

# The Question of National Identity in the Multiethnic Sopron Through the Activity of the Dalfüzér/Liederkranz (1847–1867)<sup>1</sup>

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Collective choir singing had a long tradition in Europe, especially due to the rich history of church music, however the spread of secular choirs, related to national awakenings may be considered a special phenomenon of the 19th century.<sup>2</sup> The German choral movement was an important tool in the unification of Germany and served also partly as a substitute for political parties. As this movement spread to whole Europe, most of the newly formed choral societies transmitted political and/or national overtones as well.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Krisztina Lajosi and Andreas Stynen, “Introduction,” in *Choral Societies and Nationalism in Europe*, eds. Krisztina Lajosi and Andreas Stynen (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1–3.

<sup>3</sup> “Daß sich zwischen Wiener Kongreß und der Revolution von 1848/49 über das Gebiet des Deutschen Bundes ein engmaschiges Netz von Liedertafeln und Liederkränzen legen konnte – teilweise als Ersatz für die damals noch nicht zugelassenen politischen Parteien –, wurzelte nach D. Klenke ‘zum einen in der Suche einer tief verunsicherten, aus der christlich legitimierten Ständeordnung entlassenen Bürgerschicht nach neuer, ebenfalls religiös fundierter Gemeinschaftsidentität, zum anderen in dem Kampf um Selbstbehauptung gegenüber dem napoleonischen Herrschaftsanspruch, dem es Nationalbewußtsein und nationale Einigkeit entgegenzusetzen galt’ (1989, 460f.). Damit war der Anstoß für eine neuartige Nationalbewegung gegeben, deren oberstes Ziel – die Einigung Deutschlands – mit dem Gesang als nationales Ausdrucksmedium erreicht werden sollte. “Sprache und Lied wurden so zum Markenzeichen echten Deutschtums und deutscher Nationalkultur. Zum vornehmsten Sprachrohr des Nationalmythos stieg das Lied wohl deshalb auf, weil es als gesungene Sprache über unschätzbare Suggestivkraft verfügte und als erhabenes Medium nationaler Inszenierung eine beachtliche Anwendungsbreite bot. So verwundert kaum, daß man den Männergesang an seine nationalmythische Rolle fesselte;” Friedhelm Brusniak, “Chor und Chormusik,” Choresen seit dem 18. Jahrhundert, Von 1800 bis 1848/49,” in *MGG Online*, ed. Laurenz Lütteken (Bärenreiter, Metzler, RILM, 2016). Article first published in 1995. Article published online 2016, <https://www.mgg-online.com/mgg/stable/14147> (accessed September 6, 2022).

See Richard Taruskin “Nationalism,” in *Grove Music Online*, 2001, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000050846> (accessed September 6, 2022).

Likewise, the Hungarian choral movement was born in the middle of the 19th century, in the midst of national revival, in a time characterized by both cultural rise and political disturbances. By the 1850s, dozens of choral societies were established throughout the country, and in 1863 – indicating the state of the movement – Sopron hosted the first national choral reunion in Hungary, followed by Pécs in 1864 and Pest-Buda in 1865. Moreover, in the second half of the 1860s, by the support of leading musicians such as Ferenc Erkel, Ferenc Liszt, Kornél Ábrányi and Mihály Mosonyi, the movement made another step on the path of institutionalisation, which culminated in 1867, with the founding of the *Országos Magyar Daláregyesület* (Hungarian National Choral Society).<sup>4</sup>

The Hungarian choral movement's national/nationalistic ideal has been propagated since the 1860s, and soon became its mainstream narrative. Dictionaries from the second half of the 20th century still mention this aspect, like the famous *Pallas nagy lexikona* [Pallas's Great Encyclopedia]: "The rapid rise of the choral societies in Hungary took place in the '50s, when the intelligentsia of the oppressed nation was reliant on this institution as the sole refuge of nationalistic sentiments."<sup>5</sup> Kornél Ábrányi, the chronicler of the 19th-century history of Hungarian music and of the choral movement, claims, this was the primary facilitating factor to the formation of the *dalárda*,<sup>6</sup> but recent research suggests, it was present in a more nuanced way. The most important and also simplest argument is that many ensembles were created e.g. by transforming an already existing church choir into a secular male choir, with a dominantly German-speaking membership and German repertoire.<sup>7</sup> In these cases, national

<sup>4</sup> It was formed during the Assembly at the Arad national choral reunion on August 1867, but it was officially accepted by the authority few weeks later in 14th October. See (ák.), "Az aradi országos dalárünnepély II.," *Zenészeti lapok* 7, no. 48 (September 1, 1867): 756.

<sup>5</sup> "A D.-i intézmény intenzívebb meghonosulása hazánkban az 50-es évekre esik, hol az elnyomott nemzet értelmisége ugyszólván rá volt utalva, mint a nemzeti érzület ápolásának egyedüli aziliumára." *A Pallas nagy lexikona* IV. (Budapest: Pallas Irodalmi és Nyomdai Részvénytársaság, 1893), 861.

<sup>6</sup> "Dalárda" is one of the Hungarian word for choral society beside "dalegylet." "Dalkör" (song circle) and "dalfüzér" (song wreath) are also used.

