

INTRODUCTION

I. ORIGINS OF THE OPERA

Ferenc Erkel's first opera, *Bátori Mária*, was premièred on August 8, 1840 in the Hungarian National Theatre in Pest. The audience had to wait three and a half years for the first performance of his second work in this genre, *Hunyadi László* (January 27, 1844, in the same theatre), despite the fact that on October 22, 1840 *Honművész* had already announced the news that "our industrious Benjamin Egressy is working on the text of another new national opera entitled *Hunyadi László* (the music will be composed by Mr Erkel)".¹ The dating of the last three acts in the autograph score helps to clarify which part of this long wait was dedicated to the composition of the opera. (Erkel had not dated the first act.) He only put the year "1842" on the first page of the second act whereas full dates appear on the first pages of the third and fourth: "20/10 1842" and "23/10 1842" respectively. According to László Somfai the dates refer to the day "when he began, or rather finished the orchestration".² By all probability, Erkel completed the full score by the end of 1842. In February 1843 the piano version of the *Entr'acte* between Acts 3 and 4 was published by "Grimm and Wagner" under the title *Swan Song from Hunyadi*.³ Thus, it seems that from early 1843 onward it was the première of the completed work that was delayed. Despite *Honművész*'s early announcement the beginning of the composition was probably delayed as well, also because Erkel needed to add some new numbers to *Bátori Mária* in the months following its première.⁴ Further possible reasons for the delay are as follows. In his biography of Erkel, Kornél Ábrányi claims that Egressy wrote the libretto of the new opera after the tragedy *Hunyadi László* written by the young lawyer and dramatist Lőrinc Tóth.⁵ The play won the 100 florin prize of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1839.

¹ The suffix "i" at the end of old Hungarian family names (Hunyadi, in Latin: de Hunyad), referring to the place of origin, was often spelled with a "y" in the 19th century. Erkel used the original spelling of the family names "Bátori" and "Hunyadi" similarly to the current spelling for medieval and Transylvanian names. In the English introduction all the names have been changed to the modern spelling.

² László Somfai, "Az Erkel-kéziratok problémái" [Problems of the Erkel Autographs], in: Bence Szabolcsi – Dénes Bartha (eds), *Az opera történetéből* [From the History of Opera], Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1961, 107. (Zenetudományi tanulmányok 9.)

³ *Honderű*, 1 (1843), Vol. 1., 245.

⁴ Cf. Miklós Dolinszky's introduction to the critical edition of *Bátori Mária, Ferenc Erkel Operas*, Budapest: Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences – Rózsavölgyi, 2002, xiv-xviii.

⁵ Kornél Ábrányi Sr., *Erkel Ferenc élete és működése (Kultúrtörténelmi korrajz)* [The Life and Work of Ferenc Erkel (A Cultural Historical Study)], Budapest: Schunda V. József, 1895, 36. "Lőrinc Tóth's drama *Két László* [The Two Lászlós] (originally entitled *Hunyadi László*) won a 100 florin award at the competition of the

Later that year it was read to the actors of the National Theatre, this is how Egressy may have got acquainted with it.⁶ However, the drama *Hunyadi László* was not performed until January 17, 1842. According to Ambrus Oltványi its première has probably been hindered by censorship.⁷ If indeed censors quibbled it might have discouraged Erkel and Egressy, and Tóth may also have disapproved of the opera being staged earlier than the play it was based on. Another cause of delay might have been the miserable state of the Pest opera company after 1840. Erkel had seemingly planned to compose but one great opera seria role for *Hunyadi László* originally: that of Erzsébet Szilágyi, the mother of László and Mátyás Hunyadi. She is the only character whom the libretto and the music introduce through a real *sortita*, that is, a technically challenging two-part aria extending over a whole scene. The finale in the fourth act is made up entirely of Erzsébet's great solo, a kind of final *rondò* in the Italian manner. When the idea of the opera first emerged Egressy and Erkel undoubtedly intended this imposing part for the founder of the Hungarian opera company, Rosalia Schodel, a "*véritable tragedienne*" as Hector Berlioz called her. It was decided by fate that at the première she would indeed create this first heroic female figure in the history of Hungarian opera, which she would render "as impressively as was the role itself with which the great maestro had honoured her in this remarkable work".⁸ However, after December 5, 1840 it had seemed extremely unlikely that the great role and this great singer would ever meet. That night Mme. Schodel was involved in a stage scandal, an incident after which the Hungarian theatre did not renew her contract so she left the country. Her departure greatly reduced the chances of staging the opera in the near future. The first signs that her substitute would be found showed in the summer of 1841. From the beginning of July dramatic soprano Henriette Carl, who had been popular on German stages, began a long series of guest performances in the National Theatre so that she became its de facto prima donna. She would have liked to receive a permanent contract so as an act of good-will towards the first conductor of the theatre she even learned and sang the role of Mária Bátori. Miss Carl, who would have made a remarkable Erzsébet, may have encouraged Erkel to

Academy. It did not win lasting success. It did, however, become the model of Ferenc Erkel's opera which bears the same title."

⁶ "*Hunyadi László*, Lőrinc Tóth's play which has won a 100 florin award, has been publicly read recently and our actors are planning to stage it [...] in the hope of producing a powerful dramatic effect." *Jelenkor*, December 28, 1839.

⁷ Ambrus Oltványi (ed), *Vörösmarty Mihály Összes Művei 11, Drámák 6* [Complete Works of Mihály Vörösmarty 11, Plays 6], Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966, 292.

⁸ *Honderű*, 2 (1844), Vol. 1, 162.

work on his next opera. At the same time, Amália Mochonaky, a promising young lyric soprano, also appeared and became popular on the national stage. According to *Honderű* Erkel wrote the role of Mária Gara, László's fiancée, for her.⁹ Miss Mochonaky was contracted to the theatre in May 1841, thus, together with József Erkel (the composer's brother, probably the candidate for the role of László) and Zsigmond Joób (the future King), the quartet of high voices demanded by the opera was available.¹⁰ The auspicious constellation probably led Erkel to start composition in the summer or autumn of 1841 and to start with the orchestration in the following year. However, the equilibrium in the company was short-lived. József Erkel left the theatre at Easter 1842 and the temporary prima donna, Henriette Carl was chased off the stage and out of the city (last performance: October 23, 1842) by a hostile clique of critics and members of the audience, who had been constantly disturbing operatic performances. On the other hand Erkel might have been inspired by the guest performance of the renowned Hungarian-born tenor, József Wurda, in the summer of 1842; perhaps he looked upon him as a potential title hero.

One can only surmise why finishing the opera suddenly became so urgent in the fall of 1842. The acceleration in work may have been due to the emergence of lawyer and composer Endre Bartay on the theatrical premises. Bartay leased the National Theatre from December 19, 1842. He had probably entered into negotiations with the staff beforehand and the leading musical figure of the theatre, first conductor Ferenc Erkel had certainly been involved in the preliminaries. The idea of premièring *Hunyadi László* must have been strongly supported by Bartay during the talks. The designate director was not an unconditional admirer of Mme. Schodel, however, he was aware of the fact that Hungarian opera would not flourish unless she returned to the Pest stage. Therefore, as part of his bargaining about the lease of the theatre Bartay contacted her in London where she sang in the German opera company.¹¹ The soprano probably made a promise in autumn 1842 to

return to Pest the following year and on hearing the good news Erkel promptly finished the score. Mme. Schodel did return to Pest at the end of March 1843;¹² however, negotiations about her contract dragged on endlessly. She finally signed her new contract with the National Theatre in September 1843. One "minor obstacle" was yet to be overcome: the theatre had only one tenor in employment for an opera which needed two leading singers of the high male voice type. Being right in the middle of the theatre season which lasted from Easter to Easter only a guest singer could be engaged: Adolf Pecz was lured from the Pressburg theatre to Pest. He arrived in early January, 1844 and three weeks later he sang, in broken Hungarian, the part of the first national hero in the history of the Hungarian romantic opera.

Kornél Ábrányi presents a version of Erkel's difficulties during the gestation period of his second opera that differs considerably from the one put forward above. "After finishing *Bátori Mária* Ferenc Erkel spent some difficult years in torment and hesitation before he began to compose *Hunyadi László*. He felt that *Bátori Mária* only approximated but not fulfilled the ideals he had set for himself: »to create Hungarian opera.«" Ábrányi adds that Erkel had a vague feeling that "historical opera", of the kind which "had been initiated by Auber with his *La Muette de Portici* and successfully continued by Rossini with his *Guillaume Tell* and perfected by Meyerbeer in his *Les Huguenots*" would draw him closer to his ideals. Upon this realisation the question sprung up as to "where such a historical libretto could be obtained and who would be able to produce it". Providence lent a hand. Erkel met Benjámín Egressy in Kígyó utca in Pest; the latter was carrying under his arm the finished libretto of *Hunyadi László* which he had prepared for Endre Bartay. Erkel took it, and "within a few months – as he later purportedly told his biographer – the basic chain of ideas for my opera was complete".¹³

One cannot blame Ábrányi for inventing this anecdote to highlight the significance of *Hunyadi László* in the history of Hungarian national opera with a legend of miraculous conception. The process of composition as reconstructed above, does not in itself refute his arguments for the indebtedness of *Hunyadi László* to the historical variety of French grand opera. By 1840 Erkel was familiar with the works cited by Ábrányi with the exception of perhaps the original version of *Les Huguenots* which was banned in the Hapsburg Empire. In fact, a certain degree of influence of French opera on the dramaturgy of *Hunyadi László* cannot be questioned. The tragedy revolves around the hero at risk, who is surrounded by a configuration of other characters – including two women. This dramatic structure was favoured by French composers, especially

⁹ "Next week, that is, a week from now our readers may expect to enjoy a rare operatic experience. Our excellent maestro Ferenc Erkel's opera, *Hunyadi László* will be played for his benefit performance in which the mother will naturally be sung by Mme. Schodel and Mária Gara by Amália Mochonaky to whom the role had originally been written." *Honderű*, 2 (1844), Vol. 2, 214. Amália Mochonaky got married in the spring of 1843 and left the company temporarily; Mária was sung by an insignificant beginner, Leopoldina Molnár at the première.

¹⁰ At the première of *Bátori Mária* the role of Prince István was sung by József Erkel. At the revival in January 1841, his brother Ferenc reassigned the role to Zsigmond Joób who had a more flexible voice and composed a new aria for him. As in *Hunyadi* it is the King and not László for whom Erkel composed an Italianate aria in two movements, we may assume that the role was intended for Joób. The tenor auditioned in Vienna at the time of the première of *Hunyadi*, but took over the role of the King from Mihály Havi as soon as he returned to Pest (20 March 1844).

¹¹ Mme. Schodel made a reference to Bartay's letter during their negotiations in 1844.

¹² "Mme. Schodel, who had gained the favour of the audience in Prague with her singing, arrived in our city a few days ago." *Honderű*, 1 (April 1, 1843), Vol. 1, 448.

¹³ Ábrányi, *op. cit.* (cf. note 5), 44–45.

by Meyerbeer. In Italian romantic opera it is the prima donna who is usually the centre of attention. Although Italian *soggietti* also tend to have a pair of female characters; like Norma and Adalgisa, they are usually rivals. Erzsébet Szilágyi and Mária Gara are clearly not rivals (but to be on the safe side they do not sing together), rather, they steadfastly support the ill-fated hero during his life and grieve over him at the end. So do Alice and Isabella in *Robert le Diable*, Queen Margaret and Valentine in *Les Huguenots*, and later, Fidès and Bertha in *Le Prophète*.¹⁴ Further similarities follow from the chronicle tradition about the Hunyadis which specifies a minimum number of main characters, without whom a tragedy about the fall of László Hunyadi cannot be constructed. The two protagonists involved are László and King Ladislaus V, thus, Erkel could retain the two-tenor model with which he might have got acquainted in Halévy's *La Juive*, and used in *Bátori Mária* and in *Bánk Bán*.¹⁵ A narrative about the Hunyadis cannot be complete without a gleam of hope for the future, which is personified by the young Mátyás; this is how the French-style breeches part of the younger Hunyadi brother found its way into the opera.

A revealing kind of reflection of French opera may be traced in the autograph score of the second and fourth acts where four numbers have French titles. (A few performance directions in French appear in other parts of the opera as well.) The scene of Gara (No. 13) is titled *Air de Gara*, whereas the Andante religioso section of the finale of this act bears the title *Morceau d'ensemble*. The title to the famed *Swan Song*, which links the third and fourth acts reads *Entre act* [sic] in the score. Finally, the funeral march introducing the second scene in Act 4 had originally been entitled *Marche*, to which Erkel later added the adjective *funèbre* [sic] in pencil. With the exception of the air the French titles denote movements which are characteristically decorative or narrative. Among the French grand operas known to Erkel *La Juive* contains precisely the same combination of titles: *Entr'acte* between the first and second acts, *Morceau d'ensemble* in the grand finale of Act 3 and *Marche funèbre* at the beginning of Act 5. Of the solo numbers Halévy only terms Eléazar's grand aria an *Air*. Erkel acquainted himself with *La Juive* in 1836 in the German theatre where he worked as a conductor. In 1838

¹⁴ Donizetti's *Belisario*, which was well-known in Pest, has two female leading roles; Antonina, Belisario's wife and their daughter, Irene. Antonina is a female monster; her husband is blinded and exiled because of her intrigue. The blind hero wanders around in the desert and is assisted by Irene. The model of the cruel mother is reversed by Egressy in *Hunyadi László* in the spirit of the Hungarian tradition which depicts Erzsébet Szilágyi as *mater dolorosa*.

¹⁵ József Katona's *Bánk Bán* was premiered in the Hungarian Theatre in Pest in 1839, twenty years after its conception. Several scenes of Tóth's drama attest the direct influence of Katona. The love of Ladislaus V for Maria Gara has obviously been modelled after the craving of Otto, Duke of Dalmatia for Bánk's wife, Melinda. Oltványi, *op. cit.* (cf. note 7), 293.

preparations were made for its staging in the Hungarian Theatre, however, it was only premièred on August 6, 1842 with József Wurda in the role of Eléazar. The French titles in the *Hunyadi* score, in some cases clearly added as afterthoughts, probably testify to Erkel's study of Halévy's opera in that summer.

As regards the nature of the historical subject and its manner of adaptation as a libretto Ábrányi's theory of *Hunyadi*'s relatedness to French grand opera is difficult to embrace. The French grand operas mentioned by him employ large-scale musical and scenic devices to represent political revolutions which throw entire societies into turmoil. Unlike in a typical historical libretto by Scribe, Egressy and Erkel's operatic adaptation of the life and death of László Hunyadi does not attempt at a panoramic presentation of the historical and political background to the poignant events that took place in 15th century Hungary. A political conflict between masses only builds up in the Belgrade scene. To claim that the disputing double choirs of Hungarian soldiers and German mercenaries echo the monumental Rataplan chorus in *Les Huguenots* would be an overstatement. Its popular tone is more like the ditty that Hungarian children used to sing in the "toll bridge game". Apart from the royal march, even in the politically charged first act the music is devoid of illustrative mass effects. One need not emphasise the political implications of the famed choral finale "The traitor is dead". As for historical *staffage*, Acts 2 to 4 are even more puritanical than *Bátori Mária*.¹⁶ Despite the fact that Erkel titled it *Morceau d'ensemble*, the oath scene at the end of Act 2 is short of the kind of dramatic contrast which impregnates its twin scene in *La Juive*, for instance. The heroic Hungarian funeral march in *Hunyadi László* also greatly departs from the otherworldly cortège of Halévy; if it had a French model at all, then it is to be found in the funeral music in the third act of *La Vestale*. Strangely, the 1844 version of *Hunyadi* does not include any dances despite the fact that similarly to *Bátori Mária*, it also contains a wedding scene which calls for ballet. Only in 1848 did Erkel add a slow-fast two-part *csárdás* to the closing scene of Act 3.¹⁷

The French grand operas in question may be called operatic historical novels: the heroes are fictitious, the plot or at least one of the subplots deals with their private affairs, whereas the libretto of *Hunyadi László* delineates the actions of historical characters exclusively, in keeping with the main historical facts. It falls into the category which Luigi Baldacci called "historical feuilleton" when analysing Donizetti's libretti: a poignant presentation of a *cause célèbre*

¹⁶ This is what *Hölgyfutár* refers to in connection with the revival of *Bátori Mária* on February 1, 1858: "*Bátori Mária* is said to be more colourful, although it lacks the elevated dramatic style and capturing ideas of *Hunyadi*". *Hölgyfutár*, February 3, 1858.

¹⁷ *Hungarian Dance* first appears on the playbill of the performance on December 9, 1848.

on the operatic stage.¹⁸ Two of Donizetti's "historical feuilletons" that had been considered for the 1840 season of the National Theatre might have inspired Egressy to adapt the chronicle of the Hunyadis for the operatic stage. In the fall of 1840 Mme. Schodel requested *Anna Bolena* as her benefit performance from the management. The première had to be cancelled due to her unexpected departure in December, 1840. *Marino Faliero*, however, had been staged earlier that year. The plot in each piece concludes with a trial and the leading characters end up on the scaffold. In the finale of *Marino Faliero*, Elena, the wife of the doge of Venice, who is to be tried, stands onstage and listens to the trial going on offstage. The Council of Ten pass the death sentence and when "the execution is signalled by a drum roll. Elena exclaims and collapses in agony". Unlike the obscure medieval Venetian plot with its questionable historicity, the mournful end of Anne Boleyn lived on in the collective memory of European audiences well into the 19th century as an authentic episode from the past, as did the shock of the four slashes of the broadsword at László Hunyadi's neck, which, 400 years later, at the time of the conception of Erkel and Egressy's plans, Hungarian audiences had still not overcome.

One might assume that historicity demanded the conventional role of the villain to be split in two in the libretto of *Hunyadi László*. Act 1 culminates in the murder on open stage of the first villain (Ulrik Cillei) which is quite untimely from a dramaturgical point of view, and as László Négyessy put it, results in "the plot's taking a new direction through the emergence of Palatine Gara in the second act".¹⁹ However, earlier dramatic adaptations of László Hunyadi's destiny merely made references to the murder of Cillei on November 11, 1456 in Belgrade, but did not attempt at its staging. By contrast, Tóth placed a prologue entitled *The Death of Cillei* before the actual piece. The prologue almost reaches the proportions of an independent drama and in addition to the subject matter implied by its title, it includes a longish verbal battle between pro- and anti-Magyar forces who fight for influence over the King and thereby for the good or ill fortune of the nation as represented by the fate of the Hunyadis. The person of Agnes Ronow, the mistress of the King, emerges as the guardian angel of the Magyars and the mouthpiece of the poet as well. At the end of the prologue she vanishes from Tóth's drama. A historical figure by the name of Agnes Ronow does not appear in either contemporary documents or in literary works in Latin or Hungarian

about fate of the Hunyadis written before 1810. She is the brainchild of historiographer Ignaz Aurelius Fessler, appearing in his largely fictional early work *Matthias Corvinus König der Hungarn*.²⁰ Agnes Ronow has haunted several Hunyadi adaptations since a Hungarian translation of Fessler's book was published in 1813. Lőrinc Tóth was so obsessed with this character that he devoted an entire drama to her in 1839.²¹ Hungarian opera enthusiasts of the past one and a half centuries have been completely unfamiliar with the name and role of Agnes Ronow for a simple reason: Benjámín Egressy had eliminated her character together with Tóth's redundant and idealist political rhetoric, and condensed the Prologue of the play into the powerful first act of the opera. "Cillei's intrigue and punishment, the clash between national and foreign elements and the King's fear and concealed desire for vengeance turn Egressy's first act into an outstanding example of dramatic composition" (Négyessy). After the strikingly dramatic exposition tension inevitably falls in Acts 2 and 3. Audiences have been willing to overlook this deficiency in return for the emotional involvement triggered by the music in the first act. The personal involvement of the public as witnesses of the sequence of events in the Belgrade fortress predetermines their sympathy towards László Hunyadi in the final moral judgment.

Egressy retained Tóth's motif of the King's sudden flames of love for Mária Gara, László Hunyadi's fiancée, which makes her father, Palatine Gara appear truly black-hearted. Gara, the head of the court league, had been traditionally cast as the number one political opponent of László after the death of Cillei. In Tóth's tragedy he becomes a true villain who is ready to sacrifice his daughter's happiness in order to gain control over the King through his sensuality. Several other motifs of the play did not find their way into the opera: to his credit Egressy omitted an abundance of superfluous characters and scenes.²² It is unlikely that he was induced to do so by some kind of historical puritanism. The radicalism of his cuts might have been provoked by the requirements of the typical operatic structure of the time as well as the low number of singers available in the opera company in Pest. In some aspects, Egressy's treatment of the subject suggests that he relied on concise primary sources like Bonfini and his Hungarian followers rather than on his literary antecedent.²³

²⁰ Oltványi, *op. cit.* (cf. note 7), 289.

²¹ Published in: *Olympia. Dramai pályavirágok Tóth Lőrincztől* [Olympia. Dramatic writings by Lőrinc Tóth] by Heckenast. The play describes the last days in the life of Ladislaus V in Prague.

²² József Ujfalussy made a thorough comparison of Lőrinc Tóth's drama and the libretto of the opera. Cf. József Ujfalussy, "A »Hunyadi László« és irodalmi előzményei" [Literary Background of *Hunyadi László*], in: Bence Szabolcsi – Dénes Bartha (eds), *Erkel Ferenc és Bartók Béla emlékére* [In Memory of Ferenc Erkel and Béla Bartók], Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1954, 219–230. (Zene-tudományi Tanulmányok 2.)

²³ This impression is confirmed by quotation-like allusions. The first sentence in the closing chorus in Act 1 seems to quote directly from

¹⁸ Luigi Baldacci, Donizetti e la storia, in *Atti del I. Convegno Internazionale di Studi Donizettiani*, Bergamo: Azienda Autonoma di Turismo, 1983, Vol. 1, 5.

¹⁹ László Négyessy, "Erkel Ferenc operaszövegei mint drámai művek" [The Libretti of Ferenc Erkel as Dramatic Works], in: Bertalan Fabó (ed), *Erkel Ferenc emlékkönyv. Születésének századik évfordulójára* [Memorial Volume to Ferenc Erkel for the 100th Anniversary of his Birth], Budapest: Pátria Irodalmi Vállalat, 1910, 229.

2. HISTORY AND NARRATION

Ladislaus V of the House of Hapsburg, who passed away unexpectedly at the age of 18, was succeeded on the Hungarian throne by the younger Hunyadi brother Mátyás. He reigned as Matthias Corvinus between 1458 and 1490. King Matthias had Antonio Bonfini, his court humanist, write the history of the Hungarian nation. The eighth book of *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades* chronicles the events in the life of the Hunyadi family in a way that suited Matthias's taste. Indeed, it might have been based on his own accounts. This ensured that popular opinion for centuries to follow held that "the Hunyadis represent spiritual greatness and righteousness".²⁴ However, Matthias would not have succeeded in perpetuating an immaculate image of his family, had posterity not preserved glorious memories of him as the greatest king in Hungarian history. Public opinion would deem nothing an exaggeration or twaddle about the clan from which the only national monarch of unchallenged power after the Middle Ages descended. Unlike the political anarchy of preceding or successive decades the age of Matthias has been credited with law and order. The Renaissance spirit at his court was regarded as the golden age of Hungarian culture. Legends about his being "the righteous king" took deep roots in folk culture. His realm and person have been considered the apogee of "bygone glory" (Kölcsy). After the nation had lost its independence to the Hapsburgs in the 16th century, the embittered Hungarian spirit viewed Matthias's campaigns in Austria and Moravia as a *revanche* for coming centuries which so despairingly turned the tides. Kölcsey's *Hymn* describes the age of Matthias in this spirit: "Thou our flags hast planted o'er / Forts where once wild Turks held sway; / Proud Vienna suffered sore / From King Mátyás' dark array".²⁵

Matthias's glorious but short-lived national monarchy was founded on the military and political achievements of his father, János Hunyadi. He emerged from a family of obscure origin who moved to Hungary from Valachia at the beginning of the 15th century and soon became King Sigismund's favourite. In 1444 he was appointed the regent of Hungary and in 1452 the Captain General, the wealthiest and most powerful liege of the country. His greatest historical merit was to withstand the advancing Ottoman conquest for twenty years from 1437 onward. In fact, he took every opportunity to shift positions and make Hungary an offensive force in the Balkans. His lifelong struggle against the Turks reached its triumphant peak in 1456. When Muhammad II came to the throne "Ottomans set forth on a new and even more successful era of expansion [...]. The Christian

world was shocked by the capture of Constantinople on May 29, 1453. As the target of his 1456 campaign Muhammad chose Belgrade, a major fortress on the southern border of Hungary".²⁶ On July 4 he began to attack the stronghold defended by Mihály Szilágyi, the brother-in-law of Hunyadi. Hunyadi rushed to the borderland and joined forces with a crusader army led by Franciscan friar Giovanni da Capistrano. Together they put the sultan's army to flight on July 22 and liberated Belgrade. "The significance of this victory need not be emphasised. [...] The sultan and his successors did not venture on another assault on Hungary for the next 65 years. Hunyadi on his part strengthened his supporters' belief in his mission and paved the way for his son to the throne."²⁷ One might paraphrase this sentence and claim that János Hunyadi's Belgrade victory strengthened the belief of later generations in the national mission of the Hunyadis. Father and son, two outstanding historical figures, strove to achieve the same political goal, which had much more far-reaching implications than sole victories or conquests, however significant. Their achievement was interpreted by posterity as the manifestation of the continuity of the nation's faculty for self-preservation, guaranteed by a persistent assumption of national responsibilities. On the other hand, the sudden emergence of the Hunyadis on the political stage could be interpreted as a good omen: the national genius possesses hidden resources which enable it to surpass itself and meet the pressing challenges of the age. Long before the Romantic age the memory of János and Matthias Hunyadi inspired hope in a nation with a frustrated present.

If every story with a happy ending is a comedy, then one might say that posterity tended to retell the story of the Hunyadis in this dramatic form. Comedies are never cheerful from beginning to end but are characterised by a "U-shaped narrative structure".²⁸ They depart from a safe old world to descend into the realm of darkness and insecurity in the middle, and rise into a new world at the end. In the national mythology the Hunyadi family's descent into the underworld is symbolized by the fate of László Hunyadi, the firstborn of János Hunyadi who was 10 years Mátyás's senior. His life and death were preserved in the collective memory of the nation not as an independent legend but as the middle part of an imaginary trilogy about the Hunyadis. László Négyessy wrote that the opera *Hunyadi László* "has an air of incompleteness because the story is suspended at a point where all our senses appeal for continuation. However, this continuation and poetic justice is served in our

Bonfini: "The traitor is dead at last / and no discord any more"; cf. "the enemy of the state and disruptor of piece and calm is dead, the traitor deserved all he got".

²⁴ Négyessy, *op. cit.* (cf. note 19), 230.

²⁵ Translation by William N. Loew, 1881.

²⁶ Pál Engel – Gyula Kristó – András Kubinyi, *Magyarország története 1301–1526* [The History of Hungary 1301–1526], Budapest: Osiris, 1998, 209–210.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 212.

²⁸ Northrop Frye, *The Great Code. The Bible and Literature*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982, 169.

²⁹ Négyessy, *op. cit.* (cf. note 19), 229–230.

national memory”.²⁹ In the Hungarian legendry László Hunyadi impersonates the offering of the nation on the altar of destiny, in order to gain a final victory. Vilmos Fraknói wrote in 1896, at the millennium of the settling of the Hungarians in the Carpathian basin: “the scaffold in Buda, which was meant to be the catafalque for the power of the House of Hunyadi and all the national aspirations attached to them, became the pedestal on which the restored national monarchy would be erected”.³⁰

At the age of twenty-three László Hunyadi played an independent role in 15th century Hungarian politics for only a few months. He made his entry at a time of glory and despair. His father fell a victim to plague which had broken out in the camp three weeks after the Belgrade victory, and passed away on August 11, 1456. The leading members of the anti-Hunyadi court league and the young king who was under their influence had safely stayed in Buda to await the end of the battle, perhaps anticipating Hunyadi’s defeat. After his death they thought it was time to give the *coup de grâce* to the Hunyadi party. The king appointed his uncle, Count Ulrik Cillei from Carniola (present day Slovenia) Captain General, and László was ordered to hand over control over the forts. These forts included, first and foremost, the fortress of Belgrade. According to Engel et al. László Hunyadi “swore a false oath to the king at the Diet in Futak, then he lured the king and Cillei to Belgrade. There he entrapped them without their attendants in the fortress where he had the Cillei murdered on November 9, 1456. The assassination made him the master of the situation. He took the king to his castle in Temesvár where Ladislaus V had no choice but to assign László Captain General and take an oath not to avenge Cillei’s death. However, László succeeded to his father’s patrimony for a very short time.” The king and his advisors “sought an opportunity to retaliate. When László and Mátyás were staying in Buda they were taken into custody by the king’s supporters on March 14, 1457. The royal council, which turned into a court martial, found the Hunyadi brothers guilty of treason, *lèse majesté* and disloyalty. László’s death sentence was carried out two days later, on March 16, at Saint George’s Square in Buda. [...] All his associates were pardoned and soon escaped from the prison except Mátyás whom the king took to Bohemia.”³¹

Engel et al. term the incident in Belgrade “a homicide combined with a breach of faith”. They find no extenuating circumstances, not even the psychological ones: three months after János Hunyadi’s death Cillei and the teenage king set off to expel the Hunyadi brothers from the fortress which their father had liberated. It could indeed have been his loyalty to his father’s memory and his family pride being hurt that triggered László’s

gut reaction to kill; and not “guile and ambition” as is assumed by the learned authors in the name of “historical correctness”. László must have been convinced that it was Cillei who committed a breach of faith against him and the memory of his father and acted accordingly. In one of the narrative traditions he in fact killed Cillei with his own hands. This tradition recognised Cillei’s political intrigue as an offence not only against the House of Hunyadi but also as a political attack on the Hungarian nation, which was justly avenged by László.³² Even Bonfini admits that László had in fact formulated a plan to murder Cillei and supplies the motivation which reveals the extent of his malevolence. In his version László’s friends capture a letter in which the Count promises the heads of the Hunyadi brothers to his father-in-law, Đorđe Brankovic, the Serbian despot. In spite of Cillei’s treachery, László is depicted as innocent of committing the actual murder. He is, quite understandably, enraged on learning about the contents of the letter but even then he does not attack Cillei. On the contrary, it is Cillei who assails László with a sword and is promptly slain by Hunyadi’s friends.³³

³² László Szörényi, “Ismeretlen latin jezsuita dráma Hunyadi Lászlóról” [Unknown Latin Jesuit Drama about László Hunyadi], in: Mária Zsuzsanna Pintér – István Kilián (eds), *Iskoladráma és folklór* [School Plays and Folklore], Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, Néprajzi Tanszék, 1989, 54. “In the first scene László Hunyadi is alone on the stage. He holds the bloodstained sword with which he had just killed Ulrik Cillei. The young hero proudly brandishes the sword dripping with blood in his right hand since it – as he puts it – is the »avenger of your glory my sweet homeland, and of the dignity of the House of Hunyadi«.”

³³ Antonio Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades*. Transl. in Hungarian by Péter Kulcsár, Budapest: Balassi, 1995, 683–684. “First of all, the king took the key and told him to look after the fortress, take over his father’s duties and not worry. While the King is staying at the fortress Count Cillei is constantly setting him against László and frightening him with all kinds of things. He accuses László of recklessness because he did not let the soldiers into the fortress. The youth, on the other hand, is annoyed by the Count’s daily accusations, and discusses the murdering the Count with his paternal friends; János Vitéz, the bishop of Várad and former advisor of Corvinus, who was later appointed Archbishop of Esztergom by Matthias. Being religious and so as not to seem the originator of the crime, János Vitéz replies he does not encourage László to do so, but in the event of its happening he will not condemn his deed. The others encourage László to kill his opponent. Further machinations of Cillei accelerate the events. László had recently got engaged to the daughter of the palatine from the noble family of the Garais, while the wife of Ulrik is the daughter of the Serbian despot. Cillei had written a letter to the despot saying that when he and the King arrive in Belgrade he would send two balls with which to play at will. He meant the heads of the sons of Corvinus. László’s servants intercepted the letter and handed it to their lord, who read it. On that day, which was dedicated to Saint Martin of Tours, the King was attending a mass and the lords were having a meeting in a secluded room. They summoned the Count, who was aware of the ills he had done, and hesitated for a while whether or not to go. Then he decided to put on his chain mail. László, who was enraged by the letter, went to meet him and while demanding an explanation he wildly waved the letter in his hand. He called Cillei a traitor who attempted on his life the same way he had attempted on his father’s life, made the King his enemy and kept repeating that the day of judgment had come. Some claim that the Count had formerly accused László of being reckless for not al-

³⁰ Vilmos Fraknói, *A Hunyadiak és a Jagellók kora* (1440–1526) [The Age of the Hunyadis and Jagellos], Budapest: Athenaeum, 1896, 169. (*A magyar nemzet története* [History of the Hungarian Nation], 4.)

³¹ Engel et al., *op. cit.* (cf. note 26), 212–215.

“All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

Bonfini’s account of the death of Cillei obviously lacks credibility. Cillei must have lost all his self-control during the argument to have forgotten that the person he was maligning and assailing was in actual fact holding him hostage.³⁴ Early performances of the opera showed that the scene could not be staged in a way that would conceal the Magyars’ intention to assassinate Cillei: the opera as a reconstruction of the crime has refuted the

lowing the guardsmen into the fortress. In any case, Ulrik grabbed a sword from one of the armigers and slashed at the head of László, who suddenly raised his arm, but was wounded at the top of his head and on his fingers. There was howling and the Hungarians attacked the Count, who was desperately trying to defend himself, and killed him by inflicting several wounds on him. When Ulrik died they all went to the King, and cry out that the enemy of the state and disruptor of piece and calm is dead, the traitor deserved all he got, rejoiced that the traitor had met his fate and the sovereign had nothing to fear, because he had become a real monarch, and his peaceful reign had now started. In fact, he had not been a real King before, because Count Cillei had been in command. The King concealed his pain, anger and fear with more dexterity than might have been expected at his age and stated that the Count’s murder had been justified, but he is shocked at the recklessness of the deed. His friends comfort him and he says it had all been decided by fate, Ulrik could not be brought back to life, they would have to focus on those that stayed alive and may God bless their lives. Ulrik’s body was taken to Cilli to rest with his fathers. Ulrik was handsome and slender, he was well-built, he had a thin face and kind charming eyes. He was a great admirer of the ladies; for this reason he shaved his beard, he was always well-groomed and wore fine clothes. At the time of his untimely death he was in his fifties.”

³⁴ Lőrinc Tóth modelled the dialogue between Cillei and Hunyadi on the dialogue between the Queen and Bánk in József Katona’s *Bánk Bán*. Similarly to Cillei, the Queen there grabs a dagger before she is stabbed by Bánk.

³⁵ For many decades critics observed that it was impossible to stage this historical scene successfully. Cf. *Honderű*, 2 (1844), Vol. 1, 365–367. “Cillei’s assassination would seem more authentic dramatically if the Hungarian lords blocked four different doors and prevented Cillei’s escape. In fact, the scene would seem more chivalrous and less robber-like if Cillei were captured by only one or two lords after a short fight at the last door while the others would only use mimes and would only stab Cillei after he had collapsed. Indeed, a bright director could simply come up with this idea since it is part of *mise en scene*”; *Életképek*, 5 (1846), 793. “There is but one remark to make about the acting of »László H.« and »Cillei« in act 1; it seems that an awkward mistake is becoming a stereotypical element on the stage. Cillei wears a large hunting horn over his shoulder; nobody knows why. When Cillei visits László H. and they have hurled accusations at each other Cillei approaches the door to leave. This is when László H. rather infamously attacks him from the back and tugs the horn from Cillei’s neck. Naturally, this angers C who draws his sword in response. László H. buffers the slash with the horn, which is in his hand, and then his friends come out of their hiding-places and to *compensate* László H.’s impetuosity and unchivalrous attack, they chop up Cillei. Then the King arrives and László H. contemptuously lies to him that he had been unarmed and attacked by Cillei... This is the way it was performed in the theatre, but it should not be. Both in historical sources and in the text of the opera it is Cillei who is referred to as being infamous, therefore, the actors of these two roles should feel encouraged to experiment upon meeting this double challenge. Cillei should be the first to attack and László H. should not necessarily defend himself with a horn torn off from Cillei’s back, since he could grab some kind of a weapon from the table or off the wall, which would seem much more realistic. This way the scene would not be distorted.” *Hölgyfutár*, May 19, 1859. “Kakas Márton [Mór Jókai] wisely criticised the text of *Hunyadi László*. We agree with him. There is no

testimonies of Mátyás and other prejudiced historical witnesses.³⁵ Nevertheless, even if he did not commit the murder personally and if one were to side with him from a psychological viewpoint, a serious doubt remains: if both the personal and the political mitigating factors were taken into account, his deeds would still be at variance with the divine norm. He had broken the sixth commandment and the distressing thought cannot be subdued that the sentence of Jesus came true in his own death. This is the way Erzsébet Szilágyi’s reactions to the Belgrade events were described by Bonfini as well as by an anonymous 18th century Jesuit (in his version Mihály Szilágyi was substituted for Erzsébet, to conform to the rules of the school play which did not allow female characters to appear on stage) and by György Bessenyei in the first Hungarian historical tragedy which was, inevitably, dedicated to the fate of László Hunyadi. Lőrinc Tóth goes out of his way to find excuses for his hero both before and after the murder but even he does not conceal Erzsébet Szilágyi’s doubts.³⁶ In Egressy’s adaptation, which is quite rudimentary from a textual point of view, László’s mother clearly condemns the killing.

