been numerous studies dedicated to the aspects of Franz Joseph's and Elisabeth's cults. Beyond their political roles, their private lives, personalities and their cultural importance are all well-known. In the Austrian part of the former Habsburg Empire, the Empress was called Sisi, while in the Hungarian part of the dual state her official name, *Erzsébet királyné* (Queen Elisabeth) became the popular version. The official definition of her position was the Ruler Consort, which means that she was the Empress consort (Kaiserin) of Austria, and the Queen consort (királyné) of Hungary, Croatia and Bohemia. In order to avoid further misunderstandings and difficulties, I will identify her either as Empress or Queen, depending on the political context.

Her cult contains some well-known imagery based on her biographical background:

- Elisabeth as the young, independent, liberal princess;

- Elisabeth who became an empress “all of a sudden”;
- Elisabeth as a beautiful woman;
- Elisabeth as a “Mater dolorosa” — a mother in pain (Unterreiter 2005: 16).

The real facts and mythical elements of these images have already been discussed many times (most recently in Hain 2015). However, there are very few scholarly analyses of the musical pieces dedicated to Empress Elisabeth. Brigitte Hamann was the first scholar who focused on Empress Elisabeth’s life, political role and special activities aimed at her musical affirmation. In 1987 Hamann described the Empress’ musical taste, skills and some pieces of music dedicated to her (Hamann 1987). Günther Brosche discovered the collection *Huldigung der Tonsetzer Wiens* (*In Honour of Vienna Composers*, 1854) containing 91 pieces written for the Empress on the occasion of her wedding. He recounted the story of the honouring collection and identified the composers as well (Brosche 1987). He discovered that Johann Vesque von Püttlingen (1803–1883), the leader of *Die Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* (The Society of the Friends of Music) was the organiser and editor of the *Huldigung der Tonsetzer Wiens*. This collection was also discussed by Ulla Fischer-Westhauser, who edited and introduced the ceremonial gifts received by the just married ruling couple in 1854 in a decorative album (Fischer-Westhauser 2007).

Another wedding song collection was uncovered and released by Walter Deutsch (Deutsch 1997: 19). He discovered that, simultaneously with Vesque, a young composer, Carl Anton Spina (1827–1906) edited another song collection, the *Oesterreichische National Melodien* (*Austrian National Melodies*) (Ibid). Deutsch presents the circumstances of Spina’s collection mentioning the rearrangement of the *Kaiserhymne* (*Austrian Imperial Anthem*) and an application of the anthem in other honouring music pieces. However, the works dedicated to Empress Elisabeth are discussed most detailedly by Gabriele Praschl-Bichler and Gerhard Bruckner in their book *Sisis Melodien: Die Musik der Kaiserin Elisabeth* (*Sisi’s Melodies, The Music of Empress Elisabeth*) (Praschl-Bichler and Bruckner 1998). This study summarises all the aforementioned music collections, the Elisabeth-titled pieces, and especially Strauss’ compositions, and shows the empress’ musical representation.

Reviewing all these Austrian studies I can detect that all these compositions were the gesture of the dynastic honour towards Empress Elisabeth. All of them were written for various occasions and celebrations; Ulla Fischer-Westhauser lists the following celebrations: the betrothal, the wedding, the birth of their children, important visits, the enthronement with the Hungarian regalia, the 25th anniversary of her husband’s reign, the 25th anniversary of their marriage, the weddings of their children, and Elisabeth’s death

(Fischer-Westhauser 2007: 27). Musical pieces written by Austrian composers had almost no political overtones, irrespective of whether they were written in the more or less popular times of Elisabeth's life (Hamann 1997: 233).

In contrast, Hungarian musical works dedicated to Elisabeth were inspired by many difficult political ambitions. Their contemporary interpretation and reception depended absolutely on the political situation. A few examples of her Hungarian honouring music are mentioned in the aforementioned studies, but a systematic scientific research of these works has only just begun in the twenty-first century. While the *Erzsébet-emlény* (*Elisabeth Memorial Album*, 1854) has only been mentioned in some history books, the *Erzsébet* (*Elisabeth*, 1854) opera was discussed by Katalin Szacsvai Kim in her doctoral thesis (Szacsvai 2012). My final example, Franz Liszt's *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* was analysed by many scholars again and again (recently in Saffle 2003: 3–25). Nevertheless, the research on the Empress' memorials in Hungarian music has just begun. Two of the honouring art works, the *Erzsébet-emlény* and *Erzsébet* opera lost their importance after the downfall of the dual state and disappeared from Hungarian cultural life. Liszt's oratorio is still a part of the Hungarian concert life; however, as I aim to show, its interpretations both by musicologists and historians are full of false nostalgia for Empress Elisabeth.

Empress Elisabeth in Cultural Memory

In the middle of the nineteenth century the sovereign's political representation fell into two channels: protocol events and artistic manifestation. The protocol art works are usually literary texts, musical pieces, paintings and photos. These works are two-faceted: they aim to be eternal – as their artistic value could indeed have been timeless — but they are often ephemeral. This duality gives them a special, sinister aura, which makes it difficult to assess their value. Although we do not regard *Wellington's Victory* by Ludwig van Beethoven or the *1812 Overture solennelle* by Pyotr Tchaikovsky as their masterpieces, these art works emphasise the political interpretation, putting behind the historical and artistic aspects.