<sup>7</sup> In Sopron e.g., the Lutheran choir became the secular male-choir, in Pécs, church musicians actively participated in forming the *dalárda*. For further cases see Rudolf Gusztin, "The Institutionalization of the Choral Movement in Nineteenth-Century Hungary," *Musicologica Austriaca: Journal for Austrian Music Studies* "Exploring Music Life in the Late Habsburg Monarchy and Successor States," special issue (April 3, 2021), <https://www.musau.org/parts/neue-article-page/view/105>. For further reading, see Rudolf Gusztin, "Choral Movement and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Hungary" in Stanislav Tuksar, Vjera Katalinić, Petra Babić, and Sara Ries eds., *Glazba umjetnosti i politika: revolucije i restauracije u Europi i Hrvatskoj 1815.–1860. / Music, Arts and Politics: Revolutions and Restorations in Europe and Croatia, 1815–1860* (Zagreb: Hrvatska Akademija Znanosti i Umjetnosti, Odsjek za povijest hrvatske glazbe, 2021) (= *Muzikološki ubornici / Musicological Proceedings* 23), 695–712. DOI: 10.21857/y6zolbr8nm.

ideology obviously could not have been part of the agenda – even if later it became important for these choirs.

To explore the question of nationalism, Sopron is an excellent case study, since this town, which lies in the western corner of the country, bordering Austria, had a large part of German population. Christian Altdörfer, the choirmaster of the Lutheran church and founder of the Dalfüzér/Liederkrantz, coming from Württemberg, set up a singing group in 1847 that sang in both German and Hungarian.<sup>8</sup> In this paper – without presenting the history of the Sopron Dalfüzér society – I will specifically address the issue of national identity. Through this case study I would like to highlight what national identity meant in a certain multiethnic town in the mid-19th-century Hungary. First, I will present how the society related to language and other nationalities, secondly, I will offer an insight into their repertoire, and before concluding, I intend to sketch their relationship to politics.

### Language as a Tool of Identity?

Before the 19th century in Hungary national identity was based on belonging to a territory or being a citizen of the state. This is known as “Hungarus consciousness.”<sup>9</sup> In the 19th century language became the source of national identity in Central Europe, but multiethnic cities were in a more complex situation, since due to the multilingualism present there, the former approach transformed into the new concept a bit slower.

As texts about the choral movement regularly mention, it was in the country’s German-speaking towns that the first choral societies came into being.<sup>10</sup> Undoubtedly, the German-speaking population, which was familiar with this form of associational existence, played a key role in the Hungarian movement. Due to its geographical position, Sopron had close ties to the Central European culture, the influx of which was further increased by the close relationship of the local Lutheran Church with the German Lutheran Church.<sup>11</sup> In the 1850s German

<sup>8</sup> The society used both the Hungarian and German name. In this paper I will mainly use Dalfüzér.

<sup>9</sup> “The ‘Hungarus-consciousness’ is a territorially based cultural identity, which connected people living in Hungary until the late 18th century, regardless of ethnic, linguistic and religious differences between them.” Rab Irén, “‘Hungarus’ Consciousness – The Cultural Identity of Ethnicities Living in Hungary in the 18th Century,” *Kaleidoscope* 6, no. 12 (2016): 34. DOI: 10.17107/KH.2016.12.34-44.

<sup>10</sup> Haksch Lajos, *A negyvenéves pécsi dalárda története (1862–1902)* (Pécs: Taizs József, 1902), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ilona Ferenczi, “Sopron in the 17th Century,” in *Starck Virginal Book (1789). Compiled by Johann Wohlmuth. Johann Wohlmuth: Miserere (1696)* (= *Musicalia Danubiana* 22) (Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet, 2008), 95ff. See also Ágnes Sas, *Többszólamú zene a magyar városokban, templomokban és főúri udvarokban* (Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Zene-tudományi Intézet, 2017), 67, 196–197, 281–282, 289, 291.

population was extremely high in Sopron, even though we do not know the exact numbers.<sup>12</sup> We are aware that in the schools different nationalities were mixed together. The number and proportion of the Hungarian pupils was much higher in the Protestant school, and the Hungarian spirituality was quite strong there too. The Lutheran educational institutions (gymnasium, képezde, lyceum) taught both Hungarian and German, and there was also a Hungarian and German self-study circle. Adolf Frankenburg's memoir, published in 1853 in the review *Hölgyfutár*, supports the coexistence of different languages and nationalities:

At the grammar school in Sopron, we learned everything in Hungarian, with the exception of the Latin grammar. Although the German-speaking pupils were not obliged to do so, most of them still enrolled among the Hungarians. They said they were Hungarian, and by the time they graduated from the smaller classes, they really became Hungarian. We lived in peace together; I do not remember ever having the slightest ethnic inequality among us, even though we were Hungarians, Germans, and Croats at the school.<sup>13</sup>

The annual reports the schools also show that the local Lutheran congregation had both a Hungarian and a German pastor. Bilingualism was therefore quite natural, and since the Dalfüzér was closely connected to the Lutheran church, this is notable. No wonder that on the choral society's flag, consecrated in 1859, the slogan of the society was marked in German, while on the one side of the ribbon affixed to it, there was the coat of arms of the Artner family, with the slogan in Hungarian: "Életben és dalban egyesüljünk!" [Let us unite in song and in life], and on the other side of the ribbon the name of the society – "Soproni Dalfüzér" – could be read, also in Hungarian.

