

HUNGARIAN COMPOSERS - 37

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Budapest Music Center

12.735

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Portrait from the final years.
Woodcut by Károly Rusz



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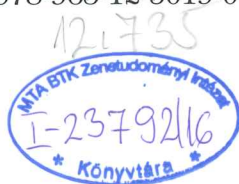
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Béni Egressy

(1814–1851)

Iron-strong character and unwearied industry – these key phrases so often voiced in connection with the Egressys were first written in the obituary published by János Erdélyi¹ in the year after Béni Egressy's death. In the Calvinist minister's family, members of the lesser nobility, "pure Christian feelings, strong and unyielding aspiration after what is noble, and persistent and incessant industry paired with idealism were time-honoured properties", as Pál Rakodczay², a later chronicler put it. Pál Egressy (1771-1827), just like his father, served in Borsod County. These traditions, passed down from generation to generation, were also coupled with years of traditional training: like his brother Sámuel Egressy (1766-1848), Pál Egressy studied at the Calvinist grammar school in Miskolc and the college in Sárospatak. Among his children, however, it was only the first-born, Pál Egressy jr., who trod the same path. Similarly to many of their fellows in their generation, the careers of the sons who lived to adulthood turned them away from the paternal traditions, although their studies began in that direction. (The strength of the family traditions – in a different sense – was, however, manifest in Béni Egressy's career in a multitude of ways.)

1 Entitled *Életrajzi vázlat* [Biographical Sketch], in: *Értesítő*, 3 April 1852. Published: *Erdélyi János – Irodalmi, színházi, közéleti írások és beszédek* [János Erdélyi – Writings and speeches on literature, theatre and public life] (A magyar irodalomtörténetírás forrásai 19, Budapest 2003, 409–15). However, Erdélyi cannot be regarded as the only author of the belated recollection: he completed it with additions from the written notes of Gábor Egressy and his son Ákos. See the following documents in the Collection of Manuscripts, National Széchényi Library [abbr.: NSzL, MSS Coll.]: *Analekta 1214–1215*; Oct. Hung. 900/26, fol. 74, 78–79.

2 Rakodczay, Pál: *Egressy Gábor és kora* [Gábor Egressy and His Age], Budapest 1911, 6.

All his biographers stress Pál Egressy's extraordinary – or, at least in his social position, unusual – erudition acquired in studies both at home and abroad, which was paired with an outstanding rhetorical capacity and musical skills. He had a rare voice in terms of volume and strength, taught himself the basics of figured bass, played the piano, violin and flute excellently, and his flair for poetry is also known.³ His home was imbued with the air of culture and arts: the rhetorical skills inherited from him were consummated in his son Gábor Egressy (1808-1866), the actor, and in Béni his musical skills were spectacularly manifest⁴ (and both were polymaths, another paternal quality they inherited).

Béni Egressy, the third child of the vicar then serving at Sajókazinc (today part of Kazincbarcika), was born on 21 April 1814.⁵ In late 1816 Pál Egressy was transferred to Sajókápolna, so Béni spent the greater part of his childhood “in the darling Pitypalatty valley” at the foot of the Bükk Mountains (as his monographer, Zoltán Csorba, wrote). There is only general information about his childhood musical impressions: besides his father's singing and playing, he must have regularly heard Calvinist church music. As

3 Rakodczay notes (op. cit. 4) that Pál Egressy wrote distichs about Napoleon in Latin that were mocking when read backwards.

4 That musical talent was not exceptional in the family is evidenced by the career of Samu Egressy (1806-1868: landowner, chief notary of Pest county), the nephew of Pál Egressy (son of the pastor Sámuel Egressy), an amateur composer who published several dance tunes and other instrumental pieces in addition to a few songs. In accord with his social position, he was wont to give his compositions titles or dedications related to current political events: *Üdvözlő hangok Deák Ferenchez* [Sounds of greeting to Ferenc Deák], 1846; *Pest megyei követválasztási zene-émlék* [Musical memory of the election of the deputy for Pest County] (dedicated to Móric Szentkirályi and Lajos Kossuth), 1847; *Széchenyi Gyászinduló* [Széchenyi Funeral March] (published in 1863). In 1852 he published a piano piece with the title *Emlék Egressy Bénire* [In Memory of Béni Egressy].

5 Facsimile of the pertinent part of the Calvinist church register: *Sajókazinc Református Híradó* 15 July 2001, 5. The name given him in baptism, Benjámin, is a Biblical name meaning “son of good fortune”. An important document of family history is preserved among the manuscripts of the NSzL, marked *Analekta 1245* (notes of Monor vicar Sámuel Egressy). It reveals that the name Egressi/Egressy was an assumed name, the original being *Galambosi*. It can also be read there that Pál Egressy married twice: Gábor and Béni were born from his second marriage. Published by the present author in: *Lymbus – Magyarországtudományi Forrásközlmények 2011*, eds. Gábor Ujvári, Réka Lengyel, Budapest 2012, 384–393.

Gábor Egressy recalled, a local peasant girl “whose beautiful voice ingratiated her even with my grave father”, often sang the popular melodies of the villagers in the vicarage.⁶

Just as they were for his brother, the years Béni spent studying in Miskolc proved to be pivotal. Gábor Egressy later recalled: “there is no need to describe the first impression made by the enthralling images of the theatre upon the soul of a village lad, who had been brought up with Spartan severity and religiosity by his parents of modest standing”.⁷ From 1823, when the first permanent theatre building was opened, dramatic art in the Hungarian language had a permanent home in the town; the period was also the first heyday of the opera. As is well known, Gábor Egressy became an actor contrary to his father's wishes, and it is quite likely that Béni – then a pupil at the long-established Calvinist grammar school in Miskolc – acquired his experiences of the stage from performances involving his brother as well.

From September 1828, Béni Egressy studied at the Sárospatak Calvinist College. From the very beginning he had financial difficulties: because of the death of his father the previous year, “the otherwise cheap town and modest costs of the college were a great burden for the poor boy”.⁸ Nonetheless, Sárospatak proved to be an important station in the future career of the composer, for Béni Egressy was from 1830 a tenor member of the choir led by János Apáthy (1796-1861), who had been trained in the West⁹. Based on the experience he gained in Vienna, Apáthy achieved remarkable results: he modernized and improved the standards of musical education at the institution, and introduced piano and organ instruction (Egressy presumably participated in one of them¹⁰). His

6 Csorba, Zoltán: *Egressy Béni*, Miskolc 1974, 5–6.

7 Rakodczay op. cit. 17.

8 Erdélyi op. cit. 410.

9 Orbán, József: *A sárospataki énekkar története* [History of the Sárospatak Choir] (Sárospatak 1882), 177.; Barsi, Ernő and Szabó, Ernő: *A pataki kollégium zenei krónikája* [Musical Chronicle of the Patak College] (Budapest 1984), 72–73. Apáthy took over leadership of the choir in 1829.

10 Since Béni Egressy was brought up by a father who regularly played music at home, and later studied for four years in the Sárospatak college, which provided a thorough musical training by the standards of the age, and – as several people noted – he had an excellent voice, it is unfounded to state – as the specialist literature often does – that his knowledge of the score was defective.

activity centred on the choir, the repertoire of which he updated, primarily in the spirit of Austrian-German traditions. Taking Béni Egressy for the pioneer of Hungarian composition for male choirs, as he was hailed in the 19th century,¹¹ one cannot help discerning, however indirectly, the experience of the Sárospatak college choral practice beneath his early initiatives.

He did not complete his studies. Since he was forced to work for a living, he took on an assistant teacher's job in Szepesi in Abaúj County (today Moldava nad Bodvou, Slovakia) in the 1831/32 school year¹², then in Mezőcsát (from 23 January 1833). As the obituary writer interpreted it, this activity paved the way for Egressy's future musical career in two ways: he made use of his outstanding vocal qualities, and this was the period "to which his studies of the psalms can be traced, and from which he carried in his soul the religious songs of his denomination". (Regarding the latter, the role of the family traditions must not be forgotten.)

As a member of the Kassa theatre company, Gábor Egressy wrote in a family letter of 17 April 1833: in September Béni "may appear in Kassa and I give him hope that he might get in". There is no information on when that decisive event took place, but the most probable time – in line with the contents of the letter – is the autumn of 1833. Béni Egressy, like his brother and many of his colleagues, began his stage career as a chorister, but he did not conceal his soloist ambitions. The Kassa theatre bills that include his name (April 1834) reveal that he received a few minor prosaic roles after only a few months' work. The bill of 26 April says that apart from his prosaic utterances, he and his brother were to dance a Hungarian double dance in the interval of the production that day.

Upon the invitation of Transylvanian nobility, the theatre company moved to Kolozsvár the following month for the duration of the Diet held there. Béni Egressy's name features on eleven bills, first on 26 June in the role of a *Knight* in Rossini's *Tancredi*.

11 See e.g. the special article by István Bartalus in the 6 May 1859 issue of *Budapesti Hírlap*.

12 See Béla Hodossy's writing entitled *Egressy Benjámin* in *Zeneközlöny* [Tiszaföldvár] 1939/11.

That is his earliest known appearance in an opera, followed by others in Kolozsvár until 30 January 1835.

His theatrical career was resumed at the Castle Theatre in Buda in May 1835, which he joined with his brother and several prominent members of the former Kassa troupe. Until the end of the year he had a part in five musical and nine prosaic plays (the former, like presumably some of the Kolozsvár performances¹³, were conducted by Ferenc Erkel), and in one production he took part as a dancer. The year 1836 was far more eventful for him: he was involved in no fewer than 75 new productions, including 32 singing roles!¹⁴ These impressive figures do not *yet* imply extraordinary performances: the string of varied but mostly insignificant roles was interrupted only rarely by a more exacting operatic role.¹⁵ In this regard, the mentioned year of 1836 is outstanding: he sang *Figaro* in the *Barber of Seville* three times in the summer, and in the October he partnered Mrs Déry in excerpts from Hérold operas. (Among the less important but noteworthy artistic work was the role of *Ottokar* in *Der Freischütz*.) Gábor Egressy's letter of 13 September 1836 says that his brother "was training to be a singer".

However, it soon turned out that such a goal was an illusion because of the relatively early appearance of his fatal illness, consumption. The dramatic break in his career as an operatic singer affected his character as well: "He lost his silvery voice, and the pain of this loss lived with him", as Erdélyi wrote. The unusual timbre of his voice was noted by others, too: the most celebrated Hungarian tenor of the century, Ferenc Stéger, reminisced that Egressy "had a small, not really powerful tenor voice" but "it had a uniquely intimate, heart-moving timbre".¹⁶

13 See Éva Gurmai's study in *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae* 46/1–2 (2005), 145–55.

14 See B. Gyula Bérczessi's book on Egressy: *Tollal – lanttal – fegyverrel* [With Pen, Lute and Arms], Budapest 1986, 37 and 39.

15 As a prosaic actor, he was certainly overshadowed by his brother, whose outstanding qualities he did not possess (cf. Rakodczay op. cit. 7.; Csorba op. cit. 9–10).

16 *Erkel Ferencz Emlékkönyv* [Memorial Volume for Ferenc Erkel], ed. Bertalan Fabó, Budapest 1910, 196. As the roles mentioned reveal, Egressy's voice was originally a high baritone (see in more detail: Bérczessi op. cit. 40).

Yet the roles he sang in the premieres of Bellini operas in the first season of the Hungarian Theatre of Pest (National Theatre from August 1840) might still have seemed to be the beginning of a promising operatic career. Contracted by the institution which opened its doors on 22 August 1837¹⁷, Egressy's finances were supposed to improve, being included among the tenor singers¹⁸, but he went on living modestly, if not in need. His financial problems were permanent throughout his life: we know of a debt as late as 1848 which he found difficult to pay off.¹⁹

Particularly shocking is the picture outlined by the letters he sent home from his Italian study tour in July–September 1838. With an actor friend Mihály Havi he set out on this long journey “with swelling bosom and a flat purse”. He was probably inspired by his brother's similar undertaking the year before. To be able to study at home the acting of the Viennese company who had guest-performed in Pest, Gábor Egressy stayed in the imperial town for several months from April 1837. Still aspiring after operatic laurels, Béni Egressy and his friend of similar ambitions, made a pilgrimage to Italy, the land of the opera, “to improve themselves” “in the motherland of songs”. The final destination was Milan, “the Canaan of opera singing”, “the brightest hall of the realm of vocal art”.²⁰ The opera experiences there, Egressy wrote, “shed light on a so-far hidden realm in our souls and proved worthwhile to have trodden such a long way for”, but as surviving documents reveal, no actual training in singing could take place, contrary to some statements in specialised literature.

17 Rakodczay (op. cit. 126) mentions it as an oddity of Hungarian cultural history that the opening performance of the Hungarian Theatre of Pest involved “exactly twelve members of the Egressy family on stage, some as actors, some as extras”. The Egressy family is to be taken in a broad sense, but Béni and all his brothers were involved.

