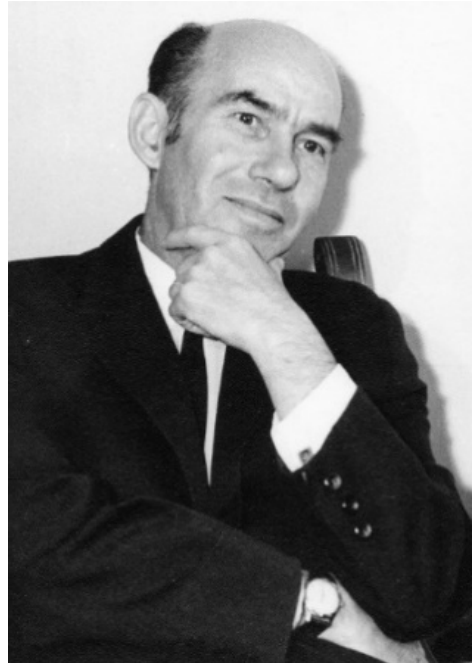


ON THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF ANDRÁS BENKŐ – CHURCH MUSIC RESEARCH –

ÉVA PÉTER¹ 

SUMMARY. This hereby study was written on the occasion of a conference commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of music historian András Benkő. Although the teaching and research of music history were central to his work, this paper focuses on only one aspect of it, namely his research and teaching in the field of Protestant church music, which is particularly noteworthy. His scientific work aimed at the exploration of sacred music manuscripts and the dissemination of the vocal material of early Protestant publications can be considered as a groundbreaking and addressing a gap of knowledge within the Transylvania area. His studies and reviews, published in scholarly volumes and journals, have provided a significant body of literature for pastors, cantors and religious education teachers working in Transylvania. His efforts to provide musical material for cantors in the field of vocal and instrumental ministry in churches and to raise the standard of cantorial training in the region remain exemplary to this day.



Keywords: manuscripts and printed church music resources, gradual, congregational hymnbooks, psalms, funeral hymns, polyphonic church singing

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Music historian and college teacher András Benkő was born on 21 January 1923² in Feiurdeni, Cluj County, Romania. He began his secondary school studies in Aiud, at the Bethlen Gábor College. This educational institution also provided instrumental training, so he acquired a solid musical education in addition to general culture. His organ studies were guided by teacher Géza Szabó.

Figure 1



The Bethlen Gábor Reformed College in Aiud³

He graduated from the Domokos Pál Péter Teachers' Training Institute in Cluj-Napoca (1944) and then began his higher music education. He first studied at the Hungarian College of Music and Drama (1946-1948), then at the Hungarian Institute of Arts, where he studied music theory and organ (1948-1950), and finally graduated as a music teacher from the "G. Dima" Conservatory of Music (1951). He received his doctorate in musicology from the "G. Dima" Conservatory of Music in 1977. His dissertation is on *Bartók și România*.

He started his teaching career as a teaching assistant at the Department of Music History of the Hungarian Institute of Arts (1949-1950), then he was assistant professor, adjunct professor and finally associate professor at the "G. Dima" Conservatory of Music until his retirement in 1985. After a break of a few years, from 1990 to 1998, he taught church music at

² Biographical data, the photo, and publications resulting from his academic work can be found on the website created by the music historian's children. I hereby would like to thank them for the use of this website. See <https://benkoandras-zenetortenesz.com/>

³ Source of photo. *Magyarság* daily newspaper, weekly supplement, 10 November 1929.

the Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj-Napoca and at the Faculty of Reformed Theology of the Babeş-Bolyai University, teaching church singing, methodology of teaching church singing, hymnology, history of church music. His teaching activities in the field of church music are probably related to his early studies in Aiud. As a student at the Reformed College of Aiud, he had the opportunity to gain insight into the Protestant musical heritage. In this renowned educational institution, emphasis was placed on music education. András Benkő, in his article *Ének és zene a Bethlen Kollégiumban (Song and Music at Bethlen College)*,⁴ gives a detailed account of music education at the college, dating back to the 17th century. He himself learned to play instruments within the framework of this institution, sang in the choir of the college and was introduced to the compositions of Kodály and Bartók at the age of 15.⁵ All of this had a great influence on his life, his career and his commitment to musicology.

