

## THE KODÁLY CONCEPT WITHIN HUNGARIAN MUSIC EDUCATION IN TRANSYLVANIA

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**SUMMARY.** The present study focuses on the native Hungarian music education in Transylvania, tracing the principles and practical elements of the Kodály concept from kindergarten to higher education. It highlights the work of Transylvanian folk music researchers, composers and teachers who helped the Kodály concept to take root in Transylvanian Hungarian music culture through their compositions, theoretical writings, or practical activities. Evidence of this can be found in theoretical writings, compositions, curricula, textbooks, and song anthologies.

**Keywords:** let music be for everyone, folk music-based vocal music education, folk music research, textbooks, song anthologies, curricula

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) is one of the great figures in music education, although he himself was not directly involved in music education, apart from teaching at university. The method, which is usually called the Kodály method, was developed under his guidance by generations of musicians. It is therefore more appropriate to speak of the Kodály concept.

### 1. The Kodály concept

From the second half of the 1920s onwards, Kodály expressed his views on the need to reform music education in a series of articles, speeches, and statements. From these we can extract the basic principles<sup>2</sup> of the

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<sup>2</sup> The writings were published in: Kodály, Zoltán. *Visszatekintés (Retrospective)*. Volume I, Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1974.



concept of music education. Kodály promoted the practical implementation of these principles by means of systematically structured collections of songs and monophonic and polyphonic compositions intended for solmization or singing with text. He also contributed to the revival of choral singing with musical works for children's choirs and mixed choirs. The compositions intended for practical use are of the highest aesthetic value; they are therefore miniature pieces of music that can also be used as performance pieces. His pedagogical compositions cover all areas of skills development. In addition to the order of degrees (from elementary to the highest level), these exercises also introduce you to the world of musical styles. The songs of the Hungarian people and related cultures, and the pieces conceived in their intonation language, from pentatonic and diatonic intonation to chromaticism, introduce us to vocal polyphony.<sup>3</sup>

The teaching method was first developed by Jenő Ádám. From then on, and up to the present day, the method has been continually improved and perfected by a whole range of eminent specialists.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, sociological and psychological surveys have verified the effectiveness of the method and helped to eliminate errors.

The main features of the music education program based on the Kodály concept can be summarized as follows: it promotes the educational impact of music and thus the multi-directional development of one's personality; it serves both the music education of the masses and professional musical education; its central objective is the education of taste, which it achieves through music of high artistic value (from folk to classical music); it is based on the acquisition of the musical mother tongue (children's songs, folk music); it emphasizes direct contact with music over theory; it provides a multi-faceted development of skills;<sup>5</sup> it uses relative solfeggio in the acquisition of musical literacy.

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<sup>3</sup> The first stage in the practical implementation of the concept was the publication of the *Iskolai énekgyűjtemény* (*School Songbook*) in 1943, a collection of systematically compiled folk songs. In addition to Hungarian children's songs and folk songs, songs of related and neighbouring peoples, as well as church songs, were included. This was followed by *333 olvasógyakorlat* (*333 Sight Reading Exercises*), *Ötfokú zene I-IV* (*Pentatonic Music I-IV*), *24 kis kánon a fekete billentyűkön* (*24 Little Canons On Black Keys*), *Bicinia Hungarica I-IV*, *Énekeljünk tisztán* (*Let Us Sing Correctly*), *15, 22, 33, 44, 55, 66, 77 kétszólamú énekgyakorlat* (*15, 22, 33, 44, 55, 66, 77 Two-Part Singing Exercises*) and *Tricinia*.

<sup>4</sup> The most notable are Erzsébet Szőnyi, László Dobszay, Katalin Forrai, Helga Szabó.

<sup>5</sup> Sense of rhythm, linear and vertical hearing, tonal sense, memory, sense of form, creativity.