18 See Csorba op. cit. 10; Bérczessi op. cit. 40–41, 43–44.

19 Bérczessi op. cit. 62–63.

20 They also passed through Zagreb, Trieste, Venice, Padua, Vicenza and Verona. Previously, they gave a concert in Balatonfüred: thanks to the donations, they could take to the road “with a lighter bosom and a heavier purse”. Egressy and Havi wrote taking turns; the letters he sent to the editor of *Természet* (and one to the Hungarian Theatre of Pest), from which the above citations are taken, make entertaining reading. Published by Bérczessi: op. cit. 47–59.

On 27 September 1838 Béni Egressy performed in Pest again. Except for a long year during the war of independence (1848/49), he was a member of the National Theatre till the end of his life. During his short career, he appeared before audiences some 2 000 times, counting his prosaic and singing roles together, performing in at least 324 plays (most often, on 38 nights, in Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*).²¹

*

The Italian tour brought no breakthrough in his operatic career: although he did fulfil various solo duties until the end of his life and often received appreciative press reviews, the physical limitations of his vocal possibilities restricted the chances of his stage success. Gradually, his attention turned to other areas of the theatre and to music outside the theatre; not always due to external constraints, much more to an inner drive, *autonomous creation* became predominant in his last ten or so years. However, he never became a “full-time” composer: he remained a “general factotum” of the theatre – that is how he is so often described by his biographers: that versatility – a characteristic more of the past – is possibly what best suited his personality (similarly to the multifaceted activity of József Szerdahelyi, Ede Szigligeti and Gábor Egressy within the theatre). In 1838 the idea that he might fill the opera director's post was also raised, but the plan was discarded.²²

His written work encompasses three main areas: musical composition, translation of stage plays, and writing opera libretti. Towards the end of his life he also debuted as a playwright: his only play, *Két Sobri* [Two Sobris] premiered in January 1851, and obviously, only his untimely death prevented him from writing more. In addition to 4 opera libretti, he translated 81 plays (including 18 opera libretti) within hardly a dozen years, to boot!²³ Egressy's poetic output is less significant: the poems were partly

21 As summed up by Bérczessi: op. cit. 65.

22 *Magyar Színháztörténet 1790–1873* [History of the Hungarian Theatre 1790–1873], ed. Ferenc Kerényi, Budapest 1990, 322.

23 Bérczessi's data, see: op. cit. 90–95.

written to be set to music and generally do not come up to the standard of his other works.

Within this widely varied oeuvre, everything is interrelated with everything else: his acting career is inseparable from his writing activity²⁴, and the same applies to his active music-making and composition. The genres that were present at the beginning of his career in composition accompanied it throughout and remained the most important. They include the male choruses, the songs, and the fashionable instrumental pieces of the age. The genre boundaries of his compositions are often fluid: a vocal movement would later appear in an instrumental form, while in other cases it seems that the melody was first composed and later some poetic text was attached to it. His composition was governed by everyday practice, and satisfied daily requirements. The external characteristics of his compositions therefore rarely exceed certain genre schemes, yet most of the pieces have a personal tone, some verging on confession, and the titles also often have some personal relevance – it was precisely the strength of the subjective message that was so effective in its age.

It is not known when Egressy began to compose. Neither is there any information about a “master” who personally guided his creative steps from the start. He was probably just as self-taught in composition as he had been earlier in acting, operatic singing and literary translation. There is a relevant remark by Ákos Egressy: “Béni had improved his musical education to such a level that he could play, and what is more, teach, nearly every instrument.”²⁵ Undoubtedly, his Italian impressions were stimulating for his whole musical career. He debuted as a composer relatively late, at the age of 25, in a concert of a mixed programme (Hungarian Theatre of Pest, 2 November 1839): his settings of Mihály

²⁴ For instance, concerning three of his four opera libretti, he acted in the prose plays before he started writing opera libretti from them. *Hunyadi László* is an exception: Lőrinc Tóth's play won the competition in 1839, Egressy wrote a libretto based on it the following year, but the stage play was only performed in 1842 (then he also had a role in it). Except for *Bánk bán*, which was premiered a decade after his death, he sang supporting roles in all the operas based on his libretti.

²⁵ Egressy, Ákos: *Petőfi Sándor életéből* [From the Life of Sándor Petőfi], Budapest 1909, 28.

Vörösmarty's poem *Szózat* [Appeal] and his *Vadászkar* [Hunters' Chorus] were performed by the male choir of the theatre. It seems that his experiences at Sárospatak are behind the genres of his first known compositions.

Egressy's early Appeal arrangement (probably the earliest of all the settings of the poem) has not survived. As for the *Hunters' Chorus*, it might be identical to a piece starting with the words “Rengeteg homályiban” [In the immense darkness] found in a handwritten volume compiled later under the supervision of the composer.²⁶ The *Hunters' Chorus* was performed again by members of the theatre in a night music concert on 23 March 1840, together with one of the *Magyar népdal* [Hungarian Folksong] choruses by the composer written to János Erdélyi's poems.²⁷ Of the 21 folksongs Erdélyi wrote, 15 were put down on paper in 1839-40, and Egressy set three of them to music (“Elmennék én katonának” [I would gladly join the army], “Magyar leány az én rózsám” [My rose is a Magyar lassie], “Juhász a hegy oldalán” [A shepherd on the hillside]); it is not known which of the listed works was performed. It is worth noting how “up-to-date” he was in responding to new elements in his “translations into notes” already in 1840, as a beginner, with an apparent flair for the strengthening popular tendencies in Hungarian literature inspired by folk traditions.

He started writing libretti in parallel with composition, the precedents also lost in the mists of the past. In summer 1840 two operas based on Béni Egressy's libretti were premiered in Pest: *Tündérlak* [Fairy cottage] with music by József Szerdahelyi on 11 July, and *Bátori Mária* with music by Erkel on 8 August.²⁸ It is not known whether they were written in the first half of the year or the previous year (the latter is more probable for *Bátori Mária*), but they certainly testify to an excellent practical sense for a beginning author.

²⁶ NSzL Music Collection, Ms. mus. 186/1, the title is also *Vadászkar* [Hunters' Chorus].

²⁷ *Honművész* 29 March 1840.

²⁸ Egressy wrote the libretto for Szerdahelyi's comic opera after a comedy (translated from German) which had been popular for decades in Hungary, usually performed with song numbers. The basis for the *Bátori Mária* libretto was the play of the same title by András Dugonics (also often staged all over Hungary for decades).

Both works were successful, the greater and more lasting success being won by *Bátori Mária*, a milestone in the history of national opera, as some contemporaries hailed it. In autumn 1840 Egressy was already writing a new libretto for Erkel.²⁹ The premiere of *Hunyadi László* in January 1844 was the greatest triumph of the Hungarian opera in the Age of Reform. That was in no small measure to the credit of the librettist, who adapted the plot of Lőrinc Tóth's play to the requirements of the medium. His excellent dramatic sense and sweeping but light-handed versification made Béni Egressy the best Hungarian libretto writer of the century (and irreplaceable for Erkel after his untimely death³⁰).

In autumn 1840, two Egressy compositions were performed by Sándor Veszter's "musical society" (noted disseminators of the contemporary popular instrumental dance music repertoire at home and abroad³¹) during their several performances at the National Theatre: on 28 October "Magyarka Frissel" [Little Magyar Tune with Fresh Part]³² and on 30 October *Hontalan* [Homeless]. Nothing is known of the former, but *Homeless* scored considerable success: on 29 December it was played again by the orchestra of the National Theatre and in 1841 the piano score was published. In the same year, more Egressy compositions appeared in print together with *Homeless* (all written for the piano), these being the composer's first published pieces: *Siralom, vigalom* [Grief, Joy], *Keserv és Viszontlátás* [Despair and Reunion] and *Komáromi*

29 *Honművész* 22 October 1840.

30 See Erkel's letter of 1863 to Bertalan Szemere (Németh, Amadé: *Erkel Ferenc életének krónikája* [The Chronicle of Ferenc Erkel's Life], 2nd edition: Budapest 1984, 159–160). The scores of the Erkel operas based on Egressy's libretti were recently published in a collaboration by the Institute for Musicology, Hungarian Academy of Science (HAS), and the National Széchényi Library: *Bátori Mária* edited by Miklós Dolinszky and Katalin Kim Szacsvai (2002); *Hunyadi László* edited by Katalin Kim Szacsvai, with an introduction by Tibor Tallián (2006); *Bánk bán* edited by Miklós Dolinszky (2009).

31 On the ensemble in more detail see the book by Csaba Szíjjártó: *A cigány út ment.../ Magyar cigányzenészek külföldjárása a kiegyezés előtt* [The Gypsy took to the road... Foreign tours of Hungarian Gypsy musicians before the Compromise of 1867] (Budapest 2002), 17–28.

32 The unusual title is probably explained by the opening piece of the concert, "Magyar Frissel" [Magyar tune with a fresh part] by Bihari. Egressy's piece was probably more modest and shorter.

emlék [Memory of Komárom]. Most of them adopt the two-part fast-slow form customary in the verbunkos repertoire since the beginning of the century. Each is captivatingly inspired; the crop of later years often failed to come up to their spontaneity and natural sweep. *Memory of Komárom* has a special place among them with its sweet and nostalgic tone. Most masterful is perhaps the deservedly popular *Homeless*, particularly for the expressive conciseness of its *Andante con moto* slow section in A minor. Its fresh, pliant melodic texture of a historical flavour with flashes of traditional Hungarian turns is paired with reserved pathos, and the ecstatic-heroic ambitions are enriched with a tinge of melancholy in the sighing motifs, as a duality of masculine and feminine features. Through the contrasts of its duality, the A minor slow section of *Homeless* could even be taken as a symbol of the *national character in the Age of Reform*.

It clearly shows the rank Egressy the composer had won within the institution by 1841 that Mihály Vörösmarty's play *Az Áldozat* [The Victim] was performed, from the second night, 5 May, onwards, with Egressy's *Kancsódal* [Pitcher Song] (as the bills reveal, and it was inserted into Károly Thern's incidental music). This male chorus marks the beginning of a series of theatre music and numbers inserted into plays spanning about a decade. The beginning of his translating activity may also be dated to 1841.³³ At first he put French prosaic works into Hungarian, followed by Italian and French opera libretti. A few works are also known to have been translated by him from German. This facet of his activity also testifies to a sensitive pragmatism often stressed by posterity when these works are discussed.

Among his piano pieces published in 1841 the combined *Keserv és Viszontlátás* [Despair and Reunion] has a dedication to Róza König, the future wife of the composer. *Komáromi emlék* [Memory of Komárom] also hints at a personal reference: the following year Egressy married the well-educated chorister born in the town (the

33 His first translation put on stage was Soulié's *Diane de Chivri* (prem.: 31 December 1841), paid for, as the bill says, by the Hungarian Scholarly Society.

girl was just 17 years old). Their marriage was not a happy one; although they had a child (Róza),³⁴ they soon separated.

His composing activity received a great boost from the foundation of a Gypsy band³⁵ on the model of similar ensembles of growing popularity at the time. As Ákos Egressy recalled, his uncle “recruited young Gypsy musician lads from all over the country” and taught them “the systematic playing of their instruments” for years, as a result of which “that was the *first* Hungarian Gypsy band to receive regular professional training”.³⁶ In Pest they performed in public every day, often also in the productions of the National Theatre, and they were among the first to go on concert tours in the provinces.³⁷ Some of the Egressy compositions in their repertoire were also published in the ‘40s, but they performed all sorts of Hungarian – and occasionally foreign – pieces (e.g. by Márk Rózsavölgyi or Johann Strauss the Elder), and even opera overtures (Meyerbeer’s *Robert le Diable*, Erkel’s *Hunyadi László*) and excerpts from musical plays.

In the year 1842 exactly a dozen plays translated by Egressy were produced at the National Theatre,³⁸ and he composed musical numbers for four foreign plays (three of them translated by him). Of the latter, the score of the choral movement written for *A fehérek* [The Whites] is his earliest known autographed manuscript.³⁹ (The majority of his songs and choruses in foreign styles, including *A fehérek kara* [Chorus of The Whites] were

34 Of Egressy’s compositions published in 1844, *Bölcsődal* [Lullaby] received its title upon the birth of his daughter.

35 Bérczessi says (without documentation) that it took place in 1842: op. cit. 99; Szíjjártó claims Egressy became the leader of the Gypsy band of Pápa in 1844: op. cit. 54. On Egressy’s direction of Gypsy bands in more detail, *ibid.*, 54–55, 338–41.