The pieces dedicated to Empress Elisabeth contain the same features: very few of them can be viewed as timeless art, but they do represent her image. In Hungarian context, it was more important to present her political image than any other historical or artistic aspects. In Hungary, Queen Elisabeth's cult was based on three different political components: the (feudal) reverence towards the ruling dynasty, the symbolism of the ambitions towards Hungarian

independence and Saint Elisabeth of Hungary's cult. As these components supported each other, a new image of Elisabeth was born: "the Loveable Habsburg" (Gerő 2016: 160). As Alice Freifeld wrote: "Elisabeth filled the public sphere with the glamour of a new monarchism and gave royalty a human face" (Freifeld 2007: 139).

This image was created and supported by the Hungarian political elite and the imperial management, although their aims were quite different. On the one hand, the Hungarian elite's memory amounted to historical facts about the suppressed war of independence, the disintegration of the state, as well as political ambitions to reach a beneficial consensus with the ruler. On the other hand, the imperial management expected the Hungarian elite's collaboration with the unchanged *status quo*. The cult, which was created and nourished by accidental occasions and strategic decisions, emerged for the first time as a real political-cultural phenomenon in 1866 (Vér 2006: 16).

The cult itself was also two-faceted. While the political expectations towards the queen were illusory (Gerő 2016: 172), some scholars agree that Elisabeth played a dominant role in the political events of the so-called Austrian-Hungarian compromise in 1867 (Hamann 1997: 231–234). Otto von Habsburg (1912–2011) interpreted Empress Elisabeth's political role in following terms: "It is always the emperor, who decides. ... She behaves like a woman in a proper marriage. The husband is the commander, but the commands are given by the wife" (cf. Szabó 1998: 7).

Queen Elisabeth became the key figure in the imperial identity of the Hungarian society. Between 1867 and 1916 she was the subject of both traditional feudal and modern political adoration. It is quite unusual that the imperially constructed Elisabeth-cult could push the original Kossuth-myth³ to the background (Freifeld 2007: 148). Her counter-myth was to tell the story, dubbed by Jan Assmann as a *counter-history* (Assmann 1999: 84). Thus, the conflict between the *hot and cold societies* described by Claude Lévi-Strauss emerged within the Hungarian community. Lévi-Strauss defined his invention by the following:

"I called [them] 'cold' and 'hot' societies: the former seeking through the institutions they gave themselves to annul the possible effects of historical factors on their equilibrium and continuity in a quasi-automatic fashion;

³ Lajos Kossuth (1802–1895) was the political leader of the war of independence in 1848–1849. His myth was one of a strong national identity: for example he was called "Our Kossuth-Father". His political activity was met with much criticism. He died in emigration in Torino. Due to the trauma of the suppressed war of independence, the Hungarian society turned to be a cold one, and its rearranged myth became the *Kossuth-myth*. It had a long historical background for many former national tragedies, and its essence is that Hungary would be a martyr of the European history.

the latter resolutely internalizing the historical process and making it the moving power of their development” (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 233–234).

Although Levi-Strauss’ idea was criticised by a number of scholars (for example Assmann 1999: 69), in order to understand the emergence of the cult of Elisabeth, it is important to note that a cold society prefers the myth instead of the history, while a hot society accepts true historical facts. Thus I argue that Queen Elisabeth’s very popular and successful cult provided an opportunity for Hungary to become a hot society.

Queen Elisabeth’s Political Representation in Hungarian Music

1854: The Austrian Imperial Anthem and Empress Elisabeth

In the first period of the cult formation Empress Elisabeth was portrayed in musical works by a quotation both of the Austrian Imperial and the Bavarian Royal Anthems. For her wedding the Empress received two honouring collections of music, mentioned earlier. Carl Anton Spina (1827–1906) collected songs (and one dance) from all the nations of all states of the Empire (Deutsch 1997: 19). For example, he included two Hungarian songs, one from the Hungarian Kingdom and one from Transylvania (he also added a Saxon melody and Romanian melodies from Transylvania). However, Spina edited the album in such way that the *Kaiserhymne* was presented on the very first pages. The album, thus, symbolises the entire Habsburg Empire.

The *Huldigung der Tonsetzer Wiens* was edited and released by Johann Vesque von Püttlingen (1803–1883), the leader of *Die Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* (the Society of the Friends of Music) (Fischer-Westhauser, 2007: 14). Following his invitation, 88 composers sent him 91 compositions. The pieces were composed by the cultural elite and bureaucratic imperial management. Among the composers who contributed their pieces one finds conductors, chamber musicians, high ranking officers and diplomats; however, the famous composers did not send their scores (Deutsch 1997: 20). The collection features many songs and waltzes.

