Franz Liszt Academy of Music POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

(6.8 Art and Cultural History Studies: Musicology)

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ERKEL WORKSHOP

COLLABORATION IN THE STAGE PLAYS OF FERENC ERKEL

(1840-1857)

DOCTORAL THESIS

ARGUMENTS

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BACK STORY

In retrospect, it is rather confounding that it was the very same Kálmán Nádasdy – composer, opera and film director – who radically rearranged Ferenc Erkel's Bánk Bán in 1940 and only a decade later signed a petition, urging the Dramatic Committee of the Budapest Opera to prepare a "critical Erkel edition" in 1951. The ministry apparently approved of his instancy, although no steps were made in the right direction to realise the bold project. The case of an "Erkel Complete" came up ten years on, with the founding of the Bartók Archives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (later Institute for Musicology) in 1961. From there on, the soup started to thicken: an editorial committee with three experts (Ferenc Bónis, Jenő Vécsey and László Somfai) was set up early in 1962, publication guidelines were determined, and Bence Szabolcsi – the director of the small academic research division – informed the Language and Literature Department of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in May the same year about their plans to initiate the complete critical edition of Erkel's body of work, referring to the project as "a complete and critical edition of musical composition" in "a branch of discipline unbeknownst to Hungary so far". In November 1963, Jenő Vécsey, then head of the Musical Collection of National Széchenyi Library, reported to the Bartók Archives the completion of the first opera: Bátori Mária. Until his untimely death in 1966, Vécsey had completed the critical edition of three further Erkel operas (Sarolta, Dózsa György Acts 1-3, Erzsébet Act 2), five overtures (Bátori Mária, Hunyadi László, Sarolta, Dózsa György, Brankovics György, Unsung Heroes [Névtelen hősök]), and the overture of *Erzsébet* credited to Ferenc Doppler. Even though the original plan was modestly aiming at the publication of piano reductions based on previously published scores, the project got stranded with the death of Vécsey, without a single sheet printed. As before, handwritten guide books were used for various stage adaptations.

Slight progress as it was in the short run, Tibor Tallián's initiative for the critical edition of Erkel's operas (Ferenc Erkel Operas) in 1998 – as opposed to the bold plan of an all-encompassing complete edition – at least rebooted the project, and there are an increasing number of stage productions that rely on the recent editions of Bátori Mária (2002), Hunyadi László (2006) and Bánk bán (2009). Incidentally, extensive research of available sources and groundwork for the critical editions significantly contributed to our knowledge of individual musical pieces, Erkel's composition methods, and generally about the opera workshop at the National Theatre.

The pace of current research is markedly different from that of the 1960s, for a number of reasons. The decisive factor, however, is that Jenő Vécsey exclusively studied the autographs. Although the guidelines for the complete edition stipulated in 1962 clearly stated the exploration of possible sources, it never actually happened. Overestimating the autographs, Vécsey complied with the then prevailing "Urtext" concept, while it is also possible that he considered his "score reconstructions", as he liked to refer to his work, the basis for future piano editions. Somewhat counter to the guidelines, he expedited neither an extensive research to uncover possible sources nor a meticulously detailed survey of orchestral parts. Having said that, one must admit that access to the score archives of the National Theatre – at the time stored without being catalogued in the Opera House – as well as the rich but dormant collection of 19th century musical scores scattered in theatres all over Hungary and in neighbouring countries was well neigh impossible, or at least immensely difficult.

SOURCES AND VERSIONS

The rekindled initiative for the critical edition of Erkel operas started in more favourable conditions and achieved palpable progress over the past fifteen years. Although basic research needed to be done in many fields to pave the way for publication, we could realistically set the goal to possibly explore and study the entire body of source materials for each musical piece. Compared to the previously known scores, available sources broadened exponentially by thousands of sheets for each opera: added to the autographs are recently revealed composition documents from the estate of Erkel's descendants (sketches, drafts and particellas); study scores and prompter's books in the National Theatre and Opera House; full scores from stage adaptations performed in the 19th and 20th centuries in theatres nationwide; as well as early editions of scores and printed librettos. Parallel to unraveling possible sources, versions at the National Theatre also had to be clarified. In case of the three operas published so far – and most probably with the currently processed Dózsa György as well – the principal text is never the original version that debuted in the Opera House but a later version, formed and chiselled through a series of stage performances directed or conducted by the composer. In order to understand those changes, one must get to know the members of the opera company over the years, and the contemporary reception of the operas cannot be disregarded either.¹

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¹ Researching the contemporary press, archives of the Institute for Musicology, pocket books of the

Sources for the critical editions of Bátori Mária and Hunyadi László amounted to 6,000 to 7,000 pages each. The autograph scores proved to be insufficient in all three operas: added to the composer's full score, the musical parts that Erkel himself used, amended and annotated for stage performances at the National Theatre are considered as the most relevant sources, complemented by copied guide books as reference sources for the critical editions. The genre and the given circumstances gave enough rationale to favour musical parts from the National Theatre archives to autographs. Erkel's original opera scores served multiple functions. They were used for working out the orchestration, and later on they served as guide books for the actual performances. Erkel exclusively conducted his operas until 1874, and more or less later on as well. He was insisting on using his own scores as guide books, despite the fact that more legible copies of Bátori Mária, Hunyadi László, and Erzsébet were available by then. Unfortunately, as he was conducting from his own original score, he would never again get down to elaborating on the sketchy notation that he had left quite uncouth in the rush of creativity. The fundamental layers of the autograph guide books are often vaguely indicative of his ideas about dynamics and articulation. Apart from the scanty notation, some of the autographs are also incomplete. Quite a few pages of the fundamental parts from he composer's authentic score of Bátori Mária, for example, went missing. Some songs that were later added to Bátori and Hunyadi are also missing from the autographs – the earliest available sources for these are likewise the musical parts and copied full scores from the National Theatre archives. A point in case, autographs of the later versions of the overtures for both operas are missing. Two later additions, vocal parts for Bátori Mária, have been recovered from scores found in theatre archives: before that we had only inferred their existence from contemporary articles. Therefore the Cabaletta (No. 8) of Lujza Liebhardt from 1852, and the love duet (No. 6) of Kornélia Hollósy and Albert Jekelfalusi composed for the 1858 restaging of the opera, together with the Hungarian dances that were possibly added at the same time, can be considered additional parts. To mention but a few examples: instrumental parts at the National Theatre archives are the primary sources for the augmented László aria (No. 7) in Hunyadi, reworked in 1859 for Ferenc Stéger, along with the later addition of Hungarian Dance (Palotás). Likewise, I interpret specific musical parts in the archives as evidence that the modifications on the La Grange aria (No. 12b) by Sándor Erkel were indeed approved by Ferenc Erkel.

THE STRUCTURE OF MY THESIS

The subject of my thesis is the question of authorship, the degree and methods of collaborative composition in the stage plays of Erkel, considering Bánk bán as a milestone. At first I am focusing on musical plays that Erkel composed before Erzsébet (Chapter III.) then a whole chapter is devoted to the opera Erzsébet itself (Chapter IV.). Enumerating the classic and recently discovered sources of the Erkel oeuvre (Chapter II.), the third chapter of my thesis deals with the authenticity of available sources, the authorship of the operas and the problems of publication in chronological order: Bátori Mária (III.1) and Hunyadi László (III.2). The rest of the chapter is devoted to the sources of folk plays that Erkel composed between 1844 and 1846, especially the autograph of Two Pistols (Két pisztoly), the first instance of collaborative authorship according to Dezső Legánÿ. I give a close scrutiny of songs in these folk plays, summing up the findings, noting the origin of songs in an incipit register. I conclude the chapter (III.4) discussing the authorship of Salvator Rosa (1855). Erzsébet (1857) deserves a chapter of its own for reasons beyond its outstanding status in Erkel's oeuvre: the abundance of available sources. This is the earliest of Erkel's stage plays where compositional documents for certain parts are accessible.² Authorship and the methods of collaborative composition are revealed with the straightforward comparative study of sources. Erzsébet being a lesser known opera, only the second act of which (No. 6-10) did Erkel compose, I start the chapter with a short description of the principal characters, structure, plot and numbers, capping the story with accounts of its controversial contemporary reception (IV. 1.). Further on, I enlist available sources: the autograph and contemporary performance scores (IV. 2.1.), evaluating compositional documents (IV.2.2.), and finally analysing the entire process of composition(IV.3.), based on surviving sketches and drafts. Collaborative composition is only studied in numbers where some forms of compositional documents have survived. For this reason, I only briefly touch upon No. 8 and completely disregard No. 10 (Finale). Based on two partial sketches and the pages in the autograph that apparently both composers worked on simultaneously, the first subchapter (IV.3.1 No. 6 Chorus of Beggars) is an attempt to reconstruct how the project was transferred between the composers, and how they collaborated. Three separate sections (IV. 2-4) are about the composition of formal units within the duet of Erzsébet and Lajos (No. 7). All three are different case studies: the scenario is attributed to Erkel alone, an assumption based on the surviving first sketchy notation of the melody (IV.3.2); the cantabile of the duet was orchestrated by Ferenc Doppler from a rather detailed piano extraction

²The final version of the King's aria in *Bátori Mária* show very little resemblance to the early sketches.

draft (IV.3.3); the *No. 7 Cabaletta* is also Doppler's orchestration, although only a melody sketch has survived, and we can only assume that Doppler used Erkel's draft as a *Vorlage* (IV:3.4.). The last section of the chapter gives an insight into the composition of the Gunda and Kuno duet (*No. 8*) and Erzsébet aria (*No. 9*), based on a short, fragmented sketch, a melody draft that would be later discarded, a piano extraction draft of the aria that still uses that melody, and a fragmented early score. I conclude my thesis with a summary (Chapter V.), followed by a thorough register of sources, primary and secondary bibliography (Chapter VI.) and the list of illustrations. The Appendix contains a data DVD with the autograph pages of the analysed parts of *Erzsébet*, and the full score and libretto of *Hunyadi László* (VII.2) from the critical edition.

ACHIEVEMENTS. THE AUTHORSHIP OF EARLY WORKS – COMPOSITION METHOD

My thesis is a concise summary of years of researching available source materials and preparing the critical editions of Erkel's early operas. I would rather paint a different picture of the composer and discard the overused, idealised portrait of Erkel by Alajos Griegl from 1855: the great composer sitting by his desk, pondering over the scores of Bátori Mária and Hunyadi László. Based on recently discovered sketches and drafts, the portrait of Erkel sitting by the piano would be more authentic and true to life. I also had to realise the importance of the work environment at the National Theatre, whether it was a hindrance or a benefit at times: experts whom - despite our previous assumptions - Erkel employed to orchestrate all his operas with the exception of *Hunyadi*; copyists who unusually not only replicated but in a way publicised Erkel's autograph scores. They were working musicians in the orchestra, and in his position as composer and conductor, Erkel most obviously instructed them to render the uncouth and rather inconsistent autograph into a musical score or a set of instrumental parts complete with dynamics, articulation and other performance instructions. In the case of Bátori Mária, for example, the cellist Anton Weindl took almost a year to finish the instrumental parts, a duplicate full score, and separate score for the Introduction (the first three numbers of the opera), using the same source material: the composer's autograph, which he had previously put in order. Following the subtle variations in the three so-called copies, we get an insight into how, by repeatedly performing Bátori, the cellist Weindl became more experienced and liberal in the interpretation of the original autograph score.

Both the representative function of the score copies, and the utilitarian considerations of the instrumental parts were good enough reasons to employ members of the orchestra to make clean and fair copies of the scores. The composer's instructions to copyists also reveal Erkel's lax attitude towards his own autographs and the finalisation of his work. He was not only liberal with performance instructions – which might have been easily overlooked anyway – but also with composition and borrowing musical movements (such as dances). This was the case from the very beginning of Erkel's career. His contemporaries knew but seldom talked about it. Despite rumours about an Erkel workshop with joint composition efforts spreading after the death of the composer, not least fuelled by disciples of Erkel's sons, and despite the autograph scores - in various handwritings, bearing the notes and remarks of different collaborators in their very basic layers - became available for research in the collection of the National Museum as early as 1913, the authorship of Erkel's oeuvre came under close and systematic scrutiny only in 1961, by László Somfai, a young expert in modern musical philology, unraveling the hidden layers of the autographs.

Without getting bogged down in the details, it is worth noting that, relying on the autograph scores, László Somfai found the 1855 publication of the melodrama Salvator Rosa, and the 1857 opera Erzsébet as milestones in Erkel's career when joint efforts in his compositions visibly commenced. In his interpretation, "in the 1850s, roughly by the completion of Sarolta and Bánk bán, collaboration was restricted to the contribution of some of his disciples – a practice not unusual in musical history. [...] More substantial contribution from fellow composers was becoming more apparent (perhaps as early as the work on Sarolta but no later than the making of Dózsa) when he trusted his sons to elaborate on his sketchy drafts to a certain part." It is important to know that, at the time when Somfai did his research, drafts and notes for Erzsébet, Bánk bán, and Dózsa György had not yet been discovered. Neither had the songs composed in 1844 for the folk play Two Pistols by Ede Szigligeti been available by then - yet another autograph score noted down in various hands. Following Somfai's logic of autograph analysis, in the list of Erkel works Dezső Legánÿ dated the beginning of Erkel's composing collaboratively thirteen years back, to 1844.

Reassessing recently uncovered sources and original autographs, neither hypotheses hold water any more. We must revise (at least partly) our

preconceptions about when and to what extent collaboration started in Erkel's work.³

At the time of publishing Bátori Mária I was unaware of the degree of collaboration. Having analysed a number of Erkel autographs, however, I returned to the composer's original score only to realise the obvious fact that the multilayered score – a fact that László Somfai had also pointed out earlier on – was not exclusively the result of Erkel's method of composing music parallel in different work phases. Collaboration played a notable role in the completion of his first opera already. Perfunctory planning and flawed workflow were responsible rather than the abilities of the composer, and it was all part of the way theatres operated – perhaps not only the Hungarian Theatre of Pest (Pesti Magyar Színház). In the case of Bátori Mária, apart from Erkel's busy schedule as head of the opera department, things were further complicated by management's hastening the premiere of his first stage play – probably to celebrate the promotion of the theatre to 'National' status. As it had happened many times before, the all-round musical talent, singer, director, translator, librettist and composer, József Szerdahelyi came to the rescue – anonymously as always – resuscitating months of stagnant work on Bátori Mária. The first notes by Szerdahelyi in the autograph of Bátori Mária show up in the second act on 85 folios out of 162 folios. He did the orchestration for the entire hunter's choir (No. 12) and the end of the following wine song (No. 13), and worked out the parts for the wind instruments in the subsequent closed numbers, based Erkel's completed notation for the strings and vocals. Erkel supervised the orchestration of his more experienced colleague and barely changed a note, apart from adding the timpani parts. On the other hand, alterations and corrections by Szerdahelyi show up all over the second act, even in parts that Erkel had entirely orchestrated beforehand. Is it all about the disparity of their positions? Perhaps. Nonetheless, we must also note that the alterations by Szerdahelyi concern not so much instrumentation as dramatic structure, introducing contrast and emphasising conflict in dramatic moments. Albeit conventional, his corrections were much

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³While preparing the critical editions, I have researched not only the available sources but also the entire volume of performance materials that survived in the National Theatre and other theatres nationwide for all stage plays by Erkel until and inclusive of *Bánk bán*. In the meantime, Gyula Erkel's estate was opened for research – most of it at the Erkel Museum of Gyula, the lesser part in the Musical Collection of National Széchenyi Library. The latter was researched by Károly Sziklavári and myself, while the scores in the collection of the Erkel Museum were first catalogued and assessed by István Kassai and Károly Sziklavári. In both collections there are several useful source materials: drafts and sketches, whose analysis and juxtaposition with previously known and analysed autographs shed new light on the authority of Erkel's operas.

needed, considering that in the most detailed review of the premiere in Hungarian Gábor Mátray was complaining about the lack of effective dramatic contrast.