## **2. The application of the Kodály concept in Hungarian language music education in Transylvania**

The spread of the principles of the Kodály concept and its incorporation into the Hungarian native music education in Transylvania was facilitated by folk music researchers, composers and teachers who were either directly or indirectly Kodály's students or followers.

### **2.1 The role of János Jagamas, a student of Kodály, in the application of the conceptual principles**

In the life work of János Jagamas (1913-1997) the collection and systematization of folk music occupied a central place. Between 1941-1944 he studied at the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, as a student of Albert Siklós, Dénes Bartha, Jenő Ádám and Zoltán Kodály. These were formative years for him. Although his first collections were made in Urişor, a village inhabited mostly by Romanians, in 1940-1941, when he worked as a teacher in the village. Following the instructions of Zoltán Kodály, he expanded the area of his collections. He tried to work in areas where folk songs had not been collected before. He collected more than 6000 folk songs during his career. The most valuable material is the folk songs of Moldavia, Ghimeş and Țara Bârsei. He has analyzed and classified nearly twelve thousand melodies and compiled a type of catalogue of Hungarian folk songs from Transylvania and Moldavia.

Jagamas followed Kodály's principles not only as a folk music researcher, but also as a music teacher. He made arrangements of his collections for educational purposes. He also involved his students in the folk music collecting trips. He required his students to make accurate notations: the notation had to reflect the local characteristics of individual performance and variant formation. He trained a new generation<sup>6</sup> of folk music researchers to introduce folk song-based music education in Transylvania.

In the field of musical literacy, he called for the use of relative solfege in both higher education<sup>7</sup> and the practice of amateur choirs.<sup>8</sup> In his manuscripts of his university notes and essays on the history of style, he

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<sup>6</sup> The most famous of them are István Almási, Ilona Szenik, Zoltán Kallós, István Pávai.

<sup>7</sup> For the solfege examination, for example, the main themes of all the preludes and fugues of *Das Wohltemperierte Clavier* had to be sung from memory using relative solfege. In addition, they had to be able to transpose the musical material.

<sup>8</sup> In the village of Méra, in Călata, he spent many years developing the choir members' ability to read music. This is still remembered today by the villagers who sing with a beautiful voice. He was the vice-president of the Béla Bartók Song Association, directed by István Nagy, which brought together amateur choirs in Transylvania. He was active in meetings of amateur choirs and conducting courses.

presented his students with analyses of works from the Renaissance and Baroque periods. In the music of the 20th century, he researched the works of Bartók, focusing on the theoretical explanation of the tonal sequences used in them.

Jagamas followed the principle "Let music belong to everyone".<sup>9</sup> Although he was active in higher music education, he also produced a standardised textbook for class VIII in secondary schools, entitled *Énekeskönyv (The Songbook)*.<sup>10</sup> Its systematically selected folk song material provided a good basis for music teaching in schools. For amateur music lovers, he published a series of articles in the journal *Művelődés*,<sup>11</sup> and a paper entitled *Miért nem népdal? (Why not folk songs?)*.<sup>12</sup> Using clear language, Jagamas clarifies how to distinguish folk songs from popular songs. He has composed folk song arrangements<sup>13</sup> for children's choirs and adult amateur choirs, contributing to a better understanding of the musical mother tongue, to the revival of the choral movement and to the education of taste in general. Through his wide-ranging work, he has served to promote musical literacy and to disseminate the principles of the Kodály concept. He stated: "If everyone could learn folk songs in time, if everyone could learn their musical mother tongue from an authentic source, then the basis of general musical literacy could be consolidated".<sup>14</sup>

## 2.2 Reflection of the Kodály concept in Csaba Szabó's oeuvre

The principles of the Kodály concept appear as a guiding thread in the rich oeuvre of Csaba Szabó,<sup>15</sup> composer, musicologist, and university professor. It is no coincidence, since his training was directed by two of Kodály's students, János Jagamas and Gábor Jodál. His commitment to folk music can be seen in his entire oeuvre. According to István Angji, a music

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<sup>9</sup> Kodály, 1952.