Négyessy implies that László Hunyadi has indeed committed felony and his being sent to the scaffold in Buda was a just punishment for his crime.³⁷ However, the arrest of the supporters of the Hunyadi party, the court-martialing of László and his execution two days after his capture tell of neither fatal retribution in a dramatic sense nor of a *vendetta* between hostile families. László’s associates were pardoned and let to escape whereas teenage Matthias, the future leader of the Hunyadi party, was kidnapped and taken to Prague, even though he could hardly have had anything to do with Cillei’s murder.³⁸ All these facts indicate that László’s execution was a political murder which deliberately liquidated the head of the opposing party. From the perspective of political scepticism it might appear that there have been no differences between the two parties in terms of the

point in correcting the mistakes in the verse because they are sung in a manner that is unintelligible to everyone, but the ambush of a ritter by 10-15 Hungarians and savaging him to death is utterly ignominious. We have observed on several occasions that strangers disparagingly laugh at this scene, even though when this incident took place there was nothing amusing about it.”

³⁶ It is true that he does not allow for elaboration, either. At the beginning of the Temesvár act – The King’s Oath – Mária Gara, László’s betrothed with a heroic personality, attempts at silencing the worries of both the mother and the audience through her unwavering and richly verbalised faith in the innocence of László.

³⁷ Négyessy (*op. cit.* [cf. note 19], 229) claimed that Egressy “had a gift for making the majority of the characters in the piece, including Erzsébet, view the murder of Cillei as a sin. Also, the connection between the two deaths is more prominent in the opera than in the play and reinforces the tragic quality of the text”.

³⁸ Lőrinc Tóth incriminated even young Matthias. Egressy’s feelings were too delicate even to make the youngster a witness of the retaliation. After his cavatina in the introduction Matthias abandons the stage and does not return before the trio in the Temesvár act. Erzsébet Szilágyi, however, blames both of his sons.

morality of their actions. An overwhelming amount of documents, however, proves that public opinion between the 16th and 19th centuries has come to a different conclusion. The two deaths, Cillei's assassination and László Hunyadi's execution, were not judged equally. The reason for it is illustrated by the title and subject of the second act of the opera: "The King's Oath". László Hunyadi committed breach of faith in Belgrade and the king committed breach of faith in Buda. However, these two breaches of faith do not have the same consequence because László is a subject and the king is a sovereign. With his breach of faith the king commits a sin far greater than homicide: he betrays the very function of the sovereign, royal grace as a reflection of divine grace. Ladislaus V dealt a blow on royal clemency as a moral entity when he false-heartedly arrested and executed László Hunyadi. László put himself at the mercy of the king because he could not imagine that the king would commit such a betrayal. (Hungarians regarded the sudden death of Ladislaus V in Prague as a physical consequence of his moral doom brought about by his breach of faith.) Although he was surely not as naive as the chronicler and dramatic traditions portrayed him it might not be a wholly romantic view that as a historical figure László Hunyadi did fall prey to "the inherent loyalty of the Magyars to their rightful monarch".³⁹

Négyessy's classicist aesthetics denies László the act of hubris: "the story of László Hunyadi has been dramatized several times before Lőrinc Tóth, for instance, by György Bessenyei, Benedek Virág and Alajos Szentmiklóssy. None of them has managed to write a true tragedy, and neither would Mihály Vörösmarty succeed, because popular opinion expected them to treat the Hunyadis as symbols of righteousness and heroism lacking a tragic flaw." It is true that László cannot be a classical tragic hero since the murder of Cillei has been traditionally considered a virtuous act and not a tragic offence, unlike the murder of the Queen by Bánk in József Katona's tragedy. It is the King who commits a misdeed and László suffers its consequences. Still, he becomes a hero in so far as his unconditional loyalty to the King makes him accept judicial murder. In the Hungarian national memory László Hunyadi is not a hero of a tragedy but the protagonist of a Passion as a representative of the community – if not the Son of Man, he is the Son of the Nation. In Négyessy's wording: "despite the lack of personal tragedy the subject had a latent element of national tragedy and this tragic national

struggle is fully expressed by Egressy's text".⁴⁰ From this aspect the suffering of László Hunyadi was considered by Romanticism "a subject from our chronicles most suitable for a true national tragedy".⁴¹

3. MUSIC AND RECEPTION

The première of *Hunyadi László* was received in the hall with such great approval that had earlier been denied to any piece of Hungarian music written with the pretension of "classical" art. An intimate relationship soon developed between the opera and its audience: "*Hunyadi László* gains equal triumph in good and bad times, like a true Hungarian infantryman, who overcomes every obstacle".⁴² The public got to know the work in detail, picked its favourite numbers and executed with delight the rites of success after the performance of each, including multiple encoring and the calling out of the composer after the King's oath, the emotional highpoint of the opera.⁴³ Of course, the public's interest saw a few low ebbs during the long decades of performance history.⁴⁴ However, if one less-loved Mária Gara turned the audience away, an adored Mária Gara brought it back, thus the press could write somewhat swaggeringly that "the performances of this work have as a rule marked epochs in the repertory of our national theatre".⁴⁵ The sympathy of the Hungarian audience was analysed by the contemporaries from the very start. Immediately after the first performance Imre Vahot, the

³⁹ *Életrajzok*, 7 (1847) 218.

⁴⁰ *Hölgyfutár*, August 8, 1850. Thanks to Mihály Havi, the première's László V, in 1846 the theatrical public started to get to know the opera even outside the Hungarian capital. Havi sang in the National Theatre for a year, then he associated with József Szabó and founded a travelling singers' company. They first toured the cities of the Hungarian provinces; later they reached Croatia, Italy and other countries of the continent (cf. note 143). Their programmes mixed vocal as well as dance numbers, and prominently featured excerpts from *Hunyadi László*. They staged the opera as a whole in 1852 in Arad, the following year in Kolozsvár (Cluj), later also in other provincial cities. For an overview of *Hunyadi* performances in Erkel's time see Dezső Legány, *Erkel Ferenc művei és korabeli történetük* [The Works of Ferenc Erkel and Their Contemporary History], Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1975, 37–39.

⁴¹ "From the viewpoint of art history it would have been interesting to mark on the programme, how many times this national opera was performed, whose interest – it seems – grows with time. This opera can be played under the most severe circumstances, after guest appearances of great artists, in the midst of financial crises, in rain, in storm – the theatre is always full all the same; the audience is still enthusiastic about it; they encore several of its finer spots; and each night, after the beautiful church scene, they call before the curtain the composer – Erkel." *Hölgyfutár*, May 4, 1858.

⁴² "*Hunyadi László* was played before a small audience; I could have said »great audience«, but if *La Juive* is given in a crowded hall, by virtue of national predilection we have the right to call the medium audience of *Hunyadi* small. We do not want to accuse the public of coldness or indifference for its attitude towards this national masterpiece, but we can certainly say that, played once a month, like nowadays, its performance would make any theatre in the empire or abroad appear small. If the Hungarian public does not hurry to hear its best opera, then we do not know what it wants." *Hölgyfutár*, June 2, 1853.

⁴³ *Divatcsarnok*, November 10, 1853.

³⁹ "Das Sujet dieser, vom bedeutenden Fortschritt des Autors und Kompositors zeugenden Oper vergegenwärtigt die erschütternde, historische Katastrophe der unglücklichen Sprößlinge des Helden Johann Hunyady, Ladislaus und Mathias. Von Intriguen niedriger Vasallen und Schranken umnetzt, erscheint Ladislaus Hunyady früh, unverschuldetes, tragisches Ende, als Fügung der Vor-sehnung, um den Glanzpunkt der angestammten Magyarentreue für den rechtmäßigen König, in der Rettung des kleinen Mathias Corvinus zu verherrlichen." *Der Spiegel*, January 31, 1844.

⁴⁰ Négyessy, *op. cit.* (cf. note 19), 230.

confirmed enemy of music, objected that the opera made venerable Hungarian historic figures sing, as if they were characters of some farce or parody; this is just as sacrilegious, as if great men of the recent past – like Ferenc Kölcsey, the poet of the venerated *Hymn* of the Hungarian nation – were dragged onto the operatic stage. Opera is a nice and amusing genre, but it should stick to its last, to the “shire of colourful imagination” – that is, to Romantic tales – the *Regélő Pesti Divatlap* wrote.⁴⁶ But the majority of critics were touched, even moved, precisely by the opera’s faithful historicism already after the first performances. The German language journal, *Der Spiegel*, praised Egressy “for having increased the interest of the plot with unmistakable poetic skill and *historical authenticity* [italics mine] from act to act until the last, surprising effect”.⁴⁷ Others felt that “the libretto or text of this opera is quite simple, so much so, that it could almost be termed as largely being devoid of a poetic quality since it hardly goes beyond a mere recountal of historical facts. Nevertheless, this does not really detract from its value since the story of László Hunyadi stirs feelings in any style of rendering and attracts attention, if only the events are narrated in the proper sequence”.⁴⁸ Decades passed, but the public could not content itself with contemplating the tableaux of the tragic, but still glorious national past.⁴⁹

The political implications of *Hunyadi László* at the time of the first performance as well as after the defeat of Hungary in the 1848/49 War of Independence warrant special attention. During the four years between the première and the outbreak of the revolution the office of censorship found no objections against the opera. This may have been due to the motive of loyalty to the king, which is embarrassingly overemphasised in Lőrinc Tóth’s original version, and plays an important role in the opera as well. It also seems as if there had been some kind of agreement between the bureaucracy and the public that the “vile vassals and courtiers” (*Der Spiegel*) would not be projected onto any contemporary political figure. The privy silence that surrounded the identity of the “traitor” Cillei’s modern equivalent was broken only on March 15, 1848. On the day of the revolution no regular performance was possible; among other symbols

of national consciousness the improvised programme included two extracts from *Hunyadi László*. It seemed inevitable to say out loud at last what everybody had been thinking in the past: the final chorus of Act 1 was interpreted by the public as referring to Chancellor Metternich.⁵⁰ However, the revelation of its hidden political message did not lead to the banning of *Hunyadi* during the years of tyranny which followed the fall of the revolution. On the contrary, its first act – the one representing Cillei’s death – was found appropriate for festivities even by the pro-Hapsburg aristocratic directors of the theatre.⁵¹ Apparently, the cherished national opera was considered as an emotional and aesthetic safety valve that could vent political tensions through the channels of “elegiac” moods in the music. Thirty years after the première, and a quarter of a century after the revolution, in the midst of national contentment after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, a memorialist described the functions of the opera in the emotional household of the nation in bygone decades. “The first performance stirred immense sensation; it threw a spark into the heart of the nation, which could easily become enthusiastic under the inexplicable spell of the approaching revolution. *Hunyadi László* originated in the era of national awakening and it bears the mark of this wondrous period: it includes some part of the fire that blazes in Petőfi’s poems. When everything was rising, everything was coming to new life: poetry, literature, politics; the art of music could not stay away, either. A young composer came, who put into magical sounds everything that Hungary was dreaming about, and announced in the language of music the dawn that appeared on the horizon. [...] During the [18]50s Erkel became a true guard of the national sentiment. He showed great firmness in the face of absolutism, which tormented hard the muses as well.”⁵²

While Egressy’s dramaturgy found the approval of the critics, the numerous verbal slips of the libretto were heavily criticised already after the first performances.⁵³

⁴⁶ *Regélő Pesti Divatlap*, 3 (1844), 156–157.

⁴⁷ “Mit unverkennbarem, poetischem Geschike u. historischer Authentizität wußte Hr. Egressy das Interesse der Handlung von Akt zu Akt, *au comble* des überraschendsten Effektes, zu steigern. Diese Hauptidee, durch frappante Episoden gehoben, diente dem ausgezeichneten Compositeur als Folie zu einem originellen, echt nationalen Tongemälde, desgleichen die vaterländische Tonmuse noch keines produzierte – und das die Hoffnung auf einen umfassenderen Aufschwung unverfälschter, nationaler Tonkunst im Herzen eines jeden wahren Patrioten beleben muß.” *Der Spiegel*, January 31, 1844.

⁴⁸ *Életképek*, 1 (1844), 195.

⁴⁹ “This national opera is not only one of the greatest treasures of Hungarian music, but also the stage tableau of a magnificent historic epoch, whose music is listened to, and whose images are looked at, by every Hungarian with enthusiasm.” *Hölgyfutár*, September 9, 1856.

⁵⁰ “Suffice to say, soon after the Rákóczi March the orchestra played a French song, the Marseilles, which was received with a loud outbreak of approval, just like the other pieces, especially the grand, exhorting finale from the first act of *Hunyadi László*, sung with extraordinary enthusiasm by choristers [!] Bognár, Füredy and Wolf, which starts with »The traitor is dead!«. By then the news of the revolution in Vienna and of the fall of the Austrian ministry having arrived, many were shouting the hated name of Metternich in reference to the song’s text. – [...] The orchestra, conducted by Ferenc Erkel, played László Hunyadi’s *Swan Song* as well, and at this time some cried: »This is the swan song of the censors!«.” *Életképek*, 9 (1848), 379. (March 15, 1848, is the day when the revolution broke out in Pest.)

⁵¹ “Opera excerpts from *Hunyadi László* and *Ilka* [opera by Ferenc Doppler]. – The court box had a high guest, His Imperial and Royal Highness Archduke Leopold; together with Their Highnesses Archduke Albrecht, Archduchess Hildegarde and Archduke Ernest.” *Hölgyfutár*, May 13, 1856. Erkel’s political loyalty was beyond doubt: he was the piano teacher of the governor’s children.

⁵² *Pesti Napló*, February 25, 1874. Signed [Ábr]-á-[nyi?].

⁵³ “*Hunyadi László* was played for the 12th time to a full hall. Usual performance. Could the poet not smooth down certain jarring

Corrections and rewritings appeared shortly and have stayed with the opera throughout its career on the stage. Nevertheless, as one critic cited above formulated, “this hardly detracts from its value, since in opera the meaning of the words is but subordinate” to the music. And the music – as many have felt throughout the past decades – admirably underlined the essence of the text: the representation of national history. “Erkel’s works correspond to the historical plot so well that one can unravel from them all the dramatic moments without knowledge of history, or deeper musical initiation. In Erkel’s operas the ray of music projects onto the canvas of our imagination a whole group of historic characters in iridescent light through the thick clouds of the past. They move before us with all their symptoms of life, their temperament, their emotions.”⁵⁴ The plot’s aforementioned passion-like quality allows the listener to follow the story on two different levels: as representing an historic event of great national importance, but also as a series of archetypal human situations that affect each witness directly. The death of the Son of Man represents the death of every human being. Already in Act 1, with the episode of László’s romance, Egressy and Erkel “warm up” the political drama that proceeds in recitatives and *turbas*; from Act 2 on the human situations become the focus of their attention. The aria (after 1850: two arias) of the *mater dolorosa* Erzsébet Szilágyi, fraught with foreboding, visions and hope; the trio of the mother and her two sons; the love duet of Mária and László as a depiction of harmonious love; their farewell duet, in which man and woman face death together; finally, the *miserere* of the closing scene – all these movements rise above the political and love intrigues, and emanate the *a priori* tragedy of life. Between these private scenes stand the monumental public ones like pillars: the three revolting choral scenes in the first act (which were the prime guarantees of the opera’s success from the start); the devout royal oath in the second; the brilliant afterthought of the *csárdás* in the wedding scene; finally, the national funeral march and the storm scene in the finale. The alternating images of public and intimate character, of the historical chronicle and the private tragedy, constitute a perfectly organic and meaningful sequence.

After the première the theatrical and musical *arbiter elegantiarum* in 1840s Pest, Lázár Petrichevich Horváth, dedicated an essay to *Hunyadi*, which extended to three issues of the journal *Honderű*. He expressed his enthusiasm “for the sublime charms of this grandiose historical music drama”,⁵⁵ and especially for Erkel’s *trouville* of coupling national music with national

passages of the libretto, and the most jarring of all, which is sung by Mr Füredy: »And you, blear-eyed fool, Hunyad«? At any rate we believe that such smoothing down would not cause any harm.” *Honderű*, 2 (1844), Vol. 2, 292.

⁵⁴ *Életképek*, 8 (1847), 700.

