

## LÁSZLÓ DOBSZAY: THE WORLD OF TONES SOLFÈGE BOOK SERIES AND THE TIMELINESS OF THE CONTEMPORARY EDITION<sup>1</sup>

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**SUMMARY.** The article discusses the necessity of the contemporary publication of *The World of Tones* series of solfège books by *Dobszay*. It outlines the areas of Kodály method that are related to the textbooks and describes the solfège publications in use before the series was published.

**Keywords:** Kodály-method, solfège, music education

The work of *Béla Bartók* and *Zoltán Kodály* marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Hungarian music education. We can find the foundation of this revolution in the folk music collections of 1905-1906. *Kodály* and *Bartók* realized that by discovering authentic rural folk music, they had acquired a national treasure. From this time on, they dedicated their entire musical activity to make this value the basis of modern Hungarian music culture. One of the aims of this effort was to create *modern Hungarian classical music*, the other was to redefine music education, which was closely associated with the creation of Hungarian national music. *'Hearing Zoltán Kodály's name makes most people think about the Kodály method...but he was a respected and well-known composer as well, even if he was not as prolific as his contemporary, Béla Bartók.'*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This study was published first in Hungarian in *Parlando* 2017-3 as. *Dobszay László. A hangok világa szolfézs-könyv sorozat alkalmazása a zeneiskolákban VI/1. - A Hangok világa szolfézs-könyv-sorozat megjelenésének korabeli időszerűsége. (The World of Tones Solfège Book Series in Music Schools (VI.1. - The Timeliness of the Contemporary Edition of the Series). See. Tanmuv-Varady-Krisztina (parlando.hu)*

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<sup>3</sup> Csüllög, Judit. *Kodály Zoltán. Hét zongoradarab Op.11. (Zoltán Kodály. Seven Piano Pieces Op.11.)* (In. *In the memory of Kodály*. EKE, Líceum Publishing House, 2020.)



In 1925 *Kodály's* educational activities took a major turn.<sup>4</sup> He started to focus on exposing a broad range of the population to music. According to *Kodály*, educating the audience, generalizing the existence of Hungarian choral culture, creating studies in sight reading based on relative solmization, and introducing everyday music lessons in the school curriculum was an important task. All in all, he intended to develop a general musical reform that extended the achievements of music education to general public education. The *Kodály method* is based on a set of principles that are necessary to achieve the goals outlined.

We can examine *Kodály's* music education method in several ways. *László Dobszay* developed one of the most comprehensive and detailed analyses.<sup>5</sup> He divided the method into five main topics, in which we can find music education as well as *Kodály's* ideas on human education.<sup>6</sup> Below, we will systematically explain the topics that deal with the educational tools found in *Dobszay's* textbooks.

### Relative solmization and tonal experience

Relative solmization was actually introduced into the *Kodály method* relatively late, in the 1930s, after *Kodály's* pedagogical principles had been developed. It perfectly suited his plans since relative solmization could become a perfect tool to implement his musical educational ideas. *Kodály* saw the greatest benefits of relative solmization in developing tonal hearing, musical thinking, inner hearing, and clear intonation. While playing music, relative solmization creates associations for each note. These associations about notes and their relationships are based on actual musical experiences instead of only theoretical knowledge. This develops tonal thinking.<sup>7</sup> The use of relative solmization is most effective when it is linked to a well-known melody. The repetition of melodies in different styles reinforces the sense of

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<sup>4</sup> 'Until about 1925, I lived the normal life of a professional musician. I didn't bother about music education in schools, believing that everything was fine there. They were doing what they could, and if you are a tone deaf, you won't matter then, anyway.' - said *Kodály* (excerpt from the presentation „Vidéki város zeneélete” ('Music in a rural town'), 1937.

<sup>5</sup> *Dobszay, L. A Kodály-módszer és zenei alapjai* (L. Dobszay. *Kodály method and its musical basis*) (In: *Parlando* 1970. issue 11, pp. 15-26.)

<sup>6</sup> Five topics. 1. *Relative solmisation and tonal experience*, 2. *Folk song and musical value*, 3. *Vocality and musical creativity*, 4. *Schools and humanistic learning*, 5. *Culture and personality*.

