

# The musical heritage of Sárospatak in the 17th–18th centuries

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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### ABSTRACT

Originally a small market town in Northern Hungary, Sárospatak (Patak) deserves attention for more than just the role it played in a series of historical events that were to define the future of this country throughout the 17th–18th centuries. The cultural, educational and musical legacy of the period is also outstanding, and the functioning of the Patak College (Pataki Kollégium), which soon gained considerable prestige, played a key part in this. The aim of this paper is to present the musical aspects of this most valuable set of interconnected cultural assets.

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### KEYWORDS

manuscript song collection, music education, choir, *kuruc* songs, Rákóczi tunes

This was a period in Hungary when new types of school (boarding schools and grammar schools) represented a kind of musical culture that defined the musical erudition and culture of the period and promoted their dissemination. It is this period that the first records of musical education at Patak date back to. Prince György Rákóczi I, patron of the school, issued new laws in 1621 to regulate organisational, curricular and disciplinary matters. His Article 2 on the teaching of liturgical song stipulates the duties of the cantor, emphasising, among other things, that no song may be sung in the church that was not previously taught at the school (Barsi and Szabó, 1984, 17). This shows that the teaching of songs was the charge of the parish cantor, assisted in his ever-increasing range of duties by skilful and musically well-trained students.

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During the rectorship of János Tolnai Dali, a man of European erudition and innovative spirit, the practice of singing psalms in Hungarian was introduced, along with a range of other reforms.

After the Prince's death (1648) his widow, Zsuzsanna Lórántffy took charge of managing school matters. Traces of lay singing also begin to appear in records from this period (referred to by the synod of Sárospatak as "useless songs") – lower grade pupils would go from house to house in the villages and perform festive songs in return for alms (Barsi and Szabó, 1984, 23).

It was also on Zsuzsanna Lorántffy's invitation that one of the most famous educational reformists of the age, Johan Amos Comenius arrived at Patak in 1650. He had already formulated the most crucial elements of his educational reform, but was still wanting an opportunity for their practical application. The Princess duly commissioned him to introduce his novel educational practices and thus bring renewal to the Patak school. Comenius had repeatedly emphasised in his writings the role of education through the arts, as well as the importance of a step-by-step approach, of sensory experience in learning and of proactivity and self-initiated activity. Of the textbooks he created during his four years at Patak, *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* and *Schola Ludus* are certainly the most widely known and most influential.

By writing *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (The Visible World in Pictures, 1653), Comenius in fact created the first picture textbook, this way emphasising a key point in his pedagogical principles – the importance of sensory experience. Efforts to print and publish the first edition were commenced in the printing house created at Comenius' behest, but were interrupted upon his hasty departure (1654). The volume was eventually published four years later by a Nuremberg printing house (Takács, 1978, 31). In connection to our subject matter it must be noted that according to Comenius' original plan the 150 lessons of the book, complete with text and illustrations (a full-scale presentation of the world around us), were to include musical instruments. Although various editions of the book show a fairly varied range in terms of the language of the explanatory texts, the number of lessons and the presence or absence of illustrations (Fehér, 1994, 93–95), in the Brassó edition of 1675 (Fig. 1) the chapter called *Musical instruments* includes analytic illustrations and descriptions of several contemporary instruments.