⁵⁵ *Honderű*, 2 (1844), Vol. 2, 245.

history, thus acknowledging that “national art of true sublimity can only originate from themes that are rooted in the past and, what reflects the former, in the character of the nation”.⁵⁶ Others observed with delight the stylistic unity of the music, which was no doubt due to its national background. *Der Spiegel* wrote of a “pleasant, touching, elegiac musical mode” that “permeated each number” of the new opera. Nevertheless, the review also spotted something that could be considered as the back side of this unity: “in some places melodies are lacking conspicuously”.⁵⁷ (The critic later revised his opinion and declared that “these melodies were taken up by the people, and will carry on living on their lips”).⁵⁸ The final chorus of the first act soon became a folksong, indeed, and it triumphed night by night in the double sign of “Hungarian feeling and melody”.⁵⁹ However, some stern critics would go on maintaining their claims with respect to “the lack of melodies and arias”,⁶⁰ even though cavatinas, grand scenas and arias (in the sense these terms were generally understood in the 1840s, after Italian models) are not missing from the dramaturgy of *Hunyadi László*. The most prominent examples include Mátyás’s two-part cavatina in the introductory scene (*Primo tempo* – Moderato, *Cabaletta* – Allegro); Erzsébet’s three-part *sortita* (*Primo tempo* – Andantino, *Tempo di mezzo* – Allegro non tanto, Molto allegro e agitato, *Cabaletta* – Allegro moderato); Gara’s single-movement aria, in itself in three sections with recapitulation; the King’s scene with two-movement aria (*Primo tempo* – Andantino, *Cabaletta* – Allegro non troppo); in conclusion the opera’s Finale, which is in point of fact a *gran scena* for Erzsébet: the introductory *scena* leads into a storm scene (as in the first finale of *La Straniera*), the slow *Primo tempo* is modelled after the *Preghiera* of Italian operas (as it happened already in *Bátori Mária*), the closing fast section (fortunately not a cabaletta) brings back the agitato middle section of Erzsébet’s aria in Act 2 – her nightmare in Temesvár

⁵⁶ *Honderű*, 2 (1844), Vol. 1., 205–211.

⁵⁷ “Der hie und da auffallende Mangel an Melodie wird vom gediegenen Saze, von der trefflichen Instrumentirung und von einem wohlthuenden, aus Herz gehenden elegischen Typus, welcher alle Nummern durchflutet, und von den meisterhaften Ensembles überdekt.” *Der Spiegel*, January 31, 1844.

⁵⁸ “Es bleibt uns nur zu bemerken, daß wenn einst ein ungarischer Typus im Opernstyl geschaffen werden sollte, Herr Erkel in *Bátori Maria* und *Hunyadi* gewiß den Grundstein dazu gelegt hat, worauf seine Nachfolger fortbauen können. Diese Weisen sind in den Mund des Volks übergegangen und werden dort fortleben.” *Der Spiegel*, November 17, 1847. An account about the folklorization of the melodies from *Hunyadi* is given in Zoltán Kodály, “Erkel és a népzene” [Erkel and folk music], in: Bónis Ferenc (ed), *Kodály Zoltán Visszatekintés. Összegyűjtött írások, beszédek, nyilatkozatok* [Zoltán Kodály: In Retrospect. Selected Writings], Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1964, II, 91–96.

⁵⁹ “[*Hunyadi László*] was again played before a huge audience and the outbreak of public approval at the most Hungarian spirited ending of the first act still reaches the highest degree. See, what the Hungarian element and melody can do!” *Pesti Divatlap*, 1 (1844), Vol. 2, 62.

⁶⁰ *Hölgyfutár*, January 27, 1858.

comes true in Buda. Erzsébet's solo numbers captivated the audience at once. "In the second act the anxiety and hopeful ardour of Hunyadi's widow came from the heart and reaches the hearts. [The finale] assures the author an outstanding place among the best composers; this scene squeezed tears from eyes that are usually not moved by the merest trifles." The arias of other characters did not drown in lack of sympathy, either. "The highpoint of the third act is the reverie of the King, which reflects his inner struggles with rare fidelity."⁶¹ In the first years of performance history both the rhythm and the range of Gara's aria proved too demanding for Hungarian singers. An intriguingly new image of the Palatine appeared only with the arrival of the Italian Giovanni Reina; "in particular it was the recitative-like solo song that opens with »Happy days, Gara!« whose difficulties he manfully conquered with his gigantic voice and, since this was a wholly new phenomenon on our stage, the ecstatic audience encored with great noise the difficult strophe that had never before caused such an effect".⁶² The role of Mátyás had a similar fate. This is essentially restricted to the opening cavatina and the trio, and remained almost unnoticeable at first, until in 1846 "with Róza Csillag a great lot was gained for the role of the little Mátyás, which was until now, apart from its rendering by Mme. László, suffering as a rule in profane hands".⁶³

All that notwithstanding, the opera's overall effect made the arias appear pale. As if Erkel himself would have agreed with his critics, out of his five significant later additions to the score with three he increased the number of arias. The insertions were composed for new singers who took over the three main roles: Erzsébet, Mária and László. First it was Mária's part that was enriched with the addition of an extensive and vocally highly demanding solo number in the second act. When the new star of the Hungarian stage, Kornélia Hollósy, made her first appearance as Mária Gara in November 1847, she received "a very pretty aria in the scene of the wedding celebration at the end of the third act".⁶⁴ Erkel's next and last step towards a reevaluation of Mária's role was inspired by the guest performance of the French *coloratura* star, Désirée Artôt, in June 1862. Neither the Hollósy cabaletta nor the Artôt cadenza gained universal approval: according to *Életképek* the cabaletta is "overloaded with the most fastidious vocal arabesques, and if it were not ennobled by Hollósy, it could only be considered a *jolie bagatelle*". For its part, the heavily ornamented *coloratura* cadenza became a

red rag to the then already ubiquitous partisans of Wagnerian music drama.⁶⁵ Others, especially the enthusiastic general public, understood Erkel's brilliant afterthought: Mária's cabaletta introduced a true *canticum canticorum* into the wedding scene, a bridal song of songs, in which the coloraturas make her heart sing without words.⁶⁶ Thanks to the insertion of the virtuoso aria and to the radiance of the art of Kornélia Hollósy, Mária Gara's part seemed to question the primacy of Erzsébet Szilágyi as the *prima donna assoluta* of the opera. It took "Mátyás's mother" (to evoke the title of János Arany's famous ballad) three years to riposte. During her guest appearances in summer 1850 the internationally fêted Anne de La Grange learnt Erzsébet's role and performed it in Hungarian; the sensation created by these twelve performances surpassed even that of the first series. De La Grange disposed of a much wider range and more spectacular method of singing than any other dramatic singer Erkel could have heard in Erzsébet's role before. Nothing could illustrate the difference better than the contrast between the modest *vocalises* of the original aria and the demanding, etude-like quality and extreme range of the insertion aria for de La Grange, aptly named after her. The singer had originally arrived to Budapest to sing the role of Fidès at the première of Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*, the now sparkling, then intimate character of that part obviously exerted a strong influence on Erkel's vocal writing.⁶⁷ From a dramaturgical viewpoint, the La Grange aria is in fact redundant, since it

praise from a musical viewpoint, since not even with the utmost benevolence can we find in it anything regularly beautiful, only an excessive mass of difficulties with respect to both memory and throat. We are convinced that anybody else, who does not dispose of Artôt's rare memory and even rarer musical ability, will fail with this boring cadenza. Those, who found it necessary to force Artôt into such thankless pains, misjudged her. She would have found approval with a shorter and simpler cadenza as well; she is not in need of blinding runs, worthless fiorituras, because she possesses the divine spark that is given to few, and with which one can bring forth moving things from the simplest scenes. Those without performing talent, who do not possess the fire and soul absolutely necessary for dramatic scenes, do well – since they are forced – to expect every effect from the trills and cadenzas, but an Artôt, who can play the last act of *La Traviata* and the dungeon scene in *Hunyadi László* with a tragic force that surpasses every expectation, surely does not need that her performance of genius be distorted by the exaggerated flourish unfortunately customary with us." *Hölgyfutár*, June 21, 1862.

⁶⁶ "As if some *otherworldly magic sounds* [italics mine], she performed with great effect the solo song as well, which was newly written by Erkel especially for the artist and accompanied by the flute; and the frequent outbursts of public approval could be compared to the strongest noise of the storm." *Pesti Divatlap*, 5 (1848), 26.

⁶⁷ "Hunyadi László created such a big crowd that not even *Le Prophète* could cause. This time an even greater number of people returned because of the lack of tickets than on the occasion of the performances of *Le Prophète*. About the success we only say in short that it by far surpassed the most ardent expectations in every respect. The new song that Erkel wrote specifically for Mme. La Grange gave an opportunity to this outstanding artist to show off her almost miraculous range in an even brighter light, and the audience's enthusiasm was infinite." *Hölgyfutár*, July 19, 1850.

⁶¹ *Életképek*, 1 (1844), 197.

⁶² *Pesti Divatlap*, 5 (1848), 26.

⁶³ *Pesti Divatlap*, 3 (1846), 1013.

⁶⁴ *Életképek*, 8 (1847), 701. Instead of the usual slow-fast double aria, Erkel only incorporated a fast aria, a cabaletta, in the scene. The model for this soaringly happy, single-section aria may have been the *O luce di quest'anima* inserted for the Paris première into the title role of Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix*.

⁶⁵ "First of all we mention the long, very long cadenza that Erkel compiled for Artôt in conclusion of her aria, and which we cannot

repeats both the attitude and the form of the *sortita*. Still, its Hungarian style and technical brilliance made it one of the most successful numbers of the work and the touchstone of Erzsébet's role. Singers in later years indeed often avoided this trial. A review of 1873 reports in particular that, just like in the present performance, "Ida Benza Nagy sang Erzsébet with the La Grange aria already last year", during her first season in Pest – as the special mention suggests: in contrast to some of her predecessors.⁶⁸

In the autumn of 1859 the Hungarian-born tenor Ferenc Stéger arrived to Pest for a two-month visit.⁶⁹ He ravished the audience among others with two appearances in László's role – the best renderings to date. "On this occasion Erkel wrote a beautiful new song for Stéger, which won general approval", the *Hölgyfutár* chronicled.⁷⁰ The sources suggest that the "new song" was in fact not entirely new; rather, it was the originally modest romance in the first act that received an insertion to a text by an unknown poet (Egressy himself died eight years earlier). With the addition, the aria now features an extraordinary but economical structure, an exquisite melodic invention, and a colourful but organic modulatory plan. After an intimate wind introduction, the original aria, first performed in 1844, opens with a D major *accompagnato* of lyric character and melodic poignancy. A single modulatory bar of string unison connects it to the cantabile which begins in B flat major and returns to the key of D major only in the coda, quoting the instrumental introduction. In the 1859 version the opening recitative is thoroughly revised, and a harp part is added. The newly inserted section of the aria sets off with a softly undulating syncopated sequential motive, and moves on to a variant of a motive that appears repeatedly in the original layer of the opera: it is elaborated in the second part of László's 1844 aria, as well as in László's and Mária's love duet (which,

in turn, is recalled at the end of the wedding scene, just before the catastrophe). After the new cantabile, the melody of the introductory recitative returns in a *spianato* version with elaborate orchestral accompaniment. There follows the single bar of modulating unison from the first version, which then appropriately leads to the original cantabile. The structure of the expanded version of the aria can be described as follows: I (instrumental introduction) – A (*accompagnato*) – B (broad cantabile insertion using motives of the original cantabile) – A_v (cantabile recapitulation of the *accompagnato*) – C (the original aria) – I (coda). The cantabile insertion begins in A major and moves through E major, C major and A minor before concluding in victorious A major. The insertion thus results in the overall tonal plan D – A – (E – C – A minor) – A – D – B flat – D.

Erkel's procedure to enrich László's part is noteworthy and differs substantially from that applied to Mária Gara's role. In the *Urform* Mária did not have a single greater solo number; her figure stepped into the lime-light only in the two duets with László and the short song – rather but an *arioso* period – in which she is quietly imploring her father to save László in the fourth act.⁷¹ The inclusion of a virtuoso aria in 1847 expanded on – if not indeed repealed – the original stylistic concept, which had been built around her song-like, lyric utterances.⁷² László's vocal character, on the other hand, was not altered, but merely enriched by the composer. Hunyadi's other aria, the one sung in the dungeon scene and featuring a Hungarian melodic style, remained unchanged. The moderate (*Andantino*) tempo and tonally wavering double strophe structure (C minor vs. A flat major) of the piece evokes an elegiac mood, and stays with the modest song, or rather romance format, even though treating it somewhat

⁶⁸ *Pesti Napló*, October 22, 1873. During this performance the critic observed the "inflammatory effect" of the two rivalling primadonna roles: "the crowded and inflammably disposed audience could not decide, to whom to present the prize, and applauded both of them until the palms broke. Ida Benza Nagy sang Erzsébet with the La Grange aria already last year, and she accomplished this task with the full bravura of her technique and a purified, tuneful voice this night as well. However, the interest was directed to Minnie Hauck's Mária Gara in particular. She was the whole novelty of the evening. She immediately made a conquest with her Hungarian costume whose splendour was increased by taste; she was a joy to look at. Her pronunciation is yet uncertain, or rather timid, but after a few rehearsals she will pronounce Hungarian words as clearly as many of our renowned singers. Her Mária Gara succeeded beyond expectation; she displayed grace, amiability, charm in it. In the well-known duet with László she enchanted the audience."

⁶⁹ Ferenc Stéger first appeared on the national stage as guest in 1848; he sang László V. He was offered a contract and was active in the National Theatre until March 1852. Although he also sang heroic tenor roles (he was the first Hungarian John of Leyden in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*), in *Hunyadi László* he stayed with the role of the King, since at this time the title role still belonged to the worthy Károly Wolf.

⁷⁰ *Hölgyfutár*, November 15, 1859.

⁷¹ Originally she would have had even less to sing: in the first edition of the libretto the text that would be composed by Erkel as the love duet of Mária and László serves for an aria of the hero.

⁷² Writing about the appearance of the Polish primadonna, Maria Leszniewska, the *Pesti Napló* made a cogent distinction between the old and the new spheres of Mária's role: between song and aria. "We regret that the often only too zealous part of the audience did not applaud precisely at those passages sung by the admired artist that we consider the highpoint of her singing today, viz. the *song* in the dungeon, which she sings on her knees before her father: »My beloved father! Listen to your child«. We stress this as a particularly beautiful passage and cannot share the opinion of those who find the revered artist's singing excellent and correct in the great coloratura *aria* [italics mine]. This singing was often not sure." *Pesti Napló*, August 11, 1857. "Song" and "aria" were frequently differentiated on other occasions as well; the publication of the piano version of *Hunyadi László*, for example, was advertised as follows: "opera for piano written by Ferenc Erkel, appeared at art-dealer J. Treichlinger; all in all viz. the overture, three booklets of songs, the *Swan Song*, the march, the *aria* written for La Grange to be had for 5 florins; the same can also be obtained one by one [italics mine]." *Hölgyfutár*, March 14, 1860. A review of July 19, 1850, in the same journal had mentioned the insertion aria after its first performance as "the new song that Erkel wrote especially for Mme. La Grange"; the programme was specific in saying that de La Grange "will sing a new aria written especially for her by the composer".

more extensively than its pendant in the first act originally did.

However, lyricism and elegiac mood are coupled in László's portrayal with rather different characteristics that "one can expect from the impersonator of a young hero". He shows his other profile in the political dialogues of the first act "where he appears in front of the King or among his fellow heroes",⁷³ as well as in the final collision with Cillei. Even here he does not abandon his characteristic song style completely; the *accompagnato* at the King's reception features the kind of "markedly aria-like periods" which Bellini allotted to Arturo in *La Straniera*, as if by way of compensation, because he was not allotted an aria proper.⁷⁴ Apart from this exception, the political dialogues slip by in lean recitative. It would certainly be welcome if the music of the dialogue between Hunyadi and Cillei approximated the textural sensitivity of the duet by Cillei and the King, although even the latter is marred by the lack of a fast section that could round up the situation. The sharp remark one reads in *Der Ungar* about certain "great runs up to aria dissolve in anguished recitatives lacking in fantasy" may apply to these scenes.⁷⁵ In spite of this problem, the duet of Cillei and the King, as well as the King's third-act scene with the other intriguer, Gara, were still hailed by critics twenty years later as evidence of "Erkel's correct notion about Hungarian opera".⁷⁶ In contrast to the King's duets, the ensembles László participates in tend to be conservative, conflict free and song-like. The most peaceful number of the opera, a trio in G major sung by Erzsébet Szilágyi and her two sons, unfolds along the lines of a classical modulation plan and exhibits obligato voice-leading with

⁷³ *Életképek*, 5 (1846), 793.

⁷⁴ Lippmann, Friedrich, *Vincenzo Bellini und die italienische opera seria seiner Zeit. Studien über Libretto, Arienform und Melodik*, Köln-Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1969, 105. (Analecta musicologica 6.)

⁷⁵ "Die teutsche, schwersäbige Kraft zuweilen [erhält] die Oberhand über die Stimme der Inspiration [...], namentlich da, wo ein großer Anlauf zu einer wirksamen Arie gemacht wird, und das Ganze in ein phantasieloses, übertrieben ängstliches Recitative hinausläuft." *Der Ungar*, October 31, 1845.

⁷⁶ "For example when Cillei reproaches the King for his feebleness toward László Hunyadi, »How many time I must tell your deceived majesty«, etc., this is neither an aria nor a duet in the usual manner, but a way of opera composition, wherein the orchestra, mostly the violins, as a rule play a melody independent from the voice (in the case in point the violins do this in alternation with the winds, which makes the passage even more interesting), while the singer in question as a rule tells an important and individually characteristic fact; it is in these [places] that Erkel's correct notion about Hungarian opera show itself, for those are also written in a Hungarian spirit. – He entered this path already in *Bátori Mária*; the Hungarian composer, who wants to obtain this proud title, has to follow this. We do not believe that the King's frame of mind, when in the third act his timid soul is filled by the poison of Gara's slander, could better be musically expressed; when the cellos and the violas start out into the depth and the violins join them, swelling up and down at the bottom of their range as well; this is true sentiment. The listener's heart constricts, and when the King cries out: »there's no mercy any more!«, one feels that László Hunyadi is lost! – and all this is said not merely in Hungarian language, but also in Hungarian music." *Pesti Napló*, June 2, 1863.

Mozartian serenity. The bipartite duet in A major sung by László and Mária in the second act mingles the style of an Italian bel canto duet with *csárdás* motives and rhythms; the two voices either reply to each other by repeating the same melody, or float in parallel sixths (László's part swells up to an unusually high B' in the falsetto register). The farewell duet uses a similar technique: it fills the Hungarian style with a tragically sublime atmosphere, while leaving intact the dance song's formal and melodic structure. (The audience could not have enough of the two duets.)⁷⁷ "Elegiac" or lyric mood, Hungarian song and dance style in the closed numbers; forceful, fairly plain declamation in the dialogues – did Erkel not act upon the admonition of critics like Imre Vahot by refraining from making the great figures of the Hungarian past sing *arias*? No doubt, the music carefully keeps László at a distance from the sphere of grand opera. To put it more explicitly, *this* László needs no grand aria and dramatic dialogues "that reflect his inner struggles with rare fidelity", like the *other* László (the King) does. The aria and the duets of the latter repeatedly show traces of a true dramatic conflict as a sign of his split personality. Erkel certainly realised that the real tragic figure of his opera was the King, whereas László is not a tragic hero to have great inner struggles: he is a Hungarian character carved out of a single block. In the style of his musical utterances Erkel romanticises the functional music of the national community – the nobility and those urban strata striving to imitate it – the hero symbolises.