<sup>7</sup> 'Ultimately, solmisation is a system of expressions that reveals the logic of the relationship between notes. Compared to measuring intervals, solmisation gives a more genuine picture of the relation of pitches. It is simple TONALITY. It shows relations and not just intervals.' *Dobszay. A szolmizáció* (L. Dobszay. *Solmisation*) (In: *Parlando* 1961. Issues 7-8., p. 17)

tonality.<sup>8</sup>

The memorization of melodies helps clear intonation and develops knowledge of style. Moreover, it is in perfect harmony with the pentatonic scale. The three main goals that relative solmization helps to achieve are '*singing in tune, pentatonic patterns, and development of musical thinking.*'<sup>9</sup>

Relative solmization can be utilized for music composed even after the Classical and Romantic musical periods. In one of his articles<sup>10</sup>, after a theoretical introduction, *László Dobszay* shows exact solmization patterns on a folk song, a Viennese classical example, as well as on two short pieces by *Béla Bartók*. Even though we can only speak of microtonality and 6/7-note figures in the latter, *Dobszay* proves in the cited study that solmization has a place in modern music as well.<sup>11</sup>

### Folk song and musical value

*'A folk song is par excellence Hungarian classical music.<sup>12</sup> It is inherited from the old, general, and universal Hungarian culture; therefore, it should serve as the basis of our national music culture, especially our music education'*<sup>13</sup>

The two basic characteristics of Hungarian folk songs are that they are monophonic and unaccompanied. Their simplicity allows their widespread use in music education. They are easy to recognize and understand, so '*They can be perfectly used as a musical alphabet*'<sup>14</sup>

Instead of exclusive influence, *Zoltán Kodály* intended to give priority to folk music at the early stages of music education. He was not campaigning against Classical music: 'we shouldn't aim to push schools to the other *extreme*

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<sup>8</sup> That is why *Zoltán Kodály* created his reading exercises which progress from easier two-voice exercises to more difficult two-, and three-voice exercises. These offer countless opportunities for teachers and students to practise relative solmisation and reading music.

<sup>9</sup> Dobszay, L. *Kodály Zoltán zenepedagógiai eszméi és népzene kutatásunk* (L. Dobszay. *Music Educational Ideas of Zoltán Kodály and our Folk-music Research*) (In. *Parlando* 1968. Issue 2. pp. 3-10)

<sup>10</sup> Dobszay, L. *A solmizáció* (L. Dobszay. *Solmisation*) (In *Parlando* 1961. Issues 7-8. p. 17)

<sup>11</sup> In this article, *Dobszay* references various excerpts from *The Bluebeard's Castle/Third Door* and *Bartók. Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion/Part 2* and illustrates them with different possibilities of solmization.

<sup>12</sup> Kodály, Z. *A magyar népdal művészi jelentősége* (Kodály, Z. *The Artistic Importance of Hungarian Folk Songs*) (In *Visszatekintés* (Retrospect) Volume I. p. 35)

<sup>13</sup> Kodály, Z. *Százéves terv.* (Z. Kodály. *A Hundred Year Plan*) (In. *Visszatekintés* (Retrospect) Volume I. pp. 288-289) *Magyar népzene* (Hungarian Folk Music) (In. *Visszatekintés* (Retrospect) Volume II. p. 135)

<sup>14</sup> Ujfalussy, J. *Zeneoktatás és nemzeti hagyomány* (J. Ujfalussy. *Music Education and National Tradition*) (In *Parlando* 1984. Issue 1. pp. 6-16)

*by applying only our folk music,<sup>15</sup> we must be open to foreign masters of any nationality.’<sup>16</sup>*

### **Vocality and musical creativity – ‘Singing is the root of music’<sup>17</sup>**

An important element of the concept is to make music education democratic. The special character of teaching musical instruments cannot fulfil this role. Due to the strong auditory perception, Kodály also promoted singing as an important tool during instrumental lessons. At the time, the published instrumental music curriculum was also based on Hungarian folk music. *‘Using folk songs allows us to develop an instrumental music curriculum based on singing. We can provide vocal education in the use of musical instruments by applying folk songs. Singing while playing the piano can greatly develop aural perception and the ability to connect different musical areas (singing, playing the piano), improves rhythmic skills, musical memory, and proper musical phrasing.’<sup>18</sup>*

Kodály considered singing as the foundation of music education regardless of social and economic status. Changes in music education have taken place in three main areas: music education in elementary schools, Hungarian choral culture, and the curriculum used in music schools.