Even a more interesting addition to the topic of language and identity is the "Verbrüderungsfest" held in Pötttschingen in 1862. Johann Polster, the author of the monography on the history of Oedenburger Liederkrantz describes, somewhat poetically, how the singers' hearts found each other and the Hungarian and German choir singers became brothers. As a participant formulated it in a toast, "the nearby border has no other significance for the singers than to encourage them to come to mutual compromises and move forward to a place where the heart and soul are urged to cultivate Beauty and Kindness, so that the harmony of the singing, which does not know differences between nations,

<sup>12</sup> According to the 1850 census, out of the 14,304 people 13,883 declared themselves German, 314 Hungarian and 9 Croatian, but these data are considered incorrect by the literature, and the statistical data from 1857 unfortunately do not include the nationalities. dr. Dányi Dezső, *Az 1850. és 1857. évi népszámlálás* (Budapest: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1993), 62.

<sup>13</sup> Adolf Frankenburg, "Öszinte vallomások. III.," *Hölgyfutár* 4, no. 7 (January 10, 1853): 30.

may become harmony in life as well.”<sup>14</sup> The event culminated when the president of the Dalfüzér, József Király’s poem “Zum Verbrüderungsfeste” [sic!] was performed and hundreds of copies were distributed to the audience. Its message could be formulated that although the two nations used to be at odds with each other, they are now forming a single community.<sup>15</sup> It is clear from the poem that, despite the language, Király considered the Dalfüzér to be a Hungarian association. As Szabolcs Boronkai wrote:

A substantial part of the locality’s population is German-speaking, there are no violent Hungarianizing efforts. Despite these – and inspite of the proximity of Austria – the members of the middle class consciously declare themselves to be Hungarian. The Hungarian-speaking teacher, who came into town from another place, writes German poems, but this does not disturb his sense of Hungarian identity. The citizens of Sopron and Wiener Neustadt – who live close to each other, speak the same dialect, and sing similar songs – know exactly whether they are Hungarian or German.

Boronkai further adds, that Király, who mostly wrote poems in German, had always declared to be Hungarian.<sup>16</sup> The fact that language and nationality can be treated separately is confirmed by another example from 1863: the columnist of the review *Nefelejts* wrote about the members of the Sopron Women’s Association that, although they were German-speaking, “they were always enthusiastically Hungarian.”<sup>17</sup>

We can see from these examples, that in Sopron national identity is not experienced in its 19th-century form, rooted in language at this time and for a long time to come. These cases confirm how incorrect it is to think of the language

<sup>14</sup> “...die nahe Landesgrenze für die Sänger seine andere Bedeutung habe, als die, das Sie dieselben ermuntern solle, gegenseitig auszugleichen und vorwärts zu streben, wo es die Pflege des Gemüthes und Sinnes für das Gute und Schöne gilt, damit die Harmonie im Liede, die seinen Unterschied der Nationen kennt, auch eine Harmonie im Leben werde.” Johann Polster, *Geschichte Des Oedenburger Männergesang-Vereines “Liederkrantz” Von Seiner Gründung Im Jahre 1859 Bis Zu Seiner Jubelfeier Im Jahre 1884* (Oedenburg: Litfaß, 1885), 15.

<sup>15</sup> Polster, *Geschichte Des Oedenburger Männergesang-Vereines*, 14–15. Polster was the secretary of the society. This is the most comprehensive book about the Liederkrantz.

<sup>16</sup> “A városi lakosság jó része német anyanyelvű, erőszakos magyarosító törekvés nincs. Ennek – és Ausztria közelségének – ellenére a polgárság magát tudatosan magyarnak vallja. Az ide érkező magyar anyanyelvű tanár németül versel, de anélkül, hogy ez magyar identitástudatát megzavarná. Sopron és Bécsújhely egymáshoz közel élő, azonos dialektust beszélő, hasonló dalokat éneklő polgárai számára egyértelmű az egyik magyarsága és a másik német volta.” Boronkai Szabolcs, “Árcképek Sopron XIX. sz.-i német nyelvű irodalmi életéből. 5. Király József Pál 1810–1887,” *Soproni Szemle* 51, no. 4 (1997): 359.

<sup>17</sup> “...de mindig lelkes magyar érzelműek voltak.” See *Nefelejts* 5, no. 5 (May 3, 1863): 59.

issue retrospectively, according to today's national concepts and try to interpret the past in this way.

## The Issue of Nationality

As I mentioned earlier, when evaluating the history of the choral movement, the actual significance of the strong national/political overtones projected by Kornél Ábrányi, among others, remains a constant question. It became clear, on the one hand, that the history of the choir movement was much more nuanced, yet the issues of nation and ethnicity, on the other hand, were indeed a part of the story. Johann Karl Schuster, for instance, wrote in his diary that the 1863 national choral festival “should become the basis for the agreement and brotherhood of the nationalities in the entire Monarchy.”<sup>18</sup>

We do have the 1859 and 1860 list of the members, which mainly contains German names,<sup>19</sup> although it is almost impossible to trace back, whether these were German-speaking people, or 2nd, 3rd generations citizens, with a Hungarian identity and a knowledge of the Hungarian language. Based on the sources we have e.g., the repertoire, it is more likely, that these were German-speaking Germans or Austrians with a Hungarian or dual national identity.