Nevertheless, László Hunyadi does not degenerate into a mere *Singspiel* character in the opera. This is due to the natural nobleness of his vocal utterances, as well as to the instrumental motives and movements, which save his person and personality from the triviality of the stage and lift him into the invisible, but musically amenable sphere of heroic legend and epos. In the opera only László's appearance is accompanied by an own motive of fate or character motive. The use of recurring motives in order to evoke certain persons or situations is usually considered as characteristic of French comic opera, which was by no means always comic, but often rather balladesque. For the new operatic efforts of 19th century nationalism (also in Germany) *opéra comique* served as one of the most important models; partly because the balladesque type proved particularly serviceable for the historical or folkloristic subjects preferred by national operas, partly since its style was more accessible to the modest vocal competence of local singers than it would have been the case with the more demanding vocal writing of Italian or French grand opera. A few years

⁷⁷ "Miss Lesniewska was the dearest Mária Gara today as well; now again she sang her duets with Mr Mazzi (László Hunyadi) with so much grace and correctness that she prompted the audience to stormy applauses spontaneously." *Divatcsarnok*, February 20, 1855. "[Kornélia Hollósy's] duet with Ellinger in the second and last act is one of the most beautiful vocal sections." *Hölgyfutár*, August 4, 1860.

before Erkel, Wagner also used the fate motive in a similar way, though more decisively, in *The Flying Dutchman*. László's fate motive is a *tárogató* signal of *kuruc* character in the minor mode, which opens with the characteristic *Doppelschlag* well-known from the *Rákóczi March*. For want of a *tárogató*, in the first act it is played by *flicorni* (flugelhorns), in the fourth by the winds and in the overture it is allotted to the trumpets. Its prophetic and melancholic call twice announces the entrance of the hero in the first act (Scene 2: László arrives from Futak; Scene 4: László before the King). It does not recur in the second and third acts – understandably so in the family scenes, but its evocation would arguably do some good to the duet of Gara and Hunyadi.⁷⁸ In the fourth act it functions as orchestral counter motive to the vocal part in the first, C minor section of László's cavatina (Andantino). Finally Erkel develops from it the short modulating transition between the scenes in the dungeon and at the Saint George's Square, respectively; which the composer labelled *Introduzione [!] del [!] Marcia* in the autograph.

The first scene of the fourth act, with Gara's scornful command – “We shall see, courageous hero [that is, László], whether you keep your word at the gallows” – is left open before the *Introduzione della Marcia*; the latter, on the other hand, comes to a halt on a half cadence in the key of the funeral march (E flat minor). Thus, the change between the two scenes in the fourth act is musically bridged over.⁷⁹ The music integrates the stations of László's last journey into a single epic process from the dungeon aria through the farewell duet to the funeral march. In fact this integration starts even earlier, with the so-called *Swan Song*. In the autograph score Erkel notated this movement at the beginning of the last act, and labelled it *Entre act.* [sic]. As regards the way of performance we have no contemporary testimonies, but it seems plausible that the *Swan Song* indeed filled the intermission between the third and fourth acts as an interlude, rather than being played simply as a prelude to the fourth. With this bridging over the opera unfolds without a break from the splendour of the wedding scene to the stormy darkness of the execution scene. In this process the entr'acte's slow–fast–coda *verbunkos* cycle, which the piano version's title clearly connects to Hunyadi himself,⁸⁰ programmatically sings of the hero's

romantic looking back at his life. The stately first section is the swan song proper: a *hallgató*; that is, an inward-looking, meditating song. The melodic turns of the fast section recall *kuruc* motives and the *Rákóczi March* in particular: the memories of the valiant life. The final *Più mosso* of a few bars evokes the coda of the *Terzetto* in Act 2 and the introductory bars of the love duet at the same time: the hero thinks of Erzsébet and Mária, his guardian angels. Erkel thought the *Più mosso* so characteristic that he used it in the overture's slow introduction as third subject after the Hunyadi motive and the farewell duet.

Throughout the opera the instrumental layer is organic and of high quality with respect to both technique and atmosphere (which cannot always be said of the vocal sections). A possible explanation could be that the national music the work uses as “raw material” also originally evolved as an instrumental idiom. By Erkel's time its use in art music already had a tradition of over half a century, not merely in works by provincial composers, but also by classical masters. The harmony between compositional technique and national expression is best achieved by Erkel in the most classical – that is, symphonic – movement, the overture of the opera. Given that the compositional process took several years and the première occurred a whole year after the assumed time of completion, it cannot have been the lack of time that caused this bravura piece to be played in the theatre only a year and a half after the opera's first performance (on October 29, 1845). Before writing the overture Erkel evidently wanted to hear and see his own work in a series of performances on the stage, and not simply in order to be able to identify the most successful numbers that should thus be evoked in the overture (the regularly encored love duet, for example, is not quoted). Rather, he wanted to *hear out* how the main dramatic accents function in the opera, so that he could later expose in instrumental form the quintessence of the drama, irrespective of the concrete plot and stage characters. The essential musical and dramatic content of the opera could thus leave the theatre and lead an independent life on the concert podium. The composer's hopes came true splendidly: the *Hunyadi Overture* soon became popular, and has remained the most frequently played Hungarian orchestral piece of the 19th century. In the theatre as well it enjoyed the highest possible esteem an operatic overture can achieve: even before the ringing up of the curtain it forced onto the audience an attitude appropriate to a national passion play. Such an attitude was by no means obvious in the middle of the 19th century.⁸¹

One month after the thirtieth anniversary of its première, on February 24, 1874, *Hunyadi László* was performed for the 200th time under festive circumstances. Fifty further performances followed until May

⁷⁸ Peculiarly, this duet is never mentioned in the theatrical reviews: one does not praise it, nor scold it; no one demands its omission, nor its restitution. It must have been cut at an early time.

⁷⁹ Thus there was a musical transition between these two scenes from the very start. In 1854 Erkel was asked to provide something similar for the other changes of scene: “the directors consulted Ferenc Erkel because his *Hunyadi László* will be newly put on stage by Szigligeti, and he should draw up the music for the transitions. Erkel promised to do so; in turn the directors also promised that the staging of his opera would be absolutely new.” *Hölgyfutár*, December 9, 1854.

⁸⁰ The publication's title on the title page: *Swan Song from the Opera Hunyadi László*. On the first page of the score: *László Hunyadi's Swan Song*.

⁸¹ “A crowded hall; the audience was practically together before the start of the majestic overture and listened to it in greater silence than usual.” *Magyar Sajtó*, June 10, 1856.

13, 1884; on this day the opera was played for the last time in the National Theatre. (In the autumn the Royal Hungarian Opera opened its doors to become the home for both Erkel's operas and the opera company he had been leading for almost fifty years.) Forty years, 250 performances – with this, *Hunyadi László* holds an absolute first place in the 50-year operatic activity of the National Theatre. It beat the second best, *Lucia di Lammermoor* (first performed in Pest in 1846) by approximately 70 performances.⁸² The victorious four decades of *Hunyadi* on the Budapest stage (and also on other stages in the then Greater Hungary) were shaded by a single, but deep disappointment: notwithstanding the efforts of numerous Hungarian and foreign musicians, singers and “cultural managers” – including Liszt, Thalberg, de La Grange, Lázár Petrichevich Horváth and the great Viennese singer, Marie Witt, an unforgettable impersonator of Erzsébet – the opera was never performed in any important theatre, with good performers, outside the Hungarian borders. The story of the series of unsuccessful attempts, which frustrated the Hungarian musical circles for decades, has been told elsewhere.⁸³ The reason that restricted the influence of *Hunyadi László* to Hungary was perhaps the one prophetically foretold by the most clear-sighted critic of the première, Ferenc Ney: “from a national point of view the opera moves in its own isolated sphere, by virtue of which it will eminently belong to the land that gave birth to it”.⁸⁴

4. PROBLEMS OF AUTHORSHIP

The authorship of Ferenc Erkel's *Bánk Bán* and his later operas was questioned as early as the time of their premières. However, the authenticity of *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László* was never really doubted, neither by contemporaries, nor by posterity. László Somfai, who first put the delicate issue under systematic philological scrutiny, came to the conclusion: the basic layer of the autograph of both early operas leaves no margin for doubt as regards the exclusive authorship of Erkel. In the autographs only the handwriting of Ferenc Erkel is discernible.⁸⁵

Authenticity of the early versions of both operas is asserted by researched sources of the National Theatre's music collection. A contemporary set of vocal and instrumental part books for both operas, used under the inspection of Erkel, was preserved almost intact. The musical text is identical with the basic layer of the autographs. Subsequent notes in the autographs, which served as conducting score as well, were made entirely

by Erkel in *Bátori Mária*, and predominantly by him in *Hunyadi*. The corrections went into the above mentioned performing material. Later part books, copied after the premières already have the revision notes of the autographs embedded in the basic layer – further proof that these early corrections soon became integral parts of the operas' performances later, when Erkel was directing them in the National Theatre.

According to sources, Erkel kept on working intensively on *Bátori Mária* even after the 1840 première.⁸⁶ The creative process of *Hunyadi László* is markedly different from that of *Bátori Mária*. In many respects *Hunyadi* followed the well-trying composition pattern of *Bátori*, therefore it is not accidental that it took less time to complete the new opera than it had taken him to conclude *Bátori* or indeed his later work. The première was a definite milestone in the composition process. Firstly because Erkel would not make amendments to his opera, save for an overture one year later, in 1845. Secondly, because when he eventually made corrections in *Hunyadi* years later, it was not so much because of his dissatisfaction with the play but due to the change in circumstances. Up-and-coming new singers inspired him, for whom he willingly composed arias, complementing the leading roles and defying critics who found his opera lacking in melodies. The deeply personal motivation, and the fact that Erkel later insisted on keeping these inserts, so much so that they became indelible parts of the opera, guarantee the authorship of these added parts. Available sources also support the idea of Erkel's unquestionable authorship: Autographs of the *Mária* Cabaletta and the La Grange aria have survived; there is direct reference to the now perished score of the amended middle part of *No. 7* (written specifically for Stéger) in the autograph. Further more, original insert sheets for all three numbers have survived in the National Theatre music collection.

It seems plausible therefore to suppose that Erkel's authorship of *Hunyadi László*, both for the original version that premiered in 1844 and in the case of vocal inserts that were added later, cannot be doubted with large certainty. It is less evident, however, that the later addition of *Magyar tánc* (*Hungarian dance*, a popular part later to be known as *Palotás* or “court dance”) was entirely his composition. Many critics have expressed doubts about the authorship of this insert.⁸⁷ Sources for *Hungarian Dance* are problematic to say the least:

⁸² The daily programmes of the National Theatre can be consulted in the Theatre History Collection of the National Széchényi Library, Budapest.

⁸³ Legány, *op. cit.* (cf. note 42), 39–45.

⁸⁴ *Életképek*, 1 (1844), 198.

⁸⁵ Somfai, *op. cit.* (cf. note 2), 105, 107.

⁸⁶ For the sources and composition process of *Bátori Mária* see the Introduction of Miklós Dolinszky, *op. cit.* (cf. note 4), xiv–xxi, and Katalin Szacsvai-Kim, “Bátori Mária – források és változatok” [Bátori Mária: Sources and Versions], *Muzsika*, January 2003, 14–17.

⁸⁷ Cf. the work-list of István Kassai, “Erkel Ferenc hangszeres művei” [Instrumental Work by Ferenc Erkel], in: Ferenc Bónis (ed), *Erkel Ferencről és koráról* [On Ferenc Erkel and his Times], Budapest: Püski, 1995, 68 (Magyar Zenetörténeti Tanulmányok), and Károly Sziklavári, “Erkel művek keletkezése nyomában” [Tracing the Origin of Erkel's Work], in: Ferenc Bónis (ed), *Erkel Ferencről, Kodály Zoltánról és koráról* [On Ferenc Erkel, Zoltán Kodály

no autograph have survived. It was common theatrical practice in those days to use dance acts rather freely. Such inserts were not necessarily considered as integral parts of an opera. There were definite sections for a dance or dance tableau to be inserted in an opera, yet the musical accompaniment could vary according to the choreography. Erkel often had other composers write dance pieces for his operas or he borrowed dance inserts from his other work if need be. One can think of the debatable Hungarian dances in *Bátori Mária*, which were later added to the original version of the opera, or a composition by Gyula Erkel, the *Fegyvertánc* (*Weapon dance*) in *Dózsa György*, which Ferenc Erkel later inserted in the performances of *Hunyadi László* and *Erzsébet* that he conducted.⁸⁸ *Weapon dance* was inserted in *Hunyadi* after the *No. 19 Cabaletta* (measure 239).⁸⁹ Erkel had made temporary additions of a similar kind earlier on. In 1852, two consecutive performances of *Hunyadi*, both conducted by Erkel, were advertised promising a “Serious threesome dance” in the second act and a “Serious Polish dance” in the third act, in addition to the usual “Hungarian dance”. The musical score of these “serious” dances are unknown, but being special performances, it is more than likely that they were borrowed inserts.⁹⁰

Despite the fact that the Hungarian dance was inserted in *Hunyadi László* deliberately, it proved to be a fleeting solution at first, bearing in mind that such an insert was probably in demand by the audience even at that time. The opera was lacking in a ballet piece, even though one had to look no further for a convenient opportunity than the wedding scene, and the “Hungarian character dance” was in increasing demand both by the performers and the audience in those exalted years just before the 1848 revolution. Three performances of *Bátori Mária* in 1846 and 1847 featured a “grand Hungarian dance duet with group sequences”. After the revolution, from August 1848, Hungarian dance tableaux were choreographed by Soma Tóth, an enthusiastic advocate of Hungarian dance. The first Hungarian dance insert of *Hunyadi László* was most probably the choreography of Soma Tóth, who danced the piece himself with three other performers on

and their Times], Budapest: Püski, 2001, 51 (Magyar Zenetörténeti Tanulmányok).

⁸⁸ See playbills of *Hunyadi* for performances on August 25, 1871 (in the presence of the Belgian queen consort, daughter of Palatine József); April 4, 1872; May 12, 1873; and playbills of *Erzsébet* for performances on April 24 and 26, 1879 (National Széchényi Library, Theatre Collection. National Theatre, playbills data bank.) Apart from the above, the same dance was used in *Kemény Simon*, a drama by Ede Szigligeti, written and performed to commemorate coronation day (June 11, 1867). Cf. Legány, *op. cit.* (cf. note 42), 89.

⁸⁹ On the basis of a subsequent note in a cello part book of *Hunyadi* in the National Theatre.

⁹⁰ Advertising for performances on July 7 and December 4, 1852 are placed in *Der Spiegel*, June 21, 1852, and December 4, 1852, respectively.

December 9, 1848.⁹¹ It was not until December 8, 1849, a whole year later, once the hard times that followed the fall of the revolution were over, that the play was put on stage again complete with the dance insert. This time a new ballet master, Frigyes Campilli choreographed the Hungarian dance, which became an indelible part of the opera henceforth.⁹²

It is not documented what sort of musical accompaniment the Hungarian dances had in the 1848 performance of Soma Tóth. The same applies to performances that were constantly kept on repertory after 1849. It seems most likely though, that the *Hungarian dance* (also known as *Palotás*) as we know it, was incorporated in *Hunyadi László* quite early on, and remained an integral element of the opera more or less continuously. A set of nearly complete insertions that has been recently discovered in the music collection of the National Theatre can be found in the performing material even today.⁹³ They were copied sometime after 1847 but definitely before 1862.⁹⁴ A recently discovered score copy (NSZ-M) – according to a note on the title page – originally belonged to Frigyes Campilli, so most probably it was in use in the 1850s.⁹⁵ Sources reveal nothing about its composer. Playbills, contemporary press coverage, part book insertions and the Campilli score copy are equally taciturn in this respect. Notated sources, that probably show an original version of the dance piece, make the authorship of Erkel unlikely. The detailed articulation and minutely detailed *violino primo* part of this early version is markedly different from the notation style of *Hunyadi*, and rather imply the hand and prowess of a practising violinist composer. Having said that, new aspects of research hint at Erkel’s possible authorship, precipitated by the discovery of the above mentioned sources: such as the early composition of *Hungarian dance*, and the fact that it was continuously included in the opera, which is documented on the one hand by the National Theatre insert sheets and existence of the Campilli score copy, on the other hand by notes referring to the dance insert both on the auto-

⁹¹ Playbill information. Erkel research has so far connected the earliest occurrence of *Hungarian dance* to the debut performance of the La Grange aria on July 18, 1850 (Legány, *op. cit.* [cf. note 42], 36), and to the performance on December 8, 1849 (Sziklavári, *op. cit.* [note 87], 51).

⁹² According to playbills, following its one-off performance in 1848, Soma Tóth took over the choreography of Hungarian dances in *Hunyadi* between June 7, 1856 and March 14, 1863.

⁹³ Only the part books for the second flute, the first bassoon, the third and fourth horns, and for the tuba have been lost.

⁹⁴ *Hungarian dance* is still missing from the double bass part book, written after 1847 (NSZ cb/2) but it appears in the basic layer of a cello part book, written between 1859 and 1862 (NSZ vlc/3). According to a performance note on one of the inserts in the double bass part book, the same *Hungarian dance* accompanied the dance act of Soma Tóth and his company on May 3, and June 17, 1862, when Desirée Artôt was the guest star of *Hunyadi*.

