

## BOOK REVIEW

*Antiphonale Varadinense*, s. XV, vol. 1: *Proprium de tempore*;  
vol. 2: *Proprium de sanctis et commune sanctorum*; vol. 3. *Tanulmányok / Essays*,  
ed. by Zsuzsa CZAGÁNY (= *Musicalia Danubiana*, vol. 26)  
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At the Diocesan Treasury and Library of Győr the largest still extant book produced for medieval Hungary is kept, the so-called “Várad antiphoner.” The codex unites two originally separated parchment choir books – a Temporale- and a Sanctorale-volume – which were bound together in 1872. The resulting corpus weighs today 70 kg, is 80 cm high and 57 cm wide. The written space on the complete folios is considerably larger than a modern A3-page (610×350 mm). The Várad antiphoner is well known in art history for its splendid illuminations (crafted in the contemporary Czech/Moravian style) and because of its flawless craftsmanship which is visible in its large-scale text- and music-writing. The music notation uses the calligraphic Czech rhombic style on four red lines (one stave measuring 45 mm in height), a style of notation usually not used in medieval Hungary.

During the 1980s the Hungarian musicologist, Janka Szendrei, was the first who argued for the now commonly accepted hypothesis that the Várad antiphoner was produced in a Czech/Moravian workshop on commission from the Moravian-born János Filipecz (1431–1509), Bishop of the cathedral of Várad 1476–1490. Várad, today’s Oradea in Romania (ca. 250 km southeast of Budapest, ca. 70 km south of Debrecen), was the seat of the diocese of Transylvania/Waradinum, the third of the Hungarian church provinces besides that of Kalocsa and the metropolitan see Esztergom. Várad cathedral was a famous pilgrimage site due to the fact that in 1096 the sainted king Ladislas had been buried here.

János Filipecz is well known not only as counsellor of King Matthias Corvinus, acting for him as administrator and diplomat, but also as a bibliophile who ordered not only the antiphoner but a whole set of splendid liturgical books for his cathedral. As such, Filipecz was just one of a long series of prelates on the bishop’s throne of Várad who were instrumental in the cultural flowering of the city under the influence of Italian Renaissance. Under Bishop János Vitéz

(reg. 1445–1465) this heyday had found its humanist climax. In 1557, however, this splendid time ended when Várad was conquered by the Calvinists and the cathedral's canons had to flee. In 1565–1566 the cathedral was raided and the Catholic faith outlawed. What happened during the following years with the cathedral's large choirbooks is virtually unknown. Certain is, however, that in the decades after 1603 the Várad antiphoner was cut into pieces, its solid parchment leaves serving as binding material for younger books. The antiphoner, thus, has reached us as a monumental torso. In the Temporale-part, the first three weeks of Advent as well as the Lenten, Easter- and summer-season are missing. The Sanctorale transmits only the summer part (from St James, 25 July, until St Jerome, 30 September). Nearly all still extant saints' offices of the Győr-torso are incomplete.

In 2019 a facsimile-edition of the Várad antiphoner was published by the musicologist Zsuzsa Czagány (Hungarian Academy of Sciences) as vol. 26 in the series *Musicalia Danubiana*. (The series is supported by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the National Research Development and Innovation Office.) Even if Czagány's modern edition measures only approximately half the size of the original, it is still definitely a quite representative publication both in its overall appearance as also in its content. The edition comprises no less than three folio-volumes weighing all in all more than 3,5 kg, the first two of them consisting mainly of splendid high-quality color-reproductions. The extensive amount of space granted to its scientific apparatus especially in the third volume is impressive.

The first two volumes give the facsimile of the antiphoner's Proprium de Tempore (vol. 1) and Sanctorale (vol. 2). Both are preceded by indices of the chant material (vol. 1 has also a preface, first in Hungarian, afterwards its English translation). The heart of the edition is the third volume, the result of extensive musicological research during the last decade. It shows again first a Hungarian text (pp. 7–148) followed by its English translation (pp. 149–294). An extensive bibliography (pp. 295–307) is given as well as an alphabetical index of the chants contained in the facsimile-volumes (pp. 308–339).