In spite of Vesque’s original intention, the most famous Austrian composer of that period, Johann Strauss Jr. (1825–1899) did not contribute to this collection. However, he composed – independently – his own musical offering, the waltz *Elisabeth-Klängen* (*Tunes for Elisabeth*, 1854).⁴ Other popular dance-composers of this time, like

⁴ Strauss, Johann Junior, *Die Elisabeth-klängen* (Op. 154, 1854). In: *Thematisch-Bibliographischer Katalog der Werke von Johann Strauß (Sohn), Strauß-Elementar-Ver-*

Philipp Fahrbach Sr. (1815–1885), August Lanner (1835–1855) and Joseph Gungl (1810–1889) composed a march, waltz or czardas with the title of Elisabeth.⁵ We learn from biographies that Anton Bruckner (1824–1896) and Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884), who were totally unknown that time, composed music for the wedding celebration.⁶

While Smetana composed a *four-movement* symphony on the variation of *Kaiserhymne*, Carl Haslinger (1816–1868) in his *Österreichische Jubel-Overtüre (Austrian Festive Overture, 1854)* and Johann Strauss Jr. in his *Elisabeth-Klänge* applied the same political anthem and the Bavarian Royal Anthem (Hamann 1987: x). The application of the *Austrian anthem* is the first symptom of the empress' representation. These applications did not have any deep political meaning; they represented her highest imperial rank.

1857: The Hungarian Honouring Music Pieces

In 1857 the reigning couple visited Hungary – ruled the Habsburg dynasty since 1849 – for the first time. The goal of the emperor was to demonstrate his power to the subordinated country. Elisabeth was just a kind of a decorative figure on the emperor's side. This role of hers did not change during the tour, but her attitude did, for example she decided to study Hungarian to be able to communicate with the people (Vér 2006: 14). The official events were suddenly interrupted

zeichnung (SEU) (*Thematic-Bibliographic Catalogue of Johann Strauss Jr.'s Works, Strauss-Elementary-Dictionary*), Edited by Wiener Institute für Strauß-Forschung, Hans Schneider, Tutzing, 1992, 226. Further information: Hain & Hain, 2015: 50 and Hamann 1997: 73.

The author later replaced the title with *Myrthenkränze (Myrtle-Wreath)*. The long version of the title is: *Myrthenkränze. Walzer zur allerhöchsten Vermählungsfeier Seiner k. k. apostolischen Majestät. des Kaisers Franz Josef I mit Ihrer königlichen Hoheit der Herzogin Elisabeth von Bayern (Myrtle-Wreath, Waltz for the Highest Wedding Celebration of his Majesty Emperor and King Franz Josef with Her Royal Duchess Elisabeth of Bavaria)*. The title is readable on the front page of its first publication: Strauss, Johann, *Myrthen-Kränze*, Carl Haslinger quondam Tobias, Wien (1855?)

⁵ The details listed below require further research. I found them on a professional, but not scientific web dictionary of The Johann Strauss Society of Great Britain.

Philipp Fahrbach, *Erzsebeth Marsch (Elisabeth-March)*, Op. 21, 1854, <http://www.johann-strauss.org.uk/composers-a-m.php?id=204>

August Lanner, *Kaiser-Braut-Ankunfts-Marsch (The Arrival of the Emperor's Fiancee – March)*, Op. 18, 1854, <http://www.johann-strauss.org.uk/composers-a-m.php?id=134>

Joseph Gungl, *Elisabeth-Csárdás*, Op. 375, 1854, <http://www.johann-strauss.org.uk/composers-a-m.php?id=205>

⁶ Anton Bruckner, *Laßt Jubeltöne lauter klingen! (Let the exultation sound loud!)*, WAB 76, 1854. Its first performance: Linz, 22 April 1854. See Hawkshaw 2001: 481.

Bedřich Smetana, *Triumpf-Sinfonie mit Benützung der österreichischen Volkshymne (Triumph Symphony with the Applyig of the Austrian Anthem)*, Op. 6, 1854 (rev. 1881). See Ottlova 2001: 550.

by the death of Archduchess Sophie (1855–1857), the couple's first child. Although Hungarian society hated the Emperor, it sympathised with the mourning mother. At this point an emotional relation was born between the Empress and the Hungarian society.

The political establishment forced Hungarian cultural elite to celebrate the ruler. The composers were obliged to offer their music to the majesties. Twelve composers sent honouring pieces to the Publisher Rózsavölgyi; these were placed in an embellished album titled *Erzsébet-emlény* (*Elisabeth Memorial Album*, 1857). The leading musicians of the Nemzeti Színház (National Theater) composed the *Erzsébet* (*Elisabeth*, 1857) opera in cooperation. Although both of these were produced for a specific occasion, excerpts from these works were performed on several later occasions.