### **Music education in elementary schools**

In Hungary, compulsory singing lessons were introduced in primary education under Article XXXVIII (11)(3) of the Public Education Act of 1868.<sup>19</sup>

However, without mandatory course material and requirements, the content of singing lessons depended on the teacher’s competence. We can find documents about the revisions of course material and methods dating back to the 19th century. In the preface of his publication *‘New system of*

<sup>15</sup> Kodály, Z. *Megjegyzések a „Szó-Mi” népiskolai énektankönyv bírálóinak viszontválaszára* (Z. Kodály. *Comments on the Reply of Critics of „So-Mi” Music Handbook for Elementary Schools*) (In. *Visszatekintés (Retrospect)* Volume I., p. 152.)

<sup>16</sup> Ujfalussy, J. *Zeneoktatás és nemzeti hagyomány* (J. Ujfalussy. *Music Education and National Tradition*) (In. *Parlando* 1984. Issue 1., pp. 6-16.)

<sup>17</sup> Kodály, Z.. *Zenei nevelésünk reformjáról* (Z. Kodály. *About the Reformation of Our Musical Education*) (In. *Visszatekintés (Retrospect)* Volume I. p.287)

<sup>18</sup> Dr. Csüllög Judit. *A népzene aránya és szerepe a Zongoraiskola kötetekben* (Dr. Judit Csüllög. *The Proportion and Importance of Folk Music in Piano Method Volumes 1 and 2*) (In *Parlando* 2016. Issue 6)

<sup>19</sup> Resource. Electronic version of *Corpus Juris Hungarici*. DVD Legal Register

*singing lessons*'<sup>20</sup>, János Goll wrote about the current situation of music education: 'According to our experience in most schools' teachers do not even attempt to teach reading music. But if they do so, their efforts produce little or no results... Let anyone who doubts this see the complete lack of singing abilities of graduating students.'<sup>21</sup>

These circumstances motivated the inclusion of Kodály's principles into the elementary school singing lesson curriculum. Kodály considered singing lessons as an introduction to choral activities. The results speak for themselves. The official cultural policy of Hungary also supported the implementation of the *Kodály method* in singing lessons in elementary schools. Following the examples of schools in the cities of Békés-Tarhos and Kecskemét, a curriculum including daily singing lessons was implemented in more than 130 schools throughout the country. The increasing number of schools using this special music curriculum also resulted in a new, musically trained audience. Kodály emphasized the importance of this in several of his articles and speeches: 'We have created the musical elite but we forgot about the audience.'<sup>22</sup> The publication of new singing lesson textbooks based on the new method became an important milestone in the formation of a sophisticated audience.<sup>23</sup> Kodály's vision of making the masses of children musically literate seemed to become the reality.<sup>24</sup>

## Choral culture

One of the basic principles of the Kodály method is to allow anyone to actively participate in singing and in music performance. This role was fulfilled by the emerging choral movement. Kodály urged fellow composers of his time to compose sophisticated choral works based on folk music.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Goll János. *Blätter zur Verbreitung der Chevéschen Elementar* (János Goll. *Blätter zur Verbreitung der Chevéschen Elementar*). Galin-Paris-Chevé education method, 1884.

<sup>21</sup> Kónya Éva. *A Békés-Tarhosi Énekiskola-az első magyar állami énekiskola története szakdolgozat* (Éva Kónya. *The History of Békés-Tarhos Music School – First Hungarian National Music School, a thesis*, EKF Faculty of Humanities 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Kodály, Z. *Tanügyi bácsik!* (Z. Kodály. 'Seniors' in Education!). In *Visszatekintés (Retrospect)*, Volume I. pp.306-307

<sup>23</sup> Kerényi, Gy. and Rajeczky, B. *Énekes Ábécé* (1939); Kodály, Z. *Iskolai Énekgyűjtemény I-II. kötet* (1943- 44); Ádám, J. *Módszeres Énektanítás a relatív szolmizálás alapján* (1944). (Gy. Kerényi and B. Rajeczky. *The ABC of Singing* (1939); Z. Kodály. *Collection of Songs for Schools I-II.* (1943- 44); J. Ádám. *Accurate Music Teaching Based on Relative Solmisation* (1944)

<sup>24</sup> Nowadays, the number of schools with music faculty has decreased significantly. Compared to sciences and informatics, the demand for humanities and their financial and moral support is constantly decreasing due to the perceived lack of their economic value.

<sup>25</sup> One of the results of this effort is the *27 Choruses for Children's and Female Voice* by Bartók (1935)

The first pieces composed for children's choir were published and gave rise to a new trend in Hungarian music compositions. The increased demand for the performance of new choral pieces led to the need to publish printed sheet music. From 1931, the *Hungarian Choir magazine* <sup>26</sup> fulfilled this role. Many series, volumes, and journals were published for children's choir, helping the work of teachers and choir directors.<sup>27</sup> From 1934, events called *Singing Youth* and *National Song Contest* organized and directed by the association named 'Énekszó', provided a forum for choirs and choir directors where they could present the results of their high-quality professional work. <sup>28</sup>

### Music education

At the same time as the Singing Youth movement began, instrumental education began to undergo significant changes. From 1952, *Erna Czövek* <sup>29</sup> and *Sándor Veress* organized a music pedagogical seminar at the 1st district music school - formerly *Fodor Music School* <sup>30</sup>- with the aim of presenting

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<sup>26</sup> Edited by *Jenő Ádám, Lajos Bárdos, György Kerényi, Gyula Kertész.*

<sup>27</sup> In addition to *Magyar Kórus (Hungarian Choir), Énekszó (Singing)* was published in 1934, aimed at the teaching of singing in schools, *Zenei Szemle (Music Review)* dealt with musicology, while *Zenepedagógia (Music Pedagogy)* and *Hangszer (Musical Instrument)* focused on the issues of instrumental music education. In 1959, the journal '*Parlando*' was launched, which is still published today, dealing with general music education issues.

<sup>28</sup> To this day, the annual concerts of the *Singing Youth* are organised by the *Association of Hungarian Choirs and Orchestras*, for primary school and grammar school choirs. Choirs can request a rating. The grades for the 'A' certification are *bronze, silver, gold, and gold diploma*. Choirs that perform even better than the 'gold diploma' rating can receive a 'National Certificate of Commendation'. The most outstanding performance can be awarded the 'Choir of the Year' title. 'B' grade is awarded for folk song, choir, and church singing. The 'B' type rating grades are bronze, silver, and gold. Special Award. Certificate of Recognition the *National Song Contest* is a professional meeting of adult amateur choirs.

<sup>29</sup> *Erna Czövek* (1899 Orsova-1983 Bp.) was one of the most important figures in the modernization of Hungarian music education. She was a very progressive-minded teacher, and her fundamental goal was the idea of Kodály that music should be accessible to all, regardless of the social and economic status. She revitalised the chamber music education, supported new pedagogical efforts and the professional development of her colleagues. She prepared the nationalisation of the rural school network and was a member of the editorial board of the music education journal *Parlando* from 1959 to 1983. Many of her theoretical (e.g., *Teaching of music in a human-centred way 1979*) and practical works (*Piano Method I-II*) are still relevant in teaching.

<sup>30</sup> The most important private music school of the period was founded in 1903 by *Ernő Fodor* (1878-1944), a pianist. The most prominent teachers of the time were *Margit Varró, Albert Siklós, Dr Sándor Kovács, Leó Weiner, and Pál Kadosa*. The *Fodor School of Music* operated at primary, secondary, and higher levels. The school supported the contemporary Hungarian music and the *Hungarian Music Association* regularly organised concerts in the school.

new methods and works from a pedagogical point of view. Lectures and professional debates shaped the principles that laid the foundations for the new instrumental education. *'The first instrumental lesson book based on Hungarian folk songs was made by Erna Czövek. Her enthusiastic encouragement convinced many composers that Hungarian piano education needed piano pieces written in the spirit of Hungarian traditions for beginners, too.'*<sup>31</sup> An entire generation of graduates from the Kodaly School began composing pieces based on folk music and incorporating elements of the Kodaly method to contribute to the development of new instrumental lesson books.<sup>32</sup>

Most of the instrumental lesson books in use today were created after the Second World War, in the spirit of the principles that were then being developed. The three most commonly used solfège lesson books were published in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>33</sup> The importance of teaching solfège was questionable even in the training of professional musicians<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, *Kodály*, as a teacher at the Academy of Music, introduced serious reforms in the training of professional musicians as early as the late 1910s. He devoted a significant part of his music theory lessons to the subject of solfège, that is the development of hearing training and the reading and writing of music. Kodály incorporated folk songs into the solfège curriculum by practicing melody writing on folk songs.

<sup>31</sup> Csüllög Judit. *A népdal szerepe a kezdők zongoraoktatásában Magyarországon.* (Judit Csüllög, *The Role of Folk Songs in Teaching Piano to Beginners in Hungary.*) (EKF, Líceum Publisher, Eger, 2009.)

<sup>32</sup> Of the major composers, the following deserve special mention. Jenő Takács, Pál Kadosa, Pál Járdányi, Sándor Szokolay, and György Ránki.