The first chapter of vol. 3 gives a detailed description of the Várad antiphoner (notation, illumination, dating, provenance), followed by an overview about the history of research concerned with the book. Especially intriguing is chapter 2 about the cathedral of Várad and Filipecz' books, as well as the destiny of these books after the battle of Mohács (1526) and the fall of the city in 1557. Here the reader is confronted with surviving testaments and inventories which mention the large and splendid choirbooks of Várad cathedral in the chaotic historical circumstances which in many cases lead to their extinction. Chapter 3 gives an account about perhaps the most important achievement documented in Czagány's edition: it represents not only a facsimile and discussion of the corpus kept at Győr, but is also, and first and foremost, a reconstruction of many parts of the two original Várad antiphoner-volumes. This reconstruction locates and identifies no fewer than 58 hitherto mostly unknown fragments which were re-discovered during the last two decades by Czagány and her colleagues in 19 different collections of 12 cities in today's Hungary, Slovakia and Romania (among others in Bratislava, Budapest, Debrecen, Győr, and Košice).

The reader can reach a rough idea about the scale of these findings in a comparison between the present facsimile edition and a list of saints' offices which was published in 2010 as part of Andrea Kovács' inventory of the liturgical chant-tradition of Transylvania (CAO-ECE VII/B, on pp. 47–48). In addition to the corpus at Győr, the list shows the contents of four other sources from the Transylvanian tradition – among them the so-called 12th-century Codex Albensis



and a Várad breviary dated 1460, today housed at the Vatican library, lat. 8247. In Kovács's table of 2010 roughly 60 saints' offices were listed as missing from the antiphoner. The indices of the present edition reveal that at least traces of no less than a third of these lost offices have been found again in form of the mentioned fragments. In the Temporale nearly the complete Advent-season could be reconstructed as well as parts of the Lenten and Easter seasons, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, and Corpus Christi. The rediscovered fragments are now incorporated into the facsimile edition at their assumed original places.

In the concluding Chapter 4, the now available chant repertory of the Várad antiphoner receives a detailed and erudite description. The material is contextualized and compared with the regional and supraregional rites of medieval Europe, revealing a number of specialities in the repertory of the Várad antiphoner as well as some of its melodic peculiarities. Perhaps not so surprising, due to its commissioner and production history, is the comparably large amount of Bohemian influence among the saints' offices revealed in this chapter.

Despite its fragmentary state, the Várad antiphoner is a splendid witness of the importance of written books as elements of liturgical representation during the Middle Ages. As such it must be seen as a towering monument of European cultural heritage. There is no doubt, thus, about the legitimacy of making the book available to a wider audience. The present edition is indeed able to reflect the historical and cultural status of Bishop Filipecz's original antiphoner. This happens not only in its lavish layout and design, but also in the quality and thoroughness of the scientific work dedicated to it. The result must be seen as a major achievement of Central European musicological research during the last decades, and it is to be hoped – and even expected – that future research will add additional fragments to the present encouraging reconstruction.

This edition has several practical issues, mainly the exclusion of scholarly support that would interest specialists as well as non-specialists. Firstly: it seems odd that the indices do not refer to the globally known standard works which usually help to contextualize the liturgical content of a liturgical book (CAO, CANTUS, CAO-ECE, also Dobszay's and Szendrei's Antiphon-volumes in the series *Monumenta Monodica Medii Aevi*, vol. 5 etc.). The detailed description in chapter 4 of volume 3 indeed addresses questions of regional and supraregional transmission – but of course through the lens of the author. References to the mentioned standard-works would have enabled a first sight orientation for the scholarly reader. Secondly: the facsimiles do not give continuous page numbers. Folio-information is at the moment only available for the Győr-corpus. For the reconstructed material fictitious page or folio-numbers should have been given, in square brackets for example; without them, future reference to the facsimile will be rather uncomfortable. Thirdly: neither the indices nor the facsimile give readily accessible information about what is *not* represented, what is lost. An example: on the first page of the Sanctortale-facsimile we see part of a spine of a book made of parchment with music notation. Only some syllables are left. The image covers 8×7 cm on a page of 28×18 cm, which means that it is surrounded by nearly provocative much blank space. But what we actually see is not explained here. The reader must browse to the discussion of the fragment in vol. 3 pp. 256–257, or to the index of volume 2. Only at these places do we learn that the tiny piece of parchment transmits the end of the responsory *Patriacharum semine* followed by the verse *Nobilis haec clara stirps* for the feast Mariae Conceptio. I wonder in this and other comparable cases whether the original chant should not have been at least indicated in excerpts on the page where it is represented, in the style of archaeological reconstructions which usually simulate the assumed form of houses or objects. The same “pedagogical” approach might have been fruitful also in the present case. It



can always be debated how far reconstructions should go. But especially the non-specialist reader might have been grateful for additional support in the presentation of the fragments which otherwise remain arcane in their appearance. These issues may be amended in the online-presentation of the Várad antiphoner, which is, so far I could learn recently, under construction.