<sup>10</sup> 1949.

<sup>11</sup> A series of articles in the 1979 issue of the journal *Művelődés*, no. 1-4.

<sup>12</sup> Jagamas, János, *Miért nem népdal? (Why not folk songs?)*, In: *Művelődés*. Vol. XXXIII/5, Cluj-Napoca, 1980, 30-33.

<sup>13</sup> I have published an analysis of János Jagamas' folk song arrangements in Péter, Éva, *János Jagamas' Folk Song Arrangements*, In: *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Musica*, No.: LXV-2, 2020, 307-320.

<sup>14</sup> Jagamas, János, *Miért nem népdal? (Why not folk songs?)*, In: *Művelődés*, Vol. XXXIII/5, Cluj-Napoca, 1980, 30-33.

<sup>15</sup> He started his career at the Szekler Folk Ensemble in Târgu Mures, where he worked as a conductor and composer. From 1963 to 1987, he was a teacher at the István Szentgyörgyi Institute of Theatre Arts in Târgu Mures. He taught music theory, music history and the rhythm and pronunciation of Hungarian speech. In 1988 he moved to Hungary with his family. He taught at the Berzsényi Dániel College in Szombathely. As a composer, he has written songs, choral works, chamber works, symphonic works, masses and stage music.

aesthete, "Csaba Szabó's works are characterized from the very beginning by his love of folk music, his love of his mother tongue and his mastery of the most modern expressive tools of his time".<sup>16</sup> The works inspired by folk music,<sup>17</sup> and the folk instruments (cimbalom, flute, bagpipe, cowbell) played in them, are proof of the composer's close connection with the specific expressive tools of folk culture.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the compositions contribute to the knowledge of the native music language.

His emphasis was on education, following the Kodály concept. His works on music education were published in the 1970s. In 1971, he participated in the creation of a curriculum for music education for native Hungarian speakers in Transylvania, and with his colleagues (teachers at music schools and the Conservatory) he planned the publication of new music textbooks and song collections for music education in kindergartens, elementary schools, and secondary schools.<sup>19</sup>

The most urgent task was to carry out a music-sociological survey on the effectiveness of music teaching in primary and secondary schools. He fought for the eradication of musical illiteracy: "...the amateur movement can only build on the results of high-quality pedagogical work in schools".<sup>20</sup> He considered the introduction of music notation and reading only in the 3rd grade, as laid down in the 1969 curriculum, to be too late. He considered the amount of melodic material taught each year to be too little in relation to the

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<sup>16</sup> *Üvegszilánkok között – Szabó Csaba emlékkönyv (Between Fragments of glass - In memoriam Csaba Szabó)*, Ed. by Ittész Mihály, Szabó Péter, Cellissimo, Budapest, 2013, 75.

<sup>17</sup> He composed a women's choir composition entitled *Kimennék a hegyre (I would go out to the mountain)* (1958), based on Csángó folk songs collected in Pusztina, Moldavia. In 1968 he composed *Csángó dalok a tatár fogságból (Csángó songs from the Tartar captivity)*, commissioned by the Târgu Mures Vocal and Dance Ensemble. In 1957 he composed *Három csángó népdal szoprán-, tenorszólóra és népi zenekarra (Three Csángó Folk Songs for Soprano, Tenor Solo and Folk Orchestra)*, followed by the singspiel *Az aranyszőrű bárány (The Golden-Haired Sheep)* (1958), the *Bokréta* song-dance pairing (1962), *A betyár balladája (The Outlaw's Ballad)* (1966), *Csángó dalok a tatár fogságból (Csángó Songs from Tartar Captivity)* (1968).