His research activities are wide-ranging. In the words of Ferenc László: “As a kind of one-man institute of Transylvanian Hungarian music history, it has taken on everything that can be included in this job, from the research, publication and music-historical evaluation of documents to the promotion of the music historical past”.⁶ What posterity appreciates most is the richness of data in musicological writings, the accuracy and precision of the information published, and the diversity of topics approached. His published volumes present the press coverage of Béla Bartók’s concerts in Romania, the music theory of the Bolyai, the work of János Seprődi, and insights into Protestant church singing. By editing textbooks, he helped to publish the research results of his time. He compiled a bibliographical catalogue of János Seprődi, István Lakatos, Aladár Zoltán and Albert Márkos. He wrote about the formation, activities and repertoire of Transylvanian choirs. His university notes have enriched the musical history knowledge of several generations. He has compiled a musical encyclopaedia with some 6000 entries for a wide range of music lovers. His informative writings, concert reports and music reviews, which were published in the Hungarian and Romanian press, are a valuable addition to the collection.

⁴ András Benkő. *Ének és zene a Bethlen Kollégiumban* [Song and Music at Bethlen College]. In: Györfi Dénes, Hadházi Ferenc (eds.). *A Bethlen-kollégium emlékkönyve [The Bethlen College Memorial Book]*, Aiud — Cluj — Budapest, 1995, 178-187.

⁵ András Benkő recalls the Bartók-Kodály ceremony in an interview with Tibor László. See. *Academica Transsylvanica Zene és irodalom határterületén [On the Border between Music and Literature. Tibor László in conversation with Dr. András Benkő, musicologist]*. In: *Székelyföld-Kulturális folyóirat*, Volume IV, No. 4, 2000, 49-56.

⁶ Ferenc László. *Helikon*, 2001, 8.

His research in the field of hymnology is only a small part of his academic work, but it is an important part of his exploration of the Protestant church music of Transylvania. One cannot speak of continuous research in this field. In terms of depth, a distinction is made between writings for educational purposes, teaching material for higher education, and studies aimed at the exploration and presentation of early manuscript or printed Protestant music sources in Transylvania.

1. Manuscript collections of funeral hymn material

In the field of the exploration of Protestant musical sources, a study entitled *Kéziratos halotti énekek dallamai (Funeral Hymn Manuscripts)*, published in 1968 in the *Református Szemle (Reformed Review)*, is a significant contribution.⁷ Therein, nine manuscript collections of hymns that are recorded in the Hungarian-language bibliographical literature are examined. The names of their compilers and the date of their creation are provided in the list: József Baczó's Hymnal (c. 1800), Pál Barabás (1819), Lázár Imreh (1836), Ferenc Jósa (1766), József Lugasi (1800), Zsigmond Orbán (1766), Ádám Szatsvay (early 19th century), Lajos Szentgyörgyi (1858). The ninth collection is entitled: *Hymns for DISCANT, ALTUS, TENOR AND BASS 1834*.

The earliest of these is Zsigmond Orbán's four-part hymnal. The musical material, scored in 1766 with the collaboration of four students, comprises the musical repertoire sung by the four-voice (discant, alto, tenor, bass) student groups of the reformed college of Odorheiu Secuiesc for festive or funeral services: 37 hymns for festive services and 17 burial songs, so-called funeral songs.⁸

⁷ András Benkő. Kéziratos halotti énekek dallamai [Funeral Hymn Manuscripts]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXI, No. 1-2, 1968, 62-68.

⁸ Title of the volume. A nevezetesebb ditséreték és némely halotti énekeknek harmóniája, melyet harmoniae praesességében közönséges regulákon kidolgozott a lány nótáról való rövid explicációval edgyütt, ez ezen gymnasiumnak négy betsületes tagjaival az Udvarhelyi Ref. Gimnasium Thecajanak számára leiratott Orbán Sigmond ezek által Balo Samuel, Pap Samuel, Paal Josef, Sofalvi Samuel. Irattatott Udvarhelyen 1766 esztendőben. [The harmony of the most notable praise hymns and some funeral songs, which in harmoniae praeses was elaborated on ordinary rules with a short explanation of the soft nota, written by four members of this gymnasium for the Odorhei Reformed Gymnasium by Orbán Sigmond, Samuel Balo, Samuel Pap, Josef Paal, Samuel Sofalvi. Registered in Odorhei in the year 1766.]

Figure 2

The image displays two pages of handwritten musical notation for a four-part score of the hymn "Jézus születél" (Jesus is born). The notation is arranged in two columns. Each column contains two systems of staves. The first system in each column shows the tenor cantus firmus (top staff) and the voice parts (juxtaposed staves below). The second system shows the same tenor cantus firmus and voice parts, but with a different arrangement of the voice parts. The lyrics are written in Hungarian and Latin. The manuscript is dated 1766.

Four-part score of the hymn *Jézus születél* (*Jesus is born*) from Zsigmond Orbán's hymnal in manuscript⁹

In the four-part arrangements, the tenor cantus firmus is shown, and the voice parts are not written in score-like notation but are juxtaposed. The hymnal of Ferenc Józsa, written in the same year, 1766, has the same content, arrangement and harmonization as this collection. Benkő claims that Ferenc Józsa's volume is a copy of Zsigmond Orbán's work.¹⁰ He proves this assertion by highlighting the fact that Orbán himself harmonized the melodies at the beginning of the Orbán volume. At the same time, he draws attention to the description in Orbán's manuscript book of the rules of harmonization. Thus, in the end, he compares the 78 funeral hymns of different melodies in not nine, but practically eight manuscripts.

⁹ Source based on my own photo

¹⁰ In connection with Zsigmond Orbán's activities, it should be noted that he did not compile a 4-voice choral collection but instead worked to introduce the Western European polyphonic singing practice of the 18th century to Hungary. The issue is related to the work of Maróthi, the practice of singing in the Debrecen college and the development of harmonic singing in Sászcsovás.

Compared with the two 18th-century collections described above, the other manuscripts are of later 19th-century date. According to Benkő, their material mostly continues the earlier Protestant hymn tradition, but also shows newer, Western melodic patterns.¹¹ The importance of the research lies in the fact that it presents 78 funeral hymns of different melodies, while at the same time shedding light on the characteristics of the contemporary musical manuscript notation and the notational skills of the transcribers. In terms of rhythm, manuscript notation is characterized by single-note notation, rhythmic notation is rare; time signatures and barlines are not constant; the use of clefs is inconsistent; in major pitch intervals, in some cases, omitted notes are marked with dots; accidentals are omitted in a few cases.

Some of the tunes in the manuscript collections are related to folk songs and epic songs;¹² the influence of folk lamentations on church songs is also noticeable in the material; sequencing typical of instrumental classical music is also present. Benkő draws attention to all these points in his analysis of the melodies,¹³ making this study of cultural historical significance.

2. Introduction to the *Old Gradual*

András Benkő's research on the topic of hymnology includes an examination of the church music and music history of the *Old Gradual* (Cover, Figure 3), an important Protestant publication of the 17th century. Two of his studies, *Az Öreg Graduál zenei kincse (The Musical Treasure of the Old Gradual)*¹⁴ (1986) and *Az Öreg Graduál zenei műfajai (The Musical Genres of the Old Gradual)*¹⁵ (1989), published three years apart, can be found in the theological journal *Református Szemle*. By describing the musical genres and melodic material presented in these two studies, András Benkő sheds light on the sources of church hymnody dating back to the 4th century, while at the same time, with a pragmatic approach, he identifies melodies from the collection of hymns printed in Alba Iulia that merit restoration in the 20th century, i.e. making them suitable for congregational use.