⁹⁵ Later Campilli gave his own copy to [Károly] Doppler. Then the copy was acquired by the National Theatre, and finally by the Royal Opera House.

graph and on the copied score (NSZ–P).⁹⁶ The dance insert was composed and incorporated into *Hunyadi* at a time when every performance of the opera was conducted by the composer himself. More than anything, the positioning of the dance into the fabric of the play reveals a profound musical knowledge of the opera. *Hungarian dance* not only continues the key of the preceding *No. 19 Coro* but also keeps the transposing wind instruments in tune.⁹⁷

Hunyadi László was the most popular of Erkel's operas. The theatre company and the audience were faithful to *Hunyadi* but they were not faithfully keen on keeping every detail. It was more important to follow the musical trends of the day. Critics often called Erkel to follow suit. In 1863, the daily journal *Pesti Napló* gladly announced that "Bertalan Szemere, who is presently in Paris, asked the prominent composer Ferenc Erkel to send him the complete score of his opera *Hunyady László*, a specific request from the directors of the Parisian Italian Theatre [Théâtre des Italiens] and Grand Opera [Théâtre de l'Opéra], so that this exquisite play would be put on stage ... According to the P. Ll. [Pester Lloyd], Erkel is busy revising and elaborating on certain chorus parts, etc. of *Hunyadi*, so that they are worthy of those grand theatres."⁹⁸ In 1878, *Fővárosi Lapok* reports: "When Ferenc Erkel appeared in front of the orchestra to take the conductor's baton, he received the usual applause – nothing more. He could have deserved more of an ovation, this being the very first time when he presented the new, modified and compacted version of the overture, which had won the audiences' acclaim abroad as well. The essence of the music was preserved, so not many people could register the changes. Those familiar with the ins and outs of orchestration, however, could recognize the creative marks of a retouching hand. One could only wish that the same hand retouched other parts of the opera, which

abound in gratuitous and banal musical phrases."⁹⁹ On February 19, 1885, following the first performance of *Hunyadi* in the Opera House, which was more than the 250th performance, 40 years after the première, the critic of *Egyetértés* remarks with content: "Several changes of scene were omitted, which used to halter the pace of the play. Thus the performance was more vigorous than the earlier ones in the National Theatre."¹⁰⁰ The author of the article, like other critics before him, suggests that the reading of the letter be "recitative" rather than in prose, which is an outdated technique used both in *Bánk Bán* and *Brankovics*.

The changes noted and suggested by the critics in the above mentioned articles cannot be traced down accurately in the sources of the National Theatre. It is possible that certain deletions in the performing material were made at the time of the 1885 revision,¹⁰¹ possibly when *Hungarian dance* was also repositioned, directly following the *No. 19 Cabaletta*.¹⁰² However, neither the compacting nor the revised orchestration that the journalist of *Fővárosi Lapok* was reporting are registered in contemporary musical sources. Had these revisions been made, they were to be found in the performing material of the National Theatre. The part books of the 1844 première and its subsequent copies were used by the orchestra of the National Theatre and later by musicians of the Opera House until 1927. It is more than likely that Erkel conducted from the autograph, which was occasionally used by his two sons, Gyula and Sándor, and others until at least 1894.¹⁰³ A German version of the score (NSZ–P) was copied

⁹⁶ The insertion is missing both from the autograph of the opera and from the copy score of the National Theatre (NSZ–P).

⁹⁷ Only the tuning of the 3rd and 4th horns has to be changed. During its long performance history, *Hungarian dance* has been altered frequently. At the end of the 19th century it was repositioned to its present place: after the *Cabaletta*, where Erkel originally intended the *Weapon dance*. The move affected the dramatic structure as much as the musical text of *Hunyadi*. To retain harmony, a short transition/introduction was necessary. The four-measure start of *Hungarian dance*, which is still used today, appeared first in a piano arrangement in 1896 (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 1896; prepared for publication and translated to German by Aurél Kern), but features in the 1927 part books only on pasted insert sheets. The addition appears in the critical notes of our publication.

⁹⁸ *Pesti Napló*, November 6, 1863. Concerning attempts to stage *Hunyadi* in Paris cf. Kálmán Isoz, "Kísérletek Erkel »Hunyadi László«-jának párisi [sic] színrehozatalára" [Attempts to Stage *Hunyadi László* by Erkel in Paris], *Muzsika*, September 1929, 16–22; Legány, *op. cit.* (cf. note 42), 36. The correspondence of Ferenc Erkel, Bertalan Szemere and his wife, and Ferenc Liszt on the subject from the year 1863 is published in a Hungarian translation also in Gábor Albert, *Szemere Bertalan leveleskönyve* [The Book of Letters by Bertalan Szemere] (1849–1865), Budapest: Balassi, 1999, 166–169, 171–172, 174, 243–244.

⁹⁹ *Fővárosi Lapok*, November 9, 1878, 1250

¹⁰⁰ *Egyetértés*, February 1885.

¹⁰¹ From a dramatic point of view, the play was not altered until 1927. The part books from 1927 are virtually identical with the version that had become standard by the early 1860s.

¹⁰² Cf. note 97.

¹⁰³ Not long after the première, on the performance of March 20, 1844, Louis Schindelmeisser, conductor of the German Theatre of Pest replaced Erkel. Cf. *Honderú*, 13 (1844), Vol. 1., 428–429. Schindelmeisser was probably familiar with the autograph. In February 1844, in four consecutive issues of *WAMZ* he published a detailed analysis of Erkel's *Hunyadi*, under the pseudonym "Ein Deutscher". Cf. Katalin Szerző Szőnyi, "A Wiener Allgemeine Musikzeitung Erkel Ferenc indulásáról (1841–1848)" [The *WAMZ* About the Launch of Ferenc Erkel's Career (1841–1848)], in: Ferenc Bónis (ed), *Erkel Ferencről, Kodály Zoltánról és koráról* [About Ferenc Erkel, Zoltán Kodály, and their Times], Budapest: Püski, 2001, 82–84. According to contemporary playbills, in those early days Erkel handed over the conductor's role in *Hunyadi* only to Károly Doppler in August 1860 (the performances of August 2 and 28), when he was busy composing *Bánk Bán*, and in the summer of 1861 (July 23, August 3, 10, and 24), and on December 26, 1861, when he was most probably tied up in the composition of *Sarolta*. Cf. Legány, *op. cit.* (cf. note 42), 73, 79. The name of Ilona Bárdossy, who was playing Mária from March 10, 1894, is noted in the performance notes of the autograph. The composer's manuscript was acquired by the National Museum in 1904. Cf. Ervin Major, "Erkel Ferenc műveinek jegyzéke. Második bibliográfiai kísérlet" [The Inventory of the Works of Ferenc Erkel. Second Bibliographical Attempt], in: Ferenc Bónis (ed), *Írások Erkel Ferencről és a magyar zene korábbi századairól* [Writings on Ferenc Erkel and the Early Centuries of Hungarian

within two years after the opening performance, intended for showing *Hunyadi* abroad. Later on Hungarian lyrics were added, and it was lent to smaller theatre companies nationwide, and finally used by conductors who replaced Ferenc Erkel after 1874, among them his son Sándor Erkel, until the early 1900s.¹⁰⁴ Consequently, Erkel was to have noted the alleged revisions in these copies. The supposition that the manuscript of his revisions perished is only plausible for the revision of the opera in hope of a guest performance in Paris. Erkel gives account of his revisions in a letter to Bertalan Szemere. On November 14, 1863 he wrote: “I reworked a few parts, and rearranged them into a broader, more grandiose foundation, therefore I will post the score at the beginning of next week.”¹⁰⁵ The document in question was certainly not the loan copy of the National Theatre, as it contains no trace of significant revisions. All the same, the score copy of *Hunyadi* in three volumes was delivered in Paris late November 1863,¹⁰⁶ and one year later, in November 1864, thanks to Szemere’s lobbying, it was requested for consideration by a third major Parisian opera house, Théâtre Lyrique, instead of the two other ones mentioned in *Pesti Napló* earlier on.¹⁰⁷ The performance never happened. There is no further news of the score either. The 1863 *Fassung letzter Hand* of *Hunyadi László*, adjusted to the needs of the French historical opera, remains a mystery.

If press coverage is anything to go by, neither the theatre nor the audience could propel Erkel to change the basic text of his opera. However, performance copies of the National Theatre reveal what press reviews, which had followed every single performance of the play, fail to mention: that adapting to the constantly changing abilities of the company and keeping up the attention of the spectators, the original music of *Hunyadi* went through several changes. In addition to occasional deletions and transpositions, and minute conductor’s revisions that are common in the practice of opera, there are several, more profound corrections, which affect the composition. The latter were also forced by the actual performances: adjusted to a certain soloist or refreshing the instrumentation. The earliest one is probably the transition for a G major transposition of the *No. 14 Cabaletta* by László and Mária

Music], Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1968, 11–43, and Somfai, *op. cit.* (cf. note 2), 86.

¹⁰⁴ The name of Zsigmond Pilinszky, who worked in the Opera House from 1913, also appears in the score.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted by Isoz, *op. cit.* (cf. note 98), 18, and Albert, *op. cit.* (cf. note 98), 168.

¹⁰⁶ See the letter of Bertalan Szemere to Anne de La Grange on November 26, 1863, published in Isoz, *op. cit.* (cf. note 98), 19, and in Albert, *op. cit.* (cf. note 98), 171. The mailing of the musical score was reported on by *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* (31 année, no.3. pag. 23, 1864. janvier 17): “On écrit de Pesth: « On ne tardera pas sans doute à entendre un opéra hongrois à Paris; la partition de Hunyady, par Erkely [sic], vient d’être expédiée pour cette capitale, et nous attendons avec une vive curiosité le succès de cette oeuvre madgyare. »”

(*Appendix III*), which was copied from the insertion in the autograph into the National Theatre performing material even before 1847. The modification was later added to the score copy.

Of any further revisions only two have been preserved in autograph, both recently discovered: a cadence of *No. 19 Cabaletta* (*Appendix V*), and a shortened, rearranged version of the *Cabaletta* (*Appendix VI*). The composer’s draft of the cadenza survived separate from the main corpus of the opera, and contains several revisions. The author’s footnote in German (“zurück in die Hauptstimme”) indubitably proves that Erkel most probably intended this as a valid version of his opera. It is not entirely clear which section of the *Cabaletta* Erkel’s instruction refers to, as many parts of this number would be deleted later. None the less, it is quite evident that the new coloratura was meant to replace the cadence at the end of the two main parts. The dating of the draft is questionable. Contemporary press reported on a change in the *Cabaletta* only once. Dezső Legány refers to an article by Kornél Ábrányi in *Zenészet*, mentioning that a guest artiste, Desirée Artôt performed a new, amended version of the number on June 15 and 17, 1862, accompanied on the piano by the composer himself.¹⁰⁸ Researchers have so far identified these amendments with cadences that Gyula Erkel added to the autograph – and possibly composed as well – which would later be regularly performed and accepted parts of *Hunyadi* (cf. main text, bars 1–14, 69–105/184–220).¹⁰⁹ It is worth noting, though, that the description of Ábrányi in his 1862 article is rather difficult to compare with both the autograph draft of Ferenc Erkel and the revisions entered into the autograph in the hand of Gyula Erkel. Given the *Besetzung* in both versions, it seems unlikely that Ferenc Erkel had to accompany the number on piano, as stated by Ábrányi. The said coloraturas were composed for a vocal and flute duet, complemented by the harp for all but a few measures at the closure, and also the horn in Gyula Erkel’s version. It may well be that Erkel had to play the harp part on the piano, as it had happened before, for want of a harp player, or he had to complement the number freely on the piano. None the less, it is well documented that the orchestra had contracted an excellent harp player a few months before.¹¹⁰ Further more, according to both Ábrányi and the columnist of *Hölgyfutár*, the new part was added to the end of the *Cabaletta*, while Gyula Erkel noted down – probably at same time – new cadences both at the beginning and the end of the number. Moreover, these additions rather complemented than replaced the

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Isoz, *op. cit.* (cf. note 98), 22.

¹⁰⁸ *Zenészet*, June 19, 1862.

¹⁰⁹ The authorship of the subsequent cadence was first questioned by László Somfai (*op. cit.* [cf. note 2], 109). The revision was rendered after 1862 in the handwriting of Gyula. When finalising his operas the aging Ferenc Erkel already trusted his son with several composition tasks.

original (i. e. only bars 5–7, 78–96/193–211 are new inventions). It is hard to believe that this updated – but certainly not entirely new or radically different – version of the cadence prompted the unusually sharp critique that the performance of Artôt received.¹¹¹

Apparently Erkel did not yield to the opinion of his critics.¹¹² Nevertheless, he might have given in to the harsh judgement of Ábrányi, and refrained from experimenting with the cadence. The revisions that Gyula Erkel noted down in 1862 or shortly afterwards became the norm for later performances of the opera. The same version was rearranged into a vocal score that – if contemporary performance notes are anything to go by – Kornélia Hollósy used when giving a concert in Tata in 1864.¹¹³ Despite the fact that composers and singers often altered this part, the same coloratura went into the 1896 piano arrangement of the opera, and features in many 20th century sources. Considering that the extending and instrumental rearrangement of the original cadence happened between 1862 and 1864, it seems more plausible that the modification was prompted not so much by the guest performance of the French soprano but the complete revision of the orchestral score of *Hunyadi* in 1863, in hope of a future performance in Paris. Of all surviving versions, the much-criticised cadence of 1862 – probably dismissed after the two performances of Artôt – might be identified with the above mentioned version that was preserved separate from the main corpus of the opera in Erkel's autograph draft, and was missing from the performing material of the National Theatre's music collection. However, as the musical text of cadences is the least defined, it might be the case that the revised version Désirée Artôt performed was none of the above.

Of all the numbers in *Hunyadi*, the *Mária-Cabaletta* composed for Kornélia Hollósy proved to be the most fragile one. Its music was prone to criticism from new singers who replaced Kornélia Hollósy, and were sadly boasting with a more humble vocal technique. The above reasons might have contributed to the fact that a shortened, rearranged version of the *Cabaletta* was

completed as well (*Appendix VI*). It seems plausible to consider this version with a smaller *Besetzung* and lacking the grand coloraturas as an earlier version of the *Cabaletta*.¹¹⁴ Yet this is most unlikely. On the one hand, Erkel intended the *Cabaletta* for accentuating the musical part of Mária, as well as making use of the exceptional vocal talent of the National Theatre's new starlet, Kornélia Hollósy. On the other hand, commenting on the *Cabaletta*'s first performance in 1847, contemporary reviews undoubtedly refer to the virtuoso flute and vocal duet of Hollósy and Doppler – a part that was obviously left out of this version.¹¹⁵ Even though the autograph of the latter version (AU-Cb) was preserved separate from the main corpus of the opera, by dating the National Theatre's contemporary performing material (NSZ-Cb) before 1860, however, suggests that this version was possibly part of the performances of *Hunyadi* under the supervision of Erkel. The part books were made by clarinet player and copyist János Kocsi, who retired from the National Theatre in 1860.¹¹⁶ Kocsi marked the sheets with the note: "Einlage zu Hunyadi László". The part books and insertions show corresponding "vide" reference marks. The role of Mária was more or less continuously played by Kornélia Hollósy between 1847 and 1860. She was only replaced for a short period by two other singers, which might account for the simplified version of the *Cabaletta*. Mária Erdélyi sang the part of Mária as a novice twice in 1851. Her debut was announced as her "first stage appearance". On December 4, 1852, a young debutante, Paulina Leiter took over the role of Mária and appeared in six subsequent performances. However, the simplified *Cabaletta* was certainly not arranged only for the sake of these two novice sopranos. It is more likely that Erkel originally intended this version for the guest appearance of Anne de la Grange. To compliment the French guest star, he somewhat diminished the second leading female role of *Hunyadi*: on twelve consecutive performances the role of Mária Gara was played by Mrs. Stéger, née Leona Szymanszka, whose singing talent was no match for the brilliance of Kornélia Hollósy.

Further significant revisions of the basic musical text of *Hunyadi* concerned the orchestration. Their authorship is questionable, although they all became integral parts of the opera. Possibly the most problematic modification is the subsequent introduction of the harp in several numbers. The contemporary sheet music for the harp parts perished, and the earliest known copy is from 1927. The harp accompaniments of

¹¹⁰ Péter Dubez would be employed by the National Theatre for many years to come. His arrival was announced in the April 26, 1862 issue of *Hölgyfutár*: "The harp has returned to the orchestra of National Theatre. Dubez, harp player of the Russian royal court, has been signed up and already arrived. The magnificent instrument of the Biblical David has been recently replaced by the piano in our orchestra." *Zenészet* emphasized the valuable contribution of Dubez in the performance of May 10, 1862: "»Lucia of Lammermoor« [...] Mr. Dubez played the great harp solo with masterly strokes, and it was a refreshing experience to enjoy this wondrous instrument in its own right yet again."

¹¹¹ Cf. note 65.

¹¹² Moreover, he often criticised them quite harshly, like in his above quoted letter to Bertalan Szemere. Cf. Isoz, *op. cit.* (cf. note 98), and Albert, *op. cit.* (cf. note 98), 168.

¹¹³ "The Bride's Song from *Hunyadi László*. Sung by Cornélia Hollósy / with flute accompaniment / on February 20, 1864 / Gábor Kövér" (Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library, Ms. Mus. IV. 1966). About the concert see the contemporary review in the February 23, 1864 issue of *Magyar Sajtó*.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Sziklavári, *op. cit.* (cf. note 87), 50.

¹¹⁵ *Életképek*, November 21, 1847: "Last week was the thirtieth performance of *Hunyady László*. – It is still a magnificent piece. – Cornélia Hollósy was giving an exquisite solo performance, singing a song in which her voice melted with that of the accompanying flute. – However flourishing praises one sings of her, it is still half as charming as she was in reality."

¹¹⁶ Cf. note 136.

only two arias survived in Erkel's hand: László's in *No. 7* and the King's in *No. 17*.

Interestingly enough, Erkel only noted down the harp part of the opening and closure of *No. 7* in the score copy (NSZ-P).¹¹⁷ He complemented the original version of the number with the harp part, while also making minor modifications in the rhythm of certain instruments and the vocal part, necessitated by the introduction of harp into the *Besetzung*. The author's note is undoubtedly a later addition, although the copyist seemingly included the harp part in the score heading, which supports the hypothesis that Erkel had in mind the expansion as early as the first copying of the orchestral score, i.e. before 1847. Peculiarly, the composer appears to have forgotten about the revision. Even though the autograph and original harp part of the 1859 revision of *No. 7* perished, corrections necessitated by the earlier introduction of the harp in the introductory recitative and the cadence appear only as side notes on the instrumental insert sheets, which were added later. Corrections were unavoidable because Erkel accompanied the newly composed middle part with the harp.