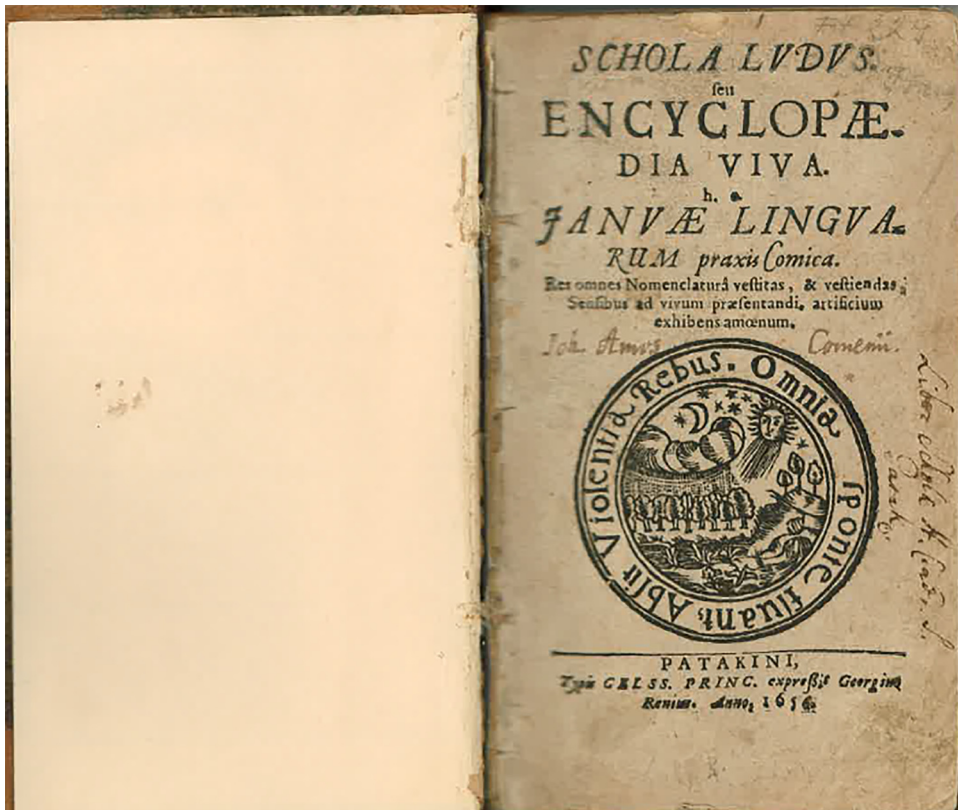


Fig. 1. *Orbis Pictus*, extract from the Brassó edition of 1675 (based on the facsimile edition of 1970), 209



*Schola Ludus* (The School as a Playing Space; 1654) was published at Patak in 1656 (Fig. 2) and offers a faithful image of the school at the time.

The stage play here presented shows clearly that Comenius' pupils at Patak were well-versed in the basics of music theory and practice. By the second half of the 17th century, it had become quite accepted for school plays to feature choirs and musical instruments (Szabolcsi, 1979, 46). Designed for a seven-grade school, Comenius' curriculum contains "Schola ludus in comedy form" as part of the 3rd grade material (Barsi and Szabó, 1984, 27). Since the performance of *Schola Ludus* was framed by "introductory and concluding" pieces of music, we may take it as certain that by this time Comenius' school was offering instrumental training, as well. The school play allows us to glimpse the practice of skills training in singing and score reading. The page inserted here as illustration reflects a student listing the names of the note values (*brevis, semibrevis, minima, semiminima, semifusa*), which are the commonly used names in mensural notation (marking precisely the duration of each note) that had emerged and become consolidated by the first half of the 15th century (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 2.** Front cover of *Schola Ludus*, Patak, 1656. By courtesy of the Academic Collections of the Protestant College of Sárospatak. (FF 229)



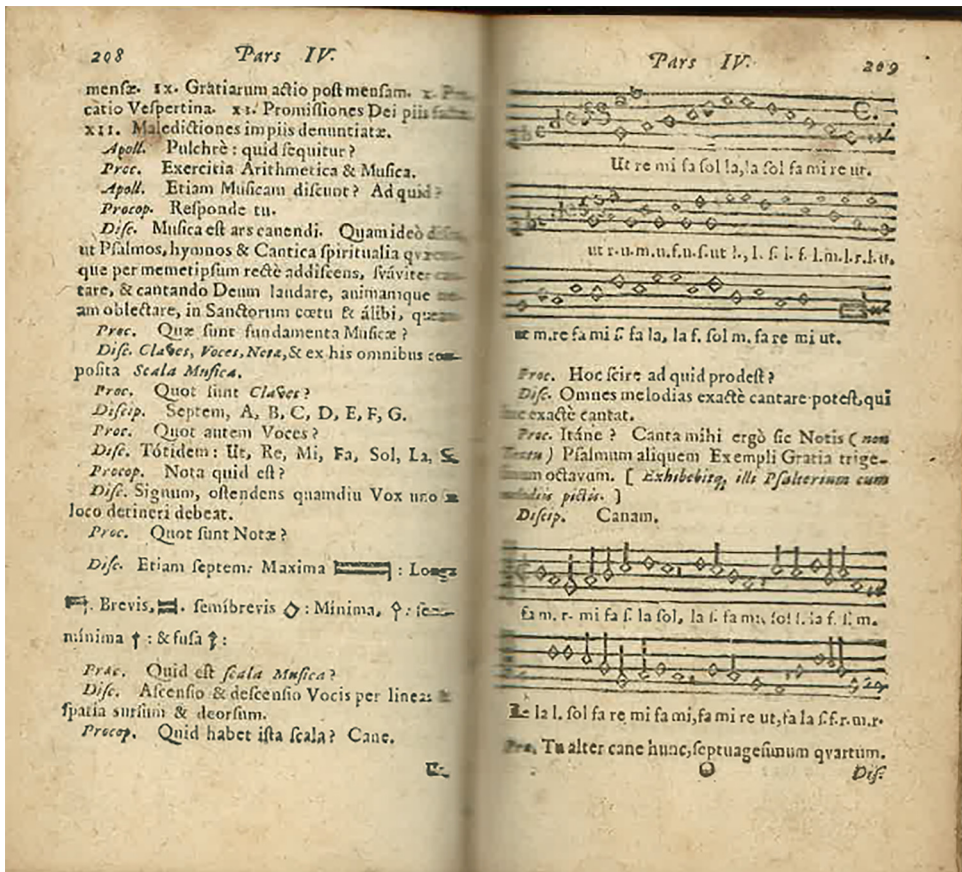


Fig. 3. *Schola Ludus*, Patak, 1656, extract from the chapter on music. By courtesy of the Academic Collections of the Protestant College of Sárospatak. (FF 229) 208-209