Erzsébet-emlény (Elisabeth Memorial Album)

As soon as the date of the ruler's visit became known (September 1856), the founding director of the Rózsavölgyi Music Edition assigned one of the most popular composers of the period, Kornél Ábrányi (1822–1903) to edit an illustrated album for the occasion (Ábrányi 1900: 243). The idea was the same as Vesque had in 1854 — to collect piano pieces. Ábrányi and Rózsavölgyi demanded pieces written in *style hongrois* to emphasise the Hungarian *couleur locale*. Their idea was that the themes of compositions had to correspond with the ruler's itinerary in Hungary. The most difficult dilemma was who to involve in the project. For example, they did not invite the leading composer of the time, Ferenc Erkel (1810–1893), because they were aware of his duty to compose an opera for the same occasion (see later). Finally, they chose the following musicians and their compositions:

1. Ábrányi Kornél *Magyarország határnál* [On Hungary's Border]
2. Bartay Ede (1825–1901) *Ünneplőinduló* [Festive March]
3. Brand Michael (1815–1870) *Pusztaiélet* [Pushta Life]
4. Doppler Ferenc (1821–1883) *Pásztorhangok* [Pastorale]
5. Doppler Károly (1825–1900) *Magyar idylla* [Hungarian Idyll]
6. Huber József (1823–1878) *Magyar hangok* [Hungarian Tunes]
7. Huber Károly (1828–1885) *Magyar cigány dal* [Hungarian Gypsy Song]
8. Merkl József (1811–1887) *Magyar impromptu* [Hungarian Impromptu]
9. Pető János (1822–1881) *Szerenáda* [Serenade]
10. Schmidt Gyula (1810–1865) *Capriccietto*
11. Székely Imre (1823–1887) *Hóniüdvözlet* [Greetings from the Homeland]
12. Thern Károly (1817–1886) *Csajka dal* [Boat Song] (Ábrányi 1854).⁷

Almost all composers were happy to contribute to the album,

⁷ I used the original Hungarian form of the names in the list to present the composers in an alphabetical order. The composers, even the Dopplers, the Hubers or Merkl used Hungarian version of their names in that period, as seen in the score.

except for Michael Brand. He refused the invitation many times, explaining that he had never composed music in *style hongrois* (Ábrányi 1900: 242). However, he changed his mind and wrote his *Pusztai élet* (*Life on the Great Plane*, 1857), which is the most remarkable piece of the whole album; it was played even by Franz Liszt. Brand was so inspired that he devoted the rest of his life to become “The Hungarian Composer”, who elevated the *style hongrois* to European standards. He even changed his name into a Hungarian version: Mosonyi Mihály (Bónis 2001: 183).

Compared to other Hungarian compositions of the time, the pieces from the album were composed in the most advanced style. The composers employed various keys throughout the album (sometimes even within one piece). Among the scales the *style hongrois* became the most significant. The pieces were written in simple times (duple and quadruple), as their structures appear usually in the ternary form. On the other side, we can find plenty of genres, for example march (Bartay), song (Thern), piece for saloon (Merkl), and short through-composed (Doppler-brothers). All compositions showcase a high entertaining character; the style is derived from the dances and songs, but realised on the level of the abstraction. Although each piece can be seen as a separate composition, a hidden narrative of the whole album can also be discovered. In the ensuing analysis I interpret four thematic cycles corresponding to the plot, character and place of the pieces in the album.

– The *Overture* – The Arrival

The first two introductory pieces depicts the beginning of the ruler’s journey. Ábrányi’s *Magyarország határánál* (*On Hungary’s Border*, 1854) is a typical programmatic salon piece. It is divided into six parts; while four of them (*Maestoso*, *Più mosso*, *Meno mosso*, *Marcia*) have a special theme, two transitional episodes (*Più allegretto*, *Presto*) vary the formal themes. The first theme is a sorrowful fanfare, the second is a serious march, the third is a dance and the fourth recalls Beethovenian tunes. The program of Ábrányi’s piece resembles the ceremony of a royal visit. People hear the fanfare which draws their attention. Then the guards and the sovereign march in. The dance forms a part of the greeting celebration. Finally, people sing a hymn to pray for the ruler’s safe arrival. The piece begins in a dark, gloomy B flat minor, then goes through C major and ends in a bright B flat major. The interchange of minor and major keys could have an auxiliary meaning: the way the travellers cross the border of Hungary. The piece can be called considered an overture on his own due to its length, thematic content and structure. This serenity is broken by Ede Bartay’s joyous *Ünnepi induló* (*Festive march*, 1854), which uses a ternary form with Trio in C major.

Example 1. K. Ábrányi's *Magyarország határánál*

- The *Scherzo* – The *Couleur Locale*

I call the next five pieces (by Brand, the Doppler- and Huber-brothers) the *Scherzo*-cycle. Their common genre is the musical picaresque, which guides the listeners to the regions that the reigning couple have visited. The editor's aim could have been to emphasise the Hungarian *couleur locale*.

