

JENŐ ÁDÁM'S CHURCH MUSIC COMPOSITIONS

ÉVA PÉTER¹

SUMMARY. In the present study I intend to present the church music compositions of Jenő Ádám. I will analyze the choral works of the composer that were based on the melodies of Protestant church hymns. The composer was also active as a conductor, but his name is primarily known in the field of music pedagogy. He played an important role in the elaboration and implementation of the Kodály method. In his works pertaining to church music, he adapted the melodies of the most representative church hymns of different ages. He uses both homophonic and polyphonic approaches with his works that have strophic structure or are through-composed.

Keywords: Genevan Psalter, Protestant hymn, Kodály method, strophic form, through-composed works, homophonic and polyphonic approaches in composition.

The composing skills of Jenő Ádám (1896-1982) were already showing even before his higher education in music. His early works include a Latin language mass for two voices, with organ accompaniment, that he wrote at the age of 12. However, the direct example and the defining guideline was Kodály's work as a teacher of composition.²

Analysts³ of Ádám Jenő's oeuvre distinguish between two creative periods. The first, vigorously unfolding, steeply ascending arc, the beginning stage of his career, which dates from the years immediately following his studies with Kodály, i.e., from 1925 to the outbreak of World War II. It was during this period that the first chamber works, orchestral

¹ *PhD Docent, Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Reformed Theology, Musical Pedagogy department, Ro-400535, Cluj-Napoca, Horea street 7, email: evapeter65@gmail.com*

² Students studying in his composition class represented crucial elements in Kodály's plan of renewing Hungarian musical life. In addition to Jenő Ádám, we must mention the work of composers Ferenc Farkas, Sándor Veress, Zoltán Gárdonyi, Pál Járdányi, Lajos Vass, and Lajos Bárdos.

³ Miklós Székely, Melinda Berlász, Sándor Berkesi.

works, and stage works were born.⁴ In the second creative period, vocal works come to the fore: especially choral works, folk song adaptations and works inspired by folk music were born. The creation of his works is influenced by his increasingly important pedagogical work. His early style is greatly influenced by the folk music and Kodály's works, but the features of his individual style also emerge: the beautiful, curving melodic formation comes to the fore. His larger-scale instrumental and vocal works⁵ are influenced by Wagner's and Brahms' melodic and harmonic modes of expression,⁶ who were the two prominent representatives of late Romanticism.

Protestant church hymn arrangements fit well into Adam's work as a composer.⁷ The musical material meant for church choirs is quite varied. The arranged melodies originated in part from the time of the Reformation, in part from a later time.⁸ Among them there are a few melodies stemming from the Genevan Psalter, such as Psalm 8, Psalm 77, Psalm 134; but he also arranged also valuable hymnal melodies as well. The data pertaining to the origin of the latter melodies are given below, because it is an indication of what the composer highlights as arrangements from within the church music heritage.

⁴ Among his most successful chamber works are his I. string quartet and the II. string quartet: while the *Dominica Suite* stands out among the orchestral works; in the 1930s, his Singspiel entitled *Hungarian Christmas*, a piece which the composer himself taught at the Budapest Opera House, and the mystery play *Mária Veronika* have premiered.

⁵ For instance, his requiem entitled *Ábel siratása (Ábel's Mourning)*.

⁶ In addition to the above, he is known for his Singspiel *Ez a mi földünk (This is our land-1923)*; his *Panasz és ünnepség (Complaint and Celebration-1941)*, for voice and orchestra; his *Variations for orchestra-1947* and his orchestral work *Europa (1939)*; *Lacrima Sonata (1927)* and *Ember az úton (Man on the Road, 1945)* for chorus and orchestra; Cello Piano Sonata composed in 1926; *Két szál pünkösdrózsa (Two Strands of Pentecostal Rose, 1948)* for two voices and folk orchestra; *Songs of János Arany (1951)*, as well as incidental music for stage and film.

⁷ The works that I am analyzing above can be found in the following volumes: *Egyházzenei vezérfonal – II. Kórusgyűjtemény (Church Music Guideline – II. Choral Collection)*. A Református Zsinati Iroda Sajtóosztálya, Budapest, 1969; *Magyar Zsoltárok – Genfi Zsoltárok magyar szerzők feldolgozásában (Hungarian Psalter – Genevan Psalter Arranged by Hungarian Composers)*. A Református Zsinati Iroda Sajtóosztálya, Budapest, 1979.

⁸ Source of the hymnal data: Dobszay László: *A magyar népének I. (To the Hungarian people I.)*. Veszprémi Egyetem kiadása, Veszprém, 1995.

1. Arranged melodies

The earliest of the arranged hymnal melodies is the song starting with *Krisztus feltámadott (Christ has risen)*, already documented in the Middle Ages. The Easter hymn, recorded as the first Hungarian language cantio, was already known in Europe around the turn of the 1st millennium, beginning with *Christus surrexit* in Latin and *Christ ist erstanden* in German. In the Sigismund-era fragment,⁹ the lyrics are written on the top of the page in Hungarian, German, Czech and Polish. The period of the song is also proven by the fact that in one of Miklós Telegdi's sermon books¹⁰ we find the piece classified as an old song.

The best of the church music heritage includes Hussar Gál's song to the Holy Spirit, the opening line of which, according to the Reformed hymnbook, is: *Könyörögjünk az Istennek Szentlelkének (Let us pray to the Holy Spirit of God)*. The first record of his melody is in the Cantus Catholici (1651) collection.¹¹ Since the 16th century, the song has been found continuously in Reformed Hymnbooks.

The text of the funeral song which begins as: *Már elmégyek az örömbé (I go on to rejoice)*, was created in the first decades of the Reformation. It can be found in Reformed, Lutheran, Catholic, and Unitarian hymnbooks. Among several of his melodic versions, Jenő Ádám arranged the melody published in the Debrecen Funeral Hymnal (1791).¹²

The Latin-Hungarian hymn that begins with *Krisztus én életemnek (Christ for my life)*, whose origins are unknown, has also spread as having a funeral text in Reformed regions, especially in Cluj County. According to hymnologist Kálmán Csomasz Tóth, it first appeared in a ritual writing that included a funeral service. That's how he got into the funeral repertoire.¹³

The melody of the hymn that begins with *Ó, áldott Szentlélek (Oh, Blessed Holy Spirit)*, was first published in the Cantus Catholici collection. It was also included in the collection of the Kájoni Cationale (1676). Since the 18th century, a slightly altered version of the original melody has become a permanent fixture of Reformed hymnals. This is the version that Jenő Ádám arranged. This piece can also be highlighted from an ecumenical point of

⁹ Created between 1437-1440 in Szepesség.

¹⁰ He publishes his books of sermons between 1577-1580.

¹¹ Dobszay, 91.

¹² Dobszay, 123.

¹³ Csomasz Tóth Kálmán: *A református gyülekezeti éneklés (Singing in Reformed Congregations)*. Református Egyetemes Konvent, Budapest 1950, p. 383.

view, because it can be found in Reformed, Lutheran, and Unitarian collections as well.¹⁴

The lyrics of the song that begins with *Jövel Szentlélek Úr Isten, töltsd be szíveinket épen* (*Come, Holy Spirit Lord God, fill our hearts*) was created based on a Latin Pentecostal antiphon and is a Luther-hymn. Its early notation can be found in the Prešov Graduale. Both Reformed and Evangelical hymnals include it. Its melody has changed over the centuries. Adam's arrangement uses the 1774 Debrecen hymnbook's version.¹⁵

The 16th century hymn that begins with *Feltámadt a mi életünk* (*Our Lives Have Resurrected*) is a piece that has an ecumenical character. Its melody is known from the hymnbook of the Czech-Moravian brothers, but it is also included in the Vietoris tablature (1680). It can be found in Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed hymnbooks. The related Easter lyrics were written by Imre Pécseli Király.¹⁶

Finally, I will mention the medieval song attributed to St. Bernard. Jenő Ádám arranged the version appearing in the Reformed hymnbook, beginning with *Jézus világ megváltója* (*Jesus, the Savior of the World*). This hymn is published by several denominations in their hymnals: it was first included in the *Cantus Catholici* (1651) in Latin and Hungarian, but can also be found in Lutheran, Baptist, and Reformed hymnbooks. Over the centuries, several versions have emerged. Both its melody and lyrics were adapted for different versions.¹⁷

2. Arrangement Methods

In terms of the performance apparatus, each of the choral works based on church music arrangements were composed for 3-voiced mixed choirs. Ádám understood women were more represented than men in congregational choirs. Thus, the compositions were written for two female voices and one male voice. Most of the works are strophic: all verses are associated with the same musical material. The arrangement of only two songs was through-composed: the melody of the 8th and 77th Genevan Psalms. These works display a variety of arrangements that are more closely related to the text.

¹⁴ Dobszay, 128.

¹⁵ Dobszay, 142.

¹⁶ Dobszay, 144.

¹⁷ Dobszay, 156.

2.1. Strophic Arrangements

In the case of works that have a strophic arrangement, Jenő Ádám uses a homophonic method or composing, he emphasizes a single voice, that which contains the melody of the church hymn, while the other voices are restricted to its harmonic accompaniment. The voices move mostly in the same rhythm, we rarely find a melismatic element that halve the rhythm of the melody, but the guiding principle of the music is its melody and the harmony supporting it. Exceptionally, one or two polyphonic bars are wedged into the homophonic musical fabric. Such an example is the one beginning with *Könyörögjünk az Istennek, Szentlelkének* (*Let's Pray to God, His Holy Spirit*), where the melody occurring in the soprano in the fourth stanza is followed by the lower voices starting two beats later.

E.g. 1

The image shows a musical score for three voices (Soprano, Alto/Tenor, and Bass) with lyrics in Hungarian. The score is written in a single system with three staves. Above the staves, dynamic markings include *mf*, *crescendo*, *ff*, and *ritent.*. The lyrics are:

Soprano: *Hogy érthessük Is-te-nünk - nek Min-den-ben a-ka-rat - ját.*

Alto/Tenor: *És az ő gyen - ge hi-tük - nek Csak Te vagy táp-lá-ló - ja.*

Bass: *Maradjon a Te ál-dát - sod A Te bá - nos né-pe - den.*
 The score shows the melody starting in the soprano part, followed by the other voices. The lyrics are aligned with the notes.

A similar solution is found at the beginning of the fifth stanza of the choral piece that begins with the words *Jézus, világ megváltója* (*Jesus, the Savior of the World*), where the melody, which begins on an accentuated beat, is preceded by an accompaniment that starts a beat earlier. In the same work, the principal voice starting with the eighth note is accompanied by the lower voices starting with a quarter note.¹⁸ This creates a polymetric effect

¹⁸ The inner rhythm of the passages *Jézus, világ megváltója* (*Jesus, the Savior of the World*) and *Engem ily nagy szeretetből* (*Out of Such Great Love*) may suggest the rhythmic structure of two long notes, four short notes and two long notes, which can be seen in the accompanying voices.

because the main voice is perceptibly triple-pulsating, while the accompanying voices, which are played simultaneously, proceed in binarily-pulsating groups. Similarly, we find accompaniments starting with augmented note values, but without the polymetric effect, in the accompanying voices of hymns *Könyörögjünk az Istennek (Let Us Pray to God)*, *Krisztus én életemnek (Christ for My Life)*, as well as no. 134 of the *Genevan Psalter*. The uniform pulsation is suggested by these opening stanzas, which seem to have no other use because they appear only at the beginning of the first line of the verse.

The works composed in a strophic approach include two Easter hymns. In both cases, a specially shaped created melody conveys the texts of the cheering *Alleluja (Hallelujah)*. In the initial bars of the arrangement pertaining to the cantio that begins with *Krisztus feltámadott (Christ Has Risen)* the *Alleluja (Hallelujah)* cry occurs on long, highlighted notes, sung on the same pitch, while the unison of the main melody in the soprano and baritone voices reflects the congregational rendition of the song.

E.g. 2

f *mf* *cresc.*

Krisztus fel-tá-ma-dott, Kit halál el-ra-ga-dott; Ör - ven -
Ha Ő fel nem tá-mad, Nincs többé bánbocsánat, De él,

f *mf* *cresc.*

Al - le - lu - ja! *Örvendezzünk, vigadjunk,*
De él, ezért szent nevét, De él,

f *mf* *cresc.*

Krisztus fel-tá-ma-dott, Kit halál el-ra-ga-dott, Ör - ven -
Ha Ő fel nem tá-mad, Nincs többé bánbocsánat, De él,

During the piece we meet the musical motif rendered textually with *Alleluja (Hallelujah)* three more times, but instead of long sounds, it occurs with a *ti-ti ta ta* rhythm, with a pitch adjusted to the harmonies.¹⁹ In the case of the Easter hymn that begins with *Feltámadt a mi életünk (Our Lives Have Risen)* the *Alleluia (Hallelujah)* cry is accompanied by an even more prominent musical design. Introducing the choral work, musical phrase that

¹⁹ In this work Jenő Ádám moves the principal melody from one voice to another, as the pattern of the melody, the range of the notes, suggests a comfortable rendition for a higher or lower voice.

includes the beautifully crafted melodic arc, of 6-bars, in 3/4 meter, carries the words of joy, which is heard in a single voice, the bass. It is such a well-crafted melody that it will later play an accompanying role to the principal melody when it will be rendered a second time. We encounter the melody for the third time in the closing part of the piece, but in that part all three voices sing *Alleluja (Hallelujah)*, creating beautifully intertwined harmonies.

When examining works that have a strophic construct, it appears that it is not the chord structure that is primary, but the linear unfolding of the voices.²⁰ Properly singable, beautiful melodies can also be discovered in the accompanying voices.

Examining the material from the standpoint of dynamics, it can be stated that Jenő Ádám pays careful attention to the indication of the vocal volume needed to sing certain parts. To indicate the tempo, he mostly uses Hungarian terms, which specify not only the speed of the performance, but also its character.²¹ Hence, he meticulously elaborates the works, leaving nothing to chance.

2.2. Through-composed Works

When the composer presents each verse in a new musical creation, we are talking about a through-composed work. In such a case, the textual content of the verses is perceptibly related to the musical crafting of the composition itself. The choice of the key, the meter, the tempo, the dynamics, the placement of the principal melody in the different parts is not uniform, but with its variety it serves the textual content of the song's different verses, aiding in the highlighting, interpretation of said words.

Jenő Ádám's work that is the arrangement of the 8th Genevan Psalm is a three-voice piece for mixed choir, which augmented to four voices only in its closing bars. Structurally, it can be divided into three units. The first of these, which deals with the first and third verses of the Genevan Psalm, contains the glorification of the creative, majestic, gracious God, with musical material presented in the tempo of *Andante maestoso*. In the second part of the arrangement, in the fourth and fifth verses of the Genevan Psalm, God's creature, man, comes into focus. The tempo then becomes more animated: *Piu agitato* and then *Mosso* tempo indicators

²⁰ Parallel third and sixth passages are common, as are triads or 4 note chords that lack fifths.

²¹ Highly expressive indications: *Bizakodva (confidently)*, *reménységgel (in a hopeful manner)*; *Ujjongva (exultantly)*; *Széles örömmel (with vast joy)*; *Boldog örömmel (with great joy)*; *Csendes bensőséggel (with quiet intimacy)*; *Gyengéd mozgással (with gentle movement)*.

follow each other.²² The concluding, third part, returns to the original tempo, it becomes bright in its content as it conveys that God has out man to rule over all creatures, so it is our duty to glorify His magnificent name.

The Genevan psalm melodies are not restricted into bars, so it is only natural that the composition of Jenő Ádám shows a continuous change of meter. The Doric melody is arranged within the d minor key.²³ In the musical fabric of the polyphonically structured first part of the arrangement, the principal melody moves plastically from one voice to the next, without any artifice, according to the character of what the text has to say. Free imitation starting at two or one beat, at a lower third or fourth interval, can be noticed with most entries of the voices.

E.g. 3

Andante maestoso

S.
A.
B.

Ó, fel-sé-ges Úr, mi kegyes Is-te-nünk, Mely csu-dá-la-tos

Ó, fel-sé-ges Úr, mi kegyes Is-te-nünk, Mely csu-dá-

a te-ne-ved né-künk. Nagy dicső-sé-ged ez e-gész föld-re ki-

la-tos a te-ne-vedné-künk. Nagy dicső-sé-ged ez egész

Usually, after exactly mimicking the intervals of the head-motif, the melody featured in the imitation voice only resembled the principal melody. In the second part of the arrangement, starting at in a *Piu agitato* tempo, the homophonic mode of composition dominates. The musical theme starts in a single voice, the alto (bar 24), the other voices intervene only at the second stanza (bar 27). At the part that is rendered in *Mosso* tempo (bar 35), on the other hand, the soprano begins, who is then followed via free imitation by the alto voice a bar away, and finally (from bar 38) all three voices move forward in homophonic consonance. The third, closing part also begins via free imitation: the psalm's melody (bar 44) that is conveyed by the alto is freely imitated by the soprano two beats later, and then from the 47th bar the principal melody placed in the tenor voice is stressed by

²² *Piu agitato* (slightly agitated), *Mosso* (livelier), *quasi recitativo* (more or less recitative-like)

²³ The major sixth interval characteristic of the Dorian mode appears as an incidental.

the bass an octave lower. At the culmination of the work, in bars 51-55, together with the text “*Valamit a világra teremtél, mindeneket lába alá vetél*” (*You have created something for this world, you put everything under your feet*) there are strong harmonies, followed a fortissimo volume and accentuated sounds sung in unison for all the voices, indicating the weight of the undeniable truth. As a further build-up, above the psalm's melody resounding in the alto and baritone parts (bar 56), in the upper register, the soprano moves towards the end with prolonged notes, gradually increasing in volume, followed by a unison part, followed by a major third ending with increased volume.

Jenő Ádám's other through-composed work, the arrangement of the 77th Genevan Psalm, uses only seven of the eleven verses.²⁴ He changes the place of the principal melody in each verse. There are no key signatures of the work, only occasional accidentals indicate key changes. The composer presents the modal melody of the psalm first in *d-Dorian* and then in perfect fifth in increasingly distant modes of *a*, *e*, and *b-Dorian*. After the conclusion of the sixth stanza, following a general pause, the melodies of a single stanza lead back, moving in opposite directions by perfect fifths, to the initial *d-Dorian*, drawing a mostly arched form in terms of the keys used.

The work is polyphonic in structure. It begins in an *Andante sostenuto* tempo, with an alto voice introducing the psalm's melody. A single voice sings, because the psalm interprets the words of a praying, lamenting man. The performing apparatus is gradually enriched with the addition of the soprano and then the male voice. The entrance of the second and then the third voice start with a counterpoint melody without text, sung on the 'A' vowel. It is only later that the imitation of the psalm's melody appears when we come to the text “*az Isten rettent engem*” (God hath made me afraid). The entrance of the imitative voice is usually two beats apart, occurring at a variable interval. The intervals of the melody are freely followed by the imitating segment because the harmony is thus properly developed. From the beginning of the third stanza, “*Szemeimet nyitva tartod*” (You keep my eyes open), there is an increasing tension that is conveyed by the piece: the rhythm of the Genevan psalm changes, note values are contracted, syncopation, dotted and sharp rhythms vary the beat, which previously moved in quarter and eighth notes.

²⁴ The hymnal published in 1948 in Budapest contains 11 verses (the fourth verse is omitted), but the 1996 hymnal contains only 4 verses (1, 2, 3 and 8). Jenő Ádám arranged the following verses: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8.