The text beneath reads as follows in English translation (Barsi and Szabó, 1984, 30):

- Teacher: What is a musical scale, you, other one?
- Pupil No. 6: The ascent and descent of notes on the lines and the spaces between the lines, up and down.
- First pupil: What is this scale? Sing it! [the pupil sings the three stave of notes]
- First pupil: What is the use of knowing this?
- Pupil: Someone who can sing this tune flawlessly will be able to sing any melody.
- First pupil: Really? Well, then sing me some psalm, just like this, after the notes and not after the text. For instance number 38. (Puts the written notes of the psalm in front of him.)
- Pupil: I'll sing it.



Besides note values and the absolute note system, pupils at Patak also learnt the solmisation hexachords associated with Guido of Arezzo, based on the European traditions of musical education, with the aim of supporting their music reading skills. They also performed further technical exercises (scales, disjunct movements up and down) in order to improve their intonation. The purpose was clear – to learn and perform the recorded psalms accurately and flawlessly. It is of particular interest to our subject matter that during her stay in Transylvania the Princess Zsuzsanna Lorántffy particularly requested Comenius by letter to wait for her return with the last two performances and so she had a chance to see precisely the music lesson scene (Barsi and Szabó, 1984, 32). It is also worth mentioning that although no more than a year passed between the 1656 Patak edition of *Schola Ludus* and its Amsterdam edition, the “match the interval” exercise of the later edition (sample melody No. 3) reflects a different logic than that used in the earlier version. While in the Patak edition the singing exercise progresses by thirds both in the ascending and the descending tune, in the Amsterdam edition we progress by thirds when ascending and move down by fourths along the melody (Fig. 4).

If this was an instance of printing error, the mistake would be easy to identify, while keeping the other notes unchanged, but in this place we see a case of clear and distinct musical logic in the second half of the tune. What can be the reason for this? Perhaps the occurrence of new methodological ideas, educational techniques or the intention to suggest continued creativity and flexibility?

As regards the comparison of melodies, it is worth contrasting a sample melody from the music chapter in another source, the *Szalkai Codex*, also produced at Patak in the late 15th century (school notes of the later archbishop Szalkai; modern edition in 2019) with the 2nd singing exercise in *Schola Ludus*. What we see is that the melody noted down some 160 years earlier (in 1490) is identical with the sample tune in *Schola Ludus*, and the only apparent difference arises from the difference between the cursive Hungarian notation method and the printed notes. In other words, the exercise to develop musical abilities in singing which was taught at the parish school of Patak during King Mátyás’s reign and which found its way into the *Codex* through Johannes Hollandrinus who lived in the 14th century (Czagány and Papp, 2016) was also a commonly used exercise to improve singing technique in Comenius’ time (Figs 5 and 6).

At the beginning of this paper we already referred to Article 2 of the Act relating to education issued in 1621. The passage makes explicit mention of polyphonic singing. “The cantor shall provide appropriate preparations in singing in harmony (*in pia harmonia*) twice each month, outside of the solemnities on festive days [...]” (Orbán, 1882, 14). Bence Szabolcsi believes that students at Patak used to sing George Buchanan’s (1506–1582) and Statius Olthof’s (1555–1629) metric psalm paraphrases (Szabolcsi, 1979, 46).


The next moment of significance from the perspective of the history of education and music is associated with the Patak school in the 18th century. Protestant colleges of Hungarian and Transylvanian towns played a particularly significant role in the music culture of 18th century Hungary (Pápa, Debrecen, Patak, Székelyudvarhely, etc.). Singing was taught here by the schoolteacher, but after a while it also became common for higher grade students of outstanding musical talent to help out with singing instruction in the lower grades. The curriculum consisted mostly of the songs to be sung at church services on Sundays or festive days (mostly the Geneva psalms and earlier ‘laudations’), but students were also expected to participate at funerals. This, however, was a task they needed to be prepared for. The steward’s registry book contains regular entries of the events that took place at Patak from 1728 onwards. According to these data,



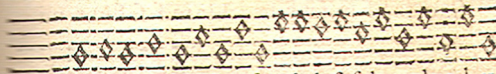
*Pars IV.* 199

:Brevis :Sembrevis :Mínima :Semi-  
mínima & fusa :

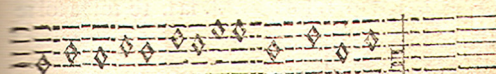
*Proc.*] Quid est *scala Musica*? tu alter.  
*6. Disc.*] Ascensio & descensio Vocis per lineas  
& spatia, sursum & deorsum.  
*Procop.*] Quid habet ista *scala*? Cane.



