

A National Opera Abroad

Ferenc Erkel's Opera *Hunyadi László* Performed Outside of Hungary

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The international presentation of Ferenc Erkel, the creator of Hungarian national opera, and the introduction of his operas into the international canon has still not been achieved up to our days. For decades, Ferenc Erkel led the opera company of the Hungarian Theatre of Pest which was opened in 1837 and became the National Theatre in 1840. In fact, the beginnings of Hungarian musical theatre go back to the 1790s and popular plays of the Viennese folk theatre and the successful pieces of French and Italian *grand opéra* were already performed during the decades of the itinerant companies. However, the establishment of a European level, professional *operatic industry* was due to Ferenc Erkel and Rozália Klein Schodel, the first internationally renowned prima donna of the Hungarian Theatre of Pest. The urgent need for the creation of Hungarian-language *opera* and Hungarian *Singspiel* (later *Volksschauspiel*) had been on the agenda ever since the outset of the Hungarian-language musical theatre in 1790. However, in the Pest Hungarian/National Theatre, founded as a central institution of cultural nation-building, this issue (the question of Hungarian opera) resulted in the so-called “opera-war,” a conflict between the opera company with its large budget, on the one hand, and the prose theatre company, which operated under more modest circumstances, and its supporters, on the other. For this reason alone, the first conductor of the opera company, Ferenc Erkel was forced to create with immediate effect *the ultimate Hungarian historic opera* – by integrating the Hungarian musical style into a cosmopolitan genre and transforming into operatic libretti such basic works of Hungarian drama as *Bátori Mária* (by Dugonics András), *Hunyadi László* (Lőrinc Tóth), *Bánk bán* (József Katona), or *Dózsa György* (Mór Jókai). But the desire that the “new” Hungarian genre thus realized should also gain international recognition, that it should be canonized at the same time in Hungarian and German, or even French, was just as important. The efforts made to achieve this goal were considered insufficient by posterity, and the failure to disseminate Ferenc Erkel's operas internationally was primarily attributed to this reason. Recent press and source research, however, somewhat contradicts this as-

sumption, or at least nuances it, and points to general problems in the reception of national historical opera in the second half of the 19th century. A closer look at these problems may also provide a better understanding of the still lacking international reception of Erkel's operas.

The Critical Edition *Ferenc Erkel Operas*

The critical editions of the works of Erkel and Liszt were mentioned in all the plans, including the drafts and five-year plans, formulated prior to the establishment of the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The Erkel complete edition was launched at the same time as the Institute for Musicology was founded in 1961. The task seemed doable at first sight, although at the start of the complete edition, Bence Szabolcsi noted in a submission addressed to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences that the publication of Ferenc Erkel's operas was an enterprise Hungarian musicology and music publishing have never seen before: works of this size have never been published in Hungary before. At that time, most of Erkel's autographs were preserved at the Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library. The staff of the National Library could be expected to attend the publishing of the operas. Jenő Vécsey, the Head of the Music Collection, undertook the task of the editing while László Somfai, who was at the time also a staff member of the same Music Collection, undertook the writing of the *Revisionsberichte* as well as the verification of the edition. With the death of Vécsey, however, this initiative came to a halt. Research for the Erkel complete edition, also including research on the history of Hungarian music in the nineteenth century was only resumed in 1998, led by Tibor Tallián, who was then the Head of the Department for Hungarian Music History and Director of the Institute for Musicology.

The critical edition series *Ferenc Erkel Operas*, initiated by Tibor Tallián in 1998, aimed at the complete processing of sources in the framework of a modern critical publication – and once we set this goal, we entered a new field. (Fig. 1) Apart from the Erkel autograph scores processed by László Somfai earlier when he was still on the staff of the National Library, the additional source material of Erkel's operas was virtually unknown at the time. Somfai made an attempt to clarify the questions concerning the authorship of operas by listing the various handwritings appearing in the autographs in a large-scale study.¹ As a matter of fact, already during Ferenc Erkel's time, it was an open secret that the composer used the help of external forces, primarily his sons Gyula and Sándor Erkel, by

¹ László Somfai, "Az Erkel-kéziratok problémái" ["The Problems of Erkel's Manuscripts"], in *Az opera történetéből [From the History of Opera]*, ed. Bence Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1961), 81–158. (= *Zenatudományi Tanulmányok [Studies in Musicology]* 9).

the composition of the late operas. The sources available in public collections were first recorded by Ervin Major and then by Dezső Legány in his 1975 catalogue of Erkel's works. Legány focused primarily on the reception of the compositions and made a huge step forward in understanding the source situation and reception of Erkel's oeuvre.² Based on the new autograph compositional sources that have surfaced since these publications we have now a clearer picture of the composer's manuscripts.³ In the case of the operas that were already published (*Bátori Mária*, *Hunyadi László*, *Bánk bán*) or are in preparation (*Erzsébet*, *Sarolta*, and *Dózsa György*)⁴ we processed the performance copies used at the National Theater while Erkel conducted the performances, including the part materials, score copies, and the librettos. The reason for this is that the corrections made during the performances, i.e., the version that can be considered *Fassung letzter Hand*, can be frequently reconstructed from these sources and not from the autographs Erkel used as his guidebook.

Composing *Hunyadi László*

According to our recent research, it seems that *Hunyadi László* was Erkel's only opera during the composition of which Erkel did not use the auxiliary contribu-

² Ervin Major, "Erkel Ferenc műveinek jegyzéke. Második bibliográfiai kísérlet" ["Catalog of the Works by Ferenc Erkel. Second Bibliographical Attempt"], in *Írások Erkel Ferencről és a magyar zene korábbi századairól* [Writings on Ferenc Erkel and Earlier Centuries of Hungarian Music], ed. Ferenc Bónis, (Budapest, Zeneműkiadó, 1968), 11–43 (= *Magyar Zenei-történeti Tanulmányok* [Studies in Hungarian Music History]). See also Dezső Legány, *Erkel Ferenc művei és korabeli történetük* [The Works of Ferenc Erkel and their Contemporary History] (Budapest, Zeneműkiadó, 1975).

³ About the issues connected to authorship, see Katalin Szacsvai Kim, "Az Erkel-műhely. Közös munka Erkel Ferenc színpadi műveiben (1840–1857)" ["Erkel Workshop. Collaboration in the Stage Plays of Ferenc Erkel (1840–1857)"] (PhD diss., Budapest, Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem, 2013), last accessed February 8, 2022, <http://real-phd.mtak.hu/60/19/Szacsvai.pdf>.

⁴ Miklós Dolinszky and Katalin Szacsvai Kim, eds. *Erkel Ferenc: Bátori Mária. Opera két felvonásban / Opera in two acts*. Bevezető tanulmány / Introduced by Miklós Dolinszky. Közreadja a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Zenetudományi Intézete és az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár / Issued by the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Association with the National Széchényi Library (Budapest, Rózsavölgyi, 2002) (= *Erkel Ferenc Operák / Ferenc Erkel Operas 1/I–II*); Katalin Szacsvai Kim, ed., *Erkel Ferenc: Hunyadi László. Opera négy felvonásban / Opera in four acts*. Bevezető tanulmány / Introduced by Tibor Tallián and Katalin Szacsvai Kim. Közreadja a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Zenetudományi Intézete és az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár / Issued by the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Association with the National Széchényi Library (Budapest, Rózsavölgyi, 2006) (*Erkel Ferenc Operák / Ferenc Erkel Operas 2/I–III*); Miklós Dolinszky, ed., *Erkel Ferenc: Bánk bán. Opera három felvonásban / Opera in three acts*. Bevezető tanulmány / Introduced by Miklós Dolinszky. Közreadja a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Zenetudományi Intézete és az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár / Issued by the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Association with the National Széchényi Library (Budapest, Rózsavölgyi, 2009) (*Erkel Ferenc Operák / Ferenc Erkel Operas 3/I–III*).

tion of a colleague or a family member. However, this statement is only true of *Hunyadi* in relation to its first performance. The additional numbers of the opera such as the *Overture*, *Mária's Cabaletta* (No. 19) intended for Kornélia Hollósy, *Erzsébet's Aria* (No. 12b), tailored to the virtuoso singing technique of guest singer Anne de la Grange, and *László's Aria* (No. 7) in the first act, extended for the sake of Ferenc Stéger – these numbers were undoubtedly composed by Ferenc Erkel in 1847, 1850, and 1859 respectively. However, the authorship of the *Magyar tánc* (“Hungarian dance”), later named as *Palotás*, presumably originating from 1848, is questionable. And so does the re-orchestration of the *La Grange aria*, established before 1878, which probably comes from Sándor Erkel.⁵

The apparent ease with which Erkel allowed his assistants to shape the final form of his works – for him, the essential phase of composition had clearly been completed earlier –, the permissive attitude with which he approved the subsequent re-orchestration of his operas, the free hand he gave to the pragmatism of the prevailing operatic practice concerning later interventions: these factors together made the job of music publishers and composer-conductors who made transcriptions easier, and greatly facilitated the widespread reception, even the folklorization, of some of the numbers from the opera *Hunyadi László*.⁶ (Fig. 4) Despite the fact that *Hunyadi László* was continuously present on the program of the National Theatre in Pest since its premiere in 1844, and – as Erkel’s most successful stage work – had already passed its 250th performance by 1885, the entire opera was not introduced to the international public and it has not achieved international recognition up to our days.

