

## THE ENDRE ADY POEMS FEATURED WITHIN LÁSZLÓ HALMOS' OEUVRE

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**SUMMARY.** The purpose of this study is to introduce the oeuvre of composer László Halmos, born 110 years ago, in Oradea, and to present his choral works that are related to the poetry of Endre Ady. Halmos' oeuvre of musical compositions is quite rich. A list of his works includes more than seven hundred opuses. The majority of his composition is dedicated to church music, but he also wrote folk song arrangements and put poems to music. The present study provides a detailed analysis of the choral work *Három tricinium Ady Endre versére (Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems)*<sup>2</sup> composed for equal voices.

**Keywords:** Homophonic and polyphonic construction methods, imitation, sequence, chords built on thirds and fourths.

Composer László Halmos was born 110 years ago, on November 10, 1909, in Oradea. After completing his schooling, he earned a degree in organ playing and one in church music at the Budapest Music Academy. He studied composition with Albert Siklós. His erudition and thorough musical education ensured the later development of a rich oeuvre. His life and ministry were linked to the city of Győr. From 1931 he became the conductor of the cathedral and taught at the public Music School, the College of Theology, and the Conservatory of Music. He has been the conductor of many choirs, and as a music teacher he has been the trainer who started the careers of many performing artists, composers, conductors and music educators. For more than 20 years he has conducted the Palestrina Choir of Győr, whose rich repertoire has covered the best of choral literature from Palestrina to contemporary Hungarian composers. In this professional workshop he laid

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the foundation for his own composing activities, and learned the mastery of the great composers in developing the sounds of choirs, leading of voices and the interweaving of harmonies.

A list of his works contains more than seven hundred opuses. Most of his compositions are dedicated to church music. He wrote masses, cantatas, motets, choral works in Latin and Hungarian. Among the most notable are the compositions of *Napmise (The Sun Mass)*, *H-moll mise (Mass in B Minor)*, *Te Deum*<sup>3</sup> and the *Barbár mise (Barbaric Mass)*<sup>4</sup>. His *Jubilate Deo* motet is often included in the repertoire of choral competitions.

His two-, three- and four-voice folk song arrangements, based on Hungarian, Slovak, Yugoslav, Gypsy, Russian, Mari folk songs are well-known. He arranged so-called “páva” songs, star songs, soldier and hideout songs. Numerous poets have inspired his works as well. These include the poems of Sándor Petőfi, Attila József, Endre Ady, Sándor Weöres, Gyula Juhász, Mihai Eminescu, William Henry Davies, Edgar Allan Poe and Nicolaus Lenau,<sup>5</sup> which form the basis of the choral works’ lyrics.<sup>6</sup>

His oeuvre is quite rich.<sup>7</sup> Following his death on January 27, 1997, his manuscripts were collected by his son Péter Halmos and cataloged by László Hoffmann in the early 2000s.<sup>8</sup>

The present study intends to introduce those choral works that are related to the poetry of Endre Ady.<sup>9</sup> László Halmos composed music based on eight Ady poems. This is but a small fraction of the composer’s great oeuvre.

<sup>3</sup> It was premiered by Lajos Bárdos on the Hungarian Radio, in 1934.

<sup>4</sup> It was a great success at the Modern Church Music Week in Frankfurt, in 1936.

<sup>5</sup> English writer-poet William Henry Davies (1871-1940), American poet, short story writer and critic Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), Austrian poet Nicolaus Lenau (1802-1850).

<sup>6</sup> His oeuvre includes pieces based on texts by Károly Vargha, Kisfaludy Károly, Károly Szabó, Ferenc Kazinczy, József Bánk, Zoltán Nadányi, István Pákolitz, Sándor Pusztai, László Tóth and Tibor Pardavi.

<sup>7</sup> 7 cantatas, 2 orchestral suites, 5 oratorios, 9 chamber music pieces for strings, 27 for chamber orchestras, piano and organ works, 45 songs with piano and violin accompaniment, 71 folk song arrangements, a requiem, a Te Deum, motets, masses, hundreds of choral works.