Ut re mi fa sol la, la sol fa mi re ut.



Ut. r. u. m. u. f. u. f. ut l. l. f. f. l. m. l. r. l. u.



ut m. re fa mi f. fa la la mi. sol re fa ut.

*Proc.*] Hoc scire ad quid prodest?  
*Disc.*] Omnes melodias exactè cantare potest,  
qui hoc exactè cantat.  
*Proc.*] Itáne? Canta mihi ergò sic Np̄tis (*non*  
*Textu*) Psalmum aliquem. Exempli gratia, trige-  
simum octavum. [*Exhibebit que illi Psalterium cum*  
*melodiis pi&itis.*]  
*Discip.*] Canam.

N 5 fa

Fig. 4. Extract from the 1657, Amsterdam edition of *Schola Ludus*. By courtesy of the Academic Collections of the Protestant College of Sárospatak. (FF 230) 199

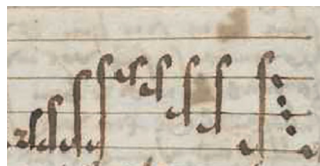
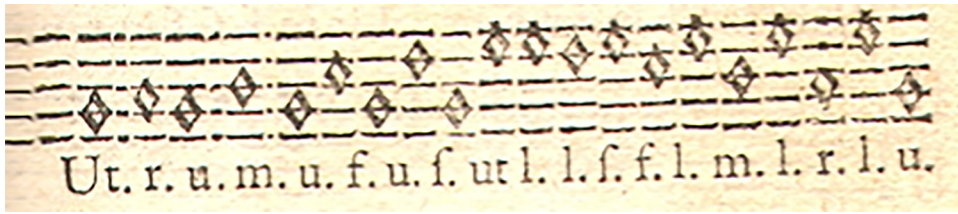


Fig. 5. The Szalkai Codex, 1490. fol. 34 v





**Fig. 6.** *Schola Ludus*, 1657. By courtesy of the Academic Collections of the Protestant College of Sárospatak. (FF 230) 199

students at Patak served at funerals not only in their own town, but also at the burial ceremonies of rich country squires or well-to-do urban citizens elsewhere. This, however, means that there must have existed a college choir operating on a regular footing and at a sufficiently high standard, where polyphonic singing must have been quite the norm. The data also reveal that the sums earned this way were partly or fully paid into the treasury of the College and the revenue was used by the choir to support students from needy backgrounds or to cover any funeral costs they might have faced. This way the choir “appears in the history of our college not only as a cultural asset, but also as a charitable institution.” (Orbán, 1882, 25)

Authentic data on musical education at the Patak College are available from 1752 onwards, but they mostly focus on the financial aspects of the operation of Choir Presidents and provide little information about professional aspects. What we can find out, however, is that the Choir President was the top official in the choir who not only supervised and evaluated the choir’s performance, but also kept up order, sanctioned those who transgressed the rules and was in charge of the choir’s internal and external affairs in general. Interestingly, he himself did not sing, but it was his office to “...prepare the text and, if musically trained, also the melody of the songs. [...] There also needed to be a body which created the tune of the songs in the appropriate system of harmony, and this could be none other than the *procentorium*,<sup>1</sup> since the president himself was neither a player, nor a scholar of music.” (Orbán, 25–26.) The use of the term “system of harmony” makes it clear that the text is referring to the singing of polyphonic choir pieces.

After 1782 the choir functioned within an organised framework – there were rules to determine the duties of the Choir President, as well as of choir members. By this time the choir consisted of 16 members, divided into 8 sections of 1–4 singers in each, and functioned as a closed organisation.

A choir annals was kept in which activities were recorded, and the President also kept a presidential *melodiarium* (a manuscript collection of songs) containing the text and melody of the songs created during his presidency, as well as of the new funeral songs that he composed. He was also obliged to transfer hymns and funeral pieces from previous *melodiaria* kept by presidents or members, as well as personally check whether each choir member copied the songs to be learnt into his own song book.

The choir’s revenues were enhanced, beyond the fees received for participation at funerals and other occasions and the entry fee paid by new members, also by penalties to be paid by choir

<sup>1</sup>A body consisting of the President and some singers.



members. Passages cherry-picked from the rule book prescribing the duties of choir members paint a vivid picture of the nature of breeches committed by undisciplined students.