The First Attempt. The Overture to *Hunyadi László* at Ferenc Liszt’s 1846 Farewell Concert in Vienna

The failure of the contemporary (nineteenth-century) international distribution of Erkel’s operas, and of *Hunyadi László* in particular, is most frequently explained by Erkel’s passivity, the composer’s difficult character, and his constant distrust, as well as the missing financial background to cover the costs for the copying of

⁵ Katalin Szacsvai Kim, “*Hunyadi László*. Források és változatok” [“*Hunyadi László*. Sources and versions”], in *Erkel Ferenc első három operája. Bátori Mária, Hunyadi László, Bánk bán. Szövegkönyvek, tanulmányok* [*The First Three Operas by Ferenc Erkel. Bátori Mária, Hunyadi László, Bánk bán. Librettos, Studies*], ed. Ágnes Gupcsó (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2011), 261–296. Reprint of the introductory essays in the complete edition.

⁶ Hungarian publishers released already in the years following the premiere a large number of piano reductions as well as potpourris and fantasies, arranged for two, four, and eight hands. Military orchestras and Gypsy bands, too, played the popular numbers of the opera. Cf. Legány, *Erkel Ferenc művei*, 34, 43.

scores.⁷ (Fig. 2) The image of the comfortable and lazy composer has long been perpetuated, and it is also reflected in the reception history of *Hunyadi László*, where the figure of the proactive Franz Liszt appears as the counterpoint of Erkel.

During his 1846 concert tour in Pest-Buda, Liszt listened to the opera on an extraordinary performance at National Theater, organized extra for him at noon on May 13th, albeit in the absence of singers Károly Wolf (Farkas) and Rozália Klein Schodel and thus with the omission of some of the opera's strongest numbers.⁸ (Fig. 3) In fact, Liszt was able to hear the overture on his arrival to Pest-Buda, as part of the grand serenade he received from the musicians of the National Theatre under the direction of Ferenc Erkel, at the Queen of England Hotel where he was accommodated. The *Wiener Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* reported on the occasion as follows:

But although Liszt has been up in his room for a long time, the excited crowd does not allow itself to be disturbed in the pleasure of patrolling up and down in front of his windows. It was pitch dark and from time to time a fine rain cooled the heated heads, then – it must have been about 10 o'clock – a blinding firelight shone down the dark alley, and the crowd doubled. A torchlight procession was approaching, with a serenade performed by the members of the Hungarian National Theater Orchestra, conducted by Kapellmeister Franz Erkel. The windows of Liszt's quarters were brightly lit, and several dark shadows appeared for a short time and soon disappeared. Then the familiar sounds of the overture from *Hunyadi László* were heard, the windows opened – Liszt appeared, and a thunderous "Éljen" ("Vivat") once again filled the air. After the end of the overture, Liszt came down to the alley, thanked for the honor shown to him and went back to his room, the windows of which had been filled with guests in the meantime. The overture of

⁷ Cf. Kálmán Isoz, "Kísérletek Erkel »Hunyadi László«-jának párisi színhozatalára" ["Attempts to stage Erkel's *Hunyadi László* in Paris"], *Muzsika* (szeptember-október 1929): 16–22, here p. 22. See also the article in the review *Hölgyfutár* of August 8, 1850 (page 135), from the period of the works (?) on *Bánk bán*: "An opera libretto is in preparation for our Erkel, it comes from a pen that is skillful in this respect. We may therefore hope that we shall again receive a new fine national opera; and if this hope is indeed to become reality, it will be due in large part to the presence of Madame La Grange, who has encouraged our brave composer, who otherwise loves comfort as much as Rossini, to activity." Cf. [without name].

⁸ "On Wednesday [May 13], the management of the National Theatre had Erkel's *Hunyadi László* performed at noon with full illumination and stage costumes in honor of Liszt. People in the audience had invitations. Mr. Wolf's weakness, who nevertheless did not want to withdraw his participation out of respect for the great artist, and Mme. Schodel's indisposition, which caused several vocal pieces to be omitted, somewhat diminished the effect of this great work. However, the celebrated artist immediately recognized its beauty. Many times he became enthusiastic and began to applaud enthusiastically, and called the brave composer an 'outstanding talent.'" Cf. *Életképek*, 5/20 (May 16, 1846), 636.

Hunyadi was followed by a festive song composed by Carl Thern, performed by the members of the Musikverein; the festive song was followed by the overture from *Bátori Maria* by Erkel, and this was followed by a very nice four-part song by Johann Grill. Each piece of music was interrupted by shouts of “Éljen” in thousands of voices, and only after the singers and instrumentalists had long since disappeared did the enthusiastic crowd slowly disperse, and the cheering was henceforth limited to the inner circle that had gathered in Liszt’s rooms.

Aber obgleich Liszt bereits lange oben in seinem Zimmer ist, die doch aufgeregte Menge läßt sich nicht in dem Vergnügen stören, vor seinen Fenstern auf und ab zu patrouilliren; es war stockfinstere Nacht und von Zeit zu Zeit kühlte ein feiner Regen die erhitzten Köpfe ab, da – es mochte wohl ungefähr 10 Uhr sein – leuchtete ein blendender Feuerschein die dunkle Gasse hinab, und das Gedränge verdoppelte sich; es nahte ein Fackelzug mit obligater Serenade, ausgeführt durch die Mitglieder des ungarischen Nationaltheaterorchesters, den Kapellmeister Franz Erkel an der Spitze. Die Fenster von Liszt’s Quartier waren hell erleuchtet, und mehrere dunkle Schatten zeigten sich kurze Zeit und verschwanden alsbald. Da ertönten die bekannten Klänge der Ouverture aus „Hunyadi László“, die Fenster öffneten sich– Liszt erschien, und ein donnerndes Éljen erfüllte abermals die Lüfte. Nach geendigter Ouverture kam Liszt auf die Gasse hinunter, dankte für die ihm erwiesene Ehrenbezeugung und verfügte sich wieder zurück auf sein Zimmer, dessen Fenster sich mittlerweile mit Gästen gefüllt hatten. Der Ouverture aus „Hunyadi“ folgte ein Festlied, componirt von Carl Thern, ausgeführt durch die Mitglieder des Musikvereins; dem Festliede folgte die Ouverture aus „Bathori Maria“ von Erkel, und dieser ein sehr schönes vierstimmiges Lied von Johann Grill. Jedes Musikstück wurde durch tausendstimmiges Éljen-Rufen unterbrochen, und erst nachdem Sänger und Instrumentalisten längst verschwunden waren, verlor sich langsam die enthusiastirte Menge, und der Jubel beschränkte sich fortan auf den engeren Kreis, der sich in Liszt’s Zimmern versammelt hatte.⁹

Once Liszt heard the opera, he programed the overture to *Hunyadi László* only a few days later (on May 17th) in Vienna at the closing concert of his 1846 concert series in that city.¹⁰ In addition, he immediately began to negotiate with

⁹ *Wiener Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, 6/59 (16. Mai 1846), 236. The event was also described by the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*, which reported of two consecutive serenades: “From 8 to 11 o’clock, a most brilliant serenade had taken place in the Hungarian Theater; at 11 o’clock a second one inside the hotel.”

In original: “Von 8 bis 11 Uhr, hatte eine höchst brillante Serenade im ungarischen Theater statt; um 11 Uhr eine zweite im Innern des Hotels.” Cf. *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung*, 4. Mai 1846. quoted in Dezső Legányi, ed., *Franz Liszt: unbekannte Presse und Briefe aus Wien 1822–1886* (Wien und Graz, Hermann Böhlau Verlag, 1986; *Wiener Musikwissenschaftliche Beiträge* 13), 109.

