

Summary of DLA doctoral dissertation

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Gregorian chants in Hungarian
from the inheritance of László Dobszay

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I. Research Context

The new, Hungarian Gregorian chants composed by László Dobszay appeared first in Catholic liturgical practice in Hungary in the second half of the 1960's. In the 1970's, these initial experiments developed into a reform programme for sacred music, becoming an unavoidable factor by our times. Eventually, a series of smaller and larger publications containing new chant were released, with many of them spreading across the entirety of Hungary.¹

Only a few studies have been made of these new Hungarian items of Gregorian chant. Essential primary sources are the essays of László Dobszay and his 2007 radio programme interviewed by Balázs Déri.² Balázs Déri's 2011 paper³ reflects on the

¹ For a list of these, see II.

² Balázs Déri: „Ami bizalommal tölt el. Rádiós beszélgetés Dobszay Lászlóval 2007-ben.” [What makes me confident. Radio interview with László Dobszay.] *Magyar Egyházzene* XVIII/4 (2010/2011): 325–340. Benjamin Rajeczky: „A készülő új Népénektár.” [About the new congregational hymnal's preparations] *Vigília* 45/2 (1980. february). László Dobszay: „A Népénektár gregorián anyaga.” [On the Gregorian contents of the new congregational hymnal.] *Musica Sacra* I/1 (1987. march). László Dobszay: „Az élő gregorián.” [Living Gregorian Chant.] In: *Psallite sapienter. Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von Georg Béres.* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 2008). [László Dobszay:] „Ad usum lectoris.” In: *The Graduale Parvum.* (Church Music Association of America – Blessed John Henry Newman Institute of Liturgical Music, 2012). VI–XV.

³ Balázs Déri: „Az Éneklő Egyház zenei újdonsága.” [The novelty of the Éneklő Egyház hymnal] In: Andrea Kovács (ed.): „A keresztyéni gyülekezetekben való isteni dicséretetek.” — *Népénektáraink tegnap és ma.* (Budapest: LFZE Egyházzenei Kutatócsoport, 2011). 403–409.

musicological importance of the question, however, no comprehensive summary has been written hitherto about the items, inception and layers of this musical repertory. When I started to examine the estate of László Dobszay in 2013 under the direction of Janka Szendrei, it became clear that apart from known publications, a number of uncirculated items and important historical documents remain, making the research of this topic a worthwhile effort.

II. Sources

The first task of this research was the cataloguing of available sources. When gathering Dobszay's new Hungarian Gregorian pieces into a collection, apart from those available from publications, I processed manuscripts, proofs, copies and drafts available from the estate of László Dobszay. The first sources we can date with certainty are from 1968, and the last from 2010.⁴ Out of these, it is worth it to emphasise three sets of publications in particular to characterise the three periods within his oeuvre. The representative works of his first period are the *Vesperal* of the Church of St Mary the Virgin University Church, Budapest (1969) and *Kis magyar*

⁴ Hungarian *Kyriale Simplex*. (Manuscript, 1968). Communion antiphon for the feast of St Thomas Becket, *Nagy az ő dicsősége* [*His glory is great in thy salvation*]. (Manuscript, 2010).

*uzuális*⁵ [Little Hungarian Liber Usualis] (ca. 1973.) This was followed in the eighties by *Éneklő Egyház* [The Singing Church] in 1985 and *Népszolozsmák* [Congregational Psalter] in 1990, which books made most of the items intended for publication available.⁶ Lastly, with the requirements of daily use in mind, the enrichment of titles was executed in the series *Énekes zsolozsma* [The Sung Office] and *Graduale Hungaricum*.⁷

The processing of the gathered material was made significantly easier by the discovery of additional documents, studies and letters in the inheritance, relating to the creation and publication of the chants in question.

It is also worth mentioning that the research was aided by eye- and earwitnesses as well. Most important are the recollections of musicologist Janka Szendrei, the members of the choir of Rókus

⁵ For the second, official edition of the *Vesperal: Magyar vesperás*. [Hungarian Vespers.] (Budapest: Római Katolikus Központi Hittudományi Akadémia, 1974). *Kis magyar uzuális*. (Eger: Főegyházmezei Hatóság, 1975). *Kis magyar uzuális. Függelék „Az üdvösség története” c. hittankönyvhöz*. [Little Hungarian Liber Usualis, appendix for the Religious Education textbook *Salvation History*.] (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1978).

⁶⁶⁶ *Éneklő Egyház*. [The Singing Church] (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1985). *Népszolozsmák*. [Congregational Psalter] (Budapest: Szent Ágoston Liturgikus Megújulási Mozgalom, 1990).

⁷ *Nappali zsolozsmák könyve (Diurnale)*. [=Énekes Zsolozsma az Esztergomi Breviárium alapján. I.] (Budapest: KÉSz Szent Ágoston Liturgikus Megújulási Mozgalom, 1990). This is followed by six more volumes of *Énekes zsolozsma* until 1999. *Graduale Hungaricum*. (Gödöllő: A Premontrei Rend Gödöllői Kanóniája, 2007).