<sup>33</sup> Szőnyi Erzsébet. *A zenei írás-olvasás gyakorló füzetek (1955-56).* Agócsy László – Irsai Vera. *Szolfézs példatár – alsófok I-II-III. kötet (1953-56).* Dobszay László. *A hangok világa (1964-72).* [Erzsébet Szőnyi. *Practise Books for Musical Reading and Writing (1955-56).* László Agócsy - Vera Irsai. *Solfège Exercise Book -Volumes I-II-III (1953-56).* László Dobszay. *The World of Tones (1964-72).*]

<sup>34</sup> There was an open debate between *Kodály* and *Antal Molnár* on this issue published in the columns of the *Hungarian Music magazine*. Although *Antal Molnár* agreed with several aspects of *Kodály's* principles (the importance of relative solmisation, choral singing and singing-based education, the elimination of musical illiteracy), he did not accept the need for solfège teaching at the Academy of Music. In his opinion, the entrance examination should be made more rigorous, so that students who are not sufficiently prepared in this field would not be admitted (Molnár Antal. *Megjegyzések a szolfézs- tárgy főiskolai oktatásáról.* (In. Magyar Zene) (Antal Molnár. *Notes on the Teaching of Solfège at the College Level* (In. Hungarian Music 1965/5. pp. 508-510.) *Kodály*, however, accused Molnár of constantly talking about 'elementary' solfège, although studies in this area can and must be continued at the highest level 'if we want to educate musicians who understand what they are playing' (*Kodály, Z. Kell-e szolfézs a Zeneművészeti Főiskolán?* (In. Magyar Zene). (*Kodály, Z. Should there be solfège at the Academy of Music?*) (In. Hungarian Music 1965/6. pp. 640- 641.)

*Kodály's* work fundamentally changed the direction and development of Hungarian music education. The long-lasting impact of his method lies in the fact that he found the right pedagogical tools for teaching music based on Hungarian folk music. Together, the new curriculum and the new teaching method created a music education and music culture that were accessible to the general public. The emergence of new methodological principles also brought with it the need to publish textbooks based on the new principles. The first publications based on the *Kodály method*, which could be used in music school solfège teaching, were László Agócsy-Vera Irsai *Volumes I-II-III of the Solfège Exercise Book-Elementary Level* and Erzsébet Szőnyi: *Practice Books for Musical Reading and Writing (1-8.)* (Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1955-56).

The first textbook of solfège education for the six grades of music school was: László Dobszay: *The World of Tones solfège book series* (EMB Budapest, 1966-72).

### **Solfège publications preceding the *World of Tones* solfège book series**

The first volume of László Dobszay: *The World of Tones* series of solfège books was published in 1966. At the time of its publication, two textbook series were in use in music school solfège teaching: Erzsébet Szőnyi: *Practice Books for Musical Reading and Writing (1955-56)* and László Agócsy-Vera Irsai: *Volumes I-II-III of the Solfège Example Book-Elementary Level*.<sup>35</sup>

In terms of presenting *The World of Tones* from a music pedagogical point of view it is important to outline the structure and content of these two other series, because they shed light on the necessity of the creation of the Dobszay series.

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<sup>35</sup> In 1952, the consultations on the reform of music education were completed, and the *Ministry of Education* decided to change the system of music education. Music education should be provided in music schools (elementary level), specialised schools (secondary level) and music colleges (higher education). In accordance with the principles of the reform, the music conservatories in Budapest and the five largest rural cities (Debrecen, Pécs, Szeged, Miskolc and Győr) were reorganised as the only educational institutions of their kind, and from that time onwards they served as vocational schools for further education of those who already had musical knowledge and a certain level of competence. The training of beginners has been provided by the state-run music schools established in the autumn of 1952 and still in place today. At this point in Hungarian music education, there was an institutional demand for the publication of standardised music textbooks suitable for different age groups.

### Erzsébet Szőnyi: Practice Books for Musical Reading and Writing<sup>36</sup>

The series was published in 1955-56 by the Zeneműkiadó in Budapest. In terms of structure, the author divided the curriculum into 100 lessons, which make up the material of eight books.<sup>37</sup> The structure of the curriculum was already based on the *Kodály method*. The melodic turns in the first booklet start from a "so-mi-la" base, taking advantage of the possibilities of relative solmization throughout. Rhythmically, the number of new rhythmic elements increase rapidly and start with the titi-ta (eight note- eight note-quarter note) relation.

When studying the books, it becomes clear that the series is primarily intended for teaching children who are preparing for careers in music. Taking all this into account, only part of the series can be used at the elementary level. Some of the exercises are very demanding.<sup>38</sup> The series also covers the practice of modal scales, whole-tone scales, polyrhythm, Renaissance clefs, and mastering the basics of harmony, too.

E. g. 1



**Szőnyi Erzsébet: A zenei írás-olvasás gyakorló füzetek. 5. füzet fedőlap**  
(Erzsébet Szőnyi: Practise Books for Musical Reading and Writing 5. volume's cover)

<sup>36</sup> Szőnyi Erzsébet. *A zenei írás-olvasás gyakorló füzetek*. (Erzsébet Szőnyi. *Practise Books for Musical Reading and Writing*). Editio Musica, Budapest, 1955-56.

<sup>37</sup> Book 1. Lessons 1-30, Book 2. Lessons 31-46, Book 3. Lessons 47-57, Book 4. Lessons 58-69, Book 5. Lessons 70- 77. Book 6. lessons 71-85, Book 7. lessons 86-93, Book 8. lessons 94-100.

<sup>38</sup> In Lesson 4 of the first booklet there are already examples of polyphonic singing, and in Lesson 8 the task is to sing four-part harmonies.

The melodic material of the first volume is based exclusively on folk music, but besides the Hungarian folk songs, there are also folk songs of other nations.<sup>39</sup>

Examples of Classical music can be found first in lesson 34 of Book 2, the introduction of Classical music examples is gradual, even in this volume the melodic material is predominantly of folk origin. The examples of Classical music in Book 5 already include excerpts from *Bartók's Cantata Profana* and *Kodály's Bluebeard's Castle*.

The use of *Erzsébet Szőnyi's: Practice Books for Musical Reading and Writing* have both positive and negative features in music school solfege teaching. Our study covers the application and usability of volumes in music schools.

*Negative features of the series:*

- Szőnyi does not publish the texts of the folk songs in the first two books.<sup>40</sup>
- The lower-level volumes are for children of exceptional ability only.
- The author does not indicate which pieces are intended for reading and which for writing.<sup>41</sup>
- Score picture explanations of theoretical knowledge (e.g., circle of fifths) are complicated.

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<sup>39</sup> In addition to the 76 Hungarian folk songs, the volume contains 20 Russian, 10 Mari, 7 Ukrainian, 5 French, 3-3 Slovak and Belarusian, 2-2 Yakut and Bulgarian, and 1 Czech, Chuvash, Polish, Indian, Kazakh, Lapp, Chinese, Swiss and Mongolian folk song.

<sup>40</sup> Booklets 1 and 2 contain only the opening lines. From booklet 3 onwards, the folk songs are recorded with lyrics.

<sup>41</sup> For an experienced teacher, this fact can be a virtue and does not completely bind the application of the material. For beginners, it would be preferable to separate the exercises.

E. g. 2

(d) G $\flat$  major 6 $\flat$       (f) D $\flat$  major 5 $\flat$       (ti) A $\flat$  major 4 $\flat$       (m) E $\flat$  major 3 $\flat$

4 (l) B $\flat$  major 2 $\flat$       (r) F major 1 $\flat$       (s) C major      (d) G major 1 $\sharp$

8 (f) D major 2 $\sharp$       (t) A major 3 $\sharp$       (l) E major 4 $\sharp$       (m) B major 5 $\sharp$

11 (r) F $\sharp$  major 6 $\sharp$

Diagram of a circle of fifths (Book 4 Lesson 62 Exercise 1)<sup>42</sup>

In teaching music theory, the author uses a very specific system of signs which is difficult to understand and is no longer in use.

E. g. 3

C:IV      6      8      4

Signal system for teaching music theory (Exercise 1 in lesson 40, book 2)<sup>43</sup>

*Positive features of the series:*

- The structure of the series is consistent, with each new element appearing in a logical sequence.
- Each lesson contains a wealth of melodic material, each dealing with a new rhythmic pattern, interval, chord, musical phenomenon.

<sup>42</sup> The author's own editing.

<sup>43</sup> The author's own editing.

- Thoughtful examples of how to practice relative solmization are given in the booklets.
- The booklets provide examples from the elementary to the highest levels of music education. Teachers at all levels of education will find exercises to suit the curriculum.

*Erzsébet Szőnyi's* series is well-edited, contains professionally excellent material, and provides valuable material for a broad spectrum of music education. However, it cannot be used as an exclusive teaching material in elementary level education because of the difficulty of the musical excerpts.