¹⁰ “On the concert Ferenc Liszt gave in Vienna last week, Erkel’s overture for his opera *Hunyadi László* was performed as well. Liszt conducted it himself. A Viennese newspaper wrote of this overture that it was ‘melodious, strongly orchestrated, quite original and a very impressive com-

the music publishers in Pest (with Wagner and Treichlinger) about the release of a paraphrase of the overture. Then, as he returned to Pest-Buda a few months later on October 10th, 1846, he performed not the independent overture, but a concert paraphrase using individual segments of the overture, titled *Hattyúdal és Induló* ("Swan Song and March"). In addition, he discussed again the release of the piece at Treichlinger. Eventually, this edition was never released, the composition only appeared in the series *Neue Liszt Ausgabe*.¹¹

However, contrary to what the Hungarian newspapers in Pest reported, the Viennese press at Liszt's farewell concert in Vienna was not unanimously positive about the performance of the Overture to *Hunyadi László*. The review *Pesti Hírlap* presumably quoted from Heinrich Joseph Adami's review released in the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* of May 19th, 1846:

Liszt had also brought from Pest an overture by Franz Erkel to the opera *Hunyadi László*, a melodious, powerfully orchestrated, completely original and also extremely effective composition, which he had performed in this concert and conducted himself. It was applauded immensely, so that Liszt could almost not avoid having it repeated, which, by the way, prolonged the concert beyond all measure.

Aus Pesth hatte Liszt auch noch eine Ouvertüre von Franz Erkel zur Oper „Hunyadi László“ mitgebracht, eine melodiöse, kräftig instrumentirte, ganz originelle und auch äußerst effectvolle Composition, die er in diesem Concerte aufführen ließ und selber dirigitte. Sie wurde ungemein applaudirt, so das Liszt fast nicht umhin konnte, sie wiederholen zu lassen, was übrigens das Concert über alle Gebühr verlängerte.¹²

The review of the editor of the *Wiener Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, Dr Maleno [August Schmidt], was also positive:

The second section began with Franz Erkel's Overture *Hunyadi László* which was repeated under the direction of the artist who gave the concert, even in spite of the rising opposition. The overture gives a fine testimony to the talent of the composer, which also aroused in us the desire to pass the whole opera by us one day.

Die zweite Abtheilung begann mit Franz Erkel's Ouverture „Hunyadi László“ welche unter der Direction des Konzertgebers auch der aufstrebenden Opposition

position."The piece was so well received that Liszt could not resist repeating it." Cf. *Pesti Hírlap*, May 5, 1846.

¹¹ Ferenc Liszt, *Schwanengesang und Marsch aus Erkels Hunyadi László*. Konzertparaphrase für Piano-forte. R 160, SW 405, in *Ferenc Liszt: Freie Bearbeitungen VIII*, eds., Adrienne Kaczmarczyk and Imre Sulyok (Budapest, Editio Musica Budapest, 1999) (= *Neue Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke. Serie II*), 95–111.

¹² Published in Legányi, *Franz Liszt: unbekannte Presse und Briefe aus Wien 1822–1886*, 110–113.

zum Troße wiederholt wurde, und die ein schönes Zeugniß für das Talent des Compositeurs abgibt, welche auch den Wunsch in uns rege machte, einmal die ganze Oper an uns vorübergehen.¹³

However, in an appendix to *Sonntagsblätter*, Josef Plank, the paper's Musikredakteur, wrote a vitriolic criticism about Liszt's farewell concert and in particular about Erkel's overture to *Hunyadi László*. The tone cannot be taken seriously, nor can Plank's criticism. Austrian musicological literature regards Plank as a mediocre critic, and his contemporaries, e.g., the newspaper's first Musikredakteur, the eminent music critic Julius Becher, distanced himself from his work, and Eduard Hanslick did not think much of him. Barbara Boisits, in a study analyzing the activity of the *Sonntagsblätter*, makes special mention of Plank's ironic remark in 1845 about Liszt "the man of fashion, of the press, of high places, indeed, the man of the century, crowned thousand times, the court counsellor, doctor, and owner of the ceremonial sword."¹⁴ Plank expresses similar objections in his review of Liszt's successful 1846 concert series in Vienna. And it is precisely in the context of the premiere of Erkel's overture to *Hunyadi László* that Plank most freely expresses his passion:

Liszt took his leave in a concert given in the large Redoutensaal, which had become almost too small for this purpose. The man defies wind and weather, the spring charms and the summer heat, one always flocks to him, and yet, but as far as the artistic essence is concerned, he has never given a worse concert than this one was. Never were his mistakes, his Lisztian classical compositions so present and so, I would like to say, low-spirited as at this farewell. His performance of Beethoven's Concerto in E-flat major stood behind that of Mr. v. Bocklet's recently heard performance. Weber's F-minor Concerto did not live up in a striking manner to the expectations of his own earlier performance, which had become known as excellent. The piano virtuosos, who believe that they have to search for and can find all music in their instrument, push away the orchestra, they lost the habit of compositions with orchestral accompaniment; I would not have thought that this would also be the case with Liszt, and yet he does not seem to have completely

¹³ Dr. Maleno [August Schmidt], "Konzert-Salon. Sonntag den 17. Mai d. J.; Abschiedskonzert des Franz Liszt im k.k. großen Redoutensale Mittags um /2 1 Uhr," in *Wiener Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 6/60 (19. Mai 1846), 241–242.

¹⁴ "der Mann der Mode, der Presse, der schönen Welt, ja des Jahrhunderts, den tausendmal bekränzten, den Hofrath, Doktor, Ehrensäbelproprietarius Liszt" – Josef Plank, "Musikbericht. Rudolf Willmers," in *Sonntagsblätter* (redakteur Ludwig August Frankl) 4/5 (09. Februar 1845), 143. Quoted by Barbara Boisits: "Die Bedeutung der Sonntagsblätter Ludwig August Frankls für die Wiener Musikkritik," in *Ludwig August Frankl (1810–1894). Eine jüdische Biographie zwischen Okzident und Orient*, ed. Louise Hecht (Köln, Weimar, Wien, Böhlau Verlag, 2016), 157–181, here p. 163.

escaped the one-sidedness of a soloist. In addition to the two concertos, he also played Schubertian Hungarian melodies and a tarantella from *La Muette de Portici*. The latter is nothing but rattling, "tapolage" is what the French call it with a concise expression. Just as meaningless were two French songs by Liszt, after texts by Victor Hugo and Girardin, on this field, it does not go at all; ce n'est pas notre affaire, let's stay with the piano. Still belonging to Liszt, an overture to the opera "Hunyády László" [sic!] conducted by him "sub auspiciis doctoris Franusci [sic!] Liszt." It is a paprika meat with aspic and some macaroni, Hungarian, French, and Italian style, of course the former prevailing and, as it were, presenting a sample card of the Magyar tunes that occur in the opera, without firm consistency, and without definite and compact form. Moreover, the opus is excessively long and ends in a noisy spectacle, a musical composition imbued with the most ghastly lack of taste. In spite of a great opposition to the applauders' demand for repetition, Mr. Liszt once again stepped up to the conductor's podium out of courtesy. One can be a great and brilliant artist, and still disregard the beat now and then.

Lißt hat in einem konzerte Abschied genommen, welches er im großen, für diesen Zweck beinahe zu klein gewordenen Redoutensaale gab. Der Mann tropt Wind und Wetter, dem Frühlingsreize und der Sommerhitze, man strömt ihm immer zu, und doch hat er, was den künstlerischen Kern betrifft, niemals ein schlechteres Konzert gegeben, als dieses war. Niemals war sein Vergreifen, sein, Lißtschen klassischer Kompositionen so hervortretend und so, ich möchte sagen, unbehäglich, als bei diesem Abschiede. Sein Vortrag des Es-dur-Konzertes von Beethoven stand hinter jenem des erst kürzlich gehörten des Hrn. v. Bocklet und des Weber'schen F-moll-Konzertes seiner eigenen, als vorzüglich bekannt gewordenen früheren Ausführung in auffallender Weise zurück. Das Vonsichstoßen des Orchesters scheint die Herren Klaviervirtuosen, die in ihrem Kasten alle Musik suchen zu müssen und finden zu können glauben, den Kompositionen mit Orchesterbegleitung förmlich entwöhnt zu haben; daß es auch bei Lißt der Fall sein werde, hätte ich nicht gedacht, und doch scheint auch er der Solo-Einseitigkeit nicht ganz entgangen zu sein. Außer den beiden Konzerten spielte er auch Schubert'sche Ungar-Melodien und eine Tarantella aus der „Stummen“; letztere ist nichts als Klapperei, tapolage nennen's die Franzosen mit prägnantem Ausdrucke. Eben so bedeutungslos waren zwei französische Lieder von Lißt, nach Texten von Viktor Hugo und Girardin, aus diesem Boden geht es schon gar nicht; ce n'est pas notre affaire, bleiben wir bei'm Piano. Als noch zu Lißt gehörend, ist eine Ouverture zur Oper „Hunyády László" [sic!] von Hrn. Erkel in Pesth anzuführen, weil sie Lißt dirigirte, also, wie es schien, „sub auspiciis doctoris Franusci Liszt“ hier ausgeführt wurde; das ist ein Paprikafleisch mit Aspick und etwas Makkaroni, ungarische, französische und italienische Manier, natürlich die erstere vorwaltend und gleichsam eine Musterkarte der magyarischen Weisen vorstellend, welche in der Oper vorkommen, ohne feste Konsistenz, ohne bestimmte und kompakte Form. Ueberdies ist das Opus übermäßig lang und läuft in ein lärmendes Spektakel aus, wie es nur der greulichste Ungeschmack einer

musikalischen Komposition einverleiben kann. Trotz einer großen Opposition gegen das Wiederholungsverlangen der Applaudierer, aus Gefälligkeitssrüksichten trat Hr. Lißt noch einmal zum Direkzionspulte hin. Man kann ein großer und genialer Künstler sein, und doch hin und wieder den Takt außer Acht setzen.¹⁵