[Saint Roch's] Church, Budapest, Father Péter Ullmann O. Præm., and Monsignor József Török, who nearly from the beginnings, but certainly from the early seventies, followed the developments of Dobszay's reform programme of sacred music.

Studying these three sets of sources in parallel made it possible that, apart from a catalogue of titles, I could also reflect on their history and importance.

III. Methodology

After the examination of the sources, it was a significant step to categorise the items collected, numbering over two thousand individual pieces. Because of the unique feature of the material in question, I could not use the categories found in the classical literature of Gregorian chant without modification, so I constructed a new, unique system for organising the music, which combines the benefits of classical categories with the unique features discovered during the gathering of this material.

The system's point is to distinguish between the methods and melodic strategies employed in the setting of Hungarian words to Gregorian chant, separating the genres of reciting tones, (1) items that largely retain their original melodies, (2) items from the field of

ethnomusicology, (3) the Hungarian use of 'type-melodies' or 'model-melodies,' (4) and novel compositions lacking a precedent.

A great benefit of using these categories is that titles that were composed with the same method are easily compared, thus making the artistic process behind them approachable and understandable.

IV. Results

Simultaneously with the gathering, processing and evaluating of the print and manuscript sources, I produced a corpus of new, Hungarian-language Gregorian chants, in which every item found was placed.⁸ In the corpus, I grouped the items according to genre and within genres, melody, but the digital format also allows for assignment and making searches according to different categories, e.g. location of the liturgical source, or initial words. This corpus is the first collected works of László Dobszay and his colleagues, containing all the new Hungarian-language Gregorian chants, and is dynamically expandable at the same time in case of a future emergence of currently unknown titles.

⁸ The corpus contains nearly 2300 items, and is available publically at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19zjPAjTlZRYTUusFuhMMTo6oAoKYCMdpNKuzB-xcn7Y/edit?usp=sharing> (Last accessed: 2021. 09. 27.).

The greatest result, apart from the compilation, analysis and organisation of the corpus is that it facilitates not only the functional, but also the musical description and isolation of the new Hungarian-language Gregorian pieces made for popular use and with the requirements of popular use in mind. These items, which I called *congregational (popular) Gregorian*, assimilate totally into their respective melodic groups and yet display signs of slight divergence and particular melodic or textual adaptations. While these solutions are to be counted as artistic decisions ascribable to László Dobszay, it is evident that they never transgress the known historical limits of variability of each given melody, assigning a new and unique character within them. The new Hungarian-language Gregorian chants, and within them, congregational Gregorian items have a significance especially because they do not copy or overwrite the classical Gregorian repertory, but rather create a new aspect within it. During the artistic process, Dobszay assumed a musical language – thought to be dead for several hundred years – to such an extent that what he produced were not exercises, but new elements within the known boundaries.

Hungarian Gregorian therefore offers a musically valid and practical solution to the contradiction between contemporary practice in sacred music (the abandoning of Gregorian chant) and official Church teaching (the primacy of Gregorian chant).

V. Documentation of the activities relation to the dissertation

Publications, lectures:

- Domonkos Farkas: „A *Temetési szertartáskönyv* magyar nyelvű gregorián tételei.” [Hungarian-language Gregorian Items in the Order of Funerals] In: Balogh Péter Piusz OPraem – Réger Ádám (szerk.): *Insigni die sollemnitatis. Írások Ullmann Péter Ágoston OPraem 80. születésnapjára.* (Gödöllő: Gödöllői Premontrei Apátság, 2020). 146–154.
- „A traktusok anyanyelvű előadási lehetőségei.” [Possibilities in the performance of the Tract in the vernacular.] Lecture at the online book release of *Graduale Hungaricum – orgonakiséretetek* [Organ accompaniment for the Graduale Hungaricum]. 2021. 06. 12. 10:00. Premontrei Auditórium, Gödöllő.
- Az új, magyar nyelvű gregorián énekekről. [On the new, Hungarian-language Gregorian repertory.] Television interview for the programme *Katolikus Krónika* for the channel MTVA. (Balogh Piusz OPraem, Kercza Asztrik OFM és Farkas Domonkos). Broadcast: 2021. 07. 18.

Musical activities relation to the dissertation:

- The debut of László Dobszay’s organ accompaniments for the offertory *Vállalival beárnyékoz* [He will overshadow thee with His shoulders] and for the Mass Ordinary ‘*Missa mundi,*’ both recovered during my research. The performance featured the choir of Budapesti Énekes Iskola (artistic directors: János Mezei and Tamás Bubnó) and Márton Levente Horváth on the organ. (2021. 02. 21. 16:00. Belvárosi Szent Mihály-templom, Budapest).
- The musical repertory in my dissertation was performed according to its proper liturgical place week on week by the schola led by me at the Norbertine Abbey of Gödöllő, Hungary.