¹¹ Benkő refers in his writing to the influence of Mozart's music. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXI, No. 1-2, 1968, 68.

¹² Such as the recitativo character and similarity of parts of the melody

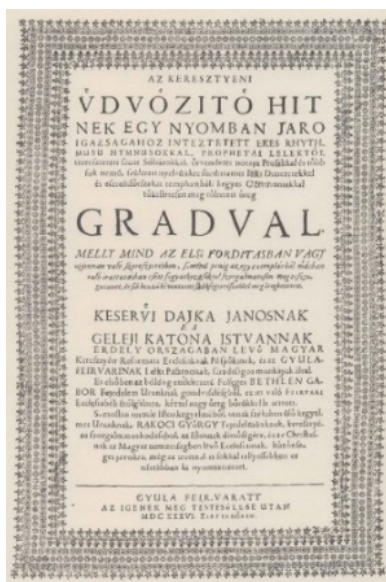
¹³ See. András Benkő. Kéziratok halotti énekek dallamai [Funeral Hymn Manuscripts]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXI, No. 1-2, 1968, 68.

¹⁴ *Az Öreg Graduál zenei kincse* [The Musical Treasure of the Old Gradual]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXIX, No. 5-6, 1986, 447-466.

¹⁵ *Az Öreg Graduál zenei műfajai* [The Musical Genres of the Old Gradual]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXXII, No. 2, 1989, 159-166.

In his writings, he provides historical music data on the circumstances of the origins of the gradual, describes its tripartite structure, indicates the number of melodies, the characteristic elements of the musical notation,¹⁶ and outlines the contemporary reception of monophonic and polyphonic singing and the use of instruments in churches. As he himself indicates, the aim of the research is “both to summarize and to supplement”,¹⁷ since the literature published in Hungary has previously examined the material of the *Old Gradual* in depth,¹⁸ but it provides important information for theologians and pastors in Transylvania, especially those who read theological literature rather than musical literature.

Figure 3



*The Old Gradual, Alba Iulia, 1936 - Cover*¹⁹

Benkő analyses in detail one of the most prominent melodies of the *Old Gradual*, the *adjutoria* melody beginning with “*Könyörülj rajtunk, Úr Isten!*”

¹⁶ Four-line staff system; use of tenor or alto clef; tone duration. semibrevis, minima, end-of-stanza longa; end-of-stanza articulations.

¹⁷ Az Őreg Gradual zenei kincse [The Musical Treasure of the Old Gradual]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXIX, No. 5-6, 1986, 450.

¹⁸ Benkő refers to the research of Péter Bod, Bartalus, Sámuel Ivánka, Károly Szabó, József Koncz, Attila T. Szabó.

¹⁹ Source. <https://dka.oszk.hu/html/kepoldal/index.phtml?id=31111>

Have mercy on us, Lord”, tracing its melodic development and notation over more than four centuries²⁰ and drawing conclusions about the changes that have taken place within Protestant musical materials.

Figure 4

***Könyörülj rajtunk, Úr Isten (Have mercy on us, Lord) -
melody variations²¹***

The *Old Gradual*, as a 17th century musical choral document, in Benkő's opinion, "represented and continues to represent the common heritage of the Christian churches."²² He therefore recommends melodies from it that can be restored and incorporated into 20th century congregational singing practice. In an attempt to provide an even more thorough description of the musical

²⁰ From the publication of the Batthyány gradual (1556-1563) to the 1969 edition of the hymnal edited in 1923.

²¹ Source. Kálmán Csomasz Tóth. *A XVI. század magyar dallamai [Hungarian Melodies of the 16th Century]*. Volume I. (2nd revised edition. Ed. Ilona Ferenczi), Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2017, 421, D 1774 No 92., D 1778 No 357, 477. 1.

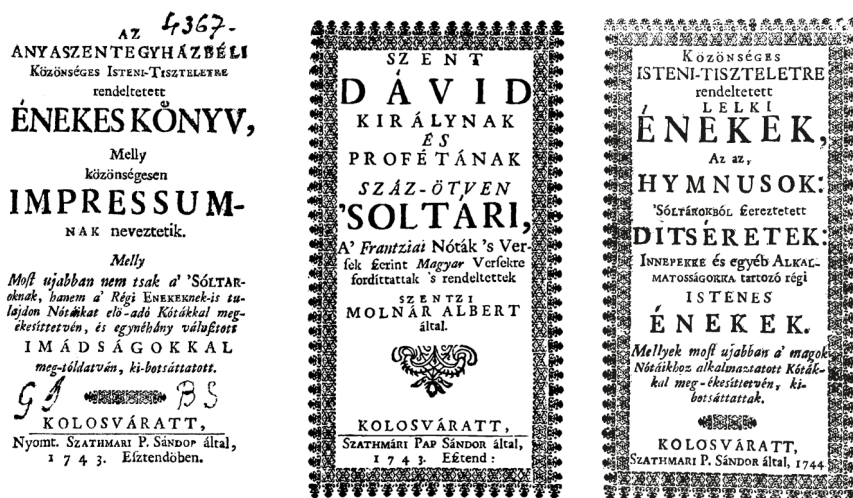
²² Az Öreg Graduál zenei kincse [The Musical Treasure of the Old Gradual]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXIX, No. 5-6, 1986, 447-466.

material, in a study entitled *Őreg Graduál zenei műfajai (The Musical Genres of the Old Gradual)*, he describes 18 different genres, accompanied by musical examples.

3. Presenting congregational hymnbooks

The *Korabeli vita az 1744-es kolozsvári énekeskönyvről (Contemporary Debate on the 1744 Cluj Hymnal)*²³ is a unique publication. It tells the story of the genesis of the most outstanding piece of Transylvanian Reformed congregational hymnbooks. The hymnal itself is so important because it is the first of the Transylvanian Reformed congregational hymnals printed with music. It preserved and published with notation the valuable hymns of the Reformation period (16th century). In addition to the complete psalm cycle (also found in earlier hymnals printed in Debrecen), it contains the melodies of about 40 hymns and nearly 130 hymns of praise. Subsequent editions of the hymnal (1778, 1837, 1923) have already either omitted or overlooked the musical material of the Reformation period.

Figure 5



Title pages of the hymnal and two of its chapters - photos by the author

²³ András Benkő. *Korabeli vita az 1744-es kolozsvári énekeskönyvről [Contemporary Debate on the 1744 Cluj Hymnal]*. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 3, 219-238.

The discussion paper raises some ambiguities about the circumstances of the creation of the hymnal: who selected the hymn material, who set the melodies or the melody versions to music. The first point of contention is the identity of the editor of the hymnal, the compiler of the material.

The discussion paper is also of church – historical significance, as it describes the synodal decisions of the Transylvanian Reformed Church District in the 18th century concerning congregational singing; the principles and expectations of singing instruction and singing; the driving forces behind the functioning of the decision-making apparatus are outlined and the teaching material and methods of the Reformed Colleges are revealed. The often-blunt formulations of the disputants reflect real facts about the thinking of the time.

It sheds light on the issues of music education in the period: a special subsection deals with the way hymns were sung, the rules of singing in congregations, and the topic of music theory.

The main conclusion of the study is that, contrary to previous assumptions that Gyula István Szigeti (1678-1740) could have been one of his students who edited the 1744 hymnal, the so-called *Impressum*, it is now clear that the editor-author himself, Gyula István Szigeti, was a former professor at the Aiud College who worked on the improvement of the hymnal texts, the selection and description of the melodies, i.e. the notation, for years. Although Pál Csider Szabó,²⁴ who initiated the debate and who himself was involved in the notation of melodies, questioned the authorship of Gyula István Szigeti, the truth is clear by the end of the study, following the evidence of József Zilahi Sebess²⁵, a short excerpt of which I am providing: ‘...at my many requests, I received scripts from the sons of István Gyula Szigeti, and these were reviewed in the *New Impressum* by a musician familiar with the topic! /.../ From all this it is clear that this work is the work of István Gy. Szigeti; why should I go on arguing, since I consider trying to do so as if someone wanted to make the sunlight brighter.’²⁶