<sup>18</sup> The cimbalom can be heard in several of his works: *Három csángó népdal szoprán-, tenorszólóra és népi zenekarra (Three Csángó Folk Songs for Soprano, Tenor Solo and Folk Orchestra)*, *Az aranyszőrű bárány (The Golden-Haired Sheep)* (1958), the *Bokréta* song-dance pairing (1962), *A betyár balladája (The Outlaw's Ballad)* (1966), *Csángó dalok a tatár fogságból (Csángó Songs from Tartar Captivity)* (1968). The flute appears in a series of variations for orchestra entitled *Üvegszilánkok között (Between Fragments of Glass)* (1976). The interesting feature of the work is that the flutist must also hum the notes played while playing. The bagpipe appears in *Conversation* (1983), while the cowbell appears in *Szvit szológordonkára kolompokkal (Suite for solo cello with cowbells)* (1978).

<sup>19</sup> See: *A kötelező tananyag (The compulsory curriculum)*. In: Szabó, Csaba, *Zene és szolgálat (Music and Service)*, Kriterion, Bucharest, 1980, 127.

<sup>20</sup> *Zene és szolgálat (Music and Service)*, 23.

amount of music lessons: "The aim of any modern music education can only be active singing and music-making".<sup>21</sup> He criticized the material in the textbooks of music high schools because they mostly contained compositions by the editors instead of valuable folk song material. He felt that the curriculum of music schools lacked folklore education. He emphasized the aim of music education: "to make the native musical language of the people learned based on literacy".<sup>22</sup>

He considered it important to apply the principles of the Kodály concept catered specifically for Transylvania. In his statements he interpreted the essence of the Kodály concept: "To put it quite simply, it is approximately this: the child must be taught the noblest music of the community into which he was born. Music education must be based on the musical mother tongue. And play. Let children sing every day".<sup>23</sup>

He broadened the range of music to be taught: "The teaching of the mother tongue should therefore be based on folk songs, but should also include the best works of classical and modern composers".<sup>24</sup> Asked how the Kodály concept should be applied in the musical education of Hungarian children in Transylvania, he replied, "The adaptation of the method for teaching the Hungarian musical language could be the incorporation of examples of Hungarian music from Romania".<sup>25</sup> He not only lists, but also describes in detail in his book *A romániai magyar zeneszerzők művei (The Works of Hungarian Composers from Romania)* the compositions of music written for pedagogical purposes.<sup>26</sup> First of all, he refers to the volume *Pimpimpáré*,<sup>27</sup> which contains children's songs written by Péter Vermesy (1939-1989), a composer from Cluj, to texts by the poet Domokos Szilágyi (1938-1976). The development of sound systems, music theory, and the principles of musical formation can be read from musical material for young children. Then he offers the composition of Ede Terényi (1935-2020) whose title is *Gágogó*, a canon for two voices with playful ostinato accompaniment. The lyrics are based on a poem by Sándor Kányádi. Also, for canon singing, aiming at the early development of polyphonic hearing, he offers Boldizsár Csíki (1937) 6/8-time rocking melody *Álmodozás (Dreaming)*, written to a poem by Sándor Weöres. Among the biciniums suggests János Jagamas (1913-1997)'s folk song arrangement of *Anyám, anyám, édesanyám (Mother, Mother, My*

<sup>21</sup> *Zene és szolgálat (Music and Service)*, 130.

<sup>22</sup> *Zene és szolgálat (Music and Service)*, 134.

<sup>23</sup> *Zene és szolgálat (Music and Service)*, 148.

<sup>24</sup> *Zene és szolgálat (Music and Service)*, 132.

<sup>25</sup> *Zene és szolgálat (Music and Service)*, 134.

<sup>26</sup> It was given as a lecture at the Second International Kodály Symposium, Kecskemét, 1975; published in *Zene és szolgálat (Music and Service)*, 163-180.

<sup>27</sup> Szilágyi, Domokos - Vermesy, Péter, *Pimpimpáré*, Kriterion, Bukarest, 1976.