E.g. 4

p flebile
Szeme - i - met nyitva tar - tod, A - lud - ni éj - jel sem

p flebile
mat. Szeme - i - met nyit - va tar - tod, A - lud - ni éj - jel sem

mf dolente
33 Sze - me - i - met nyit - va tar - tod, A - lud - ni éj - jel sem hagyod,

The imitative voices of the principal melody, join the material in parallel thirds or sixths, dominating the sound with increasing force; dynamics increase, accents emphasize key words (e.g. “Az ő nagy haragjában” - In his great wrath); the tempo accelerates, *mosso*, later *allegro agitato*, then *stringendo* markings reflect the change. In the sixth stanza, the soprano and male voices now ask in unison, fortissimo, „Teljességgel elfogyott-é? Hozzánk való nagy kegyelme?” (Is it all gone? His great mercy towards us?), and then all three voices present a descending melodic trichord motif with a step-by-step ascending sequential repetition, emphasizing the statement „Az életem odavagyon immáron!” (My life is gone now!).

E.g. 5

mf string. e cresc.
Az é - le - tem o - da va - gyon, az é - le - tem

mf string.
Az én é - le - tem im - má - ron O - da va - gyon, az é - le - tem

mf string e cresc.
59 Az é - le - tem o - da va - gyon, Az é -

JENŐ ÁDÁM'S CHURCH MUSIC COMPOSITIONS

o-da va-gyon im - má - - ron! Is - ten megvon-ta ke-
o-da va-gyon im - má - - ron! Is - ten megvonta ke-
63 le-tem o-da im - má - - ron! *attacca* Is - ten megvonta ke-

The musical intensification culminates in a unison part in *Largamente* tempo and high volume: „Isten nem nyújtja segédelmét!” (God will not help!), followed by an abrupt stop at the general pause. The return is in the original tempo of the work, with very quiet dynamics, in an intimate atmosphere, looking back to the past, as the psalmist recalls the wonderful deeds of God. Then, the final movement, in *Andante maestoso* tempo, in homophonic consonance, once again brings to life the motifs of the melody of the Geneva Psalm, as the composer indicates that it should be performed with rapture, because the text speaks of God's power, His holy deeds, his infinite power, which all peoples and ourselves have experienced in our lives.

Jenő Ádám has composed music that is bright and easy to understand. The melodies he has chosen stem from the best of the centuries-old church music heritage. He knew this material well, having participated in the editing of the Reformed hymnal published in Budapest, in 1948. As a music teacher, he also assessed the difficulty of music that church choirs of different levels of ability were able to perform and adapted his teaching accordingly. His compositions were the foundation for the musical literacy of many. His work has proven to be timeless.

Translated from Hungarian by Juliánna Köpeczi

REFERENCES

- Ádám Jenő: *Módszeres énektanítás a relatív szolmizáció alapján* (Methodical teaching of singing based on relative solfeggio). Egyetemi Nyomda, Budapest 1943.
- Csomasz Tóth Kálmán: *A református gyülekezeti éneklés* (*Singing in Reformed Congregations*). Református Egyetemes Konvent, Budapest 1950.
- Dobszay László: *A magyar népének I. (To the Hungarian people I.)*. Veszprémi Egyetem kiadása, Veszprém, 1995.
- Egyházzenei vezérfonal – II. Kórusgyűjtemény* (*Church Music Guideline – II. Choral Collection*). A Református Zsinati Iroda Sajtóosztálya, Budapest, 1969.
- Magyar Zsoltárok – Genfi zsoltárok magyar szerzők feldolgozásában* (*Hungarian Psalter – Genevan Psalter Arranged by Hungarian Composers*). A Református Zsinati Iroda Sajtóosztálya, Budapest, 1979.
- Székel Miklós: *Ádám Jenő élete és munkássága* (*The Life and Work of Jenő Ádám*). Püski Kiadó, Budapest, 2000.
- Szőnyi Erzsébet: *Kodály Zoltán nevelési eszméi* (*Zoltán Kodály's educational ideas*). Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 1948.