Why is this hymnal still of such great importance today? The hymnologist Kálmán Csomasz Tóth, evaluating the publication and its two most recent editions, points out that “...as publications with musical notes, they were ahead of similar ones from Debrecen and show the changes in the form of certain

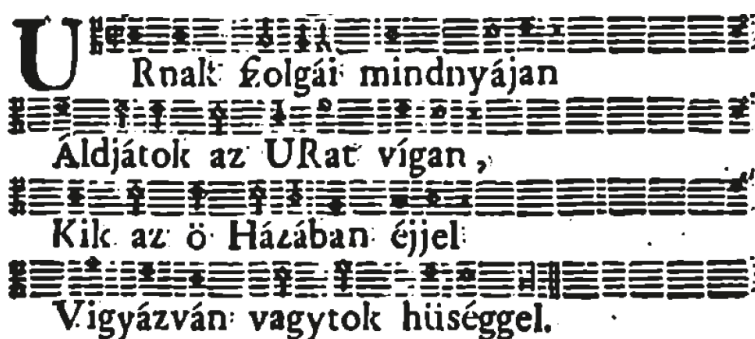
²⁴ He was a cantor in Losonc, several of his songs were published in small-format publications, and he also scored church hymns at the same time as Gyula István Szigeti.

²⁵ József Sebess Zilahi taught singing and instrument at the Aiud College and later served as a pastor.

²⁶ András Benkő. Korabeli vita az 1744-es kolozsvári énekeskönyvről [Contemporary Debate on the 1744 Cluj Hymnal]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 3, 230.

melodies in an interesting way...”²⁷ In his study, Pastor Károly Pálffy refers to the hymnal as “the most precious source of our singing”. In terms of the graphics of the musical score, the alto clef, which has a particular shape and is used only in Transylvanian hymnbooks, is noteworthy. An interesting feature of the publication is the inclusion of a short compendium of music theory in Latin, explaining how to read the musical signs in the score, and listing and describing the musical values used in the notation of the songs (*longa*, *brevis*, *semibrevis*, *minima*, *semiminima*); explains the use of the end-of-stanza *custos* and repetition signs; associates the alphabetic and solfeggio names of notes with their position on the staff; gives instructions on the use of accidentals and provides information on rhythm and meter. The publication thus also provides the hymnbook user with knowledge of musical sight-reading. Therefore, it is also a significant piece of publication in this respect as well.

Figure 6



Score of the 134th Psalm, from the hymnal published in 1744, in Cluj-Napoca
- photo taken by the author

Among the studies examining the sources of congregational hymnal material, we should mention the 1995 publication of the *Gyülekezeti énekeskönyveink vázlatos története (A Schematic History of our Congregational Hymn Books)*,²⁸ in which Benkő presents the hymn books published in chronological order from the first decades of the Reformation to the present day, from the hymn book of István Gálszécsi published in Krakow in 1536 to

²⁷ Kálmán Csomasz Tóth. *A református gyülekezeti éneklés [Reformed Congregational Singing]*, Református Egyetemes Konvent, Budapest, 1950, 162.

²⁸ András Benkő. *Gyülekezeti énekeskönyveink vázlatos története [A Schematic History of Our Congregational Hymn Books]*. In: (ed.) Molnár János. *Erdélyi Református Naptár 1997 évre*, Cluj, 97-102.

the Hungarian Reformed Hymn Book published in 1996. It is important for pastors, cantors and religious education teachers to know this information, since the hymnbooks in use today refer to these sources and take many melodies from them.²⁹

