

négy magyar dal az első, „Német dalok” alcímű CD végére került, ugyanakkor elemzése és a hozzá tartozó versek közzlése a második, „Magyar dalok” kötetben kapott helyet. Egy új, revideált kiadás esetén a két kötetet nagyobb formátumban, impozáns könyvvé egyesítve lehetne megjelentetni, a végén mindkét lemezzel. A művek sorrendjét egyéb szerkesztési szempontok is befolyásolták: amint az megszokott, a lemezek elejére vonzóbb, súlyosabb kompozíciók kerültek. Ennek köszönhetően érheti a hallgatót valódi meglepetésként a legelső szám, az *Ach wärs du mein* kezdetű Lenau-költemény megzenésítése (*Sechs Lieder*, op. 5 no. 1). Egy érett, nagyformátumú dalköltő szólal meg benne, és helyezi fel Magyarországot a műfaj nemzetközi palettájára: már ezért az egyetlen kompozícióért érdemes megismerkedni a kiadvánnyal. A másik opusz, a *Schilflieder* (op. 6) annyiban jelent „előrelépést”, hogy itt valóban egységes, egybekomponált dalciklusról van szó, a tételek közötti átvezetésekkel. Miksch Adrienn ezúttal is szépen, fényes hangszínnel és érzékenyen interpretálta, együtt lélegezve Elek Szilvia rugalmasan alkalmazkodó és inspiráló zongoraszólásával.

A magyar dalirodalom szempontjából különleges értéket képviselnek Petőfi Sándor, Arany János, Komócsy József és Tóth Kálmán verseinek megzenésítései. Mosonyi az elsők között volt, aki a nemzetközi hagyomány és a verbunkos zene elemeinek kombinációjával hozzájárult a nemzeti dalköltészet kibontakoztatásához. A két lemezen szereplő zeneművek igényes kidolgozásukkal, ötletgazdagságukkal érdemesek arra, hogy tovább színesítsék a koncertrepertoárt. Ha a szerző más műveihez hasonlóan egyenként nem is vehetik fel a versenyt a zenetörténet legnagyobb mestereinek alkotásaival, számunka akkor is érzelmi és történeti jelentőséggel bírnak, és a kiváló hazai kortársak életműveivel együtt közösen, egy tradíció részeként megtörténhet, hogy kedvező időjárás esetén olykor a Holdról is láthatókká váljanak.



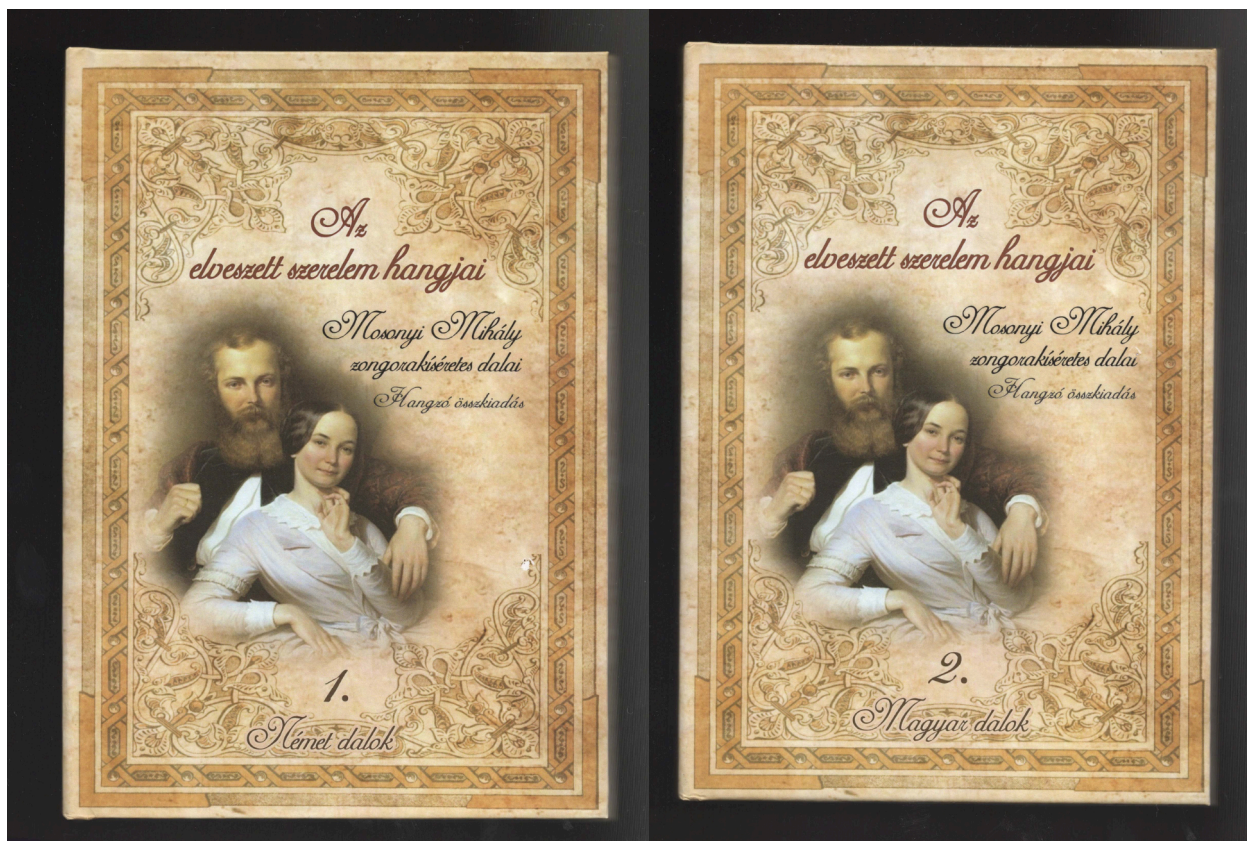
SONGS WITH PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY MIHÁLY MOSONYI