<sup>8</sup> László Hoffmann, organist and ecclesiastical musician, organized the entire oeuvre, collecting even unknown or forgotten pieces. The material is available to researchers at the Richter Collection in Győr. Hoffmann writes about choral works: “They are extremely easy to sing, as he always driven by practicality in his demanding compositions. He knew what each choir was “capable of”, matching the degree of difficulty to their abilities.” Halmos apparently sought to help the resurgent choir movement. See: *A Halmos összkiadás elé – beszélgetés Hoffmann Lászlóval (To Preface the Publication of Halmos’ Oeuvre – A Interview with László Hoffmann)*, In: *Új ember (New Man)*, September 19, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Endre Ady (1877-1919), a child of Sălaj, born in Eriu-Mețenț, studied at the Debrecen Academy of Law at the request of his parents. However, he was attracted to literature, so he interrupted his studies to work as a journalist first in Debrecen and then in 1899 in Oradea. The “Paris by the River Kőrös” was one of the most prominent centers of Hungarian

The composition *Két kórusdal Ady Endre versére* (*Two Choral Works Based on Endre Ady's Poems*) was written in August 1960. It was inspired by the revolutionary poem *Új várak épültek* (*New Castles Built*), and *A csillagok csillaga* (*Star of Stars*), a symbolic poem related to the phenomenon of the morning star.<sup>10</sup> The work *Az Isten harsonája* (*God's Trombone*) is a piece written for mixed choir voices that won the first prize of the Debrecen Reformed College jubilee competition. It was published by the *Magyar Kórus* (*Hungarian Choir*) in 1939. Ady's poem is a revolutionary poem that is quite direct in tone. The religious motifs, and biblical references used are all symbols of rebellion. The poem, which represented the basis for the work *A Délibáb üzenete* (*The Mirage's Message*), was inspired by a frequent natural phenomenon. The mirage also appears among the symbols of Ady's poetry.<sup>11</sup> The *Kis Karácsonyi Ének* (*Small Christmas Carol*) work has a playful character. It reflects the childlike purity and simplicity of Ady's poetry.

I wrote a musical analysis of a work written for equal voices: *Három tricinium Ady Endre versére* (*Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems*), which is related to three beautiful love poems by Ady. The work was created for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the poet, and this year we commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ady's death. The composer dedicated the work to his wife, Magdus.

I. The basis for the first piece of the cycle is the poem *Szeretném, ha szeretnének* (*I'd Love to be Loved*), which was premiered on June 20, 1909, in Oradea, on the floor of the Black Eagle Palace, dedicated to the presentation of new Hungarian paintings. This is a self-confession of Ady which reflects his desire for human warmth and understanding; it is also one of his best-known love pieces.

The poem is divided into two distinct parts. The first part (the first two verses) is based on a pair of opposites in which the lone man is outlined on one side: I am not the offspring, ancestor, relative, acquaintance of anyone; while on the other side is the unknowable, mysterious man: I am, like all human beings, majesty, northern point, secret, otherness, a mirage of far-away lights.

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Cultural life at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. First he worked as a journalist at the newspaper *Szabadság*, then at the editorial office of the Oradea Journal. Here he became a well-known publicist and poet. Alongside the young writers and poets of Oradea, he founded the *A Holnap* (*Tomorrow*) Literary Society in April 1908.

<sup>10</sup> The idea for writing the poem may have been given by the comet Daniel seen in Paris. The appearance of Daniel the comet was on June 9, 1907.

<sup>11</sup> Gyula Földessy lists *A Délibáb üzenete* (*The Mirage's Message*) among the so-called "red" poems of Ady. See: *Ady minden titkai* (*All the Secrets of Ady*), Budapest, 1949, 95.

The composer begins the work with two polyphonically intertwined voices.

E.g. 1

László Halmos, *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems*, I., m. 1-3.

The build-up is signaled by increasing the interval leaps in the upper voice (third, fourth, then sixth leap in bars 1, 2, 3). The second voice follows the upper one in *stretto*, a single beat apart. Its interval leaps are smaller. We could also interpret the movement of this voice as the echo of the words of the lonely man.

There is a homophone formula on the "vagyok (I am)" side of the opposing pair, the voices are separate only at the beginning.

E.g. 2

László Halmos, *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems*, I., m. 8-11.

There are many repetitive major chords in the music of the three voices, while at the repeated reoccurrence of the *lidérce*, *messze fény* (*a mirage of far-away lights*) metaphor, the special sound of an ascending chord mixture, built upon neighboring notes and made up of major chords appears.

**E.g. 3**

messze fény, Li-dér-ces, messze fény. De jaj, nem tudok

**László Halmos, *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems*, I., m. 16-19.**

The second half of the poem reflects the poet's desires. He describes in the form of requests his wish to be known and loved. The composer starts with a two-bar solo melodic section, in which he associates the exclamation "de jaj (but woe)" with a fourth leap and the "nem tudok (I can't)" outcry with a minor second descending step.

**E.g. 4**

messze fény, Li-dér-ces, messze fény. De jaj, nem tudok

20 így marad-ni, Szeret-ném ma-gam meg-mu-tat-ni, Hogy

**László Halmos, *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems*, I., m. 16-24.**

This is followed by a homophone section, in which we can observe the opposite movement of the outermost voices, the relative immobility of the middle voice, and the frequent use in every voice of the descending minor second movement, reflecting his mood of discontent.

The poem's distinctive form is the repetition of the last stanza, emphasized by Halmos with a variety of harmonies and a repeated melodic line, sung an octave pitch higher.

**E.g. 5**

40

nek, S len- nek va-la-ki- é, Len- nek va-la-ki- é.

**László Halmos, *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems, I.*, m. 40-44.**

II. The bases for the second work of the cycle is the poem *Jóság síró vágya* (*Kindness' Crying Desire*). Ady's thoughts are framed by the repetition of the first verse of the poem's total number of four. As the years pass, the sense of responsibility for the lost kindness and love matures in the poet's heart. The voice of conscience is growing increasingly stronger. Until now he had deliberately rebelled against social and moral norms, so far he had selfishly demanded everything, he had seduced other men's wives, but could not love faithfully. Now he wants to be good, loyal, giving, forgiving, and compassionate.

The second work of the cycle begins with two voices moving in parallel thirds. In the sixth measure we can observe sixths throughout several bars.

**E.g. 6**

40

Me-leg ka-rok- ban me-le-ged- ni, ó Fal- ni sut-to-gó.

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Musical score for 'Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems, II., m. 1-6.' The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of two staves. The top staff has a soprano line with lyrics: "...drá- ga szó- kat, Ju- tal- ma- zó- kat,". The bottom staff has an alto line with lyrics: "drá- ga szó- kat, Ju- tal- ma-". A box with the number '5' is placed above the first measure of the soprano line.

**László Halmos, *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems, II.*, m. 1-6.**

In addition to chords built of thirds, those structured on fourths are also common (bars 17-19: d – g - c; f – b flat – e flat).

**E.g. 7**

Musical score for 'Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems, II., m. 14-21.' The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of three systems of two staves each. The first system has a soprano line with lyrics: "ni. Semmit se kér- ni," and an alto line with lyrics: "Buzgó- ság- ban sohsem lo- hadni,". The second system has a soprano line with lyrics: "el se venni, Nagyhű- ség- gel min- dent sze- ret- ni:" and an alto line. A box with the number '15' is placed above the first measure of the soprano line in the first system, and a box with the number '20' is placed above the first measure of the soprano line in the second system.

**László Halmos, *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems, II.*, m. 14-21.**

We can observe a segment of free imitation in bars 6-7-8, where the Alto voice imitates that of the Soprano, in a lower octave, replacing the syncopated rhythm with an anacrusic dotted rhythm.

E.g. 8

...drá- ga szó- kat, Ju- tal- ma- zó- kat,  
 drá- ga szó- kat, Ju- tal- ma-  
 csó- ko- ló- kat: Mi- lyen jó  
 zó- kat, csó- ko- ló- kat:

László Halmos *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems, II.*, mm. 4-9.

An interesting sound occurs in the 26-30 bars, where above the repeated note of the third voice, the intervals are gradually increasing, from the perfect fifth, augmented fifth, to a major sixth and perfect octave, ending in unison during the lyrics „Milyen jó volna áldni tudni (How nice it would be to be able to give blessings)”.

E.g. 9

Még is vig hi- tet ad- ni más- nak,  
 ha- zud- ni. Ó vig hi- tet ad- ni más- nak,



**László Halmos, *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems*, II., m. 26-36.**

Upon the return of the first verse, the musical material occurs in a varied manner. The composer has an excellent sense of the inner rhythm of the text of the poem, to which he adapts his music. He uses dotted and syncopated rhythms, binary, ternary, heterogeneous bars to match the inner rhythm of the beautiful Hungarian poem.