8. “Anyone who arrives at a regular or extraordinary lesson after the President is to pay five Denar; anyone who comes after half an hour has passed or misses the entire lesson is to be fined ten Denar; should this be repeated, he is to receive some other, severe punishment on top of the regular fine.

12. Anyone who, at the singing lesson, merely pretends to sing by moving his lips, or, likewise, anyone who engages in debauchery or gets drunk on the occasion of participation at events in the countryside will on the first such occasion be reprimanded by the president, and on the second occasion will be more severely punished, as well as compelled to pay a fine of ten Denar.

14. As regards anyone who leaves their appointed place of accommodation during funeral or festive occasions in the countryside without the Principal’s prior permission, either with the intention of visiting acquaintances or to procure wine or under any other pretext – those procuring wine are to pay fifty Denar and receive other strict punishment; others are to pay a fine of ten Denars; while those who had received leave from the President but failed to return by the appointed time will be punished, beyond paying their fine of ten Denar, with the severity warranted by the circumstances.” (Orbán, 38–39.)

Ernő Barsi points out (Barsi and Szabó, 38) that this was a time when the sheer number of available choir pieces was insufficient to provide a repertoire required for continued service in the duties stipulated for the President. Thus it became necessary for colleges to become self-sufficient and produce their own musical arrangements – this is what resulted in the emergence of *melodiaria*. The significance of these collections for music history was that

“[...] they preserved for us the best of tunes produced during the half century from 1770 to 1820 with a Hungarian rhythm and springing from an authentic local folk inspiration– the wealth of tunes that most educated musicians would ignore outright. Indeed, almost every one of these student *melodiaria* betrays that it is not the work of an educated musician. The college’s choir rule book made it the duty of members to note down the pieces they were learning, but students, no matter how hard they tried, often failed to cope with this unusual task: most collections do not rise above the standard of Ádám Horváth’s own rather primitive method of music writing. Nevertheless, with all its imperfections, it is this college drill in music education that salvaged for us the largest and most valuable segment of 18th century Hungarian songs – including the only authentic source of *kuruc* songs. This college song repertoire is the only true depository of the legacy of old Hungarian books of verse.” (Bartha, 1964, 277)

The *melodiaria* of Patak contain records of both monophonic and polyphonic songs. They all share the same very simple rhythm notation which merely distinguishes between long and short notes; key signatures or altered notes are rare, and this way it is often hard to define their tonality. The most widely known collections of songs from the 18th century are Pál Kulcsár’s *melodiarium* (Parts I and II, 1775–1785; this collection contains the earliest recorded date, “anno 1762 of the Lord”); the Szkárosi-Járdánházi *melodiarium* (1787–1792; hand-written by István Szkárosi and János Járdánházi); Dávidné Soltári [Mrs Dávid’s Psalms] *melodiarium* (1790–1791); Lajos Novák’s *melodiarium* (Vols. I–II, 1791); János Szarka’s *melodiarium* (1798); and the *Pataki melodiarium* (1798).

The following examples illustrate the way in which monophonic tunes were noted down based on a MS of songs collected by József Darótyz (1790–1791) in Transylvania and preserved at Patak (Fig. 7).





The image shows two pages of a handwritten manuscript. The left page is numbered '27' and contains several stanzas of text in Hungarian, with a musical staff below. The right page is numbered '4' and '5' and also contains text and a musical staff. The handwriting is in a cursive style typical of the 17th or 18th century. The text includes religious lyrics, and the musical notation consists of diamond-shaped notes on a five-line staff.

**Page 27 (Left):**

27. Vallyha mine kedvedes fel lettem  
 Pecsensines ezreter nagy öbelen  
 Vallyha egy per, lenne egy ras.  
 Melly fevedes lagyina  
 Kivencuo nagy öpöppina

1. Nijetes bar trah egy per, pod piced bol  
 Mics er minden hino el oploton piceubol.  
 Ha nagy nyevem; Er sanyevem  
 Alitlaghat evi; magas aca igtes

N. 59 Mar Nota L.

**Page 4 (Right):**

4. Felvett vala sebt az egy serce  
 Engemet Egik igyisavok egy pice  
 Melly legyen uggan meo  
 Felos öpöppina evi; Sünseten ugganis el

5. Vallyha tudna melly nagy febes yess  
 Peltarsosa minden kivencben egytesen  
 Melly akhara belé akado  
 Tolla hogy ada pihado; Er öpna piceubol

6. Nyugodalmasat pjaban heresem  
 Egik ne hadparok mivel herogy esem  
 Piceum heste hasad ok; Alacis el haggypina so.  
 Sünseten uggan is erik mind acirik.

7. Meg vianma hidom erbes e abjas  
 Er elaptonnal adna pivech egy dencbas  
 Hly gonvolatonenyhis; karsinal pivecso enis  
 Hogy imar nem igen erik mind acirik

L. Mar - Nota - N. 60

**Page 5 (Right):**

1. Philosten mine Florensina  
 Kevdvebe Paris Helmasi 1/1  
 Theogenes Chavileas  
 Thedens Aradrijas  
 Ugy enis hidvalakel  
 Kivencben kivencelakel

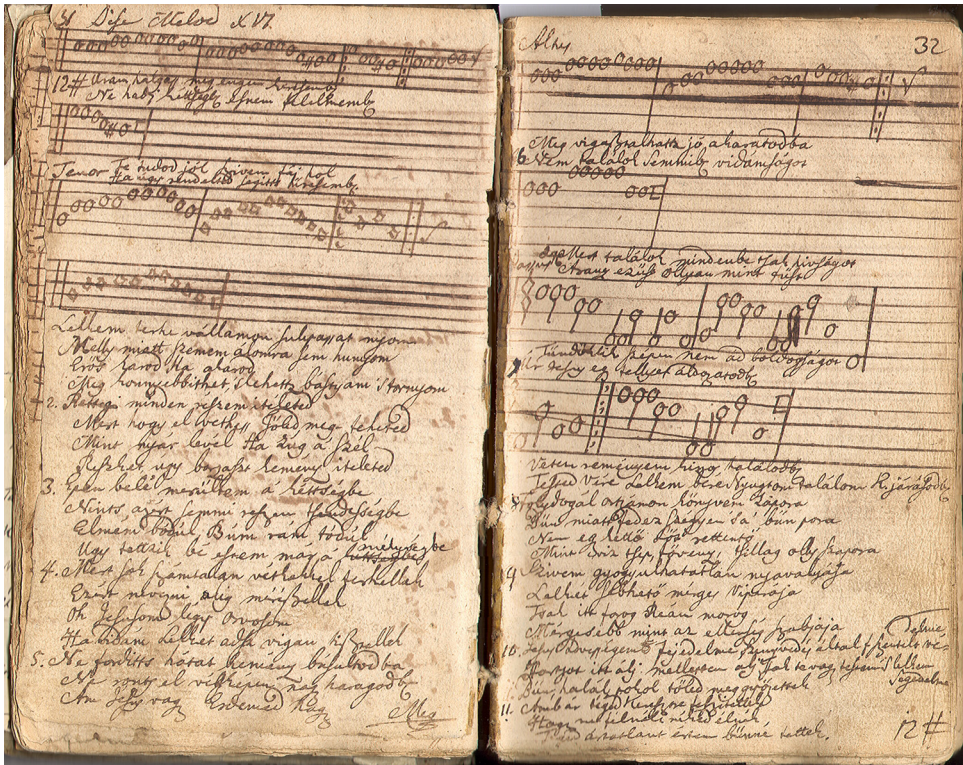
2. De jany fevagtad pivecso  
 Erpelt hiv kivencmeo

Fig. 7. Monophonic songs from Mrs Dávid's Psalms. By courtesy of the Academic Collections of the Protestant College of Sáropatak (KT 630)

While Fig. 8 allows us a glimpse into the mode of polyphonic music writing, based on Szkárosi and Járdánházi's *melodiarium* (in István Szkárosi's hand-writing), in which the music for the various voices follow each other in succession (Fig. 8).

Students at Patak would perform funeral songs in accordance with the practice of polyphonic singing characteristic in their age and they tried also to write harmonies to lay tunes in a similar manner. Claude Goudimel's (1514–1572) third series of psalm arrangements, which the composer had clearly intended for home singing, soon became widely popular due to the homorhythmic blocks of harmonies which made it appealing and easy to sing and they soon came to constitute a part of Protestant church music. This book of psalms was published in 1743 by György Maróthi (1715–1744), a progressive and open-minded lecturer at the Debrecen college who had travelled widely and studied in Switzerland and Holland before his untimely death (Szabolcsi, 1961), under the title „A' Soltároknak négyes nótáji” [Psalms in Four Parts], complete with Hungarian texts by Albert Szenczi Molnár. These tunes found their way to Patak. Each of Goudimel's psalms puts the tenor voice in charge of the tune, while the others within this four-part choir structure (with the descant and alto above it and the bass beneath) always move at the same time as the tenor whenever the rhythm or the melody shifts, but the tenor, as a high male tone, would always play the predominant role in these blocks of harmonies. This gave





**Fig. 8.** Parts of polyphonic music noted down in succession, based on Szkárosi and Járdánházi's *melodiarium*, (in István Szkárosi's hand-writing). By courtesy of the Academic Collections of the Protestant College of Sárospatak. (KT 513) 31-32

the tunes a characteristic, archaic mood reminiscent of the polyphonic structures of the 16th century.