Magyarország határánál

Themes of *On Hungary's Border*

K. Ábrányi

Maestoso - A Fanfare
1. bar

Piu mosso - A Dance
18-19. bar

Meno mosso - Beethoven-like melody
28-29. bar

Marcia
67. bar

Example 2. M. Brand's *Pusztai élet*

Pusztai élet

Themes of *The Life on the Grand Plaine*

M. Brand

Adagio
2-3. bars

Allegretto
30-33. bars

Allegretto
40-43. bars

Allegretto - Quotation of the Austrian Imperial Anthem
138-145. bars

Brand's *Pusztai élet* (*Life on the Great Plane*) piano fantasy comprises eight sections. It begins with a long, cadenza-like *Introduction*, then the fast *Allegretto* part intercepts the slow episodes (*Adagio*, *Largo* and *Andante*) three times; it ends with an *Andante*. In the *Introduction* we hear a long and sorrowful violin-like melody in D minor. The central theme is presented for the first time in the second part, which is a passionate *style hongrois* theme in D minor. The marching theme in F major arrives after several short episodes and leads to the culmination of the piece. After the climax, the *Kaiserhymn* begins in D major in quiet dynamics. The volume of the anthem gradually increases until it blasts triumphantly. As the anthem comes to the end, none of the themes return and we can only hear scales in piano *montuno*. The piece concludes in a quiet D major. It implies a hidden aim: instead of the final culmination of Hungarian themes, the imperial anthem appears (Bónis 1960: 68). However, it is also significant that after the anthem none of the formal tunes can be heard. Brand realised that the *style hongrois* tunes and the imperial anthem do not match. The programme of the *Pusztai élet* can be interpreted using the narrative of the whole album: the people of the *puszta* sing about their daily life, when the emperor arrives (Kassai 2001: 95). A certain amount of political irony can be found in the musical incompatibility of the Hungarian melodies and the imperial anthem.

Example 3. Themes from the *Erzsébet-emlény*

Themes from the *Erzsébet-emlény*

F. Doppler: *Pásztorhangok* (*Pastorale*)



K. Huber: *Magyar cigány-dal* (*Hungarian Gypsy Song*)



The four pieces by the Doppler- and Huber-brothers are also picaresque images of the romantic idylls set in the *puszta*. Ferenc Doppler's *Pásztorhangok* (*Pastorale*) uses the dotted rhythm, syncopated patterns and a quart-theme, all of which were popular in the period. The quart-theme may have reminded the contemporary audience of the politically banned *Rákóczi-March*. The *Pásztorhangok*

is defined as a capriccio by the author; it starts in A minor *lento* and arrives to an A major *Allegretto*.

Károly Doppler's *Magyar Idylla (Hungarian Idyll)* has a different character. It opens with a harsh, instrumental theme in A flat major. In the middle section the theme is played in D flat major. The last section presents a monumental marching theme, which returns to the opening key. József Huber's *Magyar hangok (Hungarian Tunes)* is also based on two violin-like themes. The music of *Andante* in B minor transforms to the *Allegro*'s B major coloured by the Hungarian scale. Finally, the melody of Károly Huber's *Magyar czigány-dal (Hungarian Gypsy Song)* sounds like it were sung by a human voice. Its theme is quite simple, likewise its tonal design which departs from A minor and ends in the light A major.

- The *Serenade* – Personal Respect for the Empress Elisabeth

The next three short pieces can be regarded as a *Serenade* cycle. József Merkl's *Magyar impromptu (Hungarian impromptu)* is really a sparkling piano improvisation. It falls into three sections, each of them built around its own theme. Although it contains only two tempo markings, a slow (*Lento di molto*) and a fast one (*Poco Allegro*), the keys vary. The opening section is realised in a tragic F minor, which is followed by a bright C major. However, when the opening theme returns the key also changes back to F minor. Finally, the piece finishes in the relative major of the opening key.

János Pető's *Szerenád (Serenade)* beginning in C minor and ending in C major, and Gyula Schmidt's *Capricietto* opening in E major and ending in E minor are written in the same capricious and whimsical style. Schmidt's counterpoint technique merges German melody type with Hungarian scales and rhythm. The tragic overtone of the third cycle provides an almost prophetic vision to the album.

- The *Finale* – The Farewell

The last two pieces can be regarded as the finale. Imre Székely's *Hóni üdvözet (Greetings from the Homeland)* is a vivid farewell song, opening in A minor and ending in its relative major key. Just like Schmidt's composition, it originates from the German *Lied*-tradition (e.g. in its dramaturgy and structure), but employs *style hongrois*. Finally, Károly Thern, the popular opera composer, put his *Csajkás dal (The Boatsong)* in E major to the end of the album. Its text is as follows:

Ússzál szívem hajója!
 Ringassatok, habok!
 A Balatonnak tükrén
 Két ég között vagyok:
 Majd fölfelé a kék ég
 Felé kíváncszom
 Majd mélyen a zöld öledbe,
 hullámzó Balaton!

Swim the ship of my heart!
 Rock me, waves!
 On Balaton's surface
 I am in the middle between two skies:
 I am longing towards the blue sky,
 Up and Up,
 Then towards thy green depth,
 Oh, waving Balaton! (Garay 1854: 32)

Other Themes from the *Erzsébet-emplény*

Merkl: Magyar Impromptu (Hungarian Impromptu)

Lento di molto



Poco Allegro



Pető: Szerenáda (Serenade)

Andantino



Schmidt: Capricietto

Andante



Thern: Csajkásdal (The Boatsong)

Andantino



Although the pieces follow each other alphabetically in the album, the titles and programs suggest a conscious narrative that can be summarised as a warning to the rulers of an uncertain outcome of their journey by comparing it to a boat travel. The boats, as it is known, rock. They can easily overturn. It is true that the boat can transfer the passengers to the other bank, but one may never know what will happen on the river or on the other side.