LÁSZLÓ GOMBOS

If we look at Hungary from a distance, from somewhere as far away as satellites, or at 19th century Hungarian music from a corresponding virtual position, we see only blurred outlines. As we get closer, we can recognize the mountain ranges, Lake Balaton, and the Danube, as well as the art of Ferenc Liszt and later Ferenc Erkel. I know from experience that it is worth coming even closer: we have enough treasures that, once we have discovered them for ourselves and others, will be much easier to recognize next time. Last week, a musicology conference awakened us to the value of Mihály Mosonyi's songs and drew our attention to a recording released a few years ago. Lo and behold, again we have something that is worth adding to the map of our musical life.

In the July 2019 issue (no. 36) of the Liszt Society's journal we already encountered a brief, factual mention of the release of Mosonyi's songs, but I was certainly not the only one who was not directly familiar with the double album itself. Now, in mid-October 2025, however, at a conference of the Lavotta Foundation in Sátoraljaújhely, Károly Sziklavári, the editor of the album and the author of the accompanying information, gave a lecture presentation on the songs, illustrating his points with excerpts from the CD. His words revealed a musical giant who also made significant contributions to the field of intimate vocal chamber music. Of course, we were familiar with this outstanding figure of 19th-century Hungarian music, the composer of operas, symphonic and piano works, a committed contributor to the journal *Zenészeti Lapok*, a leading figure in musical life and, last but not least, the friend of Franz Liszt. He deserves the eternal gratitude of posterity for being the great master's disciple, supporter, and "comrade-in-arms", and for playing a role in making Liszt feel more at home in Hungary and later spend months in his homeland year after year. The performance and the recording of Mosonyi's songs has drawn attention to a new side of the composer.

The audio full edition published by *Magyar Kultúra Kiadó* was new in 2018, and for many it still is today. Its title is poetic: *The Sounds of Lost Love. Songs with piano accompaniment by Mihály Mosonyi*. The publication is not a traditional CD, but two attractive books with decorative hard covers and a disc supplement on each of the inside back covers (Volume I: German songs, Volume II: Hungarian songs). It contains a total of about 200 pages of text and 70-80 illustrations (portraits, contemporary buildings, excerpts from newspaper articles, sheet music covers, sheet music examples). Károly Sziklavári's accompanying text is a genuine Mosonyi monograph with a detailed biography, a description of the composer's style and musical career, a list of works, and a thorough, analytical presentation of the songs. The author rightly called it a "*Mosonyi song*



guide” in his foreword: if the recordings whet the appetite of performers and audiences, they will find all the important information about each work here. The words of all the songs are included at the end of the volumes (in the case of German-language poems, together with a rough Hungarian translation).

What may yet remind us of a typical accompanying booklet in this ambitious publication are the brief biographies of the contributors: the two singers, Adrienn Miksch and Tivadar Kiss, the pianist Szilvia Elek, and the author of the book, Károly Sziklavári. In fact, the piano itself has become a protagonist, as its presence has left a strong mark on the entire recording: it has influenced the singers’ voices, intonation and voice-production, the pianist’s playing style, and, above all, the sound itself. The production would certainly have been more perfect with the accompaniment of a good Bösendorfer, but the producers of the publication preferred authenticity and credibility to perfection. Therefore, they opted for a piano made by Károly Schmidt in Pozsony around 1844 (the description of the instrument, serial number 737, was prepared by Szilvia Takács). This Hungarian instrument, which is in good condition for its age, dates from the time when the young Mosonyi settled in Pest.

It is indeed important that musicians performing earlier music – not only pianists, but also other chamber music performers! – encounter contemporary instruments and become familiar with their tonal and mechanical characteristics. One must play the piano, sing, play the violin, etc. differently if the timbres in the various registers of the accompaniment differ from those of today, if the decay time is different, if the structure reacts differently to the tilt, if the pedal resonates differently, or if a densely layered musical texture sounds much more transparent on an old instrument than on a modern one. Taking all this into account, the composer’s original intentions may become clear, and the lessons learned in this way may also influence the interpretation on modern pianos.

Unfortunately, some of what we gain on the swings we may lose on the roundabouts: while imperfection can indeed be a human and loveable trait, today’s ears are too much accustomed to precise sounds that can be repeated over and over again. I am not convinced that the same piano sounded the same in the mid-19th century, as the material structure, strength, and vibration properties of all its components have changed, and we cannot be sure either that it is the best instruments of the era that have survived in a playable condition. Moreover, this was a period when instrument making was undergoing rapid changes, and by the end of Mosonyi’s life, pianos would have significantly different characteristics than a few decades earlier.

Szilvia Elek certainly got the most out of her instrument, but she could not overcome the unevenness and, above all, the rattling, floating, often out of tune sound (I cannot tell to what extent Tivadar Kiss' intonation problems were affected by the uncertainty of the accompaniment's sound).

Summa summarum: thanks to the recording, listeners can imagine themselves in the atmosphere of mid-19th century domestic music-making, and rightly assume that Mosonyi and his acquaintances produced similar sounds in their own salons on the occasion of gatherings. Friends played music together spontaneously, including, in addition to the composer and his family, his pupils who later became famous: Ödön Mihalovich, Kornél Ábrányi, Sándor Bertha, László Zimay, János Végh of Vereb, Gyula Erkel, and Sándor Erkel.

In his informative text, Károly Sziklavári introduced Mosonyi's song types and composing periods in detail. Thus, the first group includes half a dozen short, intimate, simple German songs conceived in the spirit of Biedermeier in the 1840s and early 1850s. I quote from page 46 of the first volume: "*Among the six separate pieces are two lullabies (An Irma, Wiegenlied), a passionate declaration of love (Ob ich dich liebe?), an inviting expression of courtship (Du schönes Fischermädchen), a plaintive desire to get away (Aus einsamer Zelle), and a carefree, playful reverie (Wunsch im Frühlinge). At least five of them presumably preceded the composition of the songs marked with opus numbers, which were published by Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig around 1853–54. The only exception is Du schönes Fischermädchen, whose manuscript bears the date of dedication (and presumably also of composition) of May 10th, 1853...*"

Mosonyi also set poems by German poets and poems translated into German to music in the two opuses mentioned above in the early 1850s: *Sechs Lieder* op. 5 (three poems by Nikolaus Lenau, two by Emanuel Geibel, and one by Robert Burns), and *Schilflieder* op. 6 (Reed Songs / Songs from the Reeds, a song cycle based on poems by Lenau).

In the last decade of his life, when he changed (Magyarized) his name from Brand to Mosonyi, the composer also changed his style, replacing German with Hungarian lyrics and a style interwoven with Hungarian elements, which over time also reflected the influence of Wagner. In addition to the five large-scale concert songs and six shorter songs to poems by Kálmán Tóth, all composed in the 1860s, this includes 25 *Hungarian folk songs* arranged to Mihály Füredi's melodies.

This logical and chronological order was partially overridden by considerations of space and practicality during the compilation. To make the two discs have roughly the same playing time (66'16 and 62'05), four Hungarian songs were placed at the end of the first CD with the subtitle "German Songs", while their analysis and the accompanying poems were included in the second volume, "Hungarian Songs." In a new, revised edition, the two volumes could perhaps be published in a larger format, combined into an impressive book, with both CDs included at the end. The order of the works was also influenced by other editorial considerations: as is customary, the more attractive and serious compositions were placed at the beginning of the CDs. Thanks to this, the very first track, the setting of Lenau's poem *Ach wärest du mein* (*Sechs Lieder*, op. 5 no. 1), comes as a real surprise to the listener. It reveals a mature, large-scale song composer and places Hungary on the international map of the genre: this single composition alone makes the publication worth getting to know. The other opus, *Schilflieder* (op. 6), represents a "step forward" in the sense that it is a truly unified, composed song cycle with transitions between the movements. Once again, Adrienn Miksch gave a beautiful, bright-toned and sensitive interpretation, breathing in unison with Szilvia Elek's flexibly adaptable and inspiring piano part.

The musical settings of poems by Sándor Petőfi, János Arany, József Komócsy, and Kálmán Tóth are of particular value from the aspect of Hungarian song literature. Mosonyi was one of the first to contribute to the development of national song composing by combining elements of international tradition and *verbunkos* music. The musical works on the two CDs, with their sophisticated arrangements and wealth of ideas, are worthy of further enriching the concert repertoire. Although, like the composer's other works, they cannot compete individually with the works of the greatest masters of music history, they are still of emotional and historical significance to us, and together with the works of outstanding Hungarian contemporaries, as part of a tradition, they may sometimes be visible even from the moon in favourable weather conditions.