Although Erkel acknowledged and accepted the corrections he insisted on the tone that he thought was ideal for the genre. He made another attempt – this time successfully – in *Hunyadi László*. It is probably not farfetched to say that Erkel was rephrasing the musical ideas of Bátori in Hunyadi – this time without help from a collaborating composer. With more time at his hand, the score of the opening performance of *Hunyadi* – unlike that of *Bátori Mária* – would be slightly amended later on but certainly not corrected. The authorship of additional numbers - such as the overture, the 1847 original version and a subsequent abridged and reorchestrated version of the Mária cabaletta (No. 19, the latter discovered when preparing the critical edition), and the 1850 La Grange aria (No. 12b) – is beyond doubt. We can only question the authorship of the László aria (No. 7), added in 1859, and more than anything the popular *Hungarian Dance* (commonly referred to as Palotás), added to the opera in 1848. There are no autograph scores for these numbers; sources in the National Theatre archives only prove - with reassuring certainty – that these numbers became inherent parts of the opera under the supervision of Erkel himself. One of the major discoveries we made while preparing the critical edition of *Hunyadi* concerns the original version of the aria inserted specifically for Anne de la Grange, markedly different from the heavily rearranged number that is commonly played today. Most probably it was Sándor Erkel who reorchestrated the aria and replaced the original one by 1878 the latest, with the approval of Ferenc Erkel. Sándor was gradually taking over in 1874-75, first the orchestra then the whole opera company.

During his 25 years as director of the company, Sándor Erkel conducted all his father's operas, save for *Bátori Mária*, and he made various alterations to the scores. In the autographs of all but *Bátori Mária* he made notes that mostly concern instrumentation and are still in are in practice today. (His handwriting is there in the basic layer of some of the operas, as he was actively taking part in composition, albeit less intensively than Gyula Erkel.) My personal motivation to thoroughly scrutinise the authorship of Erkel's operas started when studying the role of Sándor Erkel in the composition of the La Grange aria and *Erzsébet*, while also having the chance to analyse the recently discovered original sources of *Bánk* bán, which reveals the method of Erkel's composition. *Bánk* was probably composed in the late 1840s and early 1850s. To assess the opera, it is quite important to know when and how, to what extent it was composed in the collaborative process of a musical workshop.

Following the hypothesis of Dezső Legánÿ about *Two Pistols* from 1844, the idea that Erkel's most important opera was composed in a collaborative process holds water. Nonetheless, Erkel's experience about collaboration at the time was markedly different from what we had previously thought. On the one hand, collaboration was more extensive because Erkel was forced to give in under pressure from the theatre even when composing Bátori Mária. On the other hand, I firmly believe that Dezső Legánÿ overestimated the role of collaboration in the 1840s – largely on the basis of Somfai's studies – erroneously inferring from the alleged handwriting of Ferenc Doppler in the score of Two Pistols. In my opinion, was not composed in a workshop collaboration. Joint efforts in Two Pistols notation are possible but there are several instances when Erkel obviously wrote the vocal parts after his helper had completed the full score. This fact alone, supported by other evidential circumstances, seems to prove that whoever was assisting him was perhaps not quite copying but definitely used a rather advanced and detailed Vorlage by the composer to elaborate on. That said, the fact remains that Erkel – again, contrary to common belief – lost interest in the genre of folk play very early on. It might not come as a surprise but all the same, we have to reevaluate our notion about Erkel's attitude toward folk plays. Having studied the available sources of the folk plays and having identified the melodies that Erkel adapted, I can state with certainty that Szigligeti the playwright basically employed Erkel as an orchestrator, allowing very little creative leeway, even selecting the songs himself. In the plays that they worked on together there is hardly a musical insert that was not based on existing songs. It was natural practice in the genre at the time: folk songs were considered "common music" or popular poetry, whereby anonymity or joint authorship was accepted. Researchers of Erkel have so far disregarded this fact, together with a number of phrases in his music composed and arranged for folk plays that he had borrowed from Károly Thern, József Szerdahelyi and Ferenc Doppler. Moreover, Erkel has implemented the music of Rossini (Il barbiere di Siviglia) and Auber (Fra Diavolo) in The Two Pistols, borrowed from Ferenc Kaczér and Béni Egressy in The Jew, and again from Auber's Le domino noir in The Captive (A rab). Neither has it been discussed so far how Erkel recycled some of the songs form these folk plays. Two third of the songs in The Rogue of Debrecen (Debreceni rüpők), his second collaboration with Szigligeti, are identical with certain songs in The Captive and Mystery of a Cupboard (Egy szekrény rejtelmei). Performed but once, The Rogue was a flop. Its original musical score – thought to have been lost for more than a century and only recently discovered – reveals that Erkel had simply transferred a number of songs

into the other two plays even before the fateful premiere.⁴ The genre allowed such laxity of authorship and proper collaboration in composition was out of the question anyway. Folk plays called for no more than joint "arrangement" of the basic material. While preparing *Two Pistols*, Erkel's workshop was far from being a creative base for musical collaboration, despite his previous experience in joint composition.