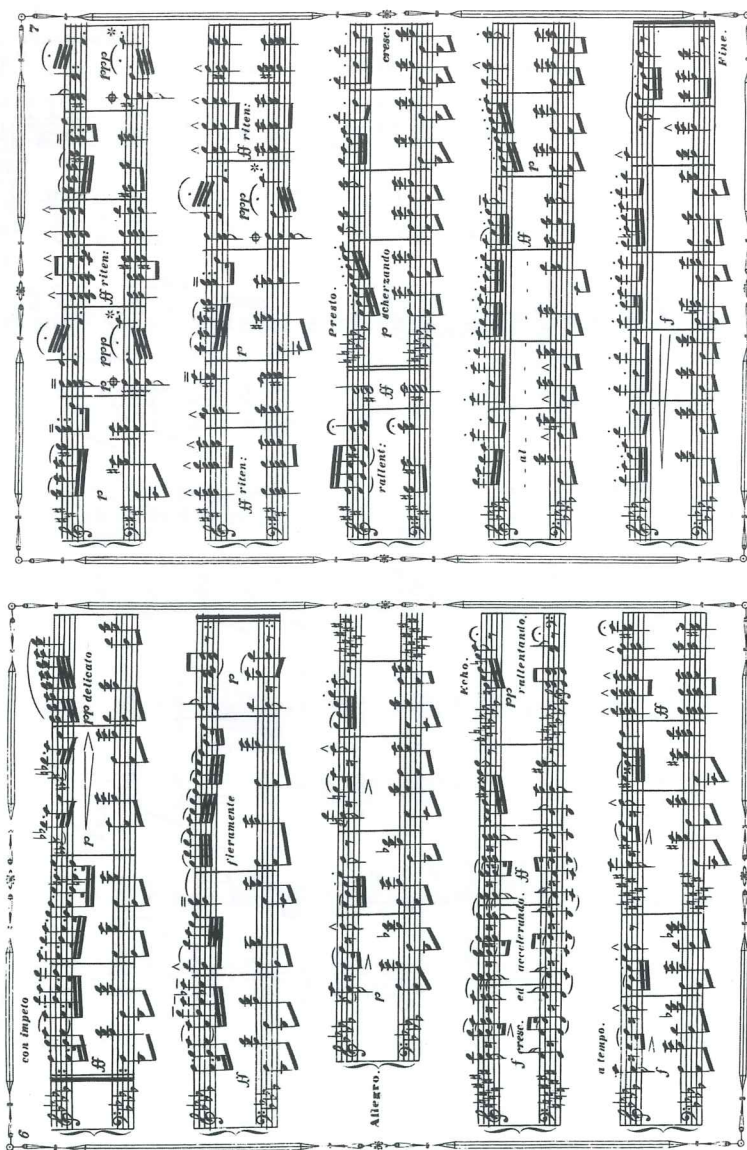
36 Egressy, Ákos op. cit. 28–29.

37 Sárosi, Bálint: *A cigányzenekar múltja 1776–1903 az egykorú sajtó tükrében* [History of the Gypsy band 1776–1903 as reflected in the contemporaneous press], Budapest 2004, 12, 72.

38 Bérczessi op. cit. 91.

39 OSzK Zeneműtár [Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library], Ms. mus. 4614. Unfortunately, in his description of the manuscript István Kecskeméti (*Egressy Béni eredeti hangjegy-kéziratai* [Béni Egressy’s original musical manuscripts], in: *Magyar Zenei-történeti Tanulmányok* [II.], ed. Ferenc Bónis, Budapest 1969, 191–200) took the wrong date to define the time interval, which affected the final conclusion of his paper, too.

First page of the published version of *Szüreti dal* [Vintage Song] (J. Wagner, 1843)



Second and third pages of Szüreti dal [Vintage Song]

composed for the stage.) Regarding his further compositions, on 5 May *Magyar körtánc* [Hungarian Circle Dance] the music of which is unknown, was performed at the theatre, and in September the 8-strong Gypsy band of Pápa, just ahead of a foreign tour, played some of his works there: they added *Hozzá* [To Her] and *Szüreti dal* [Vintage Song] to the earlier ones. The tripartite (Andante–Allegro–Presto) structure of *Vintage Song* is the first known example of the formal type prevalent since János Bihari within the oeuvre of Egressy, in which the principle of the gradualness of tempo change and the contrast of content prevails simultaneously. (This principle of form construction remained important in Hungarian composition later in the 19th century, too: in addition to Egressy's three-section songs, some of Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* may be included here, similarly to the Tisza scene in Erkel's *Bánk bán*.⁴⁰) The middle *Allegro* (D flat major) is an unusual, "delicate" colour in the piece – and of the entire verbunkos repertoire: after the whimsical yet balanced *Andante* – whose basic texture of a Hungarian tone is interlaced in places with Italian operatic elements – it could even be called a *burlesca*. The composition is animated throughout by spontaneous and original humour, particularly the *Allegro* section: its surprising modulations are coupled with a no less amusing echo effect; this character is merrily continued in the *Presto* section – actually the coda in terms of form – directed to be performed *scherzando*. And although the piling up of cadential formulae in the second half of the *Allegro* causes some faltering or even a halt in the progression abounding in surprises so far, the virtuosic invention of the overall construction is compelling. *Vintage Song* is Egressy's equivalent of Bartók's "Kicsit ázottan" [A Bit Drunk]: sparkling individuality in the basically collective idiom of the verbunkos repertoire!

In the violin concert by the famous Belgian virtuoso Henri Vieuxtemps in Pest on 23 January 1843, the male choir of the theatre sang Egressy's *Népdal* [Folksong] (without further specification) as a linking piece. It is also a sign of his recognition

40 Bence Szabolcsi: *A XIX. század magyar romantikus zenéje* [The romantic music of the 19th century], in: *A magyar zene évszázadai II. kötet* [Centuries of Hungarian Music vol. II.], Budapest 1961, 276–277.



as a composer that in a major cultural festival of the year – the celebration of Sándor Kisfaludy on his 70th birthday held at the County Hall on 17 March – a chorus for male voices that Egressy composed to a poem by János Erdélyi, “Mi zengi túl a bérceket” [What resounds beyond the peaks] was also included in the programme.

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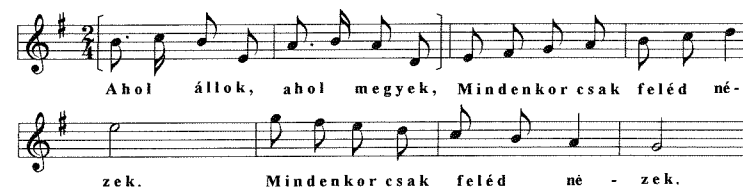
Egressy's greatest creative achievement in the history of Hungarian culture is also connected to the year 1843. His first-prize *Szózat* [Appeal] arrangement composed for a competition became well known throughout the country within a short time following its premiere on 10 May: it was the only one among the many contemporary *Appeal* arrangements to win the true appreciation of the wider public. Egressy's composition is solemn, ceremonious verbunkos music, actually in line with an earlier tradition, representing the same elevated-patriotic verbunkos song type as József Ruzitska's popular “Hunnia” in the '20s and Sándor Kisfaludy's *Nemzeti ének* [National Song] (“Adja Isten, hogy a magyart...” [May God grant that the Hungarians...]) a decade later. They share a fervent tone enriched with expressive melodic leaps and – sometimes attached to the latter – sudden changes in mood. They also share a final upward dart, inspiring the association of an apotheosis (possibly the role of the preceding moments is similar). The arch of the closing revelatory rise and its irresistible sweep reinforce the poetic message: a *real union* of the theoretical content and the musical conception can be witnessed here (although that was what some contemporary critics apparently found lacking).

One comes across similar examples in Egressy's oeuvre whenever the text to be set to music is permeated with an ardent attachment to the native land. The musical techniques employed at the end of the setting of Károly Kisfaludy's poem “Szülőföldem szép határa” [Birthplace of mine, beautiful land] and *Bujdosó* [Exile] rhyme with the end of *Appeal*:

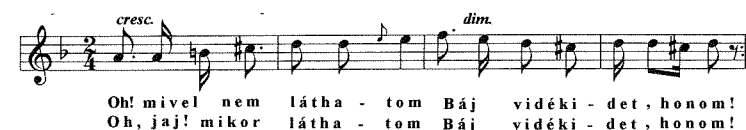
End of the *Szózat*



End of the first part of the song “Szülőföldem szép határa”/“Birthplace of mine, beautiful land”



End of the slow section of the song “Bujdosó”/“Exile”



The same melody type is represented by the vocal closing section of Egressy's setting of Ferenc Kölcsey's *Himnusz* [Hymn].

As regards the melodic aspect of Egressy's composition, it has strong roots in the colloquial formulae of the popular Hungarian music of the age (particularly through reminiscences of popular songs). That, however, did not impede its rising popularity. On the contrary: since Vörösmarty's poem itself exerted a deep influence through the weight of its ideas and its emotional dimensions (as proven by its popularity preceding the musical setting), all there was to do was “find” the right melody in the 1840s that fitted the elevated moments of collective utterances. The poetic text required a kind of music whose component parts unmistakably conveyed the voice of the *nation* and the *age*, mediating patriotic feelings. Through Béni Egressy's composition, the late Age of Reform found a mirror reflection in this melody.

As far as we know, Egressy set the poem *Szózat* [Appeal] to music three times. Just like his 1839 piece mentioned earlier, the one performed by the male choir of the National Theatre together with Erkel's *Appeal* composition on 30 May 1843 seems to be lost. The original tonality of the "laureate" *Appeal* arrangement was F major, and the vocal parts were preceded by a five-bar orchestral introduction. Thus, it was 24 bars long; the repetition of the closing melody section became customary only later.

A publication also of 1843⁴¹ carrying the names of Béni Egressy and József Szerdahelyi contains then widely known song arrangements of a folkish tone. On account of his – mostly later – compositions Egressy became a pioneer and paragon of the *popular art song* repertoire of urban roots, which blossomed over the century, and even surpassed in this role his notable colleagues Károly Thern, József Szerdahelyi and Gusztáv Szénfy.

The upswing of popular art songs – tied by several threads to the kindred tendencies of Hungarian poetry – was in concord with the leading political aspirations of the Age of Reform: "the thin – mostly urban – stratum of educated Hungarians, whose need and efforts brought about the stock of composed Hungarian folksongs, was pleased to see any musical manifestation that was in the Hungarian language and professed to be Hungarian but expressed the musical message of the age more representatively than ordinary peasant music", the analyst Bálint Sárosi concludes.⁴² Indeed, this was a unique episode in the history of Hungarian culture: songs composed in the manner of folksongs recognized no social barriers: noblemen, townsfolk and peasants all felt they belonged to them and sang them with equal enthusiasm. This is confirmed by the urban chronicler Gábor Mátray's record of "three high-spirited Hungarian peasants, their arms round each other's shoulders, unreservedly humming aloud all along Üri Street in Pest, around midnight on 20 July 1849" Egressy's popular arrangement of Mihály Tompa's poem ("Télen nyáron pusztán az én lakásom" [My

41 With the title *Magyar dalvirágok* [Bouquet of Hungarian Songs] Egressy and Szerdahelyi wished to launch a series, but only got as far as the publication of the initial volume. In more detail: Bérczessi op. cit. 100–102.

42 Sárosi: *Cigányzene...*, Budapest 1971, 143.

home is the pusta, in winter and summer"])). In what may be seen as a special case of bridging social class differences, intellectuals, soldiers and artisans imprisoned in the castle of Ljubljana sang 9 or 10 different Egressy songs together in the autumn of 1849.⁴³

The early dissemination of the repertoire of popular art songs was largely facilitated by the strolling companies (e.g. Mrs Déry and her colleagues spreading the famous "Cserebogár-nóta" [Maybug Song]) and later by the National Theatre: these tunes predominated the music of popular plays from the beginning, and also conquered the Hungarian opera to some extent, partly through Erkel.⁴⁴ The synthesizing great composers of 19th-century Hungarian music sometimes heavily drew on this folkish song repertoire in addition to the important influence of the verbunkos tradition, as is evidenced by Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* or Mosonyi's *Szép Ilonka* [Fair Helen]. (Also, such popular art songs were the partial sources of several of Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*.) The weight of these song compositions gradually increased within the 19th-century repertoire of Gypsy bands.

Egressy's, or, for that matter, Thern's popular art songs had little to do with the late 19th century, largely schematic, *magyar nóta* or popular Hungarian song crop, the main character of which is duly described by epithets like "making merry amidst tears" and "Hungarian brooding".⁴⁵ That represented the cultural needs and tastes of a highly characteristic social stratum of the period: the *gentry*. Egressy's popular art songs are tied to the western romantic song stock by their closeness to middle-class culture and theatrical relevance (including their role in the concerts held in the theatre). In terms of music they can be characterized by spontaneous invention and a freshness of melody writing, and on the whole by free, unhindered creative experimentation accompanying the joy of

43 See on all this Bence Szabolcsi's cited work, 258.

44 A melody composed in the style of folksongs was already included in the score of *Erzsébet* (1857: act II was Erkel's work, the two outer acts were composed by the Doppler brothers); a similar musical realm is represented by several details of *Bánk bán* too. Stylistically, the popular art songs later became exclusive in *Névtelen hősök* [Anonymous Heroes].