Hunyadi László and the Parisian Opera Scene

Liszt was well aware of the difficulties involved in staging a Hungarian historical opera abroad. That is why he criticized in his letter to the playwright Károly Hugó, dated November 7th, 1847 (unfortunately with good reason) the attempt of László Petrichevics to stage *Hunyadi* in Paris. According to Liszt's letter, if Károly Hugó goes to Paris "he should contact people who know something and who actually are able to do something; Petrichevich should not imitate Lázár Horváth, who only presented *Hunyadi* in the Parisian news of his newspaper."¹⁶ To be more precise, on April 19th, 1845, Petrichevich reported in *Honderű* (i.e., the newspaper edited by himself) that he had made a series of attempts to obtain the opera's performance in Paris. He tried to hand in the opera to the *Académie Royale de Musique* and he had an appointment with the director of that institution.¹⁷ Then, on March 11th, 1846, Petrichevich reported in his newspaper, that Sigismond Thalberg, who returned home after his concert in Pest-Buda, performed several fragments of *Hunyadi* in front of artists, composers, and critics with success, thus reviving the hope for a staging of the opera. (News of Thalberg's intercession for the performance in Paris appeared in the columns of *Hölgyfutár* even 5 years later, in 1851.)¹⁸ The article published on March 11th, 1846 as Thalberg's letter from Paris claimed:

Readers of other newspapers will remember (given that our own paper has not yet reported on this event) that the editor of these columns took our gallant conductor's *Hunyadi László* to Paris with the aim of attempting its performance in the grand opera house. It is easy to imagine that everybody who is only slightly privy to the magnificently intriguing affairs of the Paris Opera House, considered this a far-fetched and very daring objective. But the entrepreneur managed to

¹⁵ Josef Plank, "Musikalischer Wochenbericht," in *Sonntagsblätter* (redakteur Ludwig August Frankl) 5/21 (24. Mai 1846), 500–501.

¹⁶ The Hungarian original: "oly emberekkel érintkezzék, kik valamit tudnak és akik cselekszenek, s ne utánozza Petrichevich Horváth Lázárt, aki a Hunyadiat csupán lapjának párisi híreiben adatja elő." See Franz Liszt's letter from Woronice, November 7, 1847, quoted in Isoz, *Kísérletek Erkel Hunyadi László-jának párisi színrehozatalára* [*Attempts to stage Erkel's Hunyadi László in Paris*], 22.

¹⁷ Dezső Legány, "Erkel Hunyadi Lászlója" ["Erkel's *Hunyadi László*"], in *Magyar Zene* 11/4 (1970), 97–108.

¹⁸ Mariann Pándi, "A *Hunyadi László* két külföldi bemutatója a múlt század közepén" ["Two performances abroad of *Hunyadi László* in the middle of the last century"], in *Magyar Zene* 6/2 (1965), 73–81, here 74.

obtain the most reliable source, the intimate acquaintance of the director of the opera house, and even of the director's tyrant, the opera house's prima donna, the famous Rosina Stolz, who is as witty as she is capricious, without whose supreme patronage it is impossible to dream of a good success. Our Erkel was fortunate enough that Ronconi (the star of the Italian opera in Paris), one of the first virtuoso pianists of the French capital, Thalberg and his wife (who is the daughter of the royal Lablache), David Felician, the glorified idol of African music, and more closely Berlioz, the greatest and most genial of living classical composers, all heard with great delight Erkel's beautiful opera as they visited Pest. They are all musical authorities and we might base many fine hopes on their favorable opinion, but we could be still frightened off by the circumstance that the amiable, yet capricious *prima donna* is reluctant to appear in a mother's role. Perhaps we can help this by empowering them, in the name of history, to turn [the mother] Erzsébet Szilágyi into a stepmother, whose fervent love for her children will be a credit to Hungarian stepmothers. Frankly, we are beginning to hope for the success of this venture. The following lines written from Paris by the enthusiastic Mrs. Thalberg further increase our hope: "I hasten to inform you, while my husband is away, of this joyful news. Shortly after our arrival, my husband played almost all the most beautiful melodies of the great opera you are so eager to support in front of the most learned audience in Paris, including artists, composers, critics, and music lovers of the highest caliber. Of course, my father was present as well. (Mr. Thalberg, as you know, learned the melodies by hearing them only once.) The novelty and beauty of the melodies surprised everyone and the yearning softness of the Hungarian national voices intrigued the listeners to the point of enthrallment. In the attached column of today's *Constitutionell* ("Le Constitutionnel"), you will see, dear friend, how successful our first step was. Are we in a hurry to keep our sincere promise to you? You promised to delight us with a personal visit in the case of Hunyadi's presentation. It will certainly not depend on us to have you attracted back to this beautiful metropolis as soon as possible. Please receive [our greetings] with growing hope, etc."¹⁹

Emlékezni fognak más hírlapok' olvasói (mert saját lapunk nem szólott még ez eseményről), hogy derék karmesterünk' Hunyady Lászlóját e lapok' szerkesztője Párisba vitte volt azon célból, mikép annak a nagy operaházban előadását megkísértené. Mi tulságosnak – mi merésznél merészebbnek tartotta e célzást minden, ki csak egy kissé van a párisi operaház' nagyszerűen ármányos viszonyaiba avatva, képzelhető. Igaz, hogy sikerült a legbiztosb forráshoz jutni a vállalkozónak, bensőbb ismeretségébe az operaház' igazgatójának, sőt az igazgató' teljeshatalmu zsarnoknéjának is, az operaház épen olly szellem- mint szeszélydús primadonnájának, a híres Stolz Rosinának is, kinek legfensőbb pártolása nélkül jó sikerről még csak álmodni sem lehet vala. Erkelünk' jó csillaga úgy akarta, hogy szép dalművét azóta Ronconi (a párisi olasz opera' szemfénye) a frank főváros' első virtuózainak egyike Thalberg és neje (ki a királyi Lablache' leánya) David

¹⁹ Cf. *Honderű*, March 11, 1846, 196–197.

Felician a rögtön oltárra emelt afrikai zenebálvány, és közelebbről az élő classicus műszerzők' legnagyobb, leggenialisabbika Berlioz, mindenik Pesten megfordultában, nagy tetszéssel hallhaták: mind megannyi zenészi tekintély, kiknek kedvező véleményükre sok szép reményt építenünk szabadna, kivált ha azon hatalmas körülménytől rettegés vissza nem ijesztene, miszerint a szeretetreméltó, de szégyes primadonna anyaszerepekben föllépni egyáltalában vonakodik. De ezen tán segíthetünk, ha őket felhatalmazzuk a historia' nevében, mostohává változtatni a derék Szilágyi Erzsébetet, kinek gyermekeihezzi forró szeretete majd dicsére válandik magyar mostoháinknak. Komolyan szólva – kezd lenni már nekünk is némi reményünk a dolog' sikeréhez, mely reményünknek újabb okadatául a lelkes Thalbergnének Párisból közelebbről írott következő sorai szolgáljanak: “Férjem' honn nem létében sietek önnek azon örvendetes hírt első tudtára adni, mikép megérkezésünk után nem sokára Páris' legműértőbb hallgatósága előtt – mely csupa művészek, hangszerzők, bírálók, és magasb műveltségű műkedvelőkből, – atyám természetesen el nem maradt volna – benső barátinkból, áll vala – játszái el férjem a kegyed által pártfogolt derék dalmű' csaknem minden szebb dallamát (miket Thalberg ur – mint kegyed is tudja – egyszeri hallás után sajátított el). A melodiák' újdonsága és szépsége mindenkit meglepett s a magyar nemzeti hangok' epedő lágysága könnyezésig érdekelte hallgatóit. Ezen ide mellékeltem hasábjából a mai Constitutionnellnek [Le Constitutionnel] látni fogja kedves barátunk, minő sikerrel lőn megtéve az első lépésünk, s ha vajjon sietünk-e beváltani önnek tett őszinte ígérletünket? Rajtunk tehát mulni nem fog, hahogy kegyedet – ki Hunyady' adatása' esetében bennünket személyes látogatásával megörvendeztetni ígérkezett – a szép világáros minél hamarább vissza nem vonzandja. Mellynek élénkülni kezdő reményében fogadjja ön' stb.”

The account written by Francesca (Cecchina) Lablache – daughter of the eminent opera singer Luigi Lablache and, from 1844, wife of Sigismond Thalberg – may be inaccurate in places and certainly has a strongly cultic approach to her piano virtuoso husband, but is probably in no way exaggerating in its enthusiasm for Erkel's *Hunyadi László*, felt by Thalberg and his entourage. They sympathized with the plight of the Hungarians, the subject of the opera, and appreciated Erkel's ingenuity and his incorporation of national elements into the contemporary operatic form. At least, this is what emerges from a hitherto unknown article published in *Le Constitutionnel* by Pier-Angelo Fiorentino, a renowned writer and influential music critic, which was quoted in Mme Thalberg's letter, sent as proof to the review *Honderű*. In his article “Revue Musical,” a lengthy column on musical events, Fiorentino describes the opera *Hunyadi László* in such detail, act by act (though sometimes confusing the order of the numbers), that it is hard to imagine that neither Thalberg nor the critic had the piano score of the opera at his disposal. But the piano score of the overture and the main numbers (almost the entire opera), made by Erkel, was probably not published by

Treichlinger until June 1846. It is true, though, that *Honderú* reported the good news as a continuation of Mme Thalberg's letter (i.e., on March 11th, 1846).

We cannot rule out, however, that Erkel provided Thalberg with the piano score, which had been completed some time earlier, in the hope of a possible Paris premiere. This presentation described in the article, to which the Thalbergs invited the Neapolitan-born Parisian journalist and music critic (and, according to the article, close friend) Pier-Angelo Fiorentino as well as the renowned bass Luigi Lablache, suggests that they took on the task of promoting the opera in Paris. Their efforts are reflected in Mme Thalberg's letter and in the review of the salon concert held in Paris, which would not have been possible without their help and assistance.²⁰

The literature considers as a more serious attempt at a staging in Paris – which, however, Liszt held for hopeless and did not take part in – the intercession

²⁰ “Resté seul avec Thalberg à l'heure des libres confidences, des épanchemens involontaires, des vagues entretiens vingt fois repris, vingt fois interrompus, ses doigts se sont mis à errer sur le clavier, et il nous a joué d'un bout à l'autre, et presque sans s'en apercevoir, un opéra entier, qui paraît l'avoir vivement ému à son dernier voyage. Il en a retenu tous les motifs et nous les a fidèlement traduits sur le piano. Cette œuvre sérieuse, qui fait en ce moment la fortune du grand théâtre de Pesth, est intitulée *Hunyady*, nom d'un illustre capitaine du XV^e siècle. L'auteur, M. Erkel, a intercalé dans sa partition les plus beaux chants nationaux de son pays, de cette fière et chevaleresque Hongrie, dont le cœur tressaille si fort aux seuls noms de patrie et de liberté, qu'il fait trembler, à chaque battement, la main de fer qui l'opprime. Comme on devait s'y attendre, la censure autrichienne, alarmée du succès d'*Hunyady*, en a défendu la représentation sur le théâtre impérial. L'ouverture de cet ouvrage, instrumentée de main de maître, renferme à elle seule plus de motifs que n'en contiennent plusieurs opéras de nos jours. Le premier acte se compose d'une introduction, d'un très beau chœur de vengeance en *ut mineur*, de la romance de Ladislas et d'un chœur final. Le deuxième acte s'ouvre par un chœur dialogué entre les gardes du roi Louis, qui veulent forcer l'entrée du château des frères Hunyady, et les soldats de ces derniers, qui les repoussent. Le morceau est d'une grande originalité et d'un effet saisissant. La cavatine du Palatin, une marche délicate, un trio entre la veuve Hunyady et ses deux fils, Ladislas et Mathias (qui fut depuis Mathias le corsaire), sont les morceaux les plus saillans de cet acte, lequel se termine brillamment par la scène de réconciliation dans le château. Le roi fait le serment de paix sur l'Évangile, tandis que les chœurs entonnent une hymne d'une grande élévation de style et de pensée. Dans le troisième acte, le moins long de tous, on peut citer avec éloge la cavatine de la mère des Hunyady, et la scène des fiançailles de Ladislas, brusquement interrompue par l'arrestation de ce dernier. Par une innovation, couronnée d'un plein succès, l'entr'acte est rempli par un grand morceau de musique, dont le sujet est le rêve de Ladislas dans sa prison. Des airs nationaux, tantôt gais, tantôt mélancoliques, expriment tour-à-tour les souvenirs de bonheur du prisonnier et le pressentiment de sa mort prochaine. Le dernier acte est le plus beau et le plus dramatique. Les adieux de Ladislas à sa fiancée, une marche funèbre qui accompagne au tombeau l'ainé des Hunyady, le désespoir maternel qui éclate en sanglots déchirans, tout cela est d'une vérité, d'une passion et d'une tristesse profondes. L'orage et les éclairs se mêlent à cette lugubre scène. Exécutée par Thalberg, elle nous a touché jusqu'aux larmes, et il nous semble impossible que tôt ou tard cette magnifique partition ne soit pas représentée sur un de nos théâtres.” Pier-Angelo Fiorentino, “Revue musicale,” *Le Constitutionnel, journal du commerce, politique et littéraire*. Edition de Paris (Numéro 28) Mercredi 28 Janvier 1846, 1–2.

of Bertalan Szemere and his wife in 1863, at the time La Grange was engaged in Paris. Bertalan Szemere, a Hungarian émigré in Paris (earlier the Minister of the Interior in the revolutionary government of Kossuth) and his wife, Leopoldina Jurkovich wanted first the *Théâtre des Italiens* (where La Grange had her contract) and then the *Théâtre Lyrique* to accept the opera for performance. In 1863, the review *Pesti Napló* was pleased to report that:

our compatriot, Bertalan Szemere addressed a special request from Paris, by the wish of the boards of the Italian Theater in Paris (“Théâtre des Italiens”) and the Paris Opera (“Théâtre de l’Opéra”) to our excellent musician Ferenc Erkel. Erkel should send at the earliest convenience the score of his *Hunyadi László*, so that this beautiful opera could be performed on the mentioned stages. According to the *Pester Lloyd*: “Erkel is currently making revisions to extend to a larger scale some of the choirs in *Hunyadi László* to make them appropriate for the big world theaters.”²¹

The usually passive Erkel responded quickly to this request: on November 14th, 1863, he wrote to Bertalan Szemere: “I re-arranged a few pieces and gave them a wider and larger format, and for the same reason I will not deliver the score to the post until the beginning of next week.”²² The three-volume score of the opera seems to have indeed arrived to Paris at the end of November 1863.²³ Due to the intercession of Bertalan Szemere and his wife, the *Théâtre Lyrique* (i.e., a third institution, instead of the two large opera houses indicated in the *Pesti Napló*) requested the score for a thorough study in November 1864.²⁴ The performance, however, did not take place and we know nothing of the further fate of the score, i.e., the opera’s *Fassung letzter Hand* from 1863.

²¹ *Pesti Napló*, November 6, 1863. Concerning the efforts aimed at the Parisian premier of *Hunyadi* cf. Isoz, “Kísérletek,” 16–22, and Legány, *Erkel Ferenc művei*, 36. The correspondence of Ferenc Erkel, Bertalan Szemere, his wife, and Ferenc Liszt from the year 1863 was published in Hungarian translation by Gábor Albert, *Szemere Bertalan leveleskönyve (1849–1865)* (Budapest: Balassi, 1999), 166–169, 171–172, 174, 243–244. See also *ibid.*, “Sok itt a baj, uram, mindenben nagyon is sok! Erkel Ferenc *Hunyadi László*ja Párizsban” [“There’s a lot of trouble here, sir, a lot of trouble in everything! Ferenc Erkel’s *Hunyadi László* in Paris”], *Somogy* 38/3 (2010), 8–16, last accessed February 8, 2022, https://epa.oszk.hu/03100/03112/00007/pdf/EPA03112_somogy_2010_3_008-016.pdf.

²² Cf. Isoz, “Kísérletek,” 18, and Albert, *Szemere Bertalan leveleskönyve*, 168.

²³ See Bertalan Szemere’s letter to Anne de La Grange from November 26, 1863: Isoz, “Kísérletek,” 19, and Albert, *Szemere Bertalan leveleskönyve*, 171. The posting of the score was also reported by the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 31/3 (January 17, 1864), 23: “On écrit de Pesth: «On ne tardera pas sans doute à entendre un opéra hongrois à Paris; la partition de Hunyady, par Erkely [sic!], vient d’être expédiée pour cette capitale, et nous attendons avec une vive curiosité le succès de cette oeuvre madgyare.»”

²⁴ Cf. Isoz, “Kísérletek,” 22.

In the same correspondence, Erkel also writes to Bertalan Szemere about the motivations for his opera's performance abroad. In fact, this is one of the rare occasions when he opens up about himself. He writes that in case of a success, he would primarily want a good textbook (as there are no Hungarian librettists), and he expects an improvement of his financial situation (at the time he does not have a study because his family had to take care of 10 children). At the same time, he describes the domestic situation as stifling, dominated by personal remarks appearing in the press. Furthermore, the issue of the ethnicities, and politics in general, caused a number of obstacles.

An "Opera Scene Performed in Gorgeous Costumes." Fragments of *Hunyadi László* in the Repertoire of a Hungarian Itinerant Company's European Tour

Reading Erkel's ideas from 1863 quoted above makes us believe that he may have faced the same thoughts as early as 1856, when Franz Liszt was promoting the performance of *Hunyadi László* in Weimar.²⁵ Again, the literature on Erkel explains the failure with the composer's passivity and his lack of interest in the opera's distribution outside of Hungary. Kálmán Isoz presumed that Erkel had only one score, the autograph itself, and he could not give it out of his hands; on the other hand, he did not have the money to order a copy. These assumptions lasted for a long time. However, we find the German translation of the opera with the prosodic corrections of Ferenc Erkel in the vocal parts in the autograph score of *Hunyadi László* (Fig. 5–6) This is also why the question formulated by Liszt in his second letter, where Liszt asked for a German translation of the textbook, is strange.

Perhaps Erkel was actually thinking of a new translation at that time following a not so successful and not very-professional performance in Vienna. The latter was organized precisely around this time, on August 14th, 1856, under the name of the Arad Theater Company, led by Erkel's brother-in-law, József Szabó (Schneider). This performance lacked a proper ensemble of singer soloists and was accompanied by the orchestra of the Theater an der Wien. It was conducted by Suppé, from whom Erkel later apologized in a letter for the poor quality of the company's performance. At the same time, we cannot exclude, that the above production actually used the National Theater's score copy. As a matter of fact, the National Theater had ordered a copy, following the premiere, and had the German text written in it, with a possible German-language performances in mind. In any case, similar early score copies of *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László*

²⁵ Liszt's letters to Erkel from September 19 and November 21, 1856 bear witness to this.

have survived among the performance copies of the National Theater, which were processed in the framework of the critical edition of the *Ferenc Erkel Operas*. The idea of the Erkel-operas to be performed in German theaters already occurred by the premiere of the composer's first opera, *Bátori Mária*. The board of the National Theater had a translation of the textbook and a score with the German text prepared. They did the same thing 1844, following the premier of *Hunyadi*. Consequently, the lack of the German translation and the score copy could not be the reason which prevented the opera's distribution abroad. At least not at the time.

In addition to numerous *Hunyadi László*-performances given in Hungarian province towns, the company of József Szabó and his partner Mihály Havi, who were responsible of the infamous performance Vienna, in fact promoted fragments of the opera much earlier in Europe. According to contemporary press reports, the opera company led by Mihály Havi and József Szabó successfully performed the finale of *Hunyadi's* first act as early as in 1846 on their tour in Austria and Italy as well as in productions given in Pest and Hungarian province towns.²⁶ The instrumental parts of the company were found at the Museum of Fine Arts in Arad and were processed in the framework of the source research, performed for the Erkel critical edition. These parts testify that in 1847–1848, during their next tour to several European locations, the company performed as regular parts of their program, the overture, the opening choir of the opera, the choir from the end of Act One, and the aria *No. 17*.²⁷ Apart from the Viennese performance of the *Overtura* conducted by Franz Liszt, and despite all the attempts of the National Theater and Ferenc Erkel, all currently known performances abroad of the fragments of *Hunyadi László*, and later of the entire opera, can be attributed in fact to the Havi–Szabó company. The itinerary of the tour can be reconstructed based on the entries written by the orchestral musicians in respective their instrumental parts:

Prague (1847), Olmütz (April 10th, 1847), Baden (July 3rd, 1847), Brno (July 29th, 1847), Tiglitz (September 4th, 1847), Berlin (September 21st, 1847), Frankfurt an der Oder (October 18th, 19th, and 20th, 1847), Stettin (October 26th, 28th, 1847), Copenhagen (November 14th, 1847), Hamburg (November

²⁶ On the various stages of the tour and the company's successful debut at the National Theatre, see the reports of *Regélő Pesti Divatlap* (August 1 and 29, October 24 and 31, 1846), *Honderű* (September 15, 1846), *Pesti Hírlap* (October 22 and 27, 1846), *Múlt és Jelen* (September 20, 1846), and *Életképek* (October 31, 1846). See also Zoltán Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színészet és színház története [History of Acting and Theatre in Cluj]* (Kolozsvár, 1897), 367–368.

²⁷ The part books are preserved in the nineteenth-century music collection of the permanent theatre in Arad; they can be found today as unprocessed material in the city's Museum of Fine Arts. We express our gratitude to the staff of the Museum for their kind help.

23rd, 1847), Altona (November 1847), Hannover (December 5th, 11th, 1847), Hildesheim (December 12th, 1847), Minden (December 15th, 1847), Kasdorf (December 20th, 1847), Cologne (December 23rd, 1847), Aachen (December 28th, 1847), Brussels (January 8th, 1848, Théâtre Royal: January 10th, 12th, 1848), Ghent (January 14th, 16th, 18th, 1848), Antwerp (January 18th [sic!], 19th, 21st, 1848), Liège (January 31st, 1848), Namur (January 31st [sic!], February 1st, 1848), Mons (February 2nd, 1848), Paris (February 13th, 1848), Nancy (June 10th, 1848), Lunéville (June 22nd, 1848), Augsburg (November 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 1848).

To give an impression of the atmosphere of the company's performances abroad, let me quote a brief extract of a contemporary press report, from the travel diary of one of the two directors of the folksong and dance company (Mihály Havi and József Szabó) published in *Pesti Divatlap*, a Hungarian-language "literary and art magazine" about their tour the previous year, 1846:

(The folksong and dance company under direction of Havi and Szabó) [...] Having earned the freedom to leave Grätz, we transported the company – which took the courage to engage in a rather doubtful battle, which was to determine the life or death of our venture – with Hungarian carriages from Kanizsa [Hungary] to Pettau, the outermost city of Styria. As we moved in to the first restaurant, we became very embarrassed. We were in the midst of foreign people, foreign customs, foreign blood and thinking that was completely different from ours! – After lunch, 16 young men dressed in *atillas* [Hungarian traditional military coat] [...] walked the streets of Pettau in a long line. Szabó and I sat in a rented carriage, dressed in the same way, and accompanied by a Hungarian hussar on the coach box, we went to the mayor. — The whole town is roused; the preliminary German-language playbills are being distributed and glued everywhere. In the afternoon, the whole company re-appears on the promenade along to the Drava River, now all in white pantalons, and five women, dressed in the Hungarian fashion [...] In the evening, we give a serenade to the mayor and to the Count Festetics, our compatriot who is the military major here. The serenade consists of quartet songs. And here begins the first minute of our luck. The people in the crowd brake out in a storm of applause. No way would we perform the next day, we let the town crave for novelty. On the third day, the tickets are already announced, and by noon our performance is totally sold out. We begin with a Polish overture – because before and during our performances we only let Hungarian, French and Polish music to be played, and no German music at all. After the Polish overture, the curtain rolls up and there are 12 youngsters (I can say that they are pretty). This is the usual number for the quartet, they wear Hungarian daily suits. The conductor, dressed in the same way, takes off his hat, and now everyone takes off his own. The quartet's two-measure ritornello begins on the violoncello[s], and on a sign given by the conductor's baton, the 12 healthy,

young and beautiful voices resound enthusiastically. The audience watches them, muted as a sculpture, and applauds the first number for a long time. The 2nd, 3rd, and final numbers captivate the audience in the full sense of the word; we are called out to bow three times and we have to repeat our last number. Now come the dances, and finally the opera scene performed in gorgeous costumes; and the performance thus completed ignites these cold-blooded people. The restaurant is filled with guests and the three performances remedy all the troubles.²⁸

(A Havi És Szabó igazgatása alatt magyar népdal és tánc társaság) [...] miután Grätzből a külföldi szabadalmat megnyerém, a társaságot egy kétséges s vállalatunk élet- vagy halálát elhatározó csatára felbátorítván, magyar kocsisokkal Pettauba, Stájerhon legszélő városába szállítottuk, ott az első vendéglőbe szállásoltattuk. Keblünk el volt fogódva. Idegen nép, elem, szokás, vér, s tőlünk egészen elütő gondolkodás! — Ebéd után 16 ifjú ember magyar attilában, bársony, csinos kucsmákkal — melléjük négy szál kócsag tűzve—, pantalonban, kis gombsarkantyúkkal, mint fekete sereg, fehérkesztyűsen, hosszú sorban megsétálja Pettau utczáit, én és Szabó bérkocsiba ülve, szintúgy öltözködve, hátunknál a bakon magyar huszár állván, menénk a polgármesterhez. — A város lázzadásba jő, — az előleges német színi hirdetményt hordják és ragasztják. Estefelé az egész társaság a Dráva melletti sétányon újra megjelenik, most már mind fehér pantalonban, öt nő egészen magyarosan öltözve [...] Estve gróf Festetics hazánkfíának — itteni katonamajornak, és a polgármesternek serenád adatik quartett dalokkal. És itt kezdődött első perce mostani szerencsés állásunknak. Az összetódult nép tapsviharban tört ki. Másnap a viláért sem játsunk, s a várost az ujságinger majd megölte. Harmadnapon végre a czedulák széthordattak, s délben már minden eladható jegy el volt kapva. A lengyel nyitány után (mert előadásaink előtt és közben csak magyar, francia és lengyel, és soha semmi német nem játszatik), a függöny felgördül, s ott áll 12 fiatal, s mondhatom, csinos nép — ennyi szokott quartettre kiállni — nappali magyar öltönyben, föltett kucsmával; a karnagy, ki szinte így van öltözve, leveszi kucsmáját, s reá mind leveszik; — a quartett két tactusból álló ritornelje violoncellon megzendül, s a karnagy botjára föllelkesülten megharsan a 12 egészséges, fiatal, szép hang. A közönség néma szoborként figyel, s az első számot hosszan megtapsolja; a 2-ik, 3-ik és utósószám a közönséget a szó teljes értelmében elragadja; a kihívás háromszoros, és az utósó szám újrátzatik. Most következtek a tánczok, s végre a pompás öltözetes operai jelenet, és az így bevégzett előadás e hidegvérű népet fellázítja. A fogadó megtelik vendégekkel, és a három előadás minden bajt helyre üt.

²⁸ Cf. *Pesti Divatlap*. Szépirodalmi és művészeti lap, [Pest Fashion Magazine. Literary and art magazine], ed. Imre Vahot, 16/31. (August 1, 1846), 617–618.

A Last Attempt at the End of the 19th Century

To conclude, I would only like to mention one more attempt of a *Hunyadi*-performance abroad. Marie Wilt and Frantisek Broulik planned the staging of *Hunyadi László* at the Viennese Court Opera, with the help of Franz Doppler. The history of this attempt had already been processed by the Erkel research (by Ferenc Bónis in 1969 and by Ingeborg Birkin-Feutinger in 2005).²⁹ Based on an invoice sent by Lajos Erkel, the secretary of the Opera House, to the Vienna Opera House, Erkel had the text of the opera re-translated into German by Albert Sturm for this occasion, he also had a piano reduction and a score copied in which the new German text was introduced. We know nothing of the whereabouts of the black leather-bound piano reduction sent to Vienna, nor about the score copy made at that time. It is striking, however, that in 1893 an Austrian bookseller advertised the Hungarian-German texted scores of Erkel's operas, including *Hunyadi László*. The Vienna Opera House did not pay for the copying, so it is possible that this piano reduction was returned to Hungary. Was this another unsuccessful attempt? Maybe. In any case, the legacy of Aurél Kern at the National Széchényi Library has a working copy,³⁰ which was used for the preparation of the ornamented piano reduction of *Hunyadi László*, with the Hungarian and German texts published in 1896 by the Budapest publisher *Rózsavölgyi és Társa*. The preparation was supervised by Erkel's sons, Sándor Erkel and Gyula Erkel, both conductors and composers who had previously assisted in the composition of several of their father's operas (except for *Hunyadi László*) and it was edited by the young Aurél Kern, who later became director of the Hungarian Royal Opera House and the National Conservatory. On the one hand, this source clarifies the old assumption that this piano reduction, made around the turn-of-the-century, which was later taken over by the Editio Musica Budapest, goes back to an earlier version (meaning that it was not made at that time). On the other hand, given that the piano reduction used by Kern as a manuscript still includes the number 16, which was cut early from the opera's performances, it is conceivable that we are dealing here with a fragmentary source that is significantly earlier, and was the product of the efforts made in 1850s to stage the opera abroad, or even: this source could have been produced for the Weimar performance, advocated by Liszt.

²⁹ Ferenc Bónis, "Erkel *Hunyadi László*jának megghiúsult előadási kísérlete a bécsi Udvari Operaházban" ["The failed attempt to perform Erkel's *Hunyadi László* at the Vienna Court Opera"], in *Magyar zenetörténeti tanulmányok. Szabolcsi Bence 70. születésnapjára*. [Studies in Hungarian music history. For the 70th birthday of Bence Szabolcsi.], ed. Ferenc Bónis (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1969), 267–291. See also Ingeborg Birkin-Feichtinger, "Franz Erkel und das k.k. Hofoperntheater in Wien," *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 46/3–4 (2005): 413–436.

³⁰ Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library, Ms. mus 8159.

Of Ferenc Erkel's operas, we know the most about the efforts to present *Hunyadi László* abroad; we have no such data about the other operas, perhaps because the composer and/or the National Theatre did not even try to have them presented outside the Hungarian-speaking area. For Erkel's first two operas, the National Theatre had a German-language score prepared after the premiere, and Franz Liszt, among others, tried to promote the foreign premiere of *Hunyadi László*. After Ferenc Bónis, Dezső Legány, Katalin Szerző Szőnyi, and Inge Birkin-Feichtinger, who have already written about this negative performance history, the few details presented above contradict our previous ideas of Erkel's lack of interest in the distribution of his operas abroad.

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Hunyadi László Performed Abroad

Abstract

Of all the operas by Ferenc Erkel, we know the most about Erkel's efforts to present abroad his second opera *Hunyadi László*, while the absence of similar data concerning the other operas may be the result of the fact that the composer himself and/or the National Theatre did not even try to have them performed outside of Hungary. For Erkel's first two operas – *Bátori Mária* (1840) and *Hunyadi László* (1844) –, the National Theatre had a German-language score prepared after the premiere, and Franz Liszt, among others, tried to promote the premiere of *Hunyadi László*, which ultimately became one of the most performed Hungarian operas abroad.

After Ferenc Bónis, Dezső Legány, Katalin Szerző Szőnyi, and Inge Birkin-Feichtinger, who have already published on this negative performance history, this study would like to highlight a few minor details that contrast with our previous perception of Erkel's lack of interest in the distribution of his operas outside of the Hungarian capital's National Theatre. Through the performance history of *Hunyadi László*, and by taking into account the performance copies surviving from the period as well as the contemporary press, we get an insight into the moves and changes that occurred within the theatrical/opera companies during the second half of the 19th-century as well.

László Hunyadi na vystoupeních v zahraničí

Abstrakt

Ze všech oper Ference Erkela víme nejvíce o Erkelově snaze uvést v zahraničí jeho druhou operu *Hunyadi László*, zatímco absence podobných údajů o ostatních operách může být důsledkem toho, že sám skladatel a/nebo Národní divadlo se o jejich uvedení mimo Maďarsko ani nepokusili. Pro první dvě Erkelovy opery – *Bátori Mária* (1840) a *Hunyadi László* (1844) – nechalo Národní divadlo po premiéře připravit partituru v němčině a o propagaci premiéry *Hunyadi László*, která se nakonec stala jednou z nejhranějších maďarských oper v zahraničí, se snažil mimo jiné Franz Liszt.

Po Ferenci Bónisovi, Dezső Legány, Katalin Szerző a Inge Birkin-Feichtingerové, kteří již o této negativní inscenační historii publikovali, bychom v této

studii rádi upozornili na několik drobných detailů, které kontrastují s naším dosavadním vnímáním Erkelova nezájmu o distribuci jeho oper mimo Národní divadlo v maďarském hlavním městě. Prostřednictvím inscenační historie *Hunyadi László* a s přihlédnutím k dochovaným dobovým kopiím představení i dobovému tisku získáme přehled o pohybech a změnách, k nimž docházelo v divadelních/operních společnostech i v průběhu druhé poloviny 19. století.