4. Collecting and organizing Reformed hymnal melodies

In the 1980s, Benkő and his colleagues planned to publish a new hymnal for the congregations of the Transylvanian Diocese and the Diocese of Királyhágómellék. Benkő's aim was to enrich the musical material of the Cluj Reformed hymnal, which had been edited and published in the second decade of the 20th century (1923). He knew of valuable melodies from previous centuries which were omitted from the hymnal only because cantors with little musical training were unable to learn them or because the pastors did not consider their use absolutely necessary from the point of view of content. The work was abandoned, however, because the compilation of the material for the *Universal Hungarian Reformed Hymnal* had begun. As a member of the Hymnology Committee of the Hungarian Reformed Church, he participated in this work as a music expert of the Transylvanian Reformed Church District. The hymnal was published in 1996. According to the recommendation at the beginning of the book, it was issued for the use of Hungarian Reformed congregations around the world.

Connected with the latter activity was the educational work that András Benkő carried out in 1990-1991 in the pages of *Üzenet*.³⁰ His short writings focused on the promotion of the original melodies of the psalms or on the popularization of carefully selected melodies.

²⁹ István Gálszécsi 1536 Krakow, Gál Huszár 1560, 1574, Péter Méliusz Juhász 1562 in Debrecen, Váradí hymnal 1566, Gergely Szegedi hymnal 1562, Debrecen hymnal 1579, Péter Bornemissza hymnal 1582, György Gönczi Kovács hymnal 1592, Bártfai hymnal 1593, Imre Anderco's book of funeral hymns 1598 from Slivník, Psalterium Ungaricum 1607, The Old Graduál 1636, Miklós Tótfalusi Kis 1686, 1740 Psalter of Albert Molnár Szenczi from Maróth, 1740, Impressum - scored humnbook from Cluj 1744, Nagyenyedi Halotta [Death Hymonal from Aiud] 1769, Book of funeral hymns by István Losontzi 1778, Funeral Hymnal of Debrecen 1791, Debrecen Hymnal 1774, Old Debrecen Hymnal 1778, Cluj 1778, Hymnal (Debrecen line) 1806, Cluj 1837, Seprőd Hymnal 1908, Rehearsal Hymnal 1916, Debrecen Reformed Hymnal 1921, Cluj 1923, Budapest 1948.

³⁰ Bi-weekly church magazine

5. Church music writings on a variety of themes

The study of the folk tradition of Christmas carol singing and chanting in churches complements András Benkő's work on the analysis of church carols. His study on this topic, entitled *Karácsonyi ének – kántálás (Christmas carols - caroling)*, was published in 1991-1992.³¹ He concludes that the musical material of traditional folk caroling is related to the music sung in church. The repertoire goes back several centuries,³² and includes old Latin melodies from the music of the Roman Catholic denomination; hymns from gradual-type books with Hungarian translations; selections from printed Protestant hymnals (Lutheran, Reformed); German chorales, as well as melodies from Bach's chorale collection. The exact source, age, and versions of the melodies found in church and folk music collections are indicated. In examining the folk music tradition, his conclusions incorporate the experiences of collectors. With a good knowledge of the classical Christmas carol repertoire, he lists nearly 100 Christmas carols in an appendix. These can be incorporated into the repertoire of congregational choirs.

In 1994, his attention turned to another area: he examined the melodic material of the congregational hymnal published in 1923 in Cluj-Napoca and used until 1995, from the point of view of the presence of Hungarian elements. He drew his conclusions on eight points, the most striking of which was the finding that the hymnbook for Hungarian Reformed congregations was dominated by mostly foreign material, music of non-Hungarian origin. Although the hymns in the collections are published with Hungarian texts, in terms of their origin, the church repertoire includes, for example, the Geneva Psalms and new hymn texts written to their melodies, the melodies and texts of English, American, Scottish, Irish and Czech composers as foreign musical material. When looking for musical elements typical of Hungarian folk songs, no old-style Hungarian melodies were found in the material examined. A descending melodic line can be detected in some songs, reminiscent of old-style folk songs. In only a few cases, a recurring structure typical of folk songs also emerged as a main feature of new style folk songs. In terms of tonality, some of the music is in the framework of sacred folk tunes, but the melodies of the newer periods use exclusively major-minor keys.

In 1958, the book *Mit jelent nekünk Seprődi János munkássága?* (What do the works of János Seprődi mean to us?) was published.³³ It must

³¹ András Benkő. *Karácsonyi ének – kántálás* [Christmas carols – caroling] In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXXV, No. 1, 1992, 57-69.

³² With data going back to the musical material of the Old Gradual published in 1636.

³³ *Művelődés* Vol. XI, No. 3, 54.

be acknowledged that Seprődi's literary activities, his early folk music collections, his music criticism, and his articles on music education do not concern the field of church music. However, his work on the compilation of the musical material for the Reformed rehearsal hymnal he edited in the early years of the 20th century does.³⁴ Thus, this study by Benkő is also related to the field of hymnological research.

The work of Gábor Veress (1869-1937),³⁵ who also worked on reforming the material of the Reformed hymnal at the beginning of the 20th century, can be similarly evaluated. As a composer, he worked on the preparation of the *Reformed Choral Book* and the harmonization of funeral hymns, while as a teacher at the Aiud College he sought to raise the standard of church singing and organ playing.

6. Teaching material

The educational material for the training of Reformed cantors and religious education teachers, *Az egyházi ének története (The History of Church Singing)*,³⁶ a volume on hymnology, was published in 1994. In it, Benkő presented Christian church music from an ecumenical perspective. The chapters cover the following topics: singing and music in the Bible, Christian music culture and its development until the Reformation, the Reformers' teaching on music, our hymns in the 16th century, Albert Szenczi Molnár, our hymnbooks in the 17th and 18th centuries, our hymnbooks in the 19th and 20th centuries. An expanded version of this volume was published in 2000, with the title: *Mondjatok dicséretet (Say a Praise)*.³⁷ Drawing on years of experience, Benkő supplemented the previously known material with an introduction to the Hungarian Reformed Hymnal published in 1996, analyzing its musical material, while at the same time a new chapter entitled *A Schematic History of European Church Music* was added. I would like to highlight the subsections on Hungarian church music of the 20th century and on Hungarian church music in Romania, which contain important information previously missing.

³⁴ András Benkő in his study (ed.) *Seprődi János válogatott zenei írásai és népzenei gyűjtése [Selected musical writings and folk music collections of János Seprődi]*, (1974 - KK, Bucharest, 496), in the subsection *Az egyházi muzsikás [The Church Musician]* outlines the work of Seprődi as a hymnbook editor.

³⁵ András Benkő. Veress Gábor (1869-1969). In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXII, No. 3-4, 1969, 286-292.

³⁶ Published by the Board of Directors of the Transylvanian Reformed Church Diocese, Cluj-Napoca, 1994.

³⁷ Published by the Transylvanian Reformed Diocese, Cluj-Napoca, 2000.

The works of composers such as Samu Borsay (1860-1944), Gábor Veress (1869-1937), Bertalan Tárcza (1882-1950), Géza Delly Szabó (1883-1961), Endre Csíki (1888-1949), József Birtalan (1927-2017), Mátyás Kozma (1929-1994), Ede Terényi (1935-2020), Csaba Szabó (1936-2003) are listed (without any claim to exhaustiveness). By making their works known, the repertoire of congregational choirs gets richer. The *Appendix* at the end of the volume contains a dictionary of music history and a selection of 20 choral works that can be used as a basic repertoire for church choirs.

In conclusion, András Benkő's research and teaching in the field of Protestant church music is remarkable. His work in the discovery of manuscripts and the dissemination of the vocal material of early Protestant publications is addressed a research gap in the Transylvanian region. His studies and reviews in scholarly journals and scientific publications have provided a significant source of literature for pastors, cantors and religious education teachers in Transylvania. His efforts to provide cantors with musical material and to raise the standard of cantorial education are exemplary.

Translated from Hungarian by Juliánna Köpeczi

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