45 See Bálint Sárosi's entry *magyar nóta* in the Hungarian version of the *Brockhaus–Riemann Dictionary of Music*, ed. Antal Boronkay, Budapest 1984.

the new. Their peculiar “classless” character mentioned earlier, in accord with the main political and cultural endeavours of the age, generated patriotic feelings in the Age of Reform (and fiery passions during the war of liberation 1848–49), then served to keep national sentiments alive in the darkest years of oppression. An essential quality of Egressy’s most often appreciated songs is an unaffected and never exaggerated simplicity (e.g. “Télen nyáron pusztán az én lakásom” [My home is the pusta, in winter and summer]⁴⁶ or *Bujdosó* [Exile]). As Lajos Evva concluded, “He copied the sounds of nature and did not key up the emotions excessively. He was romantic but never bombastic, natural, naïve and folkloristic, but never vulgar.”⁴⁷

Béni Egressy composed music to the folkish poems of the following poets: János Erdélyi, József Gaál, Gergely Czuczor, Károly Kisfaludy, Sándor Petőfi and Mihály Tompa. (The publication co-edited with Szerdahelyi in 1843 includes a popular art tune sung to a Kazinczy poem.) Many of his songs belonging to this category are sung to words by unidentified authors. As for the number of settings by a single poet, Petőfi tops the list way ahead of the other poets; of the Petőfi poems set to music by Egressy the lost “Ezrivél terem a fán a meggy” [Sour cherries grow by the thousand] is surely the earliest. Egressy was the first noted composer to set a Petőfi poem to music. The speed with which he composed is particularly striking in the case of the “folksong” “Sour cherries...”: the poem appeared in No 11 of *Pesti Divatlap* (2nd week, September) and the completion of the song was announced in No 13 (4th week, September) of the same periodical. Further arrangements of Petőfi by Egressy are given in the list below (choruses, songs) with dates. Information on their performance as part of a popular play is given in brackets with the date of the premiere. The Petőfi settings attributed to Egressy without justification have not been included.

⁴⁶ The popular melody, which was also included in Egressy’s instrumental work *Kornéliához* [To Kornélia], naturally became a musical number in popular plays, too, and also inspired Ferenc Liszt to make an arrangement: see Géza Papp’s study *Unbekannte “Verbunkos”-Transkriptionen von Ferenc Liszt*, in: *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae* 29 (1987), 181–218.

⁴⁷ *Magyarország és a Nagyvilág* 21 March 1875.

“A virágnak megtiltani nem lehet” [You can’t forbid the flower], 1847(?) [*A szép juhász* (The Fair Shepherd), 1850]

Alku [The Bargain] (“Juhász legény, szegény juhászlegény” [Young shepherd, poor shepherd lad]) [*A jeggyűrű* (The Engagement Ring) 1846: textual variant; *The fair Shepherd*, 1850]⁴⁸

“De már nem tudom, mit csináljak?” [I don’t know what to do] [*A szökött színész és katona* (The Runaway Actor and Soldier), 1845]

Dínomdánom [Merry-making] (“Hegedűszó, furulyaszó, cimbalom” [Fiddlemusic, flute music, dulcimer]) [*The Fair Shepherd*, 1850]

“Ereszkedik le a felhő” [The Cloud is Descending], 1848(?)

“Ez a világ amilyen nagy” [As immensely large this world is], three-section song (another Petőfi poem – “Kis furulyám szomorú fűz ága” [My pipe is a weeping-willow branch] – is the basis of another section), 1850(?)

“Hull a levél a virágról” [Leaves are falling from the flower] [*The Fair Shepherd*, 1850]

Ivás közben [Drinking] (“Hányadik már a pohár?” [How many glasses have you drunk?]) [*Falusi lakodalmom* (Village Wedding), 1845]

Nemzeti dal [National Song] (together with József Szerdahelyi, 1848)

“Szerelmes vagyok én; Megmondjam-e, kibe?” [I am in love, shall I tell you with whom?] 1847(?) [*The Engagement Ring*: later insertion; *The Fair Shepherd*: textual variant]

Színész dal [Actor’s Song] (“Minden művészetek fején a korona” [The crown on the head of the arts]) [*The Runaway Actor and Soldier*, 1845]

“Temetésre szól az ének” [The song is a funeral song], sung by Kornélia Hollósy on 9 February 1848, music unknown

“A szerelem, a szerelem” [Love, Love] (text after Petőfi), [*A kézműves* (The Artisan), 1847]

“Elvonnék, ha adnának” [I’d marry you, if they’d let me] (text after Petőfi) [*The Fair Shepherd*, 1850]

Bordal [Wine Song] “Üresen áll már a kancsó” [The flask is empty now], poem attributed to Petőfi for a long time, 1844 [*Mátyás diák* (Student Matthias), 1844])

Petőfi’s and Egressy’s endeavours to come close to folk art have been compared several times, demonstrating some intellectual similarity between the two creators’ respective works. It can hardly be an accident that Egressy introduced a new stylistic ideal in Hungarian composition with his music set to Petőfi poems.⁴⁹ Nor

⁴⁸ Egressy’s setting is not identical to the melody generally known today: the latter was a setting by János Erdélyi of Petőfi’s poem. (See e.g.: *Petőfi Sándor Összes Művei* [Collected Works] [critical edition] vol. 4, ed. Ferenc Kerényi, Budapest 2003, 347–48.)

⁴⁹ Cf. Ábrányi, Kornél sr.: *A magyar zene a 19-ik században* [Hungarian Music in the 19th century], Budapest 1900, 108; 116–123.

can it be ignored that their personal relationship was more than simple acquaintance (when in Pest, Petőfi lived in the same building as the Egressy brothers for a time; he was a close friend of Gábor, and in 1845 became Béni's confidant in a delicate matter). As the literary historian János Horváth put it: the folksong "was the most natural expression of the lyrical personality" of Petőfi in all his youth.⁵⁰ The same applies to Egressy's folk-style compositions. Another insight by Horváth, notably, that "it was Petőfi who has done what his predecessors failed to do – to elevate the folksong to literature",⁵¹ parallels the role of Egressy's songs in the Hungarian composition of the age on several counts. The composer probably wanted to create the Hungarian equivalent of the international romance and song repertoire which was performed as musical numbers in plays or in concerts at the National Theatre. By virtue of his *sectional songs* – as Mihály Mosonyi pointed out – Egressy went "a step further" than his fellow Hungarian composers and "created a middle way between the folksong and the operatic aria".⁵² Regarding the form of these songs, he drew the conclusion from the cyclic tradition of instrumental verbunkos music on the one hand, bringing to bear the two-section *slow-fast* or three-section *slow-faster-fresh* conception of *dramaturgical contrast and gradual intensification* (to quote Bence Szabolcsi).⁵³ On the other hand, as Mosonyi's above statement suggests, Egressy must also have had the many-section operatic arias as a model in his mind. It may be taken as indirect proof that the birth of sectional songs is – apparently – tied to the world of stage music, the first examples, composed to Imre Vahot's comedy *Farsangi iskola* [Carnival School], dating from 1844.⁵⁴ They have a structure of two contrasted *slow-fast* (Andante–Allegro) sections. The most interesting is the second number of the play, in which the instrumental

⁵⁰ Horváth, János: *Petőfi Sándor*, Budapest 1922, 70.

⁵¹ Horváth op. cit. 99.

⁵² *Zenészeti Lapok* 8 January 1863, 117. By Mosonyi's *folksong, popular art song* is to be understood.

⁵³ Szabolcsi op. cit., esp.: 288–89.

⁵⁴ Egressy's music to another Vahot play, *Még egy tisztújítás* [Yet Another Election], written in 1843 has not survived, so it cannot be ruled out that this type had already been included in it.

opening section is followed by the song "Ej, haj, magyar ember" [Ay, hey, Magyar people] for mixed voices and orchestra. (The latter, as the *fresh* section of the piano piece *Ábránd* [Fantasy], became known again in 1845.) This martial, snappy melody later also inspired two eminent composers: Liszt elaborated it in *Hungarian Rhapsody No 12* and Brahms in *Hungarian Dance No 15*.

Almost immediately after the earliest known examples of two-section songs Egressy composed songs of three sections, and a few years later (first in the music of *A kézműves* [The Artisan], 1847) of four sections. These musical numbers in plays are characterized by diverse structural invention (all variants set on a few basic schemes). Most are for solo voice, but they also include duos, trios and even choral sections; the vocal sections may be preceded by an instrumental introduction (*The Artisan*), or two vocal sections may be connected by a recitative (*Két Sobri* [Two Sobris]). New types of multi-sectional songs intended by the composer for concert performance were written around 1850 and also came out in print.

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The climax of the National Theatre in the Age of Reform, the season of 1843/44, was catalytic for Egressy's creative growth and development and the enrichment of the palette of his activities, in addition to the works mentioned. That was the first time he had compiled incidental music for whole stage plays (Imre Vahot's comedy *Még egy tisztújítás* [Yet Another Election], premiere 16 December 1843; *Farsangi iskola* [Carnival School] 17 February 1844). István Balog's popular historical play, *Mátyás diák* [Student Matthias] was also produced with music by Egressy in June 1844. The first opera libretti he had translated (Donizetti's *La Fille du Régiment* and *Linda*) were also performed in 1844. He also took part in the competition to compose music for Ferenc Kölcsey's *Himnusz* [Hymn] that year and received praise for his submission, which was performed together with Ferenc Erkel's prize-winning composition at the National Theatre on 2 July 1844.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ The manuscript of the work is in the library of the Institute for Musicology, HAS: Major-estate: C-388 *Fond.* 2/58.

Egressy was also involved in the national dance movement, which called into being several choreographies after Márk Rózsavölgyi's *Első magyar társas tánc* [First Hungarian Social Dance] (1842) and many a composition labelled "Magyar Circle Dance" or "Social Dance" in the mid-forties. Egressy published cyclic dance pieces with titles such as *Mézeshetek* [Honeymoon] (1844), *Bokréta* [Nosegay] (1845) and *Társalgó* [Conversing] (1846), (the first two adopting Rózsavölgyi's pattern). As Bálint Sárosi succinctly points out, "This very social dance movement was to bring into fashion the *csárdás* [lit. dance in the roadside inn], the new social dance, whose name already indicates (in contrast *palotás* – a palace dance) that the new vernacular-inspired national spirit encompassed dancing as well".⁵⁶ Egressy's *Conversing* also contains a *Csárdás* movement; this dance name is present among the titles of his instrumental pieces published from 1845. Among the latter pieces, he performed the *Tiszaparti csárdások* [Csárdás Tunes along the Tisza] with his own band in the National Theatre, together with a cycle of unknown music, *Dunamelléki csárdások* [Csárdás Tunes from along the Danube] (as a highly intriguing duality[!]: on 23 and 26 October 1845).

Beside his musical numbers in plays composed during 1845, he also compiled more lengthy stage music for István Jakab's comedy of the 1830s, *Falusi lakodalom* [Village Wedding] (performed with his musicians on 20 July) and for Viktor Haray's popular play *Szökött színész és katona* [The Runaway Actor and Soldier]. The 20th-century specialists who were indefatigable in denigrating the folksong-like compositions of the previous century ought to have taken in hand a handwritten score, say, of *The Runaway Actor and Soldier*.⁵⁷ What a lot of innovation and fresh flavour in a volume of a mere 29 numbered pages! How excellent the choruses! The opening piece – the time-honoured, heroic arches of the soldier's song "Veres csákó süvegem" [My Hat is a Blood-red Shako] – sung by male voices with orchestral accompaniment; then somewhat later the mixed voices and orchestra performance of "Be szép a

⁵⁶ *Cigányzene...*, 143–44.

⁵⁷ Apparently a clear copy is found in the music collection of the NSZL marked *népszínházi gyűjt.* 714.

katona"⁵⁸ [How nice a soldier is] (later widely known as a *csárdás* tune, also used by Liszt and Brahms for arrangements); the highly expressive short *a cappella* male chorus settings of Petőfi's or Károly Kisfaludy's poems ("De már nem tudom, mit csináljak" [I don't know what to do], *Színész dal* [Actor's Song], "Sárga levél, sárga levél" [Yellow leaf, yellow leaf] and the impressive closing chorus of the solemn phrases of the popular art song "Magasan repül a daru" [The crane is flying high] – they are all captivatingly artless moments of the musical repertoire composed for the Hungarian stage of the period.⁵⁹

When it comes to the music of popular plays, it is not always clear whether Egressy was the *composer* or the *arranger* of a melody. That was general practice at the time: the majority of pieces inserted into popular plays were widely known or newly composed folkish tunes, and a small proportion comprised real folksongs and other types of music.⁶⁰ The music he compiled for Imre Vahot's poorly received *A kézműves* [The Artisan] (1847) survives defectively. He used some of its melodies a few months later, for a Scribe comedy, *A woman who jumps out of the window* (as the manuscript of *The Artisan* reveals. The score of *A woman...* is lost). From 1846, his public acclaim was enhanced by most diverse successes in addition to these musical scores for stage plays: some of his compositions were included in programmes of the most outstanding performers of the age.

⁵⁸ Liszt: *Hungarian Rhapsody No 8*; *Hungaria symphonic poem* (coda); Brahms: *Hungarian Dance No 3*. This melody is identical to the D major vivace section of an arrangement by József Riszner published under the title *Tolnai lakodalmás* [Wedding Song from Tolna] around 1847. It must have been widely known; Egressy had arranged it earlier, in 1845, before it appeared in print.

⁵⁹ The melody of "Magasan repül a daru..." [The crane is flying high] was also arranged by Egressy in the opening *Andante* of the three-part *Rákosi emlék* [Memory of Rákos] also composed in 1845, and his melodic invention was influenced by it later, too (see: *Két Sobri* [Two Sobris] No 11, as well as the song "Óh ne mondj engem rózsádnak" [Don't say, ah, that I'm your darling]. The melody was perpetuated for posterity primarily by Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody No 14* and *Hungarian Fantasy*. ⁶⁰ On the general question of authorship of this crop of 19th-century songs most recently, see Kim Szacsvai, Katalin: *Az Erkel-műhely kezdetei...* [The beginnings of the Erkel workshop], in: *Zenatudományi Dolgozatok 2009* [Budapest], ed. Gábor Kiss, 191–244. But the Egressy song she cites – "Mi füstölög ott a síkon" [What is that smoke in the distance?] – is not problematic, as it was published under the composer's name in his lifetime (1843).

During his international concert tour, Hector Berlioz visited Pest in February 1846, conducting two evenings of his works. It is well known that the first version of his arrangement of the *Rákóczi March* was completed for this occasion. The programme of the two concerts was the same, with one exception: on the second night, Berlioz's song (*Le chasseur danois*) was replaced by Béni Egressy's not clearly identified *Romance* and *Hungarian Folksong*.⁶¹ To be involved as the only Hungarian composer in the Pest concert of one of the most outstanding composers of the century was no small honour!

Egressy had an equally important role to play a few months later, when Ferenc Liszt returned to his native country after his legendary visit in 1839–40. Spending a considerable part of the year 1846 at home, Liszt sojourned in Pest twice, first between 29 April and 14 May. Béni Egressy composed a two-section piece entitled *Fogadj Istén* [Welcome] to pay homage to Liszt, which he performed in public several times. The critic of *Der Ungar* (13 May) gives a very vivid account of one of the concerts: "General ecstasy! I heard a gentleman exclaim rapturously: 'Egressy uttered a beautiful word, and Liszt has woven a whole oration from it!'" The second sentence accurately describes what happened: the original form of the *Hungarian Rhapsody No 10* was born during these May concerts (and published later in 1846); the whole composition is based on Egressy's piece.⁶² Egressy contributed to the grand spring celebrations in other ways as well: on the evening of Liszt's arrival in Pest he sought him out with his band, and on 6 May he and the orchestra, alternating with Rózsavölgyi's ensemble, made spirits rise high during the banquet; on 12 May it was again Egressy's Gypsy band who entertained the social elite gathered for a stately dinner.

⁶¹ The song was omitted by the composer because of the inaccuracies of the performance five days earlier. In more detail, see *Berlioz látogatása Magyarországon 1846-ban* [The visit of Berlioz to Hungary in 1846], in: *Magyar Zene* 2004/2, 95–110. (= *Berlioz' Ungarnbesuch 1846*, in: *Studia Musicologica...* 2005, 157–174.)

⁶² *Fogadj Istén* [Welcome] was published with a dedication to Liszt in 1846. The final form of *Hungarian Rhapsody No 10* was printed in 1853; in return, Liszt dedicated both versions to Egressy.

They acquainted the provinces with their music in the summer of the same year: in July–August during their Upper Hungarian tour they played in Gyöngyös, Eger, Paráds, Miskolc, Kassa, Ránk, Eperjes and Bártfa among other places. The memory of their concerts is perpetuated by the title of Egressy's composition (*Sárosi visszzhangok* [Echoes of Sáros]) published the following year. In the autumn the tour continued in Southern Hungary, the known stations being Temesvár, Arad, Újvidék and Bánlak in October (without the presence of the band leader in person). At Bánlak they played for Ferenc Liszt, too, as a surprise concert by the host Count Guido Karátsonyi.

In 1846 three Donizetti operas and one by Auber were performed at the National Theatre in Egressy's translations, and in January 1847 Verdi's *Nabucco*, a month later *Ernani* were produced with texts translated by him. All the libretti of Verdi's operas performed in Hungarian before his death in 1851 were translated into Hungarian by Béni Egressy. In summer 1846 a new star rose above the Hungarian stage of Pest: the ideal Kornélia Hollósy,⁶³ whose personal and artistic radiation did not leave Egressy untouched. The following year he published an instrumental piece, *Kornéliához* [To Kornélia], in which – unusually – two slow and one fast sections form a three-movement cycle. The opening slow part is an arrangement of Petőfi's "A virágnak megtiltani nem lehet" [You can't forbid a flower], the second section is an instrumental version of a song written to a Tompa poem "Télen nyáron pusztán az én lakásom" [My home is the pusta, in winter and summer]. Hollósy performed both in the National Theatre between 1847 and 1850, also premiering other Egressy songs. She often inserted these compositions into the singing lesson scene in *The Barber of Seville*.

The music compiled for Ede Szigligeti's experimental historical drama, *Párbaj mint istenítélet* [Trial by Combat], was Egressy's first collaboration with the most successful Hungarian playwright of the century. The premiere was on 4 March 1848, followed by

⁶³ Hollósy first sang in the National Theatre on 23 July 1846. She was a contracted member of the theatre from September 1846 to spring 1850 and in 1854–62, but she returned in 1851–52 for guest performances. Her performances gave hope and consolation in the dark years of absolutism. János Arany's poem of a few lines (*Hollósy Kornéliának* [To K. Hollósy], 1857) says more than anything else about it.

six more performances. To the revolutionary events on the Ides of March Egressy responded immediately, as usual: he set Sándor Petőfi's *Nemzeti dal* [National Song] to music almost simultaneously with its first recital (in collaboration with József Szerdahelyi: the printed version a little later carries both names).⁶⁴ On 18 March the poem was recited by Gábor Egressy in the theatre, followed by its arranged version in a performance by "the entire choral staff" (as the bill says).

In May 1848 a mime based on dance scenes from the life of the common people was presented at the National Theatre, entitled *Sobri*; the plot took place about a decade earlier in the Bakony Mountains. On the first nights (4 and 7 May) Béni Egressy's "folk music society" played the music, and the play, together with Szigligeti's *Két pisztoly* [Two Pistols] became an important inspiration later for Egressy's own popular play *Two Sobris*.⁶⁵

From late September, he – like many of his fellow actors and relatives – also volunteered to take part in the war of liberation. In February 1849 in the battle of Kápolna both his legs were seriously wounded, resulting in a lasting physical defect. His state made him resign from all his military ranks in a letter of 2 March,⁶⁶ after which he was bedridden for months at his friend the Calvinist minister Károly Fekete's home in Ónod. While convalescing, he put his creative energies in the service of church music: he wrote organ accompaniments and preludes to the Geneva psalm tunes found in the congregational song-books and compiled a separate

⁶⁴ On this topic see the book of studies by Ervin Major: *Fejezetek a magyar zene történetéből* [Chapters in the History of Hungarian Music], Budapest 1967, 201.

⁶⁵ The one-act play was directed by Sándor Veszter and Lajos Kilányi. On precedents to the *Sobri* theme on the Hungarian stage, see the book by Tóth, Dénes: *A magyar népszínmű zenei kialakulása* [The Emergence of the Music of Hungarian Popular Plays], Budapest 1953, and János Horváth's work: *A magyar irodalmi népiesség Faludtól Petőfig* [Folklorism in Hungarian Literature from Faludi to Petőfi], Budapest, 2nd edition, 1978, 248. In *Két pisztoly* [Two Pistols] Béni Egressy also participated as *Sobri*.

⁶⁶ Zoltán Szénássy has explored new documents to broaden our knowledge of Egressy's role in the war of independence: *A komáromi induló hőse* [The Hero of the Komárom March], Komárno 2001, 75–86.

book from them.⁶⁷ In June, in a half-recovered state, he volunteered for the army in Komárom and became the leader of the band of the second corps as lieutenant.⁶⁸ The town had rich traditions in military music; in 1849 two military bands were stationed in the town. The other was lead by Károly Doppler.

Ákos Egressy's recollection dated 2 July conjures up the circumstances of the composition of the march that includes in its title the name of General György Klapka, the defender of Komárom: "chance had it that I met my uncle Béni, who, in the rank of lieutenant, was stationed in the courtyard of a house with his company. Still suffering from the leg wound he received in the battle of Kápolna, Béni was lying on thatch in the yard with bandaged leg, copying the notes of the 'Klapka March' when I arrived, and he had it performed by a band outside Klapka's flat a few days later".⁶⁹ The orchestration was probably done by Doppler.⁷⁰ Mór Jókai, in his late novel *A mi lengyelünk* [Our Pole], recalls the public premiere of the *Klapka March* on 4 August. In his account, the military victory the previous day was celebrated with a grand pageant by the town, in the course of which the military band led by Egressy marched along the streets playing the piece.

⁶⁷ None of the surviving manuscripts are original. They are in the Music Coll. of the NSzL, marked *Ms. Mus. 186/2* and *Ms. Mus. 194*; and in the Ráday Library, Budapest: K.O. 18. *Ms. Mus. 194* contains Ferenc Doppler's corrections and suggestions, possibly inserted after the composer's death. K.O. 18 is a clear copy made and corrected by Károly Doppler after Egressy's death. On Egressy's psalm harmonizations and preludes, see: Kálmán Csomasz Tóth's study in *Egyháztörténet* [Budapest, Református Egyetemes Konvent] 1959/ nos 3–4. (256–7); János Máté's writing: "Itt éljed, halnod kell". 180 éve született Egressy Béni [You must live and die here. Béni Egressy was born 180 years ago], in: *Magyar Egyházzene* 1993/94 (479–483.); as well as István György Ágoston's article in *Teológiai Szemle* 2000/3.

⁶⁸ As all through his life, Egressy's activity in Komárom was also diverse: besides being an army musician, he published poems in *Komáromi Lapok* and temporarily edited the paper, too. On his service in Komárom in detail: Szénássy op. cit. 90–113.

⁶⁹ Egressy, Ákos: *Emlékeim az 1848–49-dik évi szabadságharc idejéből* [My memories from the time of the war of liberation in 1848/49], Budapest 1893, 130–31.

⁷⁰ Szénássy, Zoltán: *Egressy Béni Komáromban* [Béni Egressy in Komárom], in: *Honismeret* 2001/2, 52.

On 30 August the *Klapka March* was performed in a charity concert and was played again in Komárom on 3 October, when the castle was handed over. It was published in autumn 1849, with the title *Komáromi utóhangok* [Echoes of Komárom], and *Klapka March* on the inner frontispiece.

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After the capitulation of Komárom, Egressy as a defender of the town received safe-conduct to return to Pest, to the National Theatre,⁷¹ which was living its most critical days. The bills reveal that his next public appearance was on 23 January 1850. Two days later he sang in *Lucia di Lammermoor* together with Ferenc Stéger, who was then at the beginning of his career (they had first performed together in *Bátori Mária* in August 1848). The relationship of colleagues soon became friendship: Egressy composed and dedicated his previously mentioned song in two sections, *Bujdosó* [Exile], for Stéger;⁷² the celebrated tenor later also undertook the role of Sobri in *Two Sobris*.

Two of the sectional songs composed in the final years were premiered – and performed several times – by Kornélia Hollósy in February–March 1850; their printed versions are also dedicated to her (“Ez a világ amilyen nagy” [As immensely large this world is] and *Csalogány búcsúja* [The Nightingale’s Farewell]; the melodies of the former were later interlaced into *Fantaisie sur des mélodies Hongroises*, a piano piece by Anton Rubinstein, who gave concerts in Hungary several times). *The Nightingale’s Farewell* is based on Egressy’s own poem. It is allegorical: Hollósy’s last concert in Pest in 1850 was on 2 April, after which she went abroad for a long time. She continued to popularize these songs abroad (and after Egressy’s death), too (for instance, in 1852 she sang

71 That fact that plays and opera libretti he had translated were staged in early 1849 proves that his connection with the theatre was not broken during the war of liberation.

72 Stéger first sang it in public in the National Theatre with orchestral accompaniment on 18 February 1850.

the arrangement of the Tompa poem, “Télen nyáron...” [My home is the pusta...] in front of the Tsar and Tsarina in Warsaw⁷³).