### **László Agócsy - Vera Irsai: Solfège Exercise Book - Elementary Level I-II-III**

The following three volumes of Solfège Exercise Book was published for elementary level education in the early 1950s.<sup>44</sup> *The editors dedicated this example collection to Kodály: 'Fifteen years ago, Bicinia Hungarica was launched with a dedication to the barefoot pupils of the Galanta elementary school. It was left to us to teach 'the new Hungarian youth this kind of things (and more). This book is dedicated, on behalf of all those who are now embarking on this journey towards musical literacy, to the one who showed us all the way: Zoltán Kodály.'*<sup>45</sup>

The volumes do not divide the curriculum into lessons. Volume I. contains 400 examples, Volume II. 340, and Volume III. contains 379 examples. Short explanations of some examples for teachers are given at the bottom of the page.

Volume I. (like in the Szőnyi's *Practice books*) begins with the practicing of the 'so-mi-la' melody patterns, rhythmically with eight note-eight note-quarter note and with quarter rest. The volume contains an extremely rich collection of melodies.<sup>46</sup> New elements are gradually introduced into the material with plenty of practice. A short appendix at the end of the first volume contains daily sight-reading exercises for daily practice.

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<sup>44</sup> Agócsy László – Irsai Vera. *Szolfézs példatár – alsófok I-II-III. kötet* (Solfège Example Book-Elementary Level I-II-III. volumes) edited by László Agócsy and Vera Irsai. Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1953-56.

<sup>45</sup> *Solfège Exercise Book Volume I. Preface* p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> The volume contains 390 melodies, of which 290 are Hungarian folk songs, Hungarian children's songs, and folk music inspired melodies.

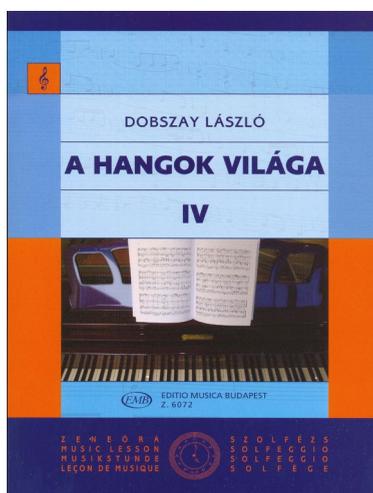
Volume II. is an organic continuation of Volume I. Among the 340 melodies included, many exercises deal with the development of clear intonation and harmonic hearing. It deals with the dominant function 'indirectly' and does not provide theoretical explanations alongside the exercises. Most of Volume III. contains folk songs, along with canons, two- and three-part exercises that helped the development of true intonation and harmonic hearing.

The strength of the *Agócsy - Irsai* series is that it provides a vast and valuable collection of melodies for teachers and students alike. The structure of the volumes is systematic, and the excellent table of contents helps to find one's way around, even if the teacher only wishes to use a single exercise. Due to the abundance of melodies, it is not necessary to use all the exercises of the volume in teaching, as this would unnecessarily slow down the progress.

As the title suggests, the series is not a textbook, but an excellent book of exercises intended for elementary level solfège teaching.

Both the *Szőnyi* books and the *Agócsy - Irsai* Solfège example book are well-edited, useful pedagogical tools for today's music education. However, neither series is entirely suitable for use as a textbook in music school solfège education. *Szőnyi's* books are fast paced, so the entire material cannot be mastered by an average child. The *Agócsy-Irsai* series was designed as a solfège exercise collection. It can be used with great advantage in music school solfège lessons, but without explanatory texts, illustrations, and exercises it is not suitable as a textbook either. The *World of Tones* textbook series written by *Dobszay* filled this gap upon its release and was the first modern solfège textbook in Hungary.

E. g. 4.



László Dobszay: *The World of Tones* solfège book series - IV. volume's cover

*László Dobszay* (1935-2011) was one of the most prominent figures of the post-war generation of Hungarian musicians. He began his studies at the Academy of Music at a young age, in 1947, at the *School for Extraordinary Talents*. His musical development was supported by such outstanding teachers as János Viski (composition), István Engel (piano), Zoltán Kodály (folk music), and Bence Szabolcsi (music history). While studying at the Academy of Music, he was also enrolled at the Faculty of Humanities of the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) double majoring in Hungarian Language/Literature and History. He received his degree in composition in 1957 and in humanities in 1959.