It is instructive to examine how the Dalfüzér society looked at itself and how others looked at it: was it a Hungarian- or a German choral society? The most severe judgment, the national choral reunion of 1863 did not count as a choral reunion in Hungary. According to Ábrányi, Sopron was “at the time even less permeated by the Hungarian spirit” than later, so their call for reunion was not that attractive for the Hungarian choral societies. For Ábrányi, the main problem was that the Hungarian associations were represented in a very small number in Sopron, whereas the presence of the choirs from German and Austrian towns was rather abundant. Invitations were extended to those from Hungary, but few accepted, so the celebration remained regional (both in Hungary and Austria). Here, in fact, a cultural region is being drawn, the boundaries of which are not drawn by nationalities and ethnicities, but by the routes and links of cultural transfer that have developed over the centuries.

Following the footsteps of Ábrányi, this reunion was deleted from the history of the choral movement for a long time, which, despite its multi-ethnic composition, could have had a serious impact on the development of the Hungarian choral movement. Ábrányi's gesture, however, not only stigmatized the 1863

<sup>18</sup> *Szemelvények Johann Karl Schuster feljegyzéseiből. 1827?–1867. I. rész* (Sopron, 2010), 113, [https://harsjozsef.hu/sites/default/files/irasok/palyazatok/2010\\_Szemelvények\\_Karl\\_Schuster\\_feljegyzeseibol.pdf](https://harsjozsef.hu/sites/default/files/irasok/palyazatok/2010_Szemelvények_Karl_Schuster_feljegyzeseibol.pdf). Schuster was part of the organizing committee.

<sup>19</sup> Soproni Múzeum, Helytörténeti Gyűjtemény, Aprónyomtatvány. 2012.196.1 and 2021.196.2.

reunion, but to some extent also condemned the Dalfüzér society, which would have become entangled in the network of its connections with the German-speaking societies. Ábrányi's view can be easily understood, since he represented the new type of nationalism, which was based on language. But if Schuster's diary entry is true, the fact that the Dalfüzér first invited the Hungarian choral societies and only then extended the invitation to foreigners after having been confronted with a sluggish reaction is, in fact, a mitigating circumstance.

It is interesting to see how the Dalfüzér positioned itself within and during the Sopron choral festival. The program of the concert held at the town theater on the first evening of the festival is quite relevant in this respect: apart from the unified choir's performance at the very end of the event, the choir members from Sopron sang only Hungarian pieces, they appeared together with the other Hungarian ensembles, and not with the German-speaking choirs. On the second evening of the reunion, the German-speaking choirs were conducted by Johann Herbeck, the choirmaster of the Wiener Männergesangverein, while the Hungarians were conducted by Altdörfer, the choirmaster of the Dalfüzér society. Obviously, they chose to stand on the side of the Hungarian choral societies.<sup>20</sup>

Austrian newspapers referred to the Liederkranz as a Hungarian choir as well. A good example is a report on the 1863 Sopron festival in *Über Land und Meer*:

Es ist jedenfalls ein beachtenswerthes Zeichen der Zeit, daß es der ungarische Gesangverein einer ungarischen Stadt war, von dem die Anregung zu einem Feste ausging, an dem sich die deutschen Vereine des Nachbarlandes in so würdiger Weise beteiligten. Sinniger konnte die Tendenz dieser fröhlichen Verbrüderung wohl nicht bezeichnet werden als durch den Gruß, den die vereinigten ungarischen Gesangvereine uns entgegenbrachten: „Harmonie in Lied und Leben.“<sup>21</sup>

In another place the *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* refers to the choir as “ungarischen Gesangvereine von Oedenburg.”<sup>22</sup> These external sources are important beside the society's own self-representative descriptions.

At the fest organized on the 17th of July, 1864 to commemorate the choral society reunion of the previous year, which was also attended by the Frohsinn choral society from Vienna, a memorial plaque was unveiled on the Singers' Hill, during which Király gave a speech in Hungarian, followed by the singing

<sup>20</sup> Addition is the ornamentation. The Széchenyi square was full of Hungarian flags, and only one German flag was there. *Tiroler Schütz-zen-Zeitung* (July 6, 1863). In case the Dalfüzér would have identified itself as an Austrian/German-speaking society, the ratio would have been different.

<sup>21</sup> S., “Das erste grosse Sängerfest in Ungarn,” *Über Land und Meer* (September 1, 1863): 771.

<sup>22</sup> “Der wiener Männer-Gesangverein,” *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* 11, no. 44 (October 31, 1863): 347.



of a German prayer. Then, Hungarian “Éljen!” and German “Lebehoch” calls mingled with each other, and the brotherhood became palpable during the toasts that followed. Bilingualism was natural for them as was the unity with the Austrian singers as well. It’s worthy to note, that a Hungarian choral society from a dominantly Hungarian-speaking region might have had a different approach. The Hungarian choral movement had strongly nationalistic choirs as very open and indiscriminating choirs as well.<sup>23</sup>

## The Repertoire of the Dalfüzér

Examining the musical repertoire also provides an important addition to the issue of national identity. According to their list of the repertoire, the Dalfüzér sang predominantly German works in German, but a certain amount of Hungarian-speaking works was always included in their programs, typically during the Liedertafels. The Liedertafels consisted folk song arrangements or choral works labelled as folk songs. Unfortunately, the music collection has not survived, so we can only reconstruct the repertoire of the Dalfüzér from indirect references. In this respect the surviving playbills and program booklets must be treated as primary sources, while studies belong to the secondary literature.