In Hungarian school choirs the discant section was often transposed down one octave, this way upsetting the balance of the sections and lending the tone of the upper registers a hovering character. At Patak, however, the choir employed further sections in order to restore balance and the proportions of the resulting eight-part choir were as follows.

- a) Tenors with a strong, sharp and high-pitched ambitus. A precentor or lead singer was elected from among them (today's soprano).
- b) Bassists with a strong and deep ambitus, four by number (today's semi-bass).
- c) 'Subcantists' (lower bass), two by number, with a strong and deep voice.
- d) 'Concantists' with a strong, sharp and high-pitched tone, four by number, who, if necessary, could also sing tenor.
- e.) Altos, two by number, with a sharp and high-pitched ambitus.
- f) Two 'descantists' with a medium-pitched strong ambitus.



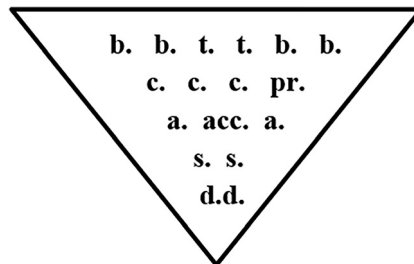
- g) One ‘procantist’ who sang the discant or tenor section in a child or female voice (later octavist).
- h) One ‘accantist’ who was among the solos singing a high or female voice and since they rarely took part in the singing they earned the sobriquet ‘pittyegtető’ (the chirp). Besides all of this, there was a semi-bass or descantist whose job was to connect the ends of the lines.” (Orbán, 31)

Bence Szabolcsi points out that such a practice is unique to Sárospatak and adds, “this choir is experimenting with Hungarian choir literature – for the first time in the history of Hungarian music” (Szabolcsi, 1961, 58). For their performances the singers used to stand in a characteristic triangular formation (Orbán, 1882, 31), obviously for acoustic reasons, since this was the best way to eradicate imbalances of sound among the different sections (Fig. 9).

Wanting in competence in higher level music theory, students were not familiar with the rules of constructing polyphonic harmony; they did not recognise the musical regularities of Goudimel’s psalms and thus, in their own compositions, the only accompaniment to melodies consisted in simple blocks of triads. For recording the melody itself at first they followed the method of the Maróthi psalms and wrote the various sections in succession after each other (as was shown by our previous example), but later a notation method more similar to our notion of a full score was used with a unique technique. Since the use of diverging clefs rendered it particularly difficult for the not-so-practiced singer to read the music, the parts were depicted in one and the same staff. The five-line staff, however, proved insufficient to represent the tunes of the full choir which consisted, by this time, of eight parts. Therefore a staff of 6–12 lines was employed, depending on the ambitus of the songs in question. They also used different signs to indicate the tunes of the different parts – these were not consistent across different pieces, but were always consistent within the same piece. In the case of reciting tunes, the simultaneous movement of the sections resulted in the emergence of choir recitativo – one of the burial songs of the Kulcsár *melodiarium* (1775–1785) is a fine example (Fig. 10).

Since the tunes not only lacked clefs (rendering it impossible to identify the exact pitch with full accuracy), but also rarely included key signatures, accidentals, bar-lines, and the notation is also fairly poor in indicating rhythm values, deciphering these tunes and reconstructing the exact way in which they sounded is no easy task. Ernő Barsi, however, points out that

“{...} the student of the age may have been assisted in music reading by the fact that the tunes were very much alive in the common consciousness as living music. Today we lack this sounding background. A pity, as it would be helpful in pieces where a major and minor key are equally imaginable. In cases like that our interpretation may be helped by other written versions of the same song in different sources or their folk variety surviving in the living tradition. The tunes also lack



**Fig. 9.** The position of the different choir parts on stage





**Fig. 10.** „Sis Benedictus in terra”, Kulcsár melodiarium. By courtesy of the Academic Collections of the Protestant College of Sárospatak. (KT 1770) 88

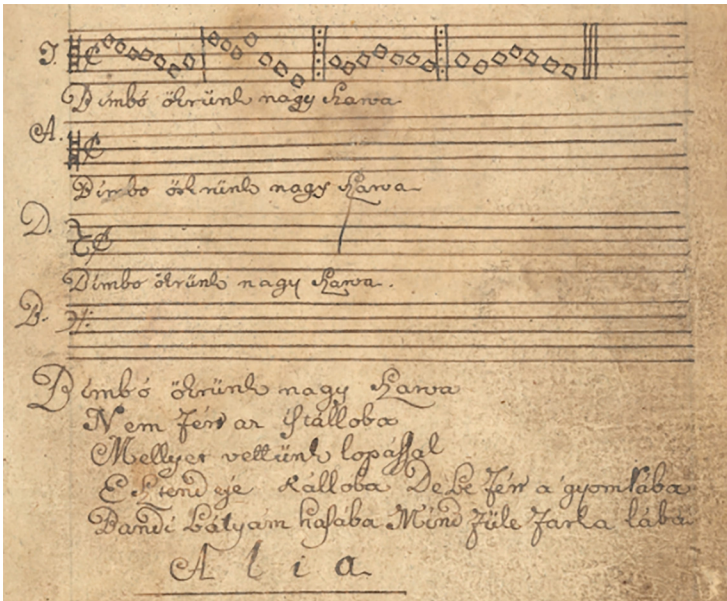
tempo markers. Dynamic sign is a rare exception, found in but one or two instances. Such markings do not begin to appear, as a rule, until the 19th century.” (Barsi, 1988, 9)