It cannot be ruled out that the *Cabaletta* of the King's aria featured the harp in the original version of the number as well. Erkel's note in the autograph does not appear to be a later addition, and the composer's corrections of the parallel parts, which Erkel most probably made before 1847, appear in the harp's staves as well.¹¹⁸ None the less, it would mean that the harp, which had been missing from the orchestra altogether until 1846, had a part only in this number during the whole opera. Harp parts in other numbers of *Hunyadi* do not appear in the autograph but feature in the 1927 part books, a basis for today's performances. One can reasonably confer that the revisions were not made by the author. Additional notes in the score copy of the National Theatre are the earliest sources for the harp accompaniments of *No. 9 Aria*, *No. 19 Coro* and the transition before *No. 22 Preghiera (Appendix VII)*. To the best of our knowledge, continuous harp accompaniment in *No. 19 Cabaletta* (apart from the coloraturas) appears in the 1927 part book of the Opera House for the first time.¹¹⁹ Harp parts of the overture are first included in a late 19th century copy of the score copy (RO) intended for sale by a music shop, then in a slightly revised version of the *Overtura* published in 1902. The first three additions might have been performed under the guidance of Ferenc Erkel. The three

additions were most probably made by the same hand, two of them before 1847, which means that they were possibly instigated by the employment of Viennese harp player Jochen Erzse in the National Theatre.¹²⁰ In the basic layer of the copy of *No. 9 Aria*, a brace between the vocal part and strings indicates that Erkel intended the harp in the number even before 1847. A harp insert in the appendix of *No. 19 Coro* follows the original format of the number, while instructions for *Hungarian dance* and the 1847 *Cabaletta* are both later additions made by a foreign hand. *No. 19 Cabaletta* and the overture are more problematic, not only for the want of proper sources, but also because the harp part is markedly different from the ones discussed above. While harp parts composed by Erkel and the notes in the score copy are equally idiomatic, here we find fairly simple and neutral chord accompaniment, that was probably complemented by so far unknown authors.¹²¹

Erkel research has already pointed out that in the autograph score, traces of an attachment are clearly visible right before the *No. 13 Gara* aria, where the 1850 version of an aria written exclusively for Anne de La Grange was pasted in. This autograph insert (AU-L) is now archived separately from the main corpus of the opera. It may well be that another insert sheet was also attached: the revised beginning of *No. 13 Gara* aria, which has perished by now. The only signs of such revision in the autograph are a few contemporary notes, most probably by the author, in red pencil: in addition to an "Einlage" instruction under the title, referring to the La Grange aria as well, the first eight bars were crossed out, and after the eighth bar, the end of a *vide* sign shows that Erkel had recomposed the beginning of the number. None the less, the insert sheet with the author's revisions in connection with the La Grange aria has been lost. It must have been taken out of the orchestral score quite early, a reason why a conductor who would use the autograph later had to note down the lead part of the new instrumentation in the bars of the cello as a quick memo. We do not know for sure if this eight-measure *violoncello* part is identical with what the autograph insert sheet contained. All the same, it is identical with the version that appears in the part books and score copy of the National Theatre as a later correction, which does not entirely rule out the possibility that the new version of the first eight bars that unanimously features in all the sources is originated from the autograph insert sheet. Continuing the revision, the original 11th

¹¹⁷It is rather special, as Erkel was not using this score copy, and apart from this harp part, there are no other author's notes in it.

¹¹⁸For instance, Erkel altered the first C major chord to B major in bar 56. The latter chord features in the basic layer of the viola and cello part books before 1850 and 1847 respectively.

¹¹⁹The latter is published with the music examples in the critical notes. Compared to the one in our publication, a significantly shorter version of the *Cabaletta* features in the part books of 1927.

¹²⁰Erzse appears in the orchestral credits of theatre yearbooks only from 1848, although archival sources reveal that he was contracted by the National Theatre on the summer of 1846. Cf. Tibor Tallián, "Átváltozások, avagy a Nemzeti Színház operai kottatárának néhány tanulsága" [Transformations: Certain Observations on the Opera Score Collection of the National Theatre], in: *Zenatudományi dolgozatok 1999*, 284.

¹²¹In case of the *Cabaletta*, it might be outright disturbing that the characteristic rhythm of accompanying instruments is not taken up by the harp.

and 12th bars were deleted from the autograph (marked later in pencil), the performance materials and the score copy alike. Further more, the rhythm preceding the cadence of the Gara entrée was modified, thus finalising the intro of the Gara aria, as it is played today (*Appendix II*). Corrections of the cadence are probably late additions, as of all the part books of the National Theatre, only the latest *violino primo* part book dating back before 1885 shows the changes in its basic layer. Consequently the lack of sufficient sources questions its authenticity and authorship. The hand of a composer other than Erkel is more than likely in another version of the introduction of *No. 13*. This version can be reconstructed from corrections that feature unanimously on the insert sheets which were made for transposing the Gara aria into A flat major. None the less, this version was performed only occasionally in the National Theatre.¹²²

It is not clear when and why Erkel's original score of the La Grange aria was lifted from the autograph. Concert performances might have prompted the deletion.¹²³ The fact that the number was often omitted for a long time might explain why the aria, which used to be successful on its own, was eventually removed from the autograph score of the opera. The rearranged version was perhaps complete at the same time as the aria was reintroduced into the opera. The new version made the original outdated and became a permanent element in the performances of the National Theatre by 1878, and remains so even today.¹²⁴ Interestingly enough, Erkel research has so far neglected the two versions of the La Grange aria, although the autograph score differs to a great extent from the later version. The role of Ferenc Erkel in the rearrangement of the aria is questionable, especially in the light of new facts that rather purport the authorship of Sándor Erkel. Erkel was getting increasingly and more intensely involved with the Academy of Music, gradually withdrawing from the National Theatre, especially after 1874, when Sándor was appointed head of not only the orchestra but the whole opera company. Although playbills stopped showing the name of the conductor from exactly the same year on, and contemporary press coverage was equally taciturn in this respect, it seems plausible that Ferenc Erkel – perhaps not regularly but certainly occasionally – relinquished the performances of *Hunyadi* to his son before 1878.¹²⁵ No autograph of this version has survived by Ferenc Erkel. The earliest source of the rearranged version of the La Grange aria is the score by Sándor Erkel, which was later pasted into the score copy of the entire opera (NSZ–P) that he used as a con-

ducting score. The manuscript of the insert appears more like a fair copy. A few corrections reveal that Sándor Erkel must have had the original version of the aria as a reference in front of him when he was doing the musical rearrangement.¹²⁶ Finally: the study by László Somfai reveals that Sándor was helping his father in composition as early as 1865–1866. He made compositional corrections in the autographs – also used as conducting scores – of all Erkel operas that he conducted, with the only exception of *Bátori*, which he never directed. He made such corrections as early as he started working for the National Theatre. The earliest, clearly dated revision was made during the 1879 revival of *Erzsébet*, when he gave the second act of the opera (the original work of Ferenc Erkel and partly of Ferenc Doppler) a thorough work-over. On the one hand, he painstakingly replaced and complemented the performance marks at parallel and analogous places, introduced new articulation and dynamics; on the other hand, he was given the go-ahead to rearrange certain numbers. His additions are meticulous to an extent that Ferenc Erkel was never capable of.¹²⁷ The numerous differences between the original version of the La Grange aria and the one that survived in the manuscript of Sándor Erkel are due to corrections similar to *Erzsébet*. The original version was much more transparent than the one orchestras have been playing since the 1870s: instead of the English horn and clarinet playing *colla parte*, earlier a single flute accompanied the vocal part, the oboe and other wind instruments generally played a less significant role. Comparing the beginning of the aria, for example, it becomes apparent that transferring the theme – with *espressivo* instruction – to the parts of the flute, the first clarinet and the first violin was a subsequent modification; so was the use of the English horn, especially in the *espressivo* sigh motive; as well as the second clarinet taking over the accompaniment motif of violins; or the bassoon doubling

¹²² It is well-known that Sándor Erkel conducted the fourth act of *Brankovics György* on its première night (May 20, 1874), and he rehearsed with the orchestra two later Erkel operas.

¹²⁶ Comparing the pages 4 and 5 of the facsimile, it is apparent that before transferring the thematic material for the oboe, Sándor Erkel had copied the part of the first flute from the original version.

¹²⁷ Dynamic changes from measure to measure, minute *crescendo*, *decrescendo* and *subito* shifts, and hosts of *mf* notes – which hardly ever appear in Ferenc Erkel's manuscripts – and part dynamics that subtly picture every pitch and hue of the orchestral sound with the fastidiousness of a conductor are some of the revisions that Sándor Erkel added. He enriched the instrumentation with wind instruments playing copulas and fill-in parts, accentuating especially the role of the oboe. He intensified the musical texture of the opera with new accompanying motives. He created a more spacious musical effect by transposing violins that played the central theme an octave higher. He dramatised the accompaniment of *recitativo* parts that were based on simple string chords, and incorporated wind instruments into the *accompanato*. Last but not least, he complemented the orchestral *Besetzung* with new instruments, adding parts for English horn, bass clarinet and a brand new instrument, the saxophone – the latter being a total novelty not only in the practice of the National Theatre but in opera orchestras in general.

¹²² Some of the insert sheets have perished, and this version of the introductory measures – published in the volume of critical notes – cannot be entirely reconstructed.

¹²³ The aria was performed on the concert of La Grange on July 26, 1851 in the National Theatre, among others.

¹²⁴ The name of Ida Benza, who played the part of Erzsébet until 1878, appears in the part book of the second bassoon.

the bass part in *legato* this time. The straightforward *ostinato* of the horns gets a rhythmic pattern in the later version, dispersing the *ostinato* between two horns. Further novelties are the melodious fill-in part of the other two horns, which were missing in the first version altogether, and the *espressivo* “joy theme” of the *violoncello*, independent from the double bass part, borrowed from the *Terzetto* that directly precedes the aria.

Beyond the incredible meticulousness of articulation and dynamics, the two versions of the La Grange aria show minor differences on the thematic level as well. Some of the differences are in the vocal part, and were meant to lessen the technical difficulties of the part. Numerous vocal corrections, which were common practice in the world of opera, were entered in Sándor’s handwriting. According to vocal part books of the National Theatre, however, the new versions proved to be temporary, as much as the original.¹²⁸ Another group of corrections concerns the *Recitativo* and the closure of the aria. They render not only the instrumentation different but change the entire thematic material. Erkel had not connected the theme of the original *Recitativo* and the final measures to the preceding *No. 12 Terzetto*, and never repeated the so-called “joy theme” from the *Terzetto*, which subsequently kicked off the *Recitativo* of the La Grange revision, and the sequential repetition of which lengthened the closure of the aria. The same motive was ruled out in the original version of the aria, as Erkel overused it in the *Terzetto*: both as a thematic basis and as a concluding cadence. The reason why the revision did fall back on the “joy theme” is probably because the later version was originally not an insert but the *ossia* of the trio of Erzsébet, László and Mátyás. Temporary notes in the part books show the deletion of the *Terzetto* and those in the score copy of the National Theatre show the deletion of the aria – further proof of the above supposition. Moreover, the later version of the aria features both in the score of Sándor Erkel and in early insertions of the National Theatre score copy as “*No. 11 ½*” or *No. 11 Einlage*, instead of “*No. 12 ½*”. A piano reduction, arranged by Aurél Kern under the supervision of Erkel’s sons, published in 1896, refers to the aria of Erzsébet as *No. 12a*, i.e. the *ossia* of *No. 12*. All the facts considered, however, the latter modification, which concerned the thematic layer of the opera, cannot be contributed to Sándor Erkel with overall certainty. There is a part book of Erzsébet with Hungarian and Italian text, copied in the National Theatre before 1880, and probably going back to the 1860s when it may have been intended for Anna Carina, and used by the famous Marie Wilt. In this copy there is the above mentioned version of the introductory *recitativo*, while other corrections that appear in the score of Sándor Erkel are completely missing. As this part book also dif-

fers from the autograph at many points, its *Vorlage* may well have been a score that contained a so-far unknown, interim version of the La Grange aria.

5. THE SOURCES OF PUBLICATION

This critical edition of *Hunyadi László* accounts for all the known insert numbers and author’s revisions that were performed in the life of Ferenc Erkel. Considering that the opera was being conducted and thus continuously controlled by the composer himself for decades, and the process was documented in details by the autograph, which was used as a conducting score, and the part books of the National Theatre that were used alongside, a unique opportunity presented itself: instead of the score of the first performance, the main text of our publication contains a later version of the opera, which had developed by 1862–1864 and entails all the major additions and revisions by Erkel. In addition to the original score of the opera, there is the Mária cabaletta from 1847, and its two cadenzas from 1862–1864 (*No. 19 Finale*); the original version of the Erzsébet aria (*No. 12b*) from 1850; the middle part of László’s aria (*No. 7*) in the first act, composed in 1859; and the *Hungarian dance* (*No. 19*), which became a regular number during the 1850s. Discarded or temporary versions – such as the transition composed for the transposition of *No. 14 Cabaletta* (*Appendix III*); two original coloraturas of *No. 19 Cabaletta* (*Appendix IVa–b*); a new cadence for the same *Cabaletta*, which survived as a draft autograph separate from the main corpus of the opera (*Appendix V*); and a shortened, rearranged version of the above cabaletta (*Appendix VI*) – are listed in the *Appendices*. Further items in the *Appendices* include revisions of dubious authorship, which nonetheless became indelible parts of the opera and are performed even today: the rearranged version of the La Grange aria (*Appendix I*); a rewrite for the beginning of *No. 13 Gara* aria (*Appendix II*); and a harp cadenza preceding the *Preghiera*, also a later addition (*Appendix VII*). Further entries of the harp part of uncertain authorship are included in the main text, typeset in smaller notes. Revisions on the micro level of the score are included in the publication, provided that they were adapted in the earliest part books and in the basic layer of part books, which were copied while Erkel was still alive. Sections that were performed on the 1844 première but would later be deleted by the composer are retained in the main text of the score, marked by *vide* signs at the beginning and the end. Subsequent notes and revisions in relevant sources made by anyone other than Ferenc Erkel are accounted for in the critical notes.

In the course of preparing the material for publication, the editor intended to reveal a wide range of sources. Research has so far processed a relatively small part of a great array of sources, which is possible to widen in the near future, given the early and

¹²⁸ Sándor Erkel transferred the original octave shifts of the vocal part into the instrumental parts. Cf. bar 21 and analogous places.

enduring popularity of the opera. A catalogue of sources by Dezső Legány from 1975 only lists the autograph score, a separate autograph score of the La Grange aria (AU and AU-L), a 19th century copy of the overture intended for commercial purposes (RO), and contemporary piano arrangements.¹²⁹ This registry was later amended by a few sources that are kept in the Erkel Museum of Gyula.¹³⁰ Separate from the performance material of the opera, a National Theatre copy of the part of the King, which was made after the opening performance, is kept here, along with the vocal part and some insert sheets for wind instruments and percussion parts of the original La Grange aria, containing the composer's revisions of the vocal part (NSZ); the autograph draft of the new cadenza version for the Mária cabaletta (AU-Cd); and the orchestral parts for a shortened, rearranged version of this number (NSZ-Cb).

Our research has amended the contemporary sources of the opera with performance material of the National Theatre and smaller troupes outside Budapest. In addition to the autograph, part books from the National Theatre (NSZ) became the main source of our publication. Part books from the opening performance, contemporary copies of string and choir parts, and copied parts of the inserts have survived virtually intact.¹³¹ Thousands of pages of sheets music that were used under the auspices of the composer have retained traces of detailed instructions that Erkel not necessarily bothered to enter into the autograph, which he used as a conducting score.¹³² The overture, the middle section of *No. 7*, and *Hungarian dance* first feature in these part books, for want of an autograph. Inserts of uncertain authorship – a later introduction of *No. 13*, and the cadenzas of *No. 19 Cabaletta* that survived in the writing of Gyula Erkel – are authorised by part books that were used under the guidance of the composer. Likewise, original insert sheets from the National Theatre prove that the rearrangement of the La Grange aria was probably made by Sándor Erkel and became a standard version in the lifetime of the composer.

The authenticity of the National Theatre score copy (NSZ-P) is rather problematic for the critical edition. Made before 1847 and based on the autograph,¹³³ the copy only contained German text at first (Erkel himself entered the German text into the autograph).¹³⁴ Ori-

ginally the copy might have been intended for a planned performance abroad. Later, however, it served as a lending copy for performances outside Pest. Finally, it became the score used by conductors who followed Erkel in the National Theatre and the Opera House. Given the intended representative function of the copy, it differs from the autograph and the National Theatre part books even in its basic layer. János Kocsi, a clarinet player in the orchestra, was one of Erkel's favourite copyists,¹³⁵ and apparently the composer granted him considerable leeway in correcting and finalising the incomplete, sometimes contradictory articulation, dynamics and tempo indications of the autograph. Although the corrections by Kocsi are all rather musical and based on the performances conducted by Erkel, they do not always comply with the notations of part books. More than that, aiming at an "orderly" score, the copyist often overburdens the musical text, and makes it much too uniform. All the same, this copy is a valuable source of reference for the critical edition, and the fact that it is one of the sources from the National Theatre necessitates that we refer to its variances in the critical notes in detail. The score has been updated several times over time. The German score was complemented with a Hungarian text,¹³⁶ and the composer's topical new inserts were added;¹³⁷ further corrections were added regarding instrumentation and on the micro level of the score. The authenticity of the latter additions is questionable, as the handwriting of Ferenc

Nationalbibliothek Wien. Mus. Hs. 32.814; old inventory no.: Ser. nov. 10.882.)

¹³⁵ Kocsi has been so far known in Erkel research as the copyist of the *Hungarian Anthem*. Cf. Zoltán Falvy, "A Himnusz kézírata" [The Manuscript of the National Anthem], *Muzsika*, March 1960, 14–19; László Somfai, "A Himnusz ősbemutatójának szövege" [Performing Material for the First Performance of the National Anthem], in: Ferenc Bónis (ed), *Írások Erkel Ferencről és a magyar zene korábbi századairól* [Studies on Ferenc Erkel and the Early Centuries of Hungarian Music], Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1968, 57–62. His handwriting was identified on a signed pay slip dated 29 January 1844, when he got reimbursed for the copying of vocal, orchestral and choir parts and the choir score for the première of *Hunyadi*. (National Széchényi Library, Theatre History Collection, archive of the National Theatre, Fond 4/50/1/20f. We wish to thank archivists of the Theatre History Collection for researching and providing for publication valuable documents of the National Theatre.) According to yearbooks of the National Theatre, Kocsi was playing the clarinet in the orchestra between 1838 and 1860.