*mother*) and Miklós Szalay (1930-2003)'s *Édesanyám* (*My mother*). It highlights the work of Aladár Zoltán (1929-1978), who composed 28 works for children's choirs in the 1960s, with the aim of introducing the typical sound systems of the first half of the 20th century, from pentatonic to dodecaphony. These are compositions based on bi-tonal, tri-tonal, or four different pitches moving simultaneously, or on acoustic tone sequences.<sup>28</sup>

Csaba Szabó's work, as the above-mentioned prove, contributed significantly to the implementation of the Kodály concept in the teaching of Hungarian music in Transylvania. He developed the music curriculum, from kindergarten to the last grade of secondary school, based on uniform principles, applying the Kodály principles. His efforts to improve the mastery of the native musical language, which can facilitate the understanding of the material of the coexisting nationalities and the universal musical culture, must be particularly emphasized.

### **2.3 The application of the principles of the Kodály concept in today's music education**

In Hungarian-language education, music curricula have remained essentially unchanged over the last five decades. The curriculum currently in force is the one compiled by Ilona Szenik and Katalin Halmos in 2003 and expanded in 2017.

In the music classes for preschool and primary school children, monophonic songs and folk singing games play a skill-building role. From the age of 5 to 7 years, elements of polyphonic habituation (singing in dialogue, canon, application of ostinato rhythm and ostinato melody) are also introduced, as Kodály himself pointed out that clear intonation is only achieved through polyphonic singing. Voice formation, rhythm, and ear training, and listening to music are only included in the curriculum for this age group as a means of stimulating the voice. From grades 3 to 4 to 6, emphasis is placed on musical literacy, the development of a sense of rhythm and ear and the acquisition of related skills. The sequence of teaching pitches begins with the learning of *sol-mi* sounds that can be directly derived from speech intonation. Subsequently, a pentatonic set of sounds, followed by a seven-degree diatonic scale, is gradually developed in the auditory development curriculum. The curriculum also provides for the development of tonal sense, polyphonic hearing, sense of form and creativity. In grades 7-8, knowledge and skills development continue, while at the same time there is a focus on folk music and the study of musical periods and genres.

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<sup>28</sup> As an example, Csaba Szabó presents the work *Bokor alján ibolya* (*The Violet at the Bottom of the Bush*), written to a poem by Sándor Kányádi.

As the preceding paragraph proves, the main principles of the Kodály concept prevail in music education: education begins with vocal music training; in the practice of musical literacy both the solmization names and letter names are used; the study of Hungarian folk music is the primary focus, followed later by the study of the music of coexisting nationalities and the rich heritage of universal music culture. However, certain elements of the method, such as the introduction of relative solfege, have not been properly implemented.<sup>29</sup> However, progress has been made in the development of a native language choral culture through the organization of independent choirs within the various national sections.

Music education in Transylvania is very poor in terms of textbooks. New textbooks for grades V to VIII are urgently needed, because although the content of the old ones is good, they reflect the work of the people mentioned in the 1972 curriculum.<sup>30</sup> The textbook selection for the elementary grades is richer, because more publications have been produced in the last two decades. One of these series<sup>31</sup> requires a relative reading of musical notation, which only teachers who have completed their training in Hungarian-language higher education could have learned. Relative solfege is not used in Romanian-language teaching.<sup>32</sup>

In the case of song collections, the choice is richer. One must look back to the early publications. For example: Ferenc Balázs - Sándor Szent-Iványi - Imre Mikó published in 1931 in Cluj-Napoca, a book of songs whose title is *Ifjúsági daloskönyv (Youth Songbook)*. Another example is the volume *Daloljunk (Let's sing)*, published in 1944 in Timisoara by Antal Czilling and Géza Szabó, containing 111 folk songs. The most significant publication was the youth song book entitled *A mi dalaink (Our Songs)*, published in 1936 with the aim of making the folk music material, which was discovered by Bartók, Kodály and their followers known and to make it the basis of musical education.