In the case of songs that survived in monophonic versions, there are several examples where it seems likely that the individual who noted them down also planned to render them to polyphonic harmony, but the work remained unfinished: while the song was noted down for the tenor, the lines of the other parts remained empty, as we may see, e.g. in Fig. 11.

Notes appended to these *melodiaria* offer further explanations regarding the polyphonic melodies. These texts and the tunes of the songs reveal that although the practice of using *accantus* and *procantus* (i.e. the free octave doubling of the higher sections) was a general and wide-spread practice, we can discover no further clarifying rules in the songs in this respect. Composers used these auxiliary sections practically freely, according to their own taste, which in the better case resulted in a balanced sound. The other two auxiliary sections (*concantus* which was a detachment from the tenors, and the *subcantus*, a detachment from the bass) do not often appear, except in the function of filling out incomplete harmonies for the duration of a single harmony or melody section.

In summarising the musical and stylistic characteristics of the songs in the *melodiaria* we rely on a paper by Bence Szabolcsi (Szabolcsi, 1961). Alongside a limited number of old Hungarian folk melody samples, we may notice that the new layer of folk music emerging just at this time is represented in great numbers; and so are songs of a student/folk character, the so-called *flower*





**Fig. 11.** Folk song „Bimbó ökrünk nagy szarva” [Our ox, Bimbo, has broad tusks]. Patak melodiarium. By courtesy of the Academic Collections of the Protestant College of Sárospatak. (KT 514) 231

songs and songs composed in a Western style. The individuals who noted down the tunes were typically the sons of the common nobility studying at the colleges after finishing their elementary education in the village school. Most of them had spent their childhood confined to their own provincial environment, had unwittingly adopted the customs and mores of the peasant lifestyle, and usually returned, upon completing their studies, to a shallow and uninspiring way of life devoid of worthwhile content. Bence Szabolcsi points out that

“[...] the poorer members of the common nobility practically shared a life with their serfs – and found support for their opposition spirit in anything that was “folkish” or “from the olden days”. It is crucial to be aware that during the time of Maria Theresa and the Emperor Joseph the common nobility were well known to be opposition minded and of strong *kuruc* sentiment, and this spirit inevitably cast a retrospective hue over their musical tastes. They fondly preserved the memory of the age of Thököly and Rákóczi and this allows us to understand why he was the first to note down the musical wealth of the *kuruc* period.” (Szabolcsi, 1979, 52)

It is important to mention what are known as *kuruc* songs, related to the most determining historical event of the 18th century, the war of liberation headed by Prince Rákóczi, as well as the famous ‘Rákóczi Song’ and ‘Rákóczi March’, both of which gained their final form around this time and may thus be considered as authentic historical documents. Both tunes exist in several variants and have inspired a number of composers, thus a range of arrangements for different types of apparatus have become widely known. Probably Hector Berlioz’ Rákóczi March is the most popular variant, but Hungarians think most fondly of Franz Liszt’s Royal Song or Hungarian Festive Song. The text of the Rákóczi Song is known in two variants: „Hej, Rákóczi, Bercsényi...” [Oh, Rákóczi, Bercsényi] and „Jaj, régi szép magyar nép... [Oh, the fine old Hungarian nation]”.



Sárospatak can proudly claim that one of the first records of the Rákóczi Song (Régi magyar nagy vitézek [Great Hungarian Warriors of Old]) has survived due to the efforts of Patak students – a seven part variant has been preserved in the *Pataki Melodiarium* (1798), if we consider the *subcantus*, detached from the bass, as a separate section. This sample is one of the very few examples where we can witness the use of a diesis (Fig. 12).

We believe that the 17th–18th century musical heritage of Sárospatak, similarly to the *Szalkai Codex* (1489–1490) of King Mathias's time, is an asset of unique value and significance in Hungarian cultural history; a relic of the high standard of musical education which was to make the Patak College world famous in the later course of history.



**Fig. 12.** Choir score for the Rákóczi Song (Régi Magyar nagy Vitézek [Great Hungarian Warriors of Old]) in the *Pataki melodiarium*. By courtesy of the Academic Collections of the Protestant College of Sárospatak. (KT 514) 233



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