

## ***Zenészet* [Musical Journal] (1860-1876)**

*Zenészet* *Lapok* (alcíme: *Heti közlöny a zeneművészet összes ágai köréből*) [Musical Journal (subtitle: weekly gazette from all the branches of music)], Hungary's first music journal, was published from October 1860 to August 1876 by Kornél Ábrányi Sr. For sixteen years this journal served as a witness to, and as an organizing force in, one of the most dynamic periods of Hungarian music history. In 1866 the subtitle was altered—*A hazai dal- és zeneegyletek hivatalos közlönye* [Official gazette of the national singers and music associations]—then changed again from 1869 to 1872—*Az országos magyar daláregyesület hivatalos közlönye* [Official gazette of the country-wide Hungarian Choral Society]. Each issue of the journal consists of eight pages in a rather large (33cm x 24cm) format.

The first issue appeared on 3 October 1860,<sup>1</sup> and was followed by regularly appearing weekly issues, first on Wednesday, and later on Thursday and on Sunday. The first twelve volumes each began in October and ended in September of the subsequent year with issue number 52, which explains why the numbering of the volumes does not match with the calendar year.<sup>2</sup> However, beginning with Volume thirteen (1873) the publication year begins in January and corresponds to that of the calendar year. The sixteenth and final volume was published in 1876.

The first six volumes contain regularly appearing weekly issues published at the rate of four or five per month. Volume six ceased publication on 6 May 1866 (issue 31); thereafter, publication paused for a period of five months. The journal continued publication on 7 October 1866 with the designation “New and 7th Volume.” At the front of this issue an editorial explains the reason for the pause in publication, namely, the Prussian-Austrian War. In the same issue the previous page numbering system is changed to column numbering, with the eight numbered pages becoming sixteen numbered columns. The 20 February 1870 issue (Volume ten) did not appear due to a typographers strike, as reported in an editorial.<sup>3</sup> Further missing issues<sup>4</sup> were announced on 22 September 1872, when the journal ceased being the official gazette of the Choral Society. Volume twelve closed with its 20 October 1872 issue, in which the editor announced that the music journal would become independent the following year. Volume thirteen (1873) retains the journal's regular dimensions but returns to the page numbering system. In this year several issues fail to appear, and, including the publication of double issues, only forty-one are published. The first issue of Volume fourteen appears on 5 May 1874, and future issues appear irregularly. With Volume fifteen (1875) the journal ceased regular weekly publication, and appeared mainly three times a month. In 1876 the number of

<sup>1</sup> On 8 August 1860 a sample issue appeared; it is identical to that of the 3 October issue.

<sup>2</sup> The first volume is 1860/61, the second 1860/62 etc. The RIPM numbers naturally follow the chronological not the publishing year.

<sup>3</sup> 20 February 1870, page [321].

<sup>4</sup> The other missing issues are those of 8 and 15 September.

monthly issues was reduced to two, which appeared at irregular intervals; during this year the journal ceased publication.

Beginning in 1856, plans for a music journal incorporating the music columns of the existing political, literary, and fine arts periodicals were linked to the name of Kornél Ábrányi Sr. (1822-1903), who later became the owner and editor-in-chief of *Zenészet*i Lapok. Kornél Ábrányi Sr. was a highly-educated and cultured musician. A friend of Franz (Ferenc) Liszt and Ferenc Erkel, Ábrányi studied piano in Paris with Chopin and Kalkbrenner in 1843-1844; and, in 1846 was a student of Joseph Fischhof in Vienna. Ábrányi made his debut as a pianist in Pest in 1847. In the 1850s he began his career in music journalism, and in 1855 became the music correspondent for the *Pesti Napló* [Pest Journal], one of the most prestigious Hungarian political daily newspapers. As a music critic, composer, and music educator, Ábrányi saw quite clearly that Hungarian musical life—which was in the process of reorganization following the failed revolution of 1848-1849—was in need of a central theoretical forum, regular criticism, and an educated audience. In responding to these needs Ábrányi successfully rallied support for the creation of a journal from the most outstanding musical experts of the time. These included the composer Mihály Mosonyi (1815-1870)—born as Michael Brand in Boldogasszonyfalva (today Frauenkirchen, Austria), who moved to the Hungarian capital, changed his name and became an enthusiastic supporter of a national musical identity—the musicologists István Bartalus (1821-1899) and Gusztáv Szénfy (1819-1875), and the music publisher Gyula Rózsavölgyi (1822-1861). In the early summer of 1860, statements appeared in the daily press announcing the establishment of a music journal, followed by notices soliciting subscriptions. Not long thereafter, Kornél Ábrányi distributed a sample copy of *Zenészet*i Lapok dated 8 August 1860.

A significant portion of the monumental expenses associated with the launching of the journal, including the payment of a security bond as prescribed in the press laws of 1848 and the printing costs, were covered by income from Kornél Ábrányi Sr.'s landed estates. In contrast to the general practice in Hungarian newspaper publishing of the time, whereby the proprietary rights generally belonged to the printer, with the editor being merely an employee of the printer/owner, the situation in the case of *Zenészet*i Lapok was reversed: Ábrányi, as editor-in-chief, purchased the journal's proprietary rights. Thus, while he carried the burden of the printing costs his willingness to accept them created the conditions for the journal's relative intellectual independence and the opportunity for its unified direction. (The change in the journal's ownership between 1868 to 1872 is discussed below.)