Based on the *Geschichte des Oedenburger Männergesang-Vereines*, it is clear that bilingualism was omnipresent throughout the existence of the Dalfüzér.<sup>24</sup> Primary sources confirm this as well: the playbills, for example, were printed in both Hungarian and German. At the first concert the society gave on the 3rd of April 1859, most of the program was in German, but two Hungarian folk songs were included in Altdörfer’s setting. At the flag dedication associated with the Schiller anniversary, on 13th November 1859, German pieces were again predominant, but Hungarian pieces were also sung. As it was already mentioned, during the first night of the 1863 national choral reunion, when all the participating choirs performed at the opening concert, the Sopron Dalfüzér only sang Hungarian songs with other Hungarian choirs – except for the Hungarian-Austrian coproduction.<sup>25</sup> This means, that – even though there were more German-speaking

<sup>23</sup> Pest-Buda Dalárda and Budai Dalárda became Hungarian around 1865 and became pionier in the process of becoming nationalistic. Békési Dalegyelet (Békés Singing Society) and the Brassói Magyar Dalárda (Brassó Hungarian Dalárda) are good examples of being inclusive and open. See Gusztin, “The Institutionalization of the Choral Movement,” chapter “The First National Choral Meetings: 1863, 1864, 1865, and 1867” and “The Hungarian Choral Movement and the National Question.”

<sup>24</sup> Polster’s aforementioned monography.

<sup>25</sup> “A soproni dalárünnepély műsorozata Junius 28. és 29-én 1863. / Program zum Oedenburger Sängertage am 28. und 29. Juni 1863.” Soproni Múzeum, Helytörténeti Gyűjtemény, Aprónyomatvány 86.32.1.



choirs than Hungarian-speaking – the Dalfűzér considered itself as a Hungarian society.<sup>26</sup>

In later reflections, the association itself always tried to emphasize that they had sung Hungarian songs from the very beginning. The document entitled “The most important events of the 75-year-old Dalfűzér,” preserved in the Sopron Archives also tries to highlight the Hungarian features of the association:

As the programs also included Hungarian men’s choirs (Altdörfer’s folk song arrangements), which were among the first products of the literature for Hungarian men’s choir, the choral society was watched with distrust during the Bach regime, which suspected conspiracy in all social movements.

A bit further we read: “The first number of the show (in 1863!) was the [National] Anthem!” Another text, presumably from 1936, reports of a conflict between the Dalfűzér choral society and the Férfidalkör (Men’s Choir Circle), in which the Dalfűzér felt that their Hungarianness was in doubt:

We must make it absolutely clear that that the Dalfűzér was founded in 1859, consequently it is the oldest male choral society not only in our city, but also in the truncated country. This association was established in 1859 already with the name and the slogan both in Hungarian and German. From the very beginning, each program featured a mix of Hungarian and German choirs. We repeat: we are not ashamed of our German name either, but it makes us feel uncomfortable if it is deliberately mentioned as a factor with which the Hungarianness of our association can be questioned.<sup>27</sup>

We must not forget, that this document was created in an era when the question of nationality was intense (and also due to 20th-century politics, it had a different angle), but in my opinion it correlates with the realities of the 1860s. External pressure was probably much less, unlike with the *dalárdas* in Pest-Buda, where the need of becoming Hungarian was pretty much forced on them – whether only by *Zenészeti lapok* (mainly by Ábrányi as the chief-editor, who gave direction to the movement via articles) or other societies and the public as well, remains a question yet.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> For the repertoire until 1867, see Rudolf Gusztin, “A soproni Dalfűzér/Liederkrantz fellépései 1859–1867 között,” *Magyar Zenetörténet Online* (August 25, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.23714/mzo.005>, especially pages 17–33.

<sup>27</sup> *Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Győr-Moson-Sopron megye Soproni Levéltára* X.56. “Soproni Dalfűzér Egyesület által 1936. évi választmányi gyűlési határozat az elnökség tudomására hozatala.”

<sup>28</sup> When in 1864 at the Pécs national reunion it was decided, that the next festival will be hosted in Pest, the Germanness of the capital city’s societies were reproached. K. Ábrányi, “A pécsi országos első dalárünnepély,” *Zenészeti lapok* 4, no. 50 (September 8, 1864): 395.

A number of choral societies struggled with the duality of the German versus Hungarian repertoire (e.g., in Pest-Buda and Pécs).<sup>29</sup> In his study on the German-speaking middle class in Hungary, Béla Pukánszky summarized this process precisely in the case of Sopron as follows:

In addition to literature, German music plays a significant role in the preservation of folk traditions. The history of the musical life in Bratislava and Sopron, in particular, clearly shows for how long the music preserved the German folk culture of the middle class. [...] Although Hungarian songs appear in the program of the Dalfüzér choral society in Sopron already in 1859, it was natural for the society to primarily remain the home of the Liedertafel culture for many years. And perhaps the musical literacy and music-cultivating practices of the middle class are reflected less by the performances of the public associations and more by the domestic music making: a piano alone, or accompanying a singer, a violin, a trio with piano, or a string quartet played in the closed circle of friends.<sup>30</sup>

### Dalfüzér and Politics

It is necessary to touch briefly on another aspect of national identity, namely the relationship of the Dalfüzér and politics, since it is interesting how they related to politics, political events or politicians, and it is also informative to see how authority related to them.