He has made his mark as a composer, music teacher, performer, musicologist, and church musician. He was a committed teacher, he taught continuously from the beginning of his career.<sup>47</sup> <sup>48</sup> <sup>41</sup> His pedagogical work played a significant role in the educational reforms of the 1950s. Between 1956 and 1968, his pedagogical work was particularly productive.<sup>49</sup> During this period, under the direction of *Erna Czövek*, he taught history and literature of music and chamber music at the successor of the former *Fodor Music School*, the *School of the Budapest Music School Association* in District VI.

During his time in elementary education, Dobszay faced the contemporary challenge while teaching solfège in music schools: the lack of new solfège textbooks aimed for children and based on the principles of *Bartók and Kodály*. His interest then shifted to elementary music theory education. During this time, he published numerous articles on the methodological aspects of solfège education and on the *Kodály method*.

The progressive spirit of the *Fodor* music school enabled teachers to actively participate in reforming music education. One of the outcomes of these discussions with solfège teachers was Dobszay's publication of the six-volume solfège textbook *The World of Tones* and its accompanying teacher's manual, the *Guides*, are both still in use today. During the later stages of his pedagogical career, *Dobszay* paid less attention to the issues

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<sup>47</sup> Between 1956-1968 he taught in VI. district school of the Budapest Music School Organisation. From 1970, as a teacher at the Academy of Music, he taught Gregorian music, Classical musical form, Latin language, and folk music to musicology students. In 1990, he re-established the Department of Ecclesiastical Music at the *Academy of Music*, which he headed until 2005. Since 1992 he has been a professor at the *Academy of Music* and a member of the Musicology Committee of the *Doctoral Council*.

<sup>48</sup> The principles of his teaching were summarised by *Márta Papp* in her article entitled *Dobszay László köszöntése (Welcoming László Dobszay)*. 'First and foremost, we learned music from László Dobszay, that is why György Kurtág, among others, also attended his classes. We could learn rigour, thoroughness, depth from him' (In. *Muzsika* July 1999, Vol. 42, No. 7, p. 18).

<sup>49</sup> He also composed at this time but did not wish to continue his career as a composer.

of solfège teaching, his attention turning first to folk music research and then to Gregorian music research.<sup>50</sup>

*The World of Tones* solfège book series is from the first significant period of his pedagogical career that coincides with the reform of music education in Hungary.

The textbooks, which have been used unchanged for over 60 years, and the accompanying methodological manuals are still fundamental elements for Hungarian elementary solfège education, and in the hands of skilled teachers they prove the validity of the *Kodály method* even today.

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<sup>50</sup> In 1966, at Kodály's invitation, he became a member of the *Folk Music Research Group* of the present *Institute of Musicology*. His comprehensive study is the *Magyar népdaltípusok katalógusa* (*Catalogue of Hungarian Folk Song Types*) (joint work with Janka Szendrei). In 1970, together with Benjamin Rajeczky and Janka Szendrei, he founded the *Schola Hungarica* ensemble. In 1975 he gained his academic title, candidate with a thesis on *A siratóstílus dallamköre zenetörténetünkben és népzeneinkben* (*The Melodic World of the Lament Style in our Music History and Folk*). In 1976 he became the head of the *Melodic History Group of the Institute of Musicology*, and in 1990 of its *Folk Music Department*. He was the founder and President of the *Hungarian Church Music Society*, organiser, and lecturer at the world-famous *Cantus Planus* Gregorian conferences. His most important theoretical works are. *A hangok világa I-VI.* (*The World of Tones I-IV*). 1964-1968; *Magyar zenetörténet* (*Hungarian Music History*.) Bp., 1984; *A magyar dal könyve* (*The Book of Hungarian Song*.) Bp., 1984; *A magyar népdaltípusok katalógusa* (*Catalogue of Hungarian Folk Song Types*) (with Janka Szendrei). Bp., 1988; *Corpus Antiphonarium Offici Ecclesiarum Centralis Europae* (with Gábor Prószéky). Salzburg, 1988; *Kodály után. Tűnődések a zenepedagógiáról.* (*After Kodály. Reflections on Music Pedagogy.*) Bp., 1991; *A gregorián zene kézikönyve.* (*Handbook of Gregorian Music.*) Bp., 1993. His awards. Ferenc Erkel Prize (1976), Musica Omnium Prize (1992), Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary (1995), Prize for Budapest (1998), Grand Prize of the Music Section of the National Association of Hungarian Composers (1998), Széchenyi Professorial Scholarship (1999), Academy Prize (shared) (2000), Gold Medal of the President of the Hungarian Republic (2000), Soros Lifetime Achievement Prize (2000), Széchenyi Prize (2004).

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