III. The third part of the cycle is based on the poem "*Három őszi könnycsepp (Three Autumn Tears)*". The poem consists of only a few lines. It was published in the *Vér és arany (Blood and Gold)* volume. Its artistic effect is rooted in its melodicism: without any explanation, it only evokes moods and feelings. There is a strong sense of passing in the work, which the poet achieves by depicting the melancholic mood of autumn.

In the musical material beginning with a dotted rhythm and in e minor, Halmos highlights the repeated stanza by using a sequence in the upper voice. A dialogue between the two lower voices ensues, which is based on free imitation. Opposite melody arches emerge, whose rhythm brings agility to the harmonic changes occurring in each bar. The "Óh, be nehéz (*Oh, it's tough*)" sigh is indicated by an ascending fifth interval, followed by a descending line of parallel thirds. At the end of the first verse, the phrase "*Kacagni a leányokra (Laughing at the Girls)*" ends in a cheerful G major.

Ó- szi dé- ben, ó- szi

Ó- szi

dé- ben Óh be ne- héz

ka- cag- ni a Óh be ne- héz, ne- héz

ka- cag- ni a le- á nyok- ra..

a le- á- nyok- ra.

László Halmos, *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems*, III., m. 1-9.

In the sequel, the second verse, depicting the text "Ószi éjben (*Autumn Night*)" in bars 10-11, the two lower voices perform a semitone wave motion. Because they move in different rhythms (dotted rhythm – syncopated rhythm) it does not seem to be parallel movement. In bar 11, on two related notes, strongly dissonant, augmented sixth chords develop (g-b-e flat; f#-a#-d). The closing of the "Óh, be nehéz / fölnézni a csillagokra (*Oh, it's tough / look up at the stars*)" stanzas seems incomplete due to the V scale degree stop.

## E.g. 11

10 Ó- szi éj- ben, ó- szi

éj- ben Óh be ne- héz Föl- néz- ni a

Óh be ne- , héz Föl- néz- ni a

csil- la- gok- ra. Ó- szi éj- ben,

László Halmos, *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems*, III. m. 10-18.

In the musical material of the third verse, the last verse, the familiar motifs return one after the other: the semitone wave motion; the dotted rhythm spanning over a full bar; and its short version featuring two sixteenth notes. This latter rhythmic formula appears in one after the other at all three voices; in bar 20 in a tonal chord mixture. Here the autonomy of the voices ceases to exist, the composer does develop chord progressions, he merely moves the voices in one direction for the sake of the build-up, emphasizing the Soprano line to get to the second element of "Óh, be nehéz" – „Óh, be könnyű” ("Oh, it's tough" - "Oh, it's easy").

csit-la-gok-ra. Ó-szi éj-ben,

ó-szi dél-ben Óh be köny-nyű be köny-nyű

László Halmos, *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems*, III. m. 16-21.

In the following bars, a new mixture developed from fourth-sixth chords, built upon the gradual line of the B-flat major scale, which leads through the „sírva, sírva (crying, crying)” build-up to the “leborulni (bow down)” poem closing thought. But I feel this is a mere half cadence, since the d – a – d- chord (missing its third) appears to be the fifth degree of g minor.

## E.g. 13

Sír- va, sír- va le-bo- rul- ni,  
 le-bo- rul- ni,  
 le- bo- rul- ni.

László Halmos, *Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems*, III. m. 22-26.

The composer does not determine the tempo or the dynamics of the work. In my opinion, this occurs because Ady's poems are so expressive that the content and mood of the text helps to find the proper way to perform them.

The choral work *Három tricinium Ady Endre versére (Three Triciniums Based on Endre Ady's poems)* for equal voices denotes a sensitive composer. When Ady died Halmos was only 10 years old. By the time the choral piece was written, in 1977, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ady's birth, Halmos was already at the peak of his career. Most probably, the composer wanted to salute the celebrated poet, this being what prompted him to write the piece. It is a work composed by a confident master. It was a pleasure for me to get to know the work.

*Translated from Hungarian by Juliánna Köpeczi*

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