A small but noteworthy addition is that in March 1861, at the end of the commemoration of the 1848 Revolution, the Dalfüzér sang the *Szózat*, which must have been quite thought-provoking for those who did not consider the society to be sufficiently Hungarian, since it functioned as a second national anthem beside *Himnusz*, the national anthem of Hungary.<sup>31</sup> On the 8th of the following month, at the mourning ceremony for Széchenyi, they sang it again.<sup>32</sup> Since István Széchenyi, the “greatest Hungarian,” was an emblematic figure of 19th-century Hungary and was an active participant in the nation-building project, I consider this an important, partly symbolic act, especially knowing,

<sup>29</sup> See chapter “The First National Choral Meetings: 1863, 1864, 1865, and 1867,” in Gusztin, *The Institutionalization of the Choral Movement*.

<sup>30</sup> Béla Pukánszky, *Német polgárság magyar földön* (Franklin-társulat kiadása, 1944) (= *Magyarságismeret* 4), 153.

<sup>31</sup> *Oedenburger Intelligenz- und Anzeigblatt / Soproni értesítő* 7, no. 35 (March 22, 1861): 2. *Szózat* was written by Mihály Vörösmarty in 1836 and was set to music by Béni Egressy in 1843 for a competition for the express purpose to set *Szózat* to music. The competition was announced by Endre Barty, director of the National Theater. Sziklavári Károly, “... a nemzeti himnusz neked kell megírni, addig a szobából ki nem lépsz: 175 éve született Erkel Ferenc dallama,” *Napút* 21, no. 6 (2019): 49.

<sup>32</sup> *Oedenburger Intelligenz- und Anzeigblatt / Soproni értesítő* 7, no. 40 (April 8, 1861): 2.

that from 1849 to 1867, reciting or singing the *Szózat* was on the edge of being forbidden and tolerated.

Although the Dalfűzér did not participate in politics explicitly, it could not avoid situations, where he had to make reflections on historical events and politics. On 10th July 1859 the Dalfűzér gave a concert at the Sopron railway station, to express their gratitude to the authorities for giving the society the official permission. The income of this event was offered to the wounded Austrians, whom were accommodated in Sopron after the Battle of Solferino.<sup>33</sup> It is no exaggeration to approach this event from a political point of view, since Hungarians, who had ambivalent feelings towards the Austro-Germans, sympathised with the Italians during the Piedmont-Austro-French war.<sup>34</sup> But the Dalfűzér were able to move beyond this, and it is no wonder that they attracted the attention of their Austrian fraternal associations. The *Oedenburger Intelligenz- und Anzeigeblatt*, reporting on the event, emphasises the humanitarian attitude of the association.

In 1862, when the statue of Maria Theresa was unveiled at the Wiener-Neustädter Militär-Akademie-Commando, they were present as a Hungarian choir – as the invitation letter stated – “to commemorate at the celebration of the late Empress Maria Theresa the self-sacrifice of the glorious Hungarian patriotism for the sake of protecting the Monarchy.”<sup>35</sup> Franz Joseph I and many other high ranked people were present.<sup>36</sup> The choir was in the presence of the Austrian emperor at the unveiling of another Austrian ruler as a Hungarian society after the years of oppression, in an era, where there was tension between the Austrian and Hungarian political elite.<sup>37</sup> The Dalfűzér knew this when they accepted the invitation.

After the event, the choirs who went home by train were welcomed to a beer and cold buffet at the Petschinger Wiese next to the train station. The president of the Dalfűzér, József Király, gave a speech in which he emphasised that singing and harmony knows no boundaries and also celebrated the dawning of German

<sup>33</sup> Polster, *Geschichte des Oedenburger Männergesang-Vereines*, 14.

<sup>34</sup> Cs[atkai] E[ndre], “Magyarok és a Risorgimento,” *Soproni Szemle* 16, no. 4 (1962): 382; “209. A legrövidebb háború (1859. 4. 29–7. 10.),” *Szemelvények Johann Karl Schuster feljegyzéseiből 1827?–1867*, no page number. See “Throughout history, we have often had close relations with Italy, but these relations were never stronger than in the years 1859–1861, when the affairs and interests of the two countries intertwined closely. Hungarian soldiers fought shoulder to shoulder with their Italian comrades, and Hungarian blood was shed, too, for the creation of ‘Italia unita.’” Cf. Ruhmann Jenő, “Ihász Dániel szerepe az olaszországi magyar emigrációban,” *Soproni Szemle* 6, no. 4 (November 15, 1942): 233ff.

<sup>35</sup> Boronkai, “Arcképek,” 358ff.

<sup>36</sup> “Denkmäler,” Theresianische Militärakademie, <https://www.milak.at/informationen-fuer-besucher/akademienpark/denkmaeler> (accessed January 15, 2021).

<sup>37</sup> Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története* (Kossuth kiadó, 2017), 346ff.

harmony. Dr. Bank then stepped from a table to a podium and said that whereas in the past peoples were united by arms, it is now the power of singing that brings them together, and this gives even greater meaning to the monumental celebration in honour of the great Empress, to which singers from Germany, Austria and Hungary contributed together and found way to each other's hearts.<sup>38</sup> The violent unification may as well have been a reference to the 1848/49 revolution, just as the idea of German-Austrian-Hungarian unity may have carried the concept of a kind of imperial unity.

A very interesting note made in *Die Liedgenossen* during a reflection on the 1863 Sngerfest: "Mge diese Harmonie auf dem neutralen Gebiet der gemuthbewegenden Tonkunst ein Vorlufer brderlichen Zusammenwirkens beider Lnder auch auf politischem Felde sein."<sup>39</sup> This also perfectly presents the political and also unificatory aspect which was deeply in the mindset of Germans and partly in Austria and also was present as one of the mission of the Dalfűzr, see Schuster's aforementioned diary entry or Kirly's poem.

Censorship and surveillance was also present in the life of Dalfűzr. According to a typewritten archive summarising the history of the society, the Bach era was suspicious of it, since from the beginning it also sang Hungarian choruses (transcriptions of folk songs by Altdrfer).<sup>40</sup> For this reason, on 15th August 1860, by order of the Budapest Governor's Council (Budapesti Helytarttancs), the chief of police of Sopron was appointed to control/oversee the Society.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

Although national overtones were indeed present in the Hungarian choral movement, based on recent research, it was more diversified and nuanced, than brnyi had interpreted it. Formation of the different *dalrda*s had different motivations from simple, pragmatic reasons to political and/or national ones. Cases in multiethnic cities may differ, especially, if they are close to the border or are in a German-speaking part of the country. As a matter of fact, one of the first choral

<sup>38</sup> *Fremden-Blatt* (September 2, 1862). See also *Wiener Zeitung* 441, no. 1221 (September 2, 1862) and *Die Neue Zeit: Olmzer politische Zeitung* (September 4, 1862). It is unknown yet to me, who is Dr. Bank.

<sup>39</sup> "Das Sngerfest zu Oedenburg," *Die Liedgenossen* 3, no. 8 (August 1, 1863): 31.

<sup>40</sup> The Bach era lasted from 1851 to 1859. It is named after Alexander Bach, interior minister of the Austrian Empire. One of the main characteristic of the era was oppression of Hungarian culture.

<sup>41</sup> "A 75 ves Dalfűzr fontosabb esemnyei." *Soproni levltr* (X.56). "Mnthogy msoraiban magyar rfikarok is szerepeltek /Altdrfer npdaltiratai/, amelyek a magyar rfikarirodalom els termkei kz tartoztak, mkdését bizalmatlansggal figyelte a minden trsadalmi megmozdulásban konspircit sejt Bach-rendruralom, gyhogy 1860-ban a budapesti helytarttancs a soproni rendrfnk szemlyében kormánybiztost nevezett ki az egyeslet ellenrzsre, akinek kteleessge volt az egyeslet gylsein, rendezsein szemlyesen ellenrizni a Dalfűzr mkdését."

society in Hungary was created in Sopron (1847, 1859),<sup>42</sup> a city near to the border to Austria, by Christian Altdörfer, a musician from Württemberg, presumably with a majority of German-speaking Hungarian citizens. This society was brave enough to organize and host the first national choral reunion in Hungary.

For the population of Sopron, multhiethnicity and bilingualism was natural, Germans and Hungarians got on well with each other. As citizens of a Hungarian town, everybody considered themselves Hungarian, whether they spoke Hungarian or not. The same applies to the repertoire: inspite of the dominantly German-speaking choral works, the Oedenburger Liederkrantz considered itself a Hungarian choir, as did other choral societies, including Austrians. From a political aspect, it is interesting to see, how the police monitored the Dalfüzér, especially because of the Hungarian songs they sung. Still, the main motive of the *dalárda* was harmony and unity with the different nations, especially Austrians.

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<sup>42</sup> On the founding dates, see Rudolf Gusztin, "A soproni Dalfüzér/Liederkrantz: előzmények, intézményesülés, működés (1847–1859) I. rész," *Soproni Szemle* 75, no. 3. (2021): 286–287.

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## The Question of National Identity in the Multiethnic Sopron Through the Work of the Dalfűzér/Liederkranz (1847–1867)

### Abstract

Richard Taruskin describes the German choral movement as the hotbed of German nationalist unification, the musical precursor of a new nation-building ideology. However, the Liedertafel movement did not stop in Germany, but spread to the whole of Europe, practically without exception the founding of choirs had a national–political dimension, including Hungary. It is interesting to examine how nationalism overtones could take hold in the multiethnic Hungary, especially in the German-dominated cities. Sopron is an excellent case study, since this town, which lies in the western corner of the country, bordering Austria, had a large part of German population, and as a consequence had a German theatre and German speaking press. Christian Altdörfer, the choirmaster of the Lutheran church and founder of the Dalfűzér/Liederkranz, came from Württemberg to set up a singing group in the 1840s that sang in both German and Hungarian. This situation gives us an opportunity to examine how the association saw itself and



how others saw it, and in doing so to highlight what national identity meant in mid-19th-century Hungary.