Based on the above statements and hypotheses, the 1855 score of Salvator Rosa raises doubts again. Erkel is noted in the otherwise anonymous guide book only as someone who was penning the vocal parts of the first two songs. Instrumentation of the first two songs and the entire music of the melodrama is the work of Ferenc Doppler. Similarly to his other folk play projects, Erkel did not insist on showing his name as an author. This time, for a very good reason. Salvator Rosa allows a rare glimpse into the workshop of Doppler, rather than Erkel, revealing the contemporary practice of the National Theatre employing multiple authors, at least in the case of less demanding musical genres. Contrary to Two Pistols the roles and degree of contribution are reversed here. Two Pistols was dominated by Erkel, who borrowed music from József Szerdahelyi and the young Doppler, employing a third collaborator, possibly a musician of the National Theatre, for copying and instrumentation. The composition of Salvator Rosa on the other hand was supervised by Ferenc Doppler – who had composed and arranged several operas before - and this time around Erkel was the one who allowed his tunes and expertise to be used uncredited, along with Károly Doppler. As a result, Salvator *Rosa* should not be part of Erkel's list of works.

Nonetheless, *Salvator Rosa* plays a seminal role in Erkel's development as a composer. The project presented an opportunity for Erkel and Ferenc Doppler to work together as composers, albeit in Doppler's workshop. Their experience of collaboration came in handy when *Erzsébet* had to be finished in a hurry until the first visit of the emperor and empress of Austria to Pest-Buda (as Budapest was called at the time). Ferenc Doppler did not only compose the first act of *Erzsébet* but also contributed to the second and third acts, assigned to Erkel and Károly Doppler respectively. Moreover, he was responsible for composing the overture – missing from the original version – when the play was staged again in 1865, even though he had been living in Vienna for years and was not a member of the National Theatre. The role Doppler played was important but should not be overestimated. The three acts of *Erzsébet* are individual entities, very different in

Subsequent notes and corrections reveal the origin of these songs. Dezső Legánÿ was certainly unaware of the existence of the score for *The Captive*, a recent discovery from the archives. My research provided evidence that it is indeed an Erkel autograph, containing material form *The Rogue of Debrecen*.

style and musical quality. Although Erkel was apparently not concerned with the opera as a whole, he was striving to control the composition of the act that he was responsible for. The recently discovered four bifolios of the second act composed by Erkel and the autograph score of the opera with notation in different hands reveal a lot about how the collaborative effort of the two composers worked in the making of Erzsébet. Erkel was still rather cautious and Doppler acted as a more subservient secondary orchestrator, compared to other collaborators who would join forces with Erkel later on. He merely worked out the wind instrument parts that doubled the strings, transferred the choir parts in the autograph for different instruments, or orchestrated Erkel's drafts from the composer's piano insert scores. It is conspicuous that Doppler, who was a renowned orchestrator, interpreted even the sketchiest drafts without adding a single note, let alone new musical phrases. He did not complement or elaborate on the musical material provided by Erkel even where the score obviously could have benefited from his expert touch. After years of silence, Erkel employed Doppler for certain compositional tasks but retained more substantial control than we might infer from the multiple handwriting of the autograph score. Drawing a conclusion from the close scrutiny of some 300 pages of recently catalogued composition materials and performance scores, I can imagine that we need to revise our preconceptions – based on the handwritings in the original autograph score - about the contribution of the family and theatrical workshop to the composition of Bánk bán. That analysis, however, will be less thorough and only concern a few details, merely accentuating certain contours rather than completely redrawing the picture of Erkel's musical workshop – a picture we have discerned so far from the multiple handwritings that show up in his autograph scores.

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