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<sup>29</sup> The reading of music based on relative solfege is practiced at the Music Department of the University of Partium in Oradea and at the Music Department of Reformed Teacher Training and Music Faculty at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj. Absolute solfege is used in music schools and in Romanian-language university instruction.

<sup>30</sup> Éva Maxim, Albert Márkos, Gabriella Guttman, Ilona Verestóy, Éva Pálffi, Aranka Kovács, later Katalin Halmos.

<sup>31</sup> *Zene és mozgás (Music and movement)* - textbooks for classes II, III, IV. Edited by Béla Ábri, Barna Gyergyai, János Keresztessy.

<sup>32</sup> In the article entitled *A Kodály-módszer nemzetközi térhódítása (The International Conquest of the Kodály Method)* (In: Szabó, Csaba, *Zene és szolgálat (Music and Service)*, Kriterion, Bucharest, 1980, 154.) Csaba Szabó recalls, following Károly Szász (Árkos - 1971), that "the first textbook based on relative solfege was published in 1875 in Eger by a Transylvanian author, and the second edition in 1879 in Deva. Title: *Vezérkönyv a népiskolai énekoktatáshoz (Main Guide to the Vocal Instruction in Schools)*. It was written by Sándor, Domokos."



Since the 1970s, new volumes have been published, among which I would like to highlight the collection of 230 folk songs edited by István Almási in 1972, entitled *Tavaszi szél vizet áraszt* (*The Spring Wind Gives Way to Water*). The editor has selected collections by Vikár, Bartók, Kodály, Lajtha, Domokos and Jagamas. The aim of the volume is also stated: "And, like general education, which must be based on the culture of the mother tongue, higher musical education is inconceivable without the prior acquisition of the native musical language".<sup>33</sup> In line with Kodály's pedagogical principles, Almási stresses the importance of learning to read music: "The general knowledge of musical literacy is a prerequisite for a conscious folk culture, which this songbook is intended to serve".<sup>34</sup> As a practical aid, it indicates above the initial note the name of its relative solfège note and draws attention to the C change. In parallel with this volume, other publications, collections of folk music representing source materials, were also published in Transylvania.<sup>35</sup> Several publications have also been produced for preschool and schoolchildren, including the *Pimpimpáré* volume<sup>36</sup> by Domokos Szilágyi and Péter Vermesy, presented earlier, and Katalin Halmos' collection *Daloskönyv* (*Songbook*).<sup>37</sup>

Instead of summarizing, let us conclude this study with a reflection by Csaba Szabó, which can serve as a compass for all teachers of music education: "The Kodály heritage is a living, precious jewel. A treasure shared by all mankind. His most beautiful works, his noblest aspirations enrich universal culture, inhabit it and continue to have an impact for centuries to come".<sup>38</sup>

*Translated from Hungarian by Juliánna Köpeczi*

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<sup>33</sup> *Tavaszi szél vizet áraszt* (*The Spring Wind Gives Way to Water*), 230 Hungarian folk songs. Ed. by Almási, István, Kriterion, Bucharest, 1982 (second, expanded edition), 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Tavaszi szél vizet áraszt*, 12.

<sup>35</sup> Miercurea-Ciuc, Târgu Mures, Sfântu Gheorghe, Satu Mare, Arad, Oradea, Zalău.

<sup>36</sup> Subtitle: *Vers és muzsika gyermekeknek – Az egyszerű mondókától napjaink kórusművészetéig* (*Poetry and music for children - From the simple sonnet to the choral art of today*).

<sup>37</sup> This booklet for nursery and primary school children, published in 2005, contains 46 songs. The author follows the principle of gradualism, starting with simple, short little songs and then moving on to playful songs. It also includes a description of the games.

<sup>38</sup> *Zene és szolgálat* (*Music and Service*), 144.

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