

## **Hymn Books - 17-19 century-manuscripts for Unitarian parishes Along Târnava and Homorod Rivers**

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As a doctorand to the Church Music faculty, I'm preparing my dissertation on the history and liturgical use of passio treasure, sung in Hungarian. The indicated sources in the title were recently discovered hardly last year, after my researches. We are going to refer to all these during this seminar by the first international official paper.

In specialty literature referring to the theme of these Hungarian passio, frequent hints and short descriptions related to Unitarian passio-manuscripts are shown. Unfortunately, the studies published until now did not attach any special importance to the vivid and real use of Unitarian passio songs either from a church musical point of view, or within the research referring to as folk musical creations. Although the establishment of their range of cultivation, collecting and presenting to be known, together with the rediscovery of the historical conclusions which permeate them, require the revival of these traditions related to passio singing. Having this in mind, I took the first step in 1998 by collecting and describing the unique Gregorian passio for reformed use in Hungarian. In the Reformed church in the heart of Transylvanian region called Kalotaszeg, at Huedin (Banffihunyad), on Good Friday, it is no doubt that for four centuries it has been in use Gregorian passio which was sung in Hungarian.

The practice of singing passio hymns in Hungarian may not even seem of special and unique importance. But behind visible (audible) tradition, well outlined differences are hidden, from musical and literary point of view. For instance, the practice of passio singing in Latin from Middle Age Esztergom, instead of a „major” tonality drew up the variations of a specific ambitus in a minor. This passio in a minor, owing to the Trent Council and to the historical circumstances, in the Catholic churches, gradually disappeared. On Hungary's Territory the passio singing came back to its major melodic Roman form and it goes without saying that farther on, in the mass language, that is Latin,

The Protestant liturgical manuscripts meant to be locally used through which the text for passio was transposed in Hungarian, keeping thus the medieval traditional Esztergom tunes, preserved in quite a number and in many variants the forms and mode of passio singing.

While I was going through the small churches of Unitarian Transylvanian Churches in 2001 spring and summer, my purpose was collecting and cataloguing passio songs, having in mind their being sung too. Thus, organized by the Institute of Music Sciences affiliated to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, supported by the Unitarian Cluj Diocese, we could penetrate a few well-supplied libraries and also in the title-mentioned regions, establishments nearby Târnava and Homorod Rivers (Romania). In these areas there still are around cent out of a total of 100 churches of Unitarian Church, a preserver of some anti-Trinitarian concepts, appeared as one of the later branches of 16-th century Protestantism. While I was searching these regions and collecting vivid testimonies, I came across more and more important manuscripts, which contained the very passio I was looking for.

During the first century of Reformation, owing to the Protestant claim of singing in the mother tongue and to the wish of singing together in church, there were created liturgical Gregorian hymns in Hungarian, called *graduale*. Here and there, but not officially, both practices had predecessors in Medieval Hungary (as an example I mention: the many forms of *kancio*, that is „*Te Deum*”). Thus, the liturgical Protestant Hungarian music was present in a perfect parallelism with Latin in the first centuries. This is proved by contemporary text testimonies, agendas, and the two types of hymn books - that is that containing songs with Gregorian type tunes, called *gradual books* and the books containing stanza songs, called *kancionale*. As a result of a fruitful work of the translators, about 1550, there was gathered a high number of liturgical songs, but the

singing of these dropped in 18-19 centuries, as a consequence of the spreading of Puritan principles after 1650, as well as of the Counter-Reform influence, then of Council/Decisions, which harshly and very successfully forbade their singing. In the already mentioned regions, in Unitarian churches, the tradition of passio singing may look back over a meaningful historic past, despite the stormy-blown centuries. The elderly members of these Unitarian churches have still remembered the Gregorian singing since their childhood and according to their testimonies even their forerunners used to sing them.

On searching through the neglected parts of town and city libraries, it dawned on me that during the searched centuries (18-19) apart the hymn books published every century, there were permanently used three collections spread as manuscripts as it follows:

1. The Passionales, containing hymns related to the ceremonies during the Week of Passion;
2. A high number of big sized, richly adorned in copying workshops books, called *Graduale Sacrum*;
3. Besides these, a *Psalterium Hungaricum* from Szenci - a still big sized, adorned, handcopied.

Apart from these there came to light, in a big number hymn books for private use, prayer books with addenda containing songs (their majority taken from the above-mentioned collections) and manuscripts, notes from church music field.

The most important sources may be divided into six categories, among which the first contain note-manuscripts already mentioned, that can be considered typical among the 17-18th centuries Unitarians. About the other three categories of sources we can tell that they appeared as a side effect of my searches. Here are the six categories:

1. *Passionales* - 14 copies (among which 3 are but fragments), these, with the majority of cases, do not contain only passio, but also lamentations, sometimes a *Te Deum*, then hymns ordered according to the liturgical year. We can find in them forms of canticum, recited psalms with antiphones. Some of these manuscripts are hard-cover, others are coverless, with fluent Hungarian written notes, on four-line staves without clefs. The initials sometimes are adorned and the colour-written texts are usually in red ink.

2. *Graduale Sacrum* - 14 copies, among which 2 contain only fragments. In their first part, besides a smaller number of Gregorian motifs (antiphones, psalms, hymns, *Te Deum*) the stanza songs of an Unitarian hymn-books, printed in the 17th century, indicating the tune but without scores, were also found.

3. Five copies of Szenci Molnar Albert *Psalterion*. These are copies of 1562 Geneva-Psalms, which Szenci edited in Hungarian as manuscripts-copies, under the title of *Psalterium Hungaricum* in 1607. They are big size (21x33 cm), with initials, in four cases with mensural notes, on five lines with clefs.

4. Private Hymn Books prayer books with addendas containing songs, 3 copies. They were meant for local use; they have small size (A/8), they are collections of texts in rhyme, indicating the melodies. In one of the cases, the text appears either in Latin or in Hungarian; in other cases the local pastor supplied his own lines for the texts. The liturgical use of these sources cannot be attested.

5. Book Covers (resembling medieval codex covers) 9 copies. These are the covers of old printing papers from Odorheiu Secuiesc Library, belonging to 15-17th centuries. Some of them are covered in 3-4 kinds of parchments, among which there were 4 sheets codex type with notes.

6. Five copies having another destination. Collections of songs for students, translations from the Talmud, collections of choral pieces for more voices, scores for voices, addendas by handwriting to some printings.

Total: 50 sources. Among them 38 have notes, 12 no notes, 42 undiscovered until now, 8 known.

Half of these belong to the libraries copies, other copies belong to rural communities. Comparing the sources, the minute analysis of the material would go beyond the range of this paper. The transformation of the six categories of manuscripts is taking place at present, and their publishing is expected in a near future. I am convinced that by means of the mentioned sources, besides enriching the hymn Hungarian treasure, the high number of researchers of all-over the world be also enriched.