## **Otázka národní identity v multietnické Šoproni prostřednictvím díla Dalfüzér/Liederkrantz (1847–1867)**

### **Abstrakt**

Richard Taruskin popisuje německé sborové hnutí jako ohnisko německého nacionalistického sjednocení, jako hudebního předchůdce nové ideologie budování národa. Hnutí Liedertafel se však nezastavilo v Německu, ale rozšířilo se do celé Evropy, prakticky bez výjimky mělo zakládání sborů národně politický rozměr, včetně Uher. Je zajímavé zkoumat, jak se nacionalistické podtóny mohly prosadit v multietnickém Maďarsku, zejména ve městech s převahou německého obyvatelstva. Šoproň je výbornou případovou studií, protože toto město, které leží v západním cípu země a hraničí s Rakouskem, mělo velkou část německého obyvatelstva, a v důsledku toho mělo německé divadlo a německy mluvící tisk. Christian Altdörfer, sbormistr luteránského kostela a zakladatel spolku Dalfüzér/Liederkrantz, přišel z Württemberska a ve 40. letech 19. století založil pěvecký spolek, který zpíval německy i maďarsky. Tato situace nám dává příležitost prozkoumat, jak spolek vnímal sám sebe a jak ho vnímali ostatní, a tím poukázat na to, co v polovině 19. století v Uhrách znamenala národní identita.

### **Keywords**

Hungarian choral movement; Sopron; Oedenburg; Soproni Dalfüzér; Oedenburger Liederkrantz; nationalism; national identity; multiethnicity; Christian Altdörfer; Kornél Ábrányi; Hungarian language; Hungarian repertoire; German language; German repertoire; music and politics

### **Klíčová slova**

maďarské sborové hnutí; Šoproň; Oedenburg; Soproni Dalfüzér; Oedenburger Liederkrantz; nacionalismus; národní identita; multietnicita; Christian Altdörfer; Kornél Ábrányi; maďarský jazyk; maďarský repertoár; německý jazyk; německý repertoár; hudba a politika

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# SOPRONI DALÁRÜNNEPÉLY MŰSOROZATA

Junius 28. és 29-én 1863.

19 résziut magyar-, résziut osztrákoni dalárdák  
közreműködésével

rendezve

a Soproni „*dalfűzer*“ énekegylet által.

## Programm

zum

# Oedenburger Sàngerfeste

am 28. und 29. Juni 1863.

Unter Mitwirkung, respective Theilnahme von  
19 Männergesangvereinen aus Oesterreich und Ungarn

veranstaltet vom

Oedenburger Gesangverein „*Fiederkrantz*“.

<b>SOPRON.</b>	<b>OEDENBURG.</b>
<b>Az 1864. évi Junius 18-án este 8 órakor a helybeli „Dalfüzér“ által a „magyar királyhozi“ vendégfogadó kertjében tartandó <b>DALKÖR</b> MŰSOROZATA.</b>	<b>PROGRAMM</b> zu der am 18. Juni 1864 <b>Abends 8 Uhr</b> im Garten des Gasthofes zum „König von Ungarn“ abzuhaltenden <b>Niedertafel</b> des Gesangvereines „Niederfranz.“
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><div style="width: 45%;"><p>1. <b>Sängers Abendlied.</b> — Franz Abt. 2. <b>Befordultam a konyhára.</b> — Magyar népdal. 3. <b>Wasserfahrt.</b> — Heinr. Weidt. 4. <b>Das A. B. C.</b> — Carl Zöllner. 5. <b>Képeddel alszom el.</b> — Magyar népdal. 6. <b>Piratengefang.</b> — Jul. Otto. 7. <b>Mutterseelenallein.</b> — Pfr. Braun. 8. <b>Csillag elég ragyog az égen.</b> 9. <b>Das Wiedersehen.</b> — Ferd. Solle. 10. <b>Trinklied.</b> — J. P. Gotthard.</p></div><div style="width: 45%;"><p><b>Jegyzet.</b> Nem kedvező időjárás esetében, — a dalkör Junius 19-én tartatik.</p><p><b>Figyelmeztetés.</b> A dalfüzér e hó 29-dik napján a múlt évi első magyarhoni dalártnépelemlékére a „dalárhegyen“ emlékkövet felszentelni s ezen eljárással a szomszéd dalárdák közreműködése mellett az ájtelti kertben ünnepélyes dalmulatságot összehívni szándékozik. A dalárdának t. ez. gyámo-lító tagjai ezennel ez ünnepélyre oly észrevétellel tiszteletteljesen meghívotnak, hogy az ünnepély tárgyrendre a helyh. hirlap Junius 26-ikán megjele-nendő számában közhírre fog tétetni.</p></div></div>	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><div style="width: 45%;"><p><b>Anmerkung.</b> Im Falle einer ungünstigen Witterung wird die Niedertafel auf den 19. Juni verschoben.</p></div><div style="width: 45%;"><p><b>Zur Nachricht.</b> Der Niederfranz beabsichtigt, am 29. Juni l. J., als am ersten Gedächtnistage des Oedenburger Sängerfestes, einen auf dem Sangerberg zu errichtenden Gedenkstein zu weihen und in Verbindung mit einigen benachbarten Vereinen eine Festniedertafel im Neuhofgarten hieran anzuschließen. Die p. l. unterstützenden Mitglieder des Vereines werden demnach schon jetzt zu dieser Festerlichkeit mit dem Bemerken freundlichst eingeladen, daß das* specielle Programm in der am 26. Juni erscheinenden Nummer des Oedenburger Localblattes bekannt gemacht werden wird.</p></div></div>	
<small>Druck von Adolf Reichard in Oedenburg.</small>	

Museum of Sopron