The Reception of the Album

According to Ábrányi's interpretation in 1900, all composers were deeply touched by the respect shown for the queen. He said: "May the God bless the name of Queen Elisabeth, which had such magic power, that it was strong enough to transform the lost Shauls into Hungarian musical Pauls" (Ábrányi 1900: 246). This pathetic sentence seems to be a belated illusion that appeared in Ábrányi's consciousness in retrospect. However, there is a symbolic drawing on the album cover. The twelve composers' figures stand around the queen's marble bust and raise their eyes to her. This position – twelve people surrounding a central figure – resembles the usual positioning of the apostles and Jesus Christ in Christian visual presentations. Thus, the album image implies secondary sacredness. This drawing can verify Ábrányi's late retrospect, by suggesting that the album was not just addressed to the Empress, but highly inspired by her.

The album was published on 4 May 1857, on the day when the Emperor and Empress visited Pest. This edition was displayed in the shop window to catch the audience's attention, who were indeed highly interested in it. Finally, the pieces by Kornél Ábrányi, Michael Brand, Ferenc Doppler, Imre Székely and Károly Thern became popular (Ibid: 244).

The Erzsébet Opera

The same occasion drove the director of the National Theatre to invite Ferenc Erkel to compose an opera addressing the Empress (Szacsvai 2012: 151). Due to the fact that the director made the offer in September 1856, and the visit was due to take place in May 1857, there was not enough time to compose a *grand opéra*. Hence Erkel decided to compose a *bel canto opera* and shared the assignment with his musician colleagues – the aforementioned Doppler brothers. They contributed one act each. The favourite librettist of that time, József Czanyuga (1816–1894) wrote the drama with the title of *Erzsébet* (Elisabeth) about Saint Elisabeth's fictional romance.

In the first act, which takes place in the early thirteenth century, German crusaders go to the Holy Land and pass across Hungary. Among the knights, the Landgrave Ludwig, the fiancé of Princess Elisabeth, visits Hungary to find out if his spouse would fall in love with him. Ludwig and his friend disguise themselves as lute players. The princess also puts on a disguise to attend the diamond wedding anniversary of her friend's grandparents. Ludwig and Elisabeth have a brief encounter and they fall in love with each other. In the first finale the princess attends the wedding anniversary.

In the second act Elisabeth is torn by her faithfulness to her fiancé and her new burning passion. She gives food to the beggars and goes with them to a chapel to pray. Ludwig comes in and demands her to answer his love. Elisabeth tells him the truth about her engagement, sends him away and returns to the royal court. The king organises a tournament for the knights.

In the third act Ludwig wins the tournament and it is Elisabeth's duty to put the winner's crown on his head. They recognise each other and marry happily. When the opera was renewed in later decades, the directors omitted the last act and the story ended with the second finale substituted by the wedding of Elisabeth and Ludwig. The Dopplers and Erkel created their own operatic style by merging *bel canto*, the *style hongrois* and the early German Romanticism.

As to the political symbolism of Elisabeth, Erkel wrote his act with enthusiasm. It was his first opera after recovering from depression caused by the unsuccessful war of independence. He had to make a compromise to write an opera dedicated to the rulers, but in terms of music he had considerable freedom. Since he liked the light romantic plot of the opera, he composed one of his best scores. His cabalettas, duets, ensembles, finale and symphonic intermezzo are quite advanced when assessed against contemporary Hungarian music, and even his own earlier oeuvre. However, he remained loyal to his rebellious liberal ideas, by including two of his earlier, politically motivated compositions in the second act.

In the beginning of the second act Princess Elisabeth is walking around in a valley and gives bread to the beggars, who praise her benevolence. In the nearby chapel the bells call people to pray. Elisabeth and the beggars go there and, while praying, they sing the Hungarian anthem, composed by Erkel in 1845. The first verse of the anthem is close to the religious hymns, thus it is appropriate for this scene.⁸ The Hungarian national anthem had not been performed to the rulers until that moment, hence the Emperor did not recognise it. While it was not a banned political music, as the *Rákóczi-march* was, its political significance could hardly be denied. The audience immediately understood the symbolic political gesture. It was a roguish nod between the composer and the audience.

⁸ The Hungarian anthem was written by Ferenc Kölcsey (1790–1838) with the title of *Himnusz* (*Hymn*, 1823). Its poetic English translation by William N. Loew:

“O, my God, the Magyar bless
With Thy plenty and good cheer!
With Thine aid his just cause press,
Where his foes to fight appear.
Fate, who for so long did'st frown,
Bring him happy times and ways;
Atoning sorrow hath weighed down
Sins of past and future days.”

In Loew 1881: 103.

Another Erkel's similarly politically symbolic gesture is that he included the *Magyar induló* (*Hungarian March*, 1850) in the finale of the second act.⁹ This popular march was written by Erkel as a memorial of the war of independence. In the opera its patriotic text was replaced with a neutral one about knights and fights. Thus these two political musical pieces did not stir any scandal and remained constant parts of the opera in later renewals too.

The opera was premièred with great success on 6 May 1857 in the presence of the ruling couple. All the omens suggested a huge operatic triumph. Franz Joseph, who usually insisted on his Austrian Imperial uniform, donned a Hussar-uniform for this celebration (Freifeld 2007: 144). The Empress also wore an attire resembling a Hungarian costume. As Franz Joseph had low affinity for music, he did not find any problems with the melodies. He and his wife enjoyed the melodious, dynamic love-story about a young royal couple. The ruler's favourable opinion supported the success of the opera. Due to its popularity it was played many times and renewed in further three decades. However, in the twentieth century the opera received exaggerated criticism, with its detractors claiming that it was a poorly constructed occasional work.

The opera *Erzsébet* is one of the earliest appearances of Queen Elisabeth's specific Hungarian image: it focuses on Saint Elisabeth, but addresses the Queen as a living person. The success of the opera was great thanks to its charming love story, passionate style and the two political music pieces included. This gesture was well received by the audience. The application of Hungarian anthem in a musical work of highest importance is one of the first symptoms of the memorial clashes mentioned earlier. Erkel's quotation represents an original symbol of a cold society, although the opera was meant to be a cultural memorial work of a hot society. While Brand applied the *Kaiserhymne*, Erkel confronted the audience with the national anthem. Hence the clash between the two memorial intentions began with Brand's and Erkel's works.

However, Erkel's playing with the anthem could be perceived as the best advantage of Queen Elisabeth's political representation: it allowed a Hungarian national gesture within the legal borders. However, the cold society's (hot) expectation that the political borders could be expanded by the support of the cult of Saint Elisabeth's proved to be an illusion.

⁹ The story of *Magyar induló* (*Hungarian March*) is an adventurous one; see Szacsvai 2012: 178.

Epilogue: The Legend of Saint Elisabeth

The factual relationship between the two Elisabeths (Queen Elisabeth is the fifteenth descendent of Saint Elisabeth) was emphasised by the Hofburg on many political platforms (Gerő 2016: 111). For example, at the eve of the aforementioned opera première Empress Elisabeth received an illustrated hagiography, *The Legend of Saint Elisabeth* from *Szent István Társulat* (the Saint Stephen Association) (Ibid: 179). Even though the honour gift was a beautiful book, it was not given to celebrate an important biographical relationship, but in order to mask the resistance of the Hungarian poets. The poets invited to contribute to an honouring panegyrics-album hardly sent any poems; thus, the hagiography seemed like a more respectful gift than a very slim volume of poetry.

In the Central European folklore the image of Queen Elisabeth was sometimes associated with the cult of the saint. For example, there are stories that she went to the poor Hungarians and usually gave them bread (Magyar 2010: 139). The angry Franz Joseph ran to her and demanded to tell him what she was carrying in her basket. She said they were *only roses*. Another anecdote tells a story that the Queen visited and helped a sick soldier as well.

Since 1866 the relationship between the Saint and the Queen became the main focus of many works of art, including the oratorio *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* (*The Legend of Saint Elisabeth*, 1862) by Franz Liszt. Musicians, politicians and even historians interpreted the oratorio, which had its premiere in Pest in 1865, as a political address to Queen Elisabeth (Ábrányi 1900: 320; Gerő 2016: 179; Freifeld 2007: 148). Notwithstanding the fact that Liszt composed some political music (e.g. *Missa Coronationalis – The Coronation Mass*, 1866), *The Legend of Saint Elisabeth* was not intended to be such work.¹⁰ In his letters Liszt mentioned the reasons that inspired him to deal with the saint's fate:¹¹ he sympathised with her and found similarity between the life of the saint and his own. Both of them had to leave their homeland and live in a small German region (Wartburg and Weimar respectively). Furthermore, they shared Franciscan devotion. Finally, she became an ideal figure due to her strong faith, charity and modesty.

¹⁰ Liszt applied concrete and direct political references in many compositions. For example, in the *Missa Coronationalis* he applied direct quotation from the politically banned *Rókóczi-March*. The Hungarian audience was aware of the thematic application. Thus, the lack of any concrete political quotation in the oratorio also has a profound political meaning, as I will argue below.

¹¹ Haburger 2000: 348. The letter was written on 2 December 1862 in Rome. Liszt's personal inspiration is discussed in Walker 1970: 32.

Since there are some well known analyses of this oratorio,¹² I focus only on the recent topic of the inclusion of anthems. Liszt chose the genre of oratorio rather than the opera. He presented the saint's life in a prelude and six scenes, using five main themes for the musical narrative containing seven chapters. He employed the motives not as Wagnerian leitmotifs, but with respect to the dramaturgy of the symphonic abstraction.

Liszt searched for a long time for the melodies relating to Saint Elisabeth.¹³ The first and central motif is an old Gregorian chant, the *Quasi stella matutina*, which was widely popular in Hungary. The second one is also a religious song, the *Cantio de Sanct Elisabetha Hungariae Regis Filia*, which was believed to be a mediaeval psalm.¹⁴ In order to evoke the Hungarian *coelour locale* Liszt included a favourite dance-song in, which was suggested to him by his friend, the famous violin player Ede Reményi (1828–1898). He chose the tune *Schönster Herr Jesu*, which was believed to be an old crusader pilgrim's melody, to represent German knights. Finally, there is a key motif, which is present in every scene: the cross. Thus, he applied two Gregorian chants, Hungarian and German songs and, finally, a very personal motif as a musical self-portrait. In Liszt's musical interpretation, Hungarian and German histories are just episodes in the universal story of the saint. The story is not about a woman, a princess or an empress, but about universal fate, faith and bearing the cross.