¹³⁶ The addition is the contribution of Miklós Udvarhelyi (1790–1864), director and singer of the National Theatre. His handwriting is identified on the basis of a receipt dated January 28, 1844 for the copying of the promptbook of the première of *Hunyadi*. (National Széchényi Library, Theatre Collection, archive of the National Theatre, Fond 4/50/1/1f).

¹³⁷ A transition for the transposition of *No. 14 Cabaletta* already features on a score sheet that was pasted in quite early, in the handwriting of the copyist who noted down the basic layer. Later additions are the overture, an extended version of *No. 7*, the La Grange aria in the musical arrangement of Sándor Erkel, *No. 19 Cabaletta* complete with cadences from 1862/1864, and the insertion and further revision of *No. 13*. The copy no longer includes the score of *Hungarian dance* – its one-time existence is only referred to by notes for the dance act.

¹²⁹ Legány, *op. cit.* (cf. note 42), 33–34.

¹³⁰ Sources are listed in Sziklavári, *op. cit.* (cf. note 87), 50–52.

¹³¹ Only the harp and vocal part books have disappeared, apart from two copies of the King's part.

¹³² The handwriting, colour and content of notes, and their occurrence and standardization in copies helped identifying subsequent additions, corrections and deletions in the performing material that dates back to the première and was used until 1927.

¹³³ The 1847 Mária Cabaletta is still missing from the basic layer of the copy.

¹³⁴ A German promptbook that preserved a version of the opera between 1847 and 1850 was compiled from the translation in the autograph. (Source: Musiksammlung der Österreichischen

Erkel is only discernible in the harp part of the opening and closure of *No. 7 Aria*. Consequently, the majority of corrections were most probably entered by conductors who used the score later. Thus the copied score gives an insight into the performance practices of the era when Erkel had already handed over the conductor's baton to other musicians, among them his son, Sándor Erkel, who standardised a series of minor changes in the opera that are still valid today, and entirely rearranged the *La Grange* aria.

The overture of *Hunyadi* – one of the earliest noteworthy symphonic pieces in Hungary – became independent from the text of the opera very early on. Perhaps its mobility was the reason why its autograph has perished. Peculiarly enough, early score copies have been lost as well, even though it was performed as an independent symphonic piece not only in Pest but abroad and nationwide alike, a few years after the première. It is most likely that a score copy of the overture was in possession of Franz Liszt for some time. Having spent six years abroad, Liszt started giving concerts in Pest in May 1846 – that is when he saw Erkel's *Hunyadi László* on the stage. The performance of *Hunyadi* was specifically dedicated to Liszt.¹³⁸ His visit to Pest and the honour of the performance moved him so much that upon his return to Vienna he immediately included the *Hunyadi* overture in the program of his farewell concert in Vienna, which he conducted with a resounding success and ovation for the audience of the imperial city.¹³⁹ The score copy possibly remained in his possession afterwards. According to press allegations, in September 1846 he was planning the publication of a piano arrangement of the overture. He negotiated with publishers Treichlinger and Wagner in Pest.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the arrangement has probably never been accomplished. At least on the concert of October 11, 1846 Liszt only performed his paraphrases for the Swan song and

¹³⁸“Last Wednesday [May 13] directors of the National Theatre put on stage »Hunyadi László« by Ferenc Erkel in full light set and costumes, for the honour of Liszt. The audience were all invited. For the somewhat ailing condition of Mr. Wolf – albeit he did not refrain from performing for the honour of the great composer – and indisposition of Mrs. Schodel several vocal numbers were omitted, which slightly diminished the effect of the illustrious play, yet the revered composer immediately recognised its beauties and excitedly applauded many a time, calling the opera's composer an ‘exquisite talent’.” *Életképek*, 5 (1846), 636.

¹³⁹“Ferencz Liszt gave a concert last week in Vienna; among others, the overture of Erkel's Hunyady László was performed, conducted by Liszt himself. A local newspaper wrote about the overture that »it is a rather melodic, strongly instrumented, original and most effective composition«, which was received with resounding approval, so much so that Liszt had to give an encore.” *Pesti Hírlap*, May 5, 1846.

¹⁴⁰About the intended publication see *Honderű* (September 15 and 22, 1846), and *Életképek*, 5 (September 26, 1846). Piano arrangements of the overture and other numbers of *Hunyadi* had been published a few months earlier, in June 1846. According to Ábrányi (*op. cit.* [cf. note 5], 48) Erkel himself rearranged the best parts of his opera for the publication of the Treichlinger music house.

the Joy chorus (cf. Raabe catalogue, No. 160) from *Hunyadi*.¹⁴¹

Another score copy of the overture had to be with the opera troupe of Mihály Havi and József Szabó (Schneider). According to contemporary press coverage, they performed the finale of the first act with great success on their tour to Austria and Italy in 1846, and later in Pest and other Hungarian locations.¹⁴² Recently discovered instrumental part books (HSZ) reveal that in 1847 and 1848 they were touring a number of European cities, and they regularly performed the choral song that ends the first act, the complete overture, the opening chorus of the first act, and *No. 17* the King's aria.¹⁴³ Apart from the *Overtura* conducted by Franz Liszt in Vienna, and despite all the efforts of the National Theatre and Erkel himself, almost all contemporary performances of *Hunyadi* abroad – either excerpts or the entire opera – were organised by the company of Havi and Szabó.¹⁴⁴ Part books from 1847 and 1848 are not only unique documents of a tour abroad, which we have not learned about until recently, but they are useful sources of the critical edition. A number of factors – such as Erkel's personal relations to the company Havi and Szabó,¹⁴⁵ dating the source back to 1848, and its

¹⁴¹Cf. Legány, *op. cit.* (cf. note 42), 44. It is worth noting here that Liszt wished to have Erkel's *Hunyadi* performed in the Weimar theatre in 1856. See the letters from Liszt to Erkel on September 19, and November 21, 1856. Published by Margit Prahács in: *Franz Liszt Briefe aus ungarischen Sammlungen 1835–1886*, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966, 92, and 95.

¹⁴²See *Regélő Pesti Divatlap* (August 1 and 29, October 24 and 31, 1846), *Honderű* (September 15, 1846), *Pesti Hírlap* (October 22 and 27, 1846), *Múlt és jelen* (September 20, 1846) and *Életképek* (October 31, 1846) for accounts on different stages of the journey, and the troupe's successful debut in the National Theatre. See Zoltán Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színház története* [The History of Acting and Theatre in Kolozsvár], Kolozsvár, 1897, 367–368.

¹⁴³Part books survived in the music collection of the Arad Repertory Theatre, and are now safeguarded in the city's Museum of Fine Arts, unprocessed. We wish to thank the generous help of the museum staff that expedited our research. The tour has so far been only referred to in vague terms, whereas now the stages can be traced down, on the basis of personal notes in the part books by musicians of the orchestra: Prague (1847), Olmütz (April 10, 1847), Baden (July 3, 1847), Brünn (July 29, 1847), Tiglitz (September 4, 1847), Berlin (September 21, 1847), Frankfurt an der Oder (October 18, 19 and 20, 1847), Stettin (October 26 and 28, 1847), Copenhagen (November 14, 1847), Hamburg (November 23, 1847), Altona (November 1847), Hannover (December 5 and 11, 1847), Hildesheim (December 12, 1847), Minden (December 15, 1847), Kasdorf (December 20, 1847), Cologne (December 23, 1847), Aachen (December 28, 1847), Brussels (January 8, 1848, Théâtre Royal: January 10 and 12, 1848), Gent (January 14, 16 and 18, 1848), Antwerp (January 18 [sic!], 19 and 21, 1848), Liège (January 31, 1848), Namur (January 31 [sic!] and February 1, 1848), Mons (February 2, 1848), Paris (February 13, 1848), Nancy (June 10, 1848), Lunéville (June 22, 1848), Augsburg (November 22, 23 and 24, 1848).

¹⁴⁴About the debut of *Hunyadi* in Vienna see Marianne Pándi, “A Hunyadi László két külföldi bemutatója a múlt század közepén” [Two premières of Hunyadi László abroad in the middle of the 19th century], *Magyar Zene*, 6 (February 1965), 75–77.

¹⁴⁵As a singer, the composer's brother József Erkel accompanied the tour with his wife Amália Szabó, sister of the company's leader József Szabó.

content – seem to support the theory that the composer provided the score of the opera to the company's disposal for compiling a set of part books. The basic layer of these part books already show certain corrections which would only later be entered into the National Theatre part books in pencil. The importance of these sources is paramount, as they are the only reference to Erkel's authorship concerning these corrections, for example in the case of the overture.

Among the sources of the overture, there are two scores that we use as reference in the present edition. The score of the overture, which was pasted into the score copy of the National Theatre (NSZ–P) later, features in its basic layer Erkel's earlier corrections, similarly to the part books by Havi and Szabó. Obviously the former one relies on the original National Theatre score as a reference. The second relevant source of the overture is most probably a later score copy (RO), which was intended for commercial use.¹⁴⁶ The latter score raises several problems: its *Vorlage* is not known, and the score itself contains mistakes that went uncorrected. All things considered, this copy is of substantial importance for our publication, as it contains the earliest source of the harp part, a subsequent addition to the overture. The authorship of this part is rather questionable. None the less, it went into the main text of the publication, albeit set in small notes, for two reasons: because the harp part has become a standard element of the overture, and also because it features both in the first edition of the overture from 1902, possibly supervised by Erkel's sons,¹⁴⁷ and in the set of part books of the Opera House from 1927, based on the performance materials of the National Theatre.

There are a series of scores and performance materials from other Hungarian opera companies, which are also important sources of *Hunyadi László*, yet they are excluded from the present critical edition. These copies are telling documents of contemporary opera performances and the adaptations of *Hunyadi*. In addition to

the above mentioned part books of Havi and Szabó, a complete score and a number of part books have been recently discovered in the archives of the Arad Theatre, dating back to the time of its opening in 1874 (A–PSZ). In the Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library there are further performance materials of *Hunyadi*, so far not registered in Erkel research: a 19th century score and almost complete set of part books (K–PSZ) from the repertory theatre of Kolozsvár (now Cluj in Romania); turn-of-the-century scores and part books of the overture and of a few numbers, from the estate of theatre director Ignác Krecsányi;¹⁴⁸ and the part books of the entire opera from the collection of theatre director Ferenc Farkas, used between 1906 and 1930.¹⁴⁹ An early copy of *No. 17* (the King's aria) with so far unknown origin was acquired by the Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library, as part of a nationalized estate that entailed vocal and instrumental liturgical compositions – among them figural work of composers who were in fashion at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries.¹⁵⁰ Based on the performance registry of *Hunyadi*, it is most likely that more score copies would be disclosed later. Scores of *Hunyadi* for performances in Debrecen and Székesfehérvár in the 1860s and 1870s, and for premières in the theatres of Pécs and Miskolc in 1882 and 1885 respectively, have not been brought to light yet.¹⁵¹

Similarly rich are the purely textual sources of *Hunyadi László*, which complement the musical manuscripts. In addition to printed contemporary librettos, there are a number of recently discovered handwritten promptbooks. Although the original promptbook of the opera, compiled by Miklós Udvarhelyi, has not survived, it is possible that it was replaced directly by the single copy preserved in the archives of the National Theatre (SK1), which was used for decades in the performances of *Hunyadi* after 1865.¹⁵² It is most likely that insert numbers and corrections during the first two decades after the première have overburdened the original promptbook. The duplicate, made in 1865 by György Novák, the copyist of the National Theatre, serves as our main source for editing the libretto, together with the vocal part books. With the exception of the La Grange aria, it contains all the corrections and additions in its basic layer. Moreover, the promptbook marks the end of an era: after 1865, Erkel did not make significant changes in the musical text of his opera.

The earliest manuscript source of the libretto for *Hunyadi* has been preserved in the score archives of the Kolozsvár Hungarian Opera (SK2). This early copy

¹⁴⁶ See the stamp on the title page “Rózsavölgyi és Társa / ... udvari zeneműker[eskedés] / Budapest” [Rózsavölgyi and Co. / ...royal purveyor of music]. The version of the company's name reveals that it was probably stamped into the score after 1885. Cf. Ilona Mona, *Magyar zeneműkiadók és tevékenységük* [Hungarian music publishers and their activities] 1774–1867, Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet, 1989, 120. (Műhelytanulmányok a magyar zenetörténehez 2). Rózsavölgyi music house was advertising copies of the overture and score of *Hunyadi* in 1892 and 1896. Cf. Legány, *op. cit.* (cf. note 42), 43.

¹⁴⁷ Budapest u. Leipzig, Rózsavölgyi & Co., Stich und Druck von Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig. It is worth noting at this point that the performing material for the rearranged overture was also produced in a music copying workshop in Leipzig. (Source: Library of Concertgebouw, Amsterdam. Gyula Véber called our attention to the source.) This version is markedly different from the original composition of Erkel, and many signs show that it is an instrumentation based on an early piano arrangement by Treichlinger. Therefore the changes critiques referred to in terms of the 1878 National Theatre performance cannot be identical with this version, which is most probably the work of someone else other than the author.

¹⁴⁸ Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library, Theatre 1002.

¹⁴⁹ Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library, Theatre 102/I–III.

¹⁵⁰ Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library, Ms. Mus. IV. 2276.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Legány, *op. cit.* (cf. note 42), 39.

¹⁵² Names or performers noted in reveal that the promptbook was used at least until 1886.

was probably based on a source from the National Theatre, and it served through fifty years.¹⁵³ There is a note by the censor of Nagyszeben (now Sibiu in Romania) from 1854 on the title page, suggesting that the very promptbook was used by the company of Havi and Szabó. At the time only this musical company performed *Hunyadi*, apart from the National Theatre. As discussed above, the Havi and Szabó troupe kept on repertory certain parts of *Hunyadi* as early as 1846, and started touring the country with the complete opera as of 1852. Mihály Havi left the manuscript to the Kolozsvár company in 1860, when he retired from theatre management. Havi's last stage project was a tour of the Kolozsvár troupe to Bucharest;¹⁵⁴ from then on, intermittent prompters' notes relate to the Kolozsvár company. All but one: the company of Béla Szilágyi from Székesfehérvár, giving a performance in Pozsony (now Bratislava in Slovakia), starring Ida Benza, the prima donna of the National Theatre in the role of Erzsébet.¹⁵⁵

Printed librettos of *Hunyadi* are rather plays intended for reading, which do not follow verbatim the lyrics of the opera. Four editions were published in Pest until 1862. Apart from minor corrections to help readability, these editions serve as valuable sources for the present publication, both in terms of the original text and for understanding the composition process of the opera. The libretto intended for the 1844 première (L1) contains unique sections of the text that never made it

into the final version, and probably Erkel had not even considered composing music for them.¹⁵⁶ On the other hand, Erzsébet's prayer in the finale is missing from the same edition. It is plausible that the *Preghiera* was inserted into the text of *Hunyadi* quite late but certainly before the première.¹⁵⁷ Further three librettos (L2–4), which document the text of the opera after 1850, show close reference to the authentic versions of the National Theatre. These publications form an unbroken chain of sources, the *Vorlage* of which was most certainly the current promptbook of the National Theatre at the time of printing, which has unfortunately perished over time. With the exception of the middle part of No. 7, an addition from 1859,¹⁵⁸ the three printed librettos show nearly all the revisions that had been rendered for consecutive performances in the National Theatre under the supervision of Ferenc Erkel, and resulted in a composer's finalised version of the opera by the early 1860s – a version that is represented in our critical edition of *Hunyadi*.¹⁵⁹

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¹⁵³ Insertions from after 1847 are not imbedded into the basic layer of the manuscript – they were added later. However, the earliest deletions that were made shortly after the National Theatre première already feature here; the scene of László and Rozgonyi at the beginning of *No. 8 Scena* and the entire piece of *No. 16* were not even added to the copy.

¹⁵⁴ From the permanent singers of *Hunyadi* in the National Theatre, Mrs. Lonovics Kornélia Hollósy (Mária), Mrs. Ernst Jozefa Kaiser (Erzsébet), Albert Jekelfalusi (King, László Hunyadi), and Mihály Füredi (Cillei, Gara) participated in the Bucharest tour organised by Havi. Cf. István Lakatos, “Ferenc Erkel's Opera in Klausenburg (Kolozsvár, Cluj) und Bukarest”, *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 11 (1969), 264.

¹⁵⁵ For reviews on the successful performance see *Pressburger Zeitung*, 114/122 (May 27, 1878), 3. The company of Béla Szilágyi played *Hunyadi* for the first time on October 28, 1876 in Székesfehérvár, conducted by Elek Erkel. Cf. Legány, *op. cit.* (cf. note 42), 38. It is worth noting that Szilágyi had been performing in the company of Havi and Szabó earlier on.

¹⁵⁶ From the 77th measure of *No. 3 Scena*, there is the text of an *arioso* for László and an extra entry for the choir. At the end of the number, a *recitative* is indicated in the part of László, then a repetition of the revenge chorus. There is no music composed for these texts in the autograph.

¹⁵⁷ Notation at this point is uninterrupted, both in the autograph and in the part books that date back to the première.

¹⁵⁸ Even though there would have been an opportunity for additions, the new lines of the 1859 version of *No. 7 Aria* do not feature in L4 of 1862. This publication presents the text of the 1856 L3 with minor adjustments and a new layout.

¹⁵⁹ As compared to the première version, the small corrections and subsequent author's insertions that also feature in the basic layer of the 1865 promptbook are already there in the L2–4 versions: the 1847 *Cabaletta* of Mária and the La Grange aria of 1850. (Interestingly enough the La Grange aria was not included in the main body text but bound separately as an insert sheet. Probably publishing houses were also selling the text of the aria separately.) In concord with the author's deletions for performances of the National Theatre certain parts were excluded from this version of the libretto: the dialogue of László and Rozgonyi that originally started *No. 8 Scena*, as well as the entire *No. 16*. The role of Rozgonyi is indicated on the playbills only until February 17, 1846. The role was exclusively played by Benjámín Egressy.