Egressy’s most popular Petőfi song, “Ez a világ...” [As immensely large...], was also included in concert programmes by Anne de La Grange. The guest performances by the young opera star in 1850 (between May and November) gave a huge impetus to musical life at the National Theatre. Hungarian music history can be grateful to the art of La Grange for Erkel’s well-known bravura aria in *Hunyadi László*, in addition to a four-section virtuosic song by Egressy (“Azt gondolom, az ég borús” [I think the sky is overcast], dedicated to the singer, who performed it in the singing lesson scene of the *Barber of Seville* on 8 September).

Another Egressy song composed in 1850 is the two-section “Óh ne mondj engem rózsádnak” [Don’t say, ah, that I’m your darling]. His two-section “Ki vagyok én, mi a nevem” [Who am I, what is my name?] and three-section “Viola, kék viola szál” [Gillyflower, blue gillyflower], settings of poems by Gergely Czuczor, appeared in print in July 1851, immediately after his death.⁷⁴ These, however, constitute only a small part of the awe-inspiring wealth of his output in the last one and a half years of his life. In 1850, no fewer than 10 play and libretto translations of his were staged at the National Theatre (including Meyerbeer’s *Prophet*, which he did together with Szerdahelyi). In the autumn, he finished the libretto of *Bánk bán*. The most spectacular fruits of his last creative period include the music for the popular plays, into which Egressy infused his finest creative invention. In the chronology of the premieres: Mór Jókai: *Földönfutó* [Outlaw] (14 April 1850); Ede Szigligeti: *Fidibus* (20 April); József Szigeti: *A szép juhász* [The Fair Shepherd] (11 May), and lastly, his play *Két Sobri* [Two Sobris] (11 January 1851). Wedged among these were the few movements written for Lajos Dobsa’s *Világismeret* [Worldly Wisdom] (premiered on 30 November 1850), which was simply a quick routine piece: he must have been engrossed in composing the music for *Two Sobris* at the time. In addition, he continued to undertake regular minor acting or singing roles.

73 Erkel Ferencz Emlékkönyv... op. cit. 175.

74 Cf. Bérczessi op. cit. 152.

After 1849, the popular plays could no longer explicitly convey the democratic ideas of the Age of Reform. Despite the forced paths the writers had to take, these plays served to keep the national ideas alive through their themes alone. Music had far greater possibilities in mediating patriotic content than text, and Egressy utilized them to the full: his incidental music for popular plays in 1850 conjured up the painfully glorious days of the war of independence now more openly (thus either nostalgically or with a heroic tone) or more covertly, through allusions. Those of a nostalgic tone included the reworded *Kossuth Song* in *Földönfutó* [Outlaw] and later in *A szép juhász* [The Fair Shepherd]; the more heroic musical pieces included the *Klapka March* in *Fidibus*, with verses encouraging for a battle, too! What is more, the words of “Ég a kunyhó, ropog a nád” [The hut’s burning, the reed’s crackling], a song of decades-long popularity – as the closing item of *Fidibus* – could also be associated with the war of liberation.⁷⁵ In the 1850 performance of *Fidibus*, the following strophe was sung to the *Klapka March*:

The world of the hero is the din of battle,
Where the thunder of cannons can be heard,
He goes to the field of the battle bravely,
Saying: Forward, bravely forward!

From 1861, the melody was sung nationwide with text by Kálmán Thaly, gradually modified through usage to the currently known form: “Fel, fel vitézek...” [Forward, warriors...]⁷⁶

However, with the exception of *A szép juhász* [The Fair Shepherd], the plays mentioned were not successful, *Földönfutó* [Outlaw] being performed just once, *Fidibus* twice, and the Dobsa comedy three times. The wretchedness of their libretti could not be counterbalanced by the quality of the music. (These experiences also urged Egressy to produce as soon as possible a stage work wholly of his own.) His stage musical works for the popular plays

⁷⁵ See *Népies dalok* [Popular Art Songs], ed. György Kerényi (Népzenei könyvtár 3.), Budapest 1961, 210; Major op. cit. 208.

⁷⁶ In more detail: Major op. cit. 204–5.

composed in 1850 were of a complex spectrum, often testifying to an excellent sense of humour, too, and in terms of genre, Egressy took a stride forward towards the opera. Not that this endeavour was new: it was an inherent specificity of incidental music for popular plays to “smuggle in” an operatic air or two.⁷⁷ As a next step, the boundary of the song as a stage genre was stretched towards becoming *part of a scene* (*Fidibus*); added to these were traditionally operatic elements (recitative passages, duet, trio aria sections, and illustrative orchestral interludes in *Földönfutó* [Outlaw]). The opening section of *Két Sobri* [Two Sobris] was wholly sung: a sectional chorus and an equally sectional solo vocal part were combined and even a connecting recitative was inserted to bridge two sections. Egressy’s *Two Sobris* was not unsuccessful, being performed seven times. As the manuscript – the most voluminous incidental musical compilation by the author for a stage play⁷⁸ – reveals, the orchestration was done by Ferenc Doppler and József Szerdahelyi, taking turns.

The theatrical bills inform posterity that Béni Egressy last entered the stage on 27 May 1851, in a supporting role in the *Prophet*. He died on 17 July. At his funeral two days later members of the National Theatre choir and orchestra performed his own songs. A few days after his death, the Gypsy musician József Kecskeméti composed an instrumental piece in memory of his former teacher, and later published it with the title *Egressy halotti harangozása* [Ringing the Soul-bell for Egressy]. Adolf Ellenbogen and János Kirch also took their leave of the late colleague in a composition (*Egressy Béni emlék* [Memory of Béni Egressy], 1851; *Emlék Egressy Béni sírkövére* [Memorial for the Gravestone of

⁷⁷ As if the specific traditions of *vaudeville* were living on within the frames of the new theatrical genre (cf. Kerényi, Ferenc: *A régi magyar színpadon 1790–1849* [On the old Hungarian stage 1790–1849], Budapest 1981, 431–440). For example, in the ball scene of the *Szökött katona* [Runaway Soldier] a chorus from Auber’s *Gustavus III*, in the bandits’ scene of *Két pisztoly* [Two Pistols] the relevant chorus of *Fra Diavolo* was inserted. In Egressy’s *Szökött színész és katona* [The Runaway Actor and Soldier] the *Toborzó kar* [Recruiting Chorus] from the comic opera by András Bartay Csel [The Ruse] was included, together with an aria from Herold’s *Zampa*. Later, *Földönfutó* [Outlaw] contains an excerpt from the Wolf’s Glen scene in *Der Freischütz*.

⁷⁸ NSzL, music coll.: *popular plays coll.* 405.

Béni Egressy], 1852), and later Mihály Mosonyi devoted a poetical funeral elegy to the memory of the one-time poet of music (*A csalogány panasza Egressy Béni felett* [Complaint of the Nightingale over Béni Egressy], 1860). On 24 September 1851, Róza König married Antal Csengery. Ákos Egressy noted that little Róza only survived her father by a few months.⁷⁹

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The development of Béni Egressy's compositional career is clear cut: it rose from simple (mostly strophic) male choruses and songs through more complex instrumental forms to incidental music for plays and popular theatrical works, finally reaching a stage in which certain operatic elements were also fused with stage music. In the knowledge of his oeuvre his stature as a composer is now more subtly interpreted than it so often was by specialists earlier: despite his unquestionable deficiencies in theoretical training, he was a composer of wide perspectives. No small difference when compared to his amateur song composer contemporaries! His ultimate ambition – as János Erdélyi realized at an early date – could have been no less than opera composition. He was an unselfish but self-conscious artist, this duality was manifest on multiple occasions in his career. The dictates of his goal sometimes pitted him against his renowned colleagues. He fought for his truth with self-respect; in May 1847, he threatened a ridiculous Beckmesserian critic with a “punitive” night serenade.⁸⁰

Certainly more dearly cherished by him than these critical gnat bites was Ferenc Liszt's acknowledgement and his many a friendly gesture. Apart from him – as well as Brahms and Rubinstein – Egressy's melodies also inspired later Hungarian composers, including Kornél Ábrányi, Kálmán Chován, Imre Székely and Antal Siposs.⁸¹ It suffices to refer to the arrangements of *Szózat* [Appeal]

⁷⁹ Szinnyei, József: *Magyar írók élete és munkái* [Lives and Works of Hungarian Writers] vol. II. (Budapest 1893), *Csengery Antal* name entry; NSzL, MSS coll.: *Analekta* 1214.

⁸⁰ Sárosi: *A cigányzenekar múltja...* op. cit., 73–74.

⁸¹ On the latter, see in detail Bérczessi op. cit. 113.

in the past two centuries. The musicians of his time disseminating Hungarian music also played his pieces in Vienna, Triest and possibly other cities in the West, too.⁸² He was one of the few whose compositions could address his age, and whose compositions were nurtured by his age, in the profound sense of the word, and not by the fleeting moment. His ambitious individual results were achieved so as to serve “no less than the sacred cause of the progress of culture, theatre, literature, Hungarian music and the Hungarian nation”.⁸³ This he did not always do in a spectacular form, but nevertheless – as his contemporaries attested – almost indispensably.

⁸² Szíjjártó op. cit. 35, 79, 84, 86, 108.

⁸³ To quote the lofty words of Zoltán Csorba (op. cit. 44.)

Catalogue of Works

Besides the 1852 obituary (*Életrajzi vázlat* [Biographical Sketch] and Gyula B. Bérczessi's handwritten list of works (owned by the Institute for Musicology, Hungarian Academy of Science), the catalogue has been prepared on the basis of the bibliographic works of István Kecskeméti, Ilona Mona and Géza Papp, and recent research results. The manuscripts of Béni Egressy's works can – with one indicated exception – be found in the Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library.

(Abbreviations: m ch = for male choir; Ms = manuscript; P = publication; T = J. Treichlinger, Pest; v+pn = for voice and piano; W = J. Wagner, Pest)

Incidental music for plays and popular plays; musical numbers in stage plays

(All premiered at the National Theatre in Pest.)

All the music compiled for each popular play is presented below, irrespective of whether the songs included were composed or just arranged by Béni Egressy.)

- Az áldozat [The Victim] (Mihály Vörösmarty, 1841): *Kancsódal* [Pitcher Song]: "A kancsó kézről kézre jár" [The pitcher goes from hand to hand], m ch (Ms; P: v+pn: W, 1843: "Magyar népdalok" [Hungarian Folksongs])
- Négy huszár és gyermekharisnya [Four Hussars and Children's Trousers] (F. Hopp, 1842): *Huszárdal* [Hussar Song], m ch, music unknown
- A fehérek [The Whites] (F. Mallefille and A. d'Artignes, 1842): *A fehérek kara* [Chorus of the Whites]: "Mindenható, ki ülsz a csillagok felett" [Almighty seated above the stars], m ch (Ms)
- A velencei nő [The Venetian Woman] (A. Anicet-Bourgeois, 1842): *Csajkadál* [Bowl Song]: "Kijött az esti szellő" [The evening breeze is here] (P: v+pn: T, c.1848)
- Az ördög naplója [The Devil's Diary] (É. Arago, 1842): *Románcz* [Romance] "Messze messze a zajos Párizstól" [Far, far away from noisy Paris] (P: v+pn: T, c.1848)
- Még egy tisztújítás [Yet Another Election] (Imre Vahot, 1843), music unknown
- Farsangi iskola [Carnival School] (Imre Vahot, 1844): songs, choruses for male and mixed choirs with orchestral accompaniment: "Estve van már a faluban" [It is evening in the village]; *Andante mosso* and "Ej, haj, magyar ember" [Ay, hey, Magyar people]; "A farsang jelen van" [The carnival is present]; "Mi füstölög ott a síkon távolban?... [What is that smoke in the distance?] El hát el hát a bálba" [Come on, let's go to the ball]; "Ó be kár, hogy szolgák vagyunk..." [What a pity we are servants] Volnék csak én Pest-Budában" [I wish I were in Pest-Buda] (Ms)
- Figaro leánya [Figaro's Daughter] (J. Mélesville, 1844): *Hozzá* [To Her] "Ki lopta el szememnek álmait" [Who has stolen the dreams of my eyes] (P: v+pn: T, c.1848)
- Mátyás diák [Student Matthias] (István Balog, 1844): songs, choruses for male and mixed choirs with orchestral accompaniment, a cappella male choruses, orchestral movements: "Isten édes jó atyánk" [God, our kindly Father];

"Csípős szél fújdogál" [A nippy wind is blowing]; "A tót diák" [The Slovakian Student]; "Be jó gazdasszony volt..." [What a good housewife she was] Divus Plato magnus Aristoteles"; "De mit töröm fejemet" [Why am I racking my brains]; *Kancsódal* [Pitcher Song]: "A kancsó kézről kézre jár" [The pitcher goes from hand to hand]; "Micsoda falu ez" [What a village this is]; "Azt mondják is" [It is rumoured]; "Mátyás diák szép Buda várában" [Student Matthias in fair Buda castle]; "Éljen Mátyás dicső hazánk" [Long live Matthias, our glorious country]; *Magyar induló* [Hungarian March]; "Még a világ világ lesz" [Till the end of the world] (Ms)