The Hungarian cultural elite used Liszt's personal confession of his faith to be a symbolic landmark of the *cold social* movements. The cultural (and political) elite interpreted the oratorio as a masterpiece honouring the Queen. This interpretation could have seemed right in the light of the Erkel-Doppler-opera, which also managed to sing about the saint while addressing the queen. The reception of the oratorio was supported by the political establishment that sought escape in Queen Elisabeth's cult. In 1865, when both the imperial and Hungarian political elites needed social support, the première of the oratorio was a good choice to demonstrate the image of a strong nation and a good Queen. Both the Habsburgs and the Hungarian elite could see the oratorio as a symbolic vision of the Austro-Hungarian compromise.

A decade later, when the political powers did not support the performance of the oratorio, it became a mere musical event and the

¹² A recent analysis is found in Saffle 2003: 3–25.

¹³ Further information in Liszt 1986: 458.

¹⁴ The Hungarian editor of *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth*, Imre Sulyok had discussed the story of the mentioned *Cantio*... and the crusaders' song: *Schönster*... The *Cantio* is a Baroque hymn composed by György Náray (1645-1699), the *Schönster Herr Jesu* is a late baroque song from the 18th century. SÜLYOK Imre, "Preface", In: LISZT, 1986, Ibid, VII.

very same Pest audience did not appreciate it (1877) (Legány 1986: 76–77). However, on the occasion of Elisabeth’s official funeral the Hungarian Royal Opera performed the oratorio (Ábrányi 1900: 320), thus establishing a tradition that on every 18 November – the Saint Elisabeth Day – the oratorio would be performed. And every year the Opera house was crowded on that day, because everybody in attendance was aware of the double meaning of *The Legend of Saint Elisabeth*.

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Акош Виндхаџер

ПОИГРАВАЊЕ ХИМНАМА: ФОРМИРАЊЕ КУЛТА ЦАРИЦЕ
ЕЛИЗАБЕТЕ У МАЂАРСКОЈ УМЕТНИЧКОЈ МУЗИЦИ

(Резиме)

У Мађарској је култ Царице Елизабете успостављен услед политичких очекивања (и илузија) усмерених према њој. Царици су посвећена бројна музичка дела, нпр. маршеви, песме и игре. Два остварења су се, међутим, издигла изнад уобичајеног нивоа ових музичких посвета: збирка клавирских комада *Erzsébet-emlény* и опера Еркела и Доплера посвећена Елизабети.

У комаду *Pusztaiélet* (из албума *Erzsébet-emlény*) Михаел Бранд цитира *Kaiserhymne* у свечаном маниру. Међутим, након мађарског мелоса, за којим следи царска химна, композитор не развија првобитне теме, већ музички ток само меандрира док не стигне до финалног акорда Де дура. Овиме је по први пут „иностраност” царске химне рефлектована у мађарској инструменталној музици. Ференц Еркел такође указује на политичке тензије у својој интерпретацији приповести о Светој Елизабети. Он је у своју оперу *Елизабетџа* инкорпорисао мађарску химну и бунтовни марш из доба мађарског рата за независност; цар и царица су на премијери одслушали ове „политички некоректне” мелодије, али их нису препознали. Док, дакле, царска химна звучи чудно у Брандовом комаду, мађарска химна и марш су идеално уклопљени у музички садржај Еркелове опере. Франц Лист се није приклонио култу Царице Елизабете, али је његовим делима ипак приписана таква намера. Уместо мађарске или царске химне, Лист је у ораторијум посвећен Светој Елизабети инкорпорисао грегоријанске напеве, као и немачке и мађарске песме. Његова намера била је да култ Свете Елизабете издигне изнад актуелне политичке платформе, али су његове политичке импликације ипак остале валидне.

Мађарско пре-модерно друштво имало је две могућности, према терминологији Клода Леви-Строса: или да остане „хладно” (тј. загледало у митове) или да постане „топло” (тј. да прихвати актуелну политичку реалност). Култ Царице Елизабете имао је преимућство да је могао да подржи и концепт „топлог” друштва. Царичин култ је потиснуо пређашњи мит о Лајошу Кошуту. Сукоб ова два култа био је очигледан чак и на примеру протоколарних музичких остварења, као што су биле збирка *Erzsébet-emlény* и опера *Erzsébet*. Напокон је култ Елизабете превладао и обојио све културалне наративе митско-политичким преливима, чак и у случају наизглед аполитичних уметничких остварења, попут Листовог ораторијума. Тако је један од погона модернизације „топлог” друштва постао препрека истој.

Изван сукоба меморијалних наратива, политичка представа Царице Елизабете постала је све сложенија и све удаљенија од стварне личности. Њен политички „имиџ” и друштвени култ били су оруђа у рукама њеног супруга. Пошто је Франц Јозеф одбио да игра улогу „доброг владара”, култ његове жене као лепе и добре владарке је ојачао, а затим и „надживео” како смрт саме царице, тако и распад Аустро-Угарске.

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