Keywords

Hungarian national opera in 19th century; transnational operatic practice; trans-regional cultural connections; Ferenc Erkel; Franz Liszt

Klíčová slova

maďarská národní opera v 19. století; nadnárodní operní praxe; nadregionální kulturní vazby; Ferenc Erkel; Franz Liszt

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Fig. 1 Ferenc Erkel: *Hunyadi László* (1844) the volumes of the complete critical edition (for bibliographical data see note 4)



Fig. 2 Ferenc Erkel in 1841. Lithograph with Erkel's dedication addressed to Ede Szigligeti from 1844, the year when the two wrote a folk play (*Volksschauspiel*) together. Music and Theatre History Collections of the National Széchényi Library

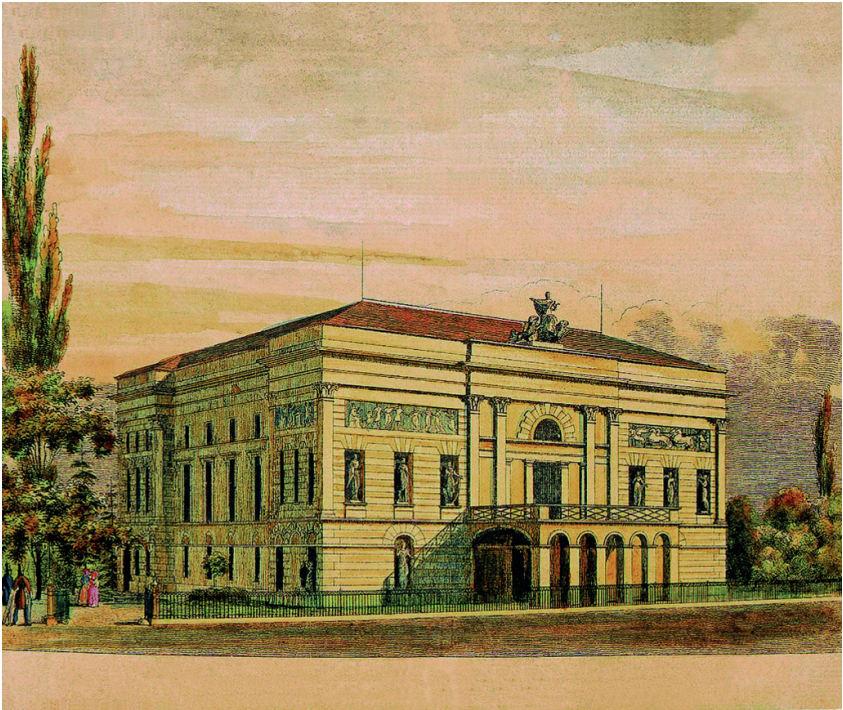


Fig. 3 The building of the National Theatre in Pest, opened in 1837. During the decades to come, Ferenc Erkel was the chief conductor of the theatre's operatic department. Music and Theatre History Collections of the National Széchényi Library

EREDETI ÚJ OPERA

Erkel F. javára.

PECZ UR VENDEG

NEMZETI SZINHÁZ

Pest, Szombaton, Január 27-én, 1844.

ERKEL FERENCZ javára.

ELŐSZÓR:

Hunyadi László.

Eredeti nagy opera 4 felv. írta Egressy B. zenéjét a JUTALMAZANDÓ. Az új öltözetek Podhráczky F. főruhátárnok felügyelése alatt készültek.

Első szakasz CILLEI HALÁLA. Személyei:

V. László, király	--- Havi	Hunyadi László } testvérek	PECZ
Cillei Ulrich, lovasnagy	--- Fűred.	Hunyadi Mátyás }	Eder László
		Rozgonyi királyi hadnagy	Egressy Benj
		<small>Történik: Nádoron, 1456.</small>	

Második szakasz KIRÁLYI ESKÜ Személyei:

V. László, magyar király	--- Havi	Erzsébet, Hunyadi János özvegye	Schödelb.
Gara, nádor	--- Udvarhelyi M.	László } fia	P. CZ.
Mária, leánya	--- Molnár Leopoldina	Mátyás }	Eder László
		Egy kölyg	Hübenthal János
		<small>Nemnek költöget. Kiszret. Történik: Tem. évért. 1458.</small>	

Harmadik szakasz ÁRMÁNY Személyei:

V. László, magyar király	--- Havi	Hunyadi László	PECZ
Gara, nádor	--- Udvarhelyi M.	Hunyadi Mátyás	Eder László
Mária, leánya	--- Molnár Leopoldina	7 zászóp, Katonák, Történészek	Buda, 1457.

Negyedik szakasz VÉRPAD Személyei:

Gara, nádor	--- Udvarhelyi M.	Erzsébet, Hunyadi János özvegye	Schödelb.
Mária, leánya	--- Molnár Leopoldina	Hunyadi László, fia	PECZ
		Kiszret, Nép, órák, Bakó, Történik: Budán.	

PECZ ur a po sorvi színházról, mint vendég a czímszerepben lesz szerencsés föllépni.

A nagy érdemé köztösnég kégyébe mely díszlettel ajánlja magát ERKEL FERENCZ

Kéretnek a pályán ó szerencsés bérlők az-országok, hogy dírtel helyek megtárasán irán reggeli 10 órag rendelkezni megőstossanak — azonúli masoknak adótnak ki. Szabad jegyek nem használhatóak.

A színház június 1-én. Kezdete 7-édtől órákor. vége 9-után.

Ezen opera szövege kinsomatlva kapható Kólosy Gergely pénzzsedőnél egy p. huszasért

László Kóti K. rendező. Kiadta Saigligeti, Utókök

Fig. 4 Playbill of the premiere of Ferenc Erkel's *Hunyadi László*. Pest, National Theatre, 17 January 1844. Music and Theatre History Collections of the National Széchényi Library

Allo non tasto, e ^{melissa} marcato *Finale. Presto.* 283
144

Flauto 2/4
 Flauto piccolo 2/4
 Fobri 2/4
 Clarinetto 2/4
 Violino I 2/4
 Violino II 2/4
 Viola 2/4
 Cello 2/4
 Bassi 2/4

Vocal part lyrics:
 meg halt a cselszövő, eltűnt a rút viszály
 Tied ist car, Nead lufu ane fchmuden di Gafte fo! Gaf uerha

Fig. 5 Ferenc Erkel: *Hunyadi László*. The Finale of the first act in the autograph score of the opera, which became a national topos. In the vocal part, an early German translation can also be seen, below the original Hungarian text. The chorus “Meghalt a cselszövő, eltűnt a rút viszály” [The traitor is dead at last, and no discord any more] spread nationwide in various arrangements, especially during the 1848 Revolution and War of Independence. Music and Theatre History Collections of the National Széchényi Library

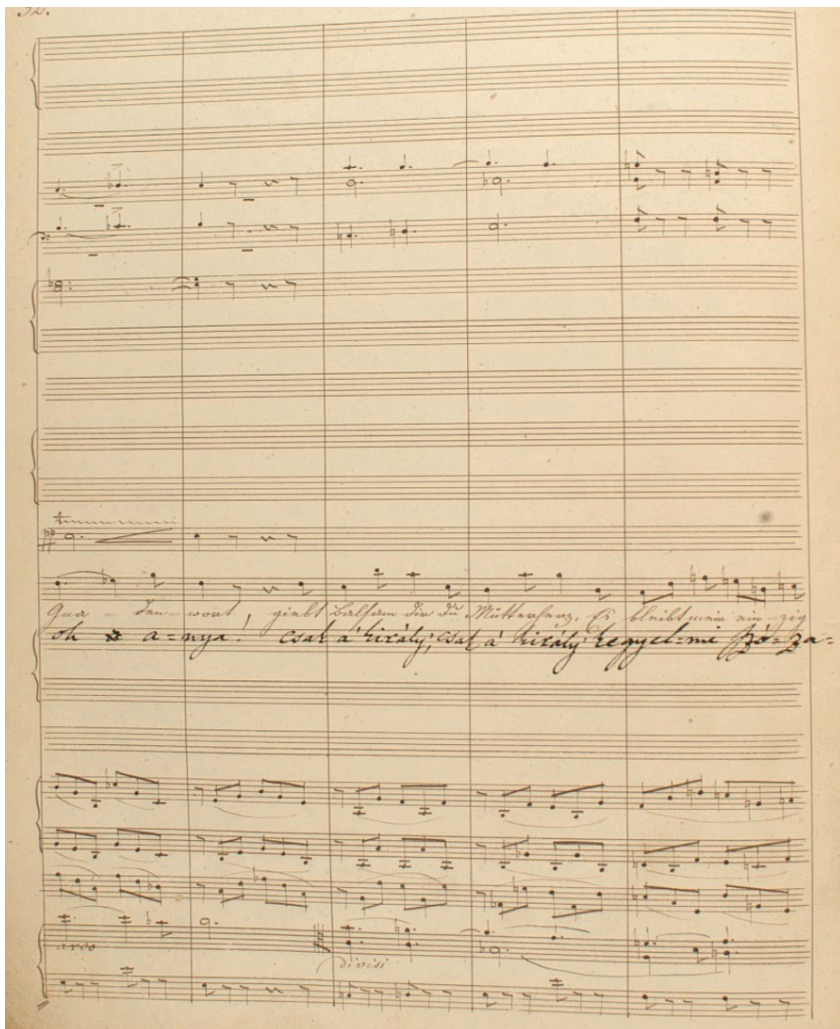


Fig. 6 Ferenc Erkel: *László Hunyadi* (1844). Score copy of the National Theatre, made shortly after the premiere of the opera, probably before 1847. Originally, it only contained the text in German, but later the theatre had the Hungarian text introduced in it, as well. Music and Theatre History Collections of the National Széchényi Library