A két Barcsay [The Two Barcsays] (Miklós Jósika, 1844): *Bordal* [Wine Song], music unidentifiable

Párizsi szerencsevadászok [Paris Adventurers] (A. D'Ennery and E. Grange, 1845): *Kardal* [Chorus], music unknown; (*mazurka*: see list of piano works)

Iñes (Navarrete y Fernández Lauda, 1845): *Romance*: "Repülj, repülj e partról" [Fly, fly away from this shore] (P: W, prior to 1849)

Falusi lakodalmom [Village Wedding] (István Jakab, with music: 1845): male and mixed choruses with orchestral accompaniment: "Tisza partján egy hajó kikötve" [A boat is moored on the banks of the Tisza]... Nem anyától lettél [You were not born to a mother]... Úgy ég a tűz ha lobog" [The fire's good when it's ablaze]; "Hányadik már a pohár? [How many glasses have you drunk?]... [Sándor Petőfi] Piros cipő, piros pánt" [Red shoes, red ribbon]; "Lágy a kenyér pirítani nem lehet [The bread is soft, you cannot toast it]... Van szederfa, de nincs rajta [There's a mulberry tree without fruit...]; "Egy az Isten, kit hiszünk [There is but one God we believe in]" [János Garay] (Ms)

A szökött színész és katona [The Runaway Actor and Soldier] (Viktor Haray, 1845): songs, choruses for male and mixed voices with orchestral accompaniment, a cappella male choruses: "Veres csákó süvegem [My hat is a red shako]; "Bort ittam én, boros vagyok [I have drunk wine, I am tipsy]... Be szép a katona [How handsome a soldier is]... Ha kimegyek a csárdába [When I go to the roadside inn]; "De már nem tudom, mit csináljak [I don't know what to do]" [Sándor Petőfi]; "Be szépen szól a clarinét" [How nicely the clarinet sings]; *Színész dal* [Actor's Song] "Minden művészetek fején a korona" [The crown on the head of the arts] [Petőfi]; "Sárga levél, sárga levél" [Yellow leaf, yellow leaf] [Károly Kisfaludy]; "Ha megunom magam a pusztába [When I get bored in the pusta]; "Magasan repül a daru [The crane is flying high]" (Ms)

A királyné és a kalandorok [The Queen and the Adventurers] (H. Laube, 1845): *Matróz dal* [Sailor's Song], male choir, music unknown

A jegygyűrű [The Engagement Ring] (József Szigeti, 1846): instrumental introduction, songs with orchestral accompaniment, duets, choruses for female, male and mixed voices: *Introductio*; "Csipkés a szőlő levele" [The vine leaf is crenellated]; "Oh világok alkotója" [Oh creator of all worlds]; "Kicsiny vagyok én" [I am little]; "Azt szokták szememre vetni" [It's often cast up to me]... Tavaj, tavaj... [sic] [Last year, last year] Akár miként nevéssenek... [However you may be laughing] Hej kicsiny menyecske" [Ey, fine little housewife]; *Vadászkar* [Hunters' Chorus] "Fel fiúk a rengetegbe" [Let's go, buddies, to the forest]; "Piros arcod ha meglátom... [When I see your lovely red cheeks] Be van az én szűröm ujja kötve... [The sleeves of my fur cloak are tight] Úgyes leány az én rózsám" [My sweetheart's a cute little lass]; "Beszégődtem Tarnóczára bojtárnak... [I got a shepherd's job at Tarnócza]

Tolvaj ment a zsidó konyhájára... [A thief went to the Jew's kitchen] Galambom édes, a csókja mézes [My dove is sweet, her kiss is honey]; "Szegény legény szegény juhász legény" [Poor lad, poor shepherd lad] [after Petőfi]; "Már csak ugyan nem is bánom" [I don't regret it anymore]; subsequent inserts: "Télen nyáron puszta az én lakásom" [My home is the pusta, in winter and summer] [Mihály Tompa]; "Szerelmes vagyok én; Megmondjam-e, kibe?" [I am in love, shall I tell you with whom?] [Petőfi] (Ms)

A kézműves [The Artisan] (Imre Vahot, 1847): songs, choruses for male and mixed voices with orchestral accompaniment, a cappella male choruses: *Marciale* and "Szép ez a mi mesterségünk... [Our craft is very nice] Iszom a bort [I'm drinking wine] [Gergely Czuczor]; "Van-e a korsóba?... [Is there something in the jug?] Hej galambom violám... [Hey, my darling gillyflower] Fel legény a táncra... [Come on, young man, start the dancing] Ez az élet a gyöngy élet [This life is a very nice life]; "A szerelem a szerelem... [Love, Love] [poem written after Petőfi] Eszem adta kis barnája" [Sweet little auburn lass]; [4 pieces without texts]; "Téli virág hófuvallom alatt" [Winter flower under the snow]; "Fel dolgozom... [Let's set to work] Ez deríti fel szívünket" [That's what cheers us up]; "Enyim vagy már szép gyöngyvirág" [You are mine, fair lily flower] (Ms)

Egy nő, ki az ablakon kiugrik [A woman who jumps out of the window] (E. Scribe, 1847), music unknown

Párbaj mint istentétel [Trial by Combat] (Ede Szigligeti, 1848): songs, choruses for male and mixed voices with orchestral accompaniment; "Isten áldja meg magyart" [May God bless Hungarians]; "Kerek az én csizmám sarka" [The heels of my boots are round]; "Az a derék legény... [It is a fine young man] Gyöngy élte a lánynak" [A lassie has a carefree life]; "Nem ettem én ma egyebet" [I've not eaten anything but] [to the melody of psalm 134]; "Azt mondják nem adnak..." [They say I won't be my darling's]; "Kicsiny vagyok én" [I am little]; "Már elmegyek édes rózsám" [I am going, sweetheart]; "Ha én azt tudhatnám... [If only I knew it] Már minálunk így köszönnek [This is how we greet each other]; "Még azt mondják a kapások... [The hoers keep saying] Ez a pohár bujdosik [This glass is going round]; "Megengedik azt az eget... [The heavens will allow] Ki nem kap a házasságon... [If you refuse to get married] Veszek neki csizmát pirosat... [I'll buy her boots, red ones] Kiállok a ház kapujába [I'll stand in the gate of the house]; "Levágom a füled" [I'll cut your ear off]; "Jaj babám csata lesz" [Alas, darling, there will be a fight]; "Én vagyok a szegény halász... [I'm the poor fisherman] Bárha szegény, mégis dúsgazdag leszek... [Though I am poor, I'll have every treasure] Elég nekünk egy csónak [One boat is enough for us]" (Ms)

Földönfutó [Outlaw] (Mór Jókai, 1850): songs and choruses for mixed choir with orchestral accompaniment, a cappella male choruses, and orchestral movements: "Azt az Isten megátkozta" [God has confounded the one]; "Ha kedvesem ölelem" [When I'm embracing my darling]; "Elmegyek már édes babám... [I'll go away, sweetheart] [to the melody of the 'Kossuth Song'] Ám de meglátalak nemsokára [But I'll see you soon again]; "Jegenyefa tetejére... [To the top of a poplar tree] Babám nézz a szemembe [Darling, look into my eyes]; "Felemelé Kádár szemeit az égre" [Kádár lifted his eyes to the sky]; "Itt már a remete!" [Here is the hermit]; "Elindula Szent Péter Rómába" [St Peter set out for Rome]; "Beborúla, jaj, elmúla a nap fényes világa" [It's overcast, alas, the radiance of the day is over]; "Czerés város híres város... [Czerés is a famous town] Éjtszakára teleszívja magát [He imbibes himself full for the night]; "Kétes sorsa a zsványinak" [Bandits have a dubious fate];

"Vigyázz, vigyázz, majd meglátnak... [Be careful lest you'll be seen] Ha megcsendítéd, akkor jaj néked [If you click it, woe betide you]; "Tizenhat esztendő voltam" [I was sixteen]; *Allegretto*; "A harmat a fűre hull" [Dew is falling on the grass] [borrowed from *Der Freischütz*]; "A Vág felől hűs szél támad" [A cool wind blows from the river Vág]; "Vajon mit írjak babámnak?" [What shall I write to my darling?]; *Allegro moderato*; *Czigány zene* [Gypsy music] (Ms)

Fidibusz [Fidibus] (Ede Szigligeti, 1850): overture and songs with orchestral accompaniment, duets, trios, mixed choruses: *Előzene* [overture]; *Melodráma*; "Magyar leány az én rózsám... [My love is a Magyar lassie] [János Erdélyi] Három a táncz mindhalálig" [You have to dance three in a row]; "Hadzaj a hősnék a világa" [The din of battle is the world of the champion]... Jaj be szép lány a rózsám [What a fair lass my darling is] [the Klapka March with words]; *Mazur* "Búsul az ifjú" [The young man is brooding]; "A galambom angyal... [My darling's an angel] Elpusztult a Tisza hídja [The bridge of the Tisza was destroyed]; "A kisasszony tehenet fej... [The miss is milking a cow] Kerek az én kalapom... [The top of my hat is round] Még azt mondja az anyám" [My mother is wont to say]; "Hallja czicza kis Katicza... [Listen, pussy little Katie] Első lecke vala" [It was the first lesson]; *Melodráma*; "Csitt, csendesen" [Hush, be quiet]; "Kicsinyke de barna... [She is small and brown] Karmazsin menyecske... [Crimson missus] Hol a leányka... [Where's the maiden] Ég a kunyhó, ropog a nád" [The hut's burning, the reed's crackling] (Ms)

A szép juhász [The Fair Shepherd] (József Szigeti, 1850): songs and mixed choruses with orchestral accompaniment, a cappella mixed choruses: "A virágnak megtiltani nem lehet" [You can't forbid the flower] [Petőfi]; "Szerelmes vagyok én, de nem mondom kibe... [I am in love, but I don't tell you with whom] [after Petőfi] A szép barna legény" [The handsome brown young man]; "Elvonnék ha adnának... [I'd marry you if I could] [poem written after Petőfi] Ki nem kap a házasságon" [If you refuse to get married]; "Piros szádát ha csókolom galambom... [When I kiss your ruby lips, my darling] Adj egy csókot [Give me a kiss]; "Árva vagyok, árva lettem [I'm an orphan, I've become one] [to the melody of the 'Kossuth Song']; "Megy a kocsi, megy a béres... [The cart's going, the farm-hand too] Megüzentem az édes anyámnak... [I'll send word to my dear mother] Csípd meg bogár [Bite her, little bug]; "Juhász legény, szegény juhász legény" [Young shepherd, poor young shepherd lad] [Petőfi]; "Nem átkozlak, nem szokásom" [I won't curse you, it's not my way]; "Én vagyok az, aki voltam" [I am the one I used to be]; "Végimentem a temetőn" [I walked all along the graveyard]; "Kedves rózsám, gyöngy violám" [My darling rose, my sweet flower]; "Hej violám, hej violám... [Hey, my flower, gillyflower] Maradj hát magadnak [Leave me alone]; "Szép a betyár paripája" [The steed of the outlaw is fine]; "Hull a levél a virágról" [Leaves are falling from the flower] [Petőfi]; "Hegedűszó, furulyaszó, cimbalom... [Fiddle music, flute music, dulcimer] [Petőfi] Bohó az aki búsul [Silly are those who keep brooding]; "Hervad a ciprusfa a sírnak tetején" [The cypress is dying on top of the grave] (Ms; P: 12 songs v+pn: T, 1850) Világismeret [Worldly Wisdom] (Lajos Dobsa, 1850): mixed choruses with orchestral accompaniment; "A galambom angyal... [My love is an angel] Elpusztult a Tisza hídja [The bridge of the Tisza is destroyed]; "Ennek ugyan megese" [It happened to her]; "Eljutottak végre boldogság ólére" [They've got to the bosom of bliss at last] (Ms)

Két Sobri [Two Sobris] (Béni Egressy's own popular play, 1851): songs, choruses for female, male and mixed voices with orchestral accompaniment: "Bort iszik a magyar ember... [Hungarians drink wine] Ha kedvesem ölelem... [When I embrace my sweetheart] Rajta tehát pohárra [Come on, let's lift our glasses]"; "Mi vigák itt ezek... [How merry there people are] Az álom kerüli lelkemet... [Dream is evading my soul] Amott tűnik le csillagom... [My star is falling there yonder] Ó az Isten remeke" [She is God's masterpiece]; "Arczod setét... [Your face is gloomy] Szívem szeretne tégedet... [My heart would love you] Ha Sobri volnál [If you were Sobri]"; "En nem tudom, az-é az amit érzek" [I wonder if that is what I feel]; "Sobrinak van csak világa... [Sobri's is the only free world] Úgy úgy galambom [That's right, sweetheart]"; "Ha boldog a szép kis gili madár" [When the little dove is happy]; "Szép a tölgy tavasz nyíltával" [The oak's lovely when spring arrives]; *Barcarola* "Mint egy óriási tükör, fénylik a tó" [The lake's shining like a huge mirror]; "Menyegzőmre úgy hiszem, illendő" [I think it is proper for my wedding]; "Ha ha ha"; "Szép huszárnak a világa" [The world of the Hussar is nice]; "Húzd rá cigány... [Play it, Gypsy] Szorítsd hozzád derekát [Press her to you by her waist]"; "A menyegző zsbaja ma csendre vált" [The noise of the wedding gives way to silence now]; "Sobri a rengeteg fia" [Sobri is the son of the wilderness]; "Kortsmárosné eszem adta" [Innkeeper's wife, my darling] (Ms; P: 4 songs v+pn: W, 1851; *csárdás*: see list of piano works)

Other songs

"Elmennék én katonának" [I'd become a soldier] (János Erdélyi, P: v+pn: W, 1843; m ch: Ms); "Magyar leány az én rózsám" [My love's a Hungarian lass] (Erdélyi, P: v+pn: W, 1843; m ch: Ms); "Juhász a hegy oldalán" [Shepherd on the hillside] (Erdélyi, P: v+pn: W, 1843; m ch: Ms); "Édes szülöm, mi bánt engem" [Mother dearest, what bothers me] (Gergely Czuczor, P: v+pn: W, 1843); "Mi füstölög ott a síkon távolba" [What is that smoke in the distance] (József Gaál, P: v+pn: W, 1843; m ch: Ms); "Szülőföldem szép határa" [Birthplace of mine, beautiful land] (Kisfaludy Károly, P: v+pn: supplement to *Der Ungar*, 1843/44?); "Ezrivel terem a fán a meggy" [Sour cherries grow by the thousand] (Sándor Petőfi, 1844, music unknown); *Országgyűlési szózat* [Parliamentary Appeal] (János Garay, also included in *Falusi lakodalom* [Village Wedding]; P: v+pn: V. Grimm, Pest, c.1845); *Népdal* [Folksong] ("Apám, anyám, barátom" [Father, mother, my friend], October 1846 at the latest, P: v+pn: T, c.1848; insert in the music of Ede Szigligeti's popular play *Zsidó* [Jew] c.1846-47); "Télen nyáron pusztán az én lakásom" [My home is the pusta, in winter and summer] (Mihály Tompa, 1846 or 47, P: v+pn: T, c.1848; insert also in the music of the popular play *Jegygyűrű* [Engagement Ring]); "Temetésre szól az ének" [The song is a funeral song] (Petőfi, February 1848 at the latest, music unknown); *Nemzeti dal* [National Song], with József Szerdahelyi (Petőfi, P: v+pn: W, 1848); "Ereszkedik le a felhő" [The cloud is descending] (Petőfi, P: v+pn: T, c.1848); *Bujdosó* [Exile] ("Bús vagyok én örökre... [My grief lasts forever] De meglátom valahára" [At last I will see it]: February 1850 at the latest, P: v+pn: W); "Ez a világ amilyen nagy [As immensely large this world is] [Petőfi]... Kis furulyám szomorúfűz ága... [My pipe is a weeping-willow branch] [Petőfi] Ej! Haj! Félre te búbanat!" Ay, hey, away with you, sorrow] (February 1850 at the latest; with orchestral accompaniment: Ms; P: v+pn: W); *Csalogány búcsúja* [The nightingale's farewell] ("Fáj szívem, fáj... [My heart's aching] Pedig

mi kedves vagy nekem... [But you are so dear to me] Megtérek nemsokára [I'll return soon]"; own poem: March 1850 at the latest, P: v+pn: W, 1852; A. F. Walzel, Pest); "Azt gondolom, az ég borús... [I think the sky is overcast] De bár a szívembe láthatnád... [I wish you could see in my heart] Meghalok én érted... [I am dying for you] Szerelem sugara [The radiance of love]" (1850; with orchestra: Ms; P: v+pn: W, 1850); "Óh ne mondj engem rózsádnak... [Don't say, ah, that I'm your darling] Hogyha körülölelem [When I'm embracing her]", P: v+pn: W, 1850); "Ki vagyok én, mi a nevem... [Who am I, what is my name] Szeretem is a kis babákat" [I do love the little babies] (Gergely Czuczor, P: v+pn: Rózsavölgyi, Pest, 1851); "Viola, kék viola szál... [Gillyflower, blue gillyflower] A süvegem gyászfekete... [My hat is mourning black] Babámnak, Marcsámnak adom e violát" [I'm giving this flower to my darling Marcsa] (Gergely Czuczor, P: v+pn: Rózsavölgyi, 1851)

Other arrangements in folk style

Magyar dalvirágok [A Bouquet of Hungarian Songs], joint publication with József Szerdahelyi (P: v+pn: K. Miller, Pest, 1843, including: "Fekete szemű szép hölgyecske" [Nice little dame with the black eyes] [Ferenc Kazinczy]; "Csósz leszek én a nyáron" [I'll be a field-warden in the summer]; "Nem úgy van már" [It's not like it used to be]; "Kisütött a nap sugára" [The sun is shining now]; "Szár az füre deres harmat" [Frosty dew's on the dry grass]; "Fehérvári hármast határ" [The wide free lands round Fehérvár]; "Ne menj rózsám a tarlóra" [Don't go sweetheart to the stubble] (P: v+pn: W, 1843); "Kidőlt a fa mandulástól" [The tree fell with the almonds] (December 1850 at the latest, score unknown)

Other choruses for men's voices

Vadász dal [Hunters' Song] ("Rengeteg homályiban" [In the immense darkness], 1839?, Ms); *Szózat* [Appeal] (Mihály Vörösmarty): 1st setting: m ch (premiere: 2 November 1839, music unknown); 2nd setting: for male voices and orchestra, written for the National Theatre competition in 1843 (premiere: 10 May 1843; P: for a cappella m ch, and v+pn: W, 1843; Mss: orchestral part, choral score and parts); 3rd setting: m ch, (premiere: 30 May 1843, music unknown); *Énekszó* [Singing] ("Mi zengi túl a bérceket" [What resounds beyond the peaks], János Erdélyi, 1843, Ms; P: v+pn: *Regélő* [Fabling] 13 April 1843, supplement); *Himnusz* [Hymn] (m ch and orchestra, Ferenc Kölcsey, 1844, Ms: Library of the Institute for Musicology, HAS); *Gyász dal* [Funeral Song] ("Mért oly borús, oly néma e sereg" [Why is this group so sad and quiet], 1844, Ms); *Bordal* [Wine Song] ("Üresen áll már a kancsó" [The flask is empty now], attributed to Petőfi for a long time, c.1845, Ms; musical number in István Balog's play *Mátyás diák* [Student Matthias], replacing *Kancsó dal* [Pitcher Song]); *Beteg leány* [Sick Girl] ("Mi költ föl édes álombul" [What wakes me up from my sweet dream], Uhland: *Éji dal* [Night Song], translated by József Bajza: October 1846 at the latest, Ms); "Szerelmes vagyok én, megmondjam-e kibe?" [I am in love, shall I tell you with whom?] (Petőfi, 1847?, Ms); *Davoria* ("Zengi dühös dalt Davoria" [Sing an angry song, Davoria], J. Erdélyi, Ms); *Bordal* [Wine Song] ("Igyál, igyál, éljen a bor és a lány" [Drink, drink, long live the wine and the lassie], Ms)

Piano works for two hands

Hontalan [Homeless] (Hungarian tune, 1840?, P: W, 1841); *Síralom, vigalom* [Grief, Joy] (Hungarian tune, P: W, 1841); *Keserv és Viszontlátás* [Despair and Reunion] (two Hungarian tunes, orchestral version: Ms; P: W, 1841); *Komáromi emlék* [Memory of Komárom] (Hungarian tune, P: W, 1841); *Hozzá, [To Her]* (1842?, P: Magyar dalvirágok [A Bouquet of Hungarian Songs], K. Miller, Pest, 1843); *Pesti nóta* [Pest Song] (P: Magyar dalvirágok, K. Miller, 1843); *Búcsú dal* [Farewell Song] (Hungarian tune, 1842?, P: W, 1843); *Szüreti dal* [Vintage Song] (Hungarian tune, 1842?, P: W, 1843); *Részvét /Búbánat* [Compassion/Sorrow] (Hungarian tune, P: W, 1843); *Országgyűlési nóta* [Parliamentary Song] (original Hungarian tune, P: W, 1844); *Sírvirágok* [Grave Flowers] (original Hungarian tune, P: W, 1844); *Honvágy* [Home-sickness] (original Hungarian tune [the *Andante* section is a transcription of the setting of a Kisfaludy poem "Szülőföldem szép határa" [Birthplace of mine, beautiful land], P: W, 1844); *Bölcsődal* [Lullaby] (original Hungarian tune, P: W, 1844); *Mézesetek* [Honeymoon] (Hungarian circle dance tune, P: W, 1844); *Őszi dal* [Autumn Song] (original Hungarian tune, P: T, 1845); *Bokréta* [Nosegay] (original Hungarian circle dance tune, P: T, 1845); *Téli dal* [Winter Song] (original Hungarian tune, P: T, 1845); *Ábránd* [Fantasy] (original Hungarian tune [the *Friss* section is a transcription of the song "Éj, haj, magyar ember" [Ay, hey, Magyar people] P: T, 1845); *Örömhangok* [Sounds of Joy] (original csárdás tune with fresh section, P: W, 1845); *Tiszaparti csárdások I-II*. [Csárdás tunes from the Tisza] (P: W, 1845); *Pásztori hangok* [Pastoral Sounds] (original csárdás tune, P: W, 1845); *Párizsi szerencsevadászok mazurka* [Paris Adventurers] (P: W, 1845); *Rákosi emlék* [Memory of Rákos] (original Hungarian tune, P: W, 1845); *Vad rózsák* [Wild Roses] (original Hungarian tune, P: W, 1845); *Víz hátán* [On the Water] (original Hungarian tune, P: W, 1845); *Társalgó* [Conversing] (new social dance, P: W, 1846); *Fogadj Isten* [Welcome] (original Hungarian tune, P: W, 1846); *Sárosi visszhangok* [Echoes of Sáros] (original Hungarian tune with csárdás and fresh, P: W, 1847); *Kornéliához* [To Kornélia] (original Hungarian tune, with csárdás [the two *Slow* sections are transcriptions of the Petőfi setting "A virágnak megtiltani nem lehet" [You can't forbid the flower] and the Tompa setting "Télen nyáron pusztán az én lakásom" [My home is the pusta, in winter and summer], P: T, 1847); *Komáromi utóhangok* [Echoes of Komárom] (*Klapka induló*, [Klapka March] P: W, 1849); *Két Sobri csárdás* [Two Sobris Csárdás] (P: W, 1851); *Vándor álmai* [Dreams of a Wanderer] (Hungarian tune, Ms)

Other instrumental works

Magyarka frissel [Little Magyar Tune with Fresh Part] (performed: 28 October 1840), music unknown; *Magyar körtánc* [Hungarian Circle Dance] (performed: 5 May 1842), music unknown; "*friss magyar nótával*" [Fast tune with fresh section] (performed: 16 January 1843), music unknown; *Dunamelléki csárdások* [Csárdás Tunes from along the Danube] (performed: 26 October 1845), music unknown; *Egy névtelen induló* [An Untitled March], for piano (P: W, c.1845: no copy is known; possibly identical to the *Magyar induló* [Hungarian March] in the popular play *Mátyás diák* [Student Matthias]); *Szent Dávid Zsoltári. Éneklést kezdő melódiák és dicsérek* / miként a helvét vallású magyar egyházban éneklék

[St David's psalms, preludes and hymns as sung in the Hungarian church of the Helvetic creed] for organ, [1849, Ms]; *Költő álma* [Dream of the Poet], for flute (attributed to Egressy, Ms)

Works mistakenly or unjustifiably attributed to Egressy have not been included.

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Egressy Béni.

Youthful portrait from the almanac
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“Surely one of the most colourful, interesting and valuable personalities” of the 1840s (to quote the literary historian Zoltán Csorba), Béni Egressy (1814–1851) contributed as a trailblazer to the cultural scene of the Age of Reform and the few years following it with his widely diverse activity. His creative significance is thrown into deep relief by the musical achievements related to the National Theatre: the birth of the Hungarian national opera, the prize-winning arrangements of two of the period’s most influential poems, Kölcsey’s *Himnusz* [Hymn] and Vörösmarty’s *Szózat* [Appeal] (functioning as a second national anthem), the spectacular blossoming of popular plays and autonomous male choruses, and the first heyday of song composition inspired by folklore. Egressy made an important contribution to each of these developments, which were of collective significance. With his untiring efforts even in the hardest years following the war of independence he was one of the pioneers of Hungarian composition of the 19th century.

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