The goal of Kornél Ábrányi and his colleagues was to help kindle both a Hungarian style of art music of European standards, and a refined concert culture for the general public. One of their most urgent initial tasks was to develop and to introduce a Hungarian musical terminology, for at the time German musical terms were in use. From the beginning, important series of articles were devoted to theoretical subjects such as harmony and thorough-bass (Mosonyi), the general history of music (Rózsavölgyi),

Hungarian musical idioms (Ábrányi), operatic performances at the National Theatre, and to important premieres of works by Liszt, Erkel, Mosonyi, Mihalovich (mainly written by Ábrányi). Moreover, in continuing series on music theory, history, and aesthetics, they summarized in Hungarian the primarily German musicological literature of the period. These series served the dual purpose of circulating contemporary musical information and of laying the foundations for Hungarian musicological terminology.

The structure of the journal is, in the main, based on a series of the following successively appearing columns: editorials, leading articles, *feuilletons*, reviews of composition, opera performances in the National Theatre, concerts, correspondence, news of artistic life, miscellanea, and sometimes poems, depending on the given context.

In its editorials, the journal announced the need for national collaboration to develop a high level musical life, seeking the support of the directors of existing cultural and musical institutions. Far-reaching strategies were outlined regarding the potential role of musical life in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the establishment of a commission for musicology, and the musical reforms to be implemented at the National Conservatory and the National Theatre. The conservative nature and slow progress of the aforementioned institutions elicited increasingly vehement criticism in *Zenészeti Lapok* beginning in its second year of publication. The situation became particularly strained with the artistic directors of the National Theatre. The theatre's principal opera conductor was Ferenc Erkel (1810-1893)—the “founder of Hungarian opera”—who was simultaneously the director of the Philharmonic Society, an orchestra composed of members of the Theatre's orchestra. Erkel's work as a conductor soon became the object of extensive criticism, as did his programming policies. In their Philharmonic concert reviews and “National Theatre” [Nemzeti Színház] column, Ábrányi and his colleagues incessantly protested Erkel's “too frequent” programming of works by Verdi and French grand opera, while they claimed that Wagner's works were not performed as often as their importance demanded.

In addition to publicizing Wagner's works, one of the most important campaigns initiated by the journal was the popularization of Franz Liszt's work in Hungary. With this in mind, the journal's news column provided weekly information on major events in the composer's life, on compositions in progress, and on his foreign and domestic concerts, while its *feuilletons* featured colorful anecdotes and reports on occasional visits with Liszt. In addition, the music review column consistently introduced Liszt's most recently published works, while the dissemination of his works in Hungary was evaluated regularly in the concert reviews. It could be asserted that one of *Zenészeti Lapok*'s greatest accomplishments was its involvement in and continuous stimulation of the Liszt movement in Hungary, a theme that over the years preserved the journal's identity and unified vision.

One of the journal's most important feature columns was devoted to music criticism and news about Hungarian music publications. From a shared and common perspective, the criticism written by István Bartalus, Mihály Mosonyi, and Kornél Ábrányi analyzed the latest publications of Hungarian music. The ideal they envisioned was a composer who—by modern standards, and the highest level of musical technique and who, by using the Hungarian folk song and the *verbunkos* as sources—would create a Hungarian national style of art music of comparable caliber to that of the German, French, and Italian national schools. It was during this golden era of *Zenészeti Lapok's* history, which lasted until May 1866, that the first theoretical appraisal of Hungarian music was undertaken, just as simultaneously many of the most important Hungarian art music compositions of the last century were being produced by Liszt, Erkel, and Mosonyi. But the policy of promoting Hungarian art music weakened noticeably beginning with Volume seven (October 1866). The old group of colleagues surrounding Ábrányi was replaced: Rózsavölgyi had died in 1861, and Bartalus and Mosonyi left the editorial staff because of personal conflicts. The new co-workers, Ábrányi's sons and their contemporaries, were enthusiastic admirers of Wagner's ideals; the shaping of the language of Hungarian art music meant less to them than it did to their fathers. Consequently, the journal's profile changed. The number of educational series decreased; more space was devoted to the critical columns focusing on daily musical events, and to the *feuilletons*, written in a loose, chatty style. Clearly the editors were trying to appeal to a broader readership: there were also more poetry inserts and, for the first time in the journal's history, a regular theatre review appeared, the "National Theatre" column. As a matter of fact, during this period, the journal was constantly burdened with financial problems. In an effort to lower the deficit, Ábrányi sought help from the mushrooming number of metropolitan and provincial choral societies.

A decisive turn in the history of the journal occurred in September 1868, when the board of directors of the country-wide Hungarian Choral Society adopted *Zenészeti Lapok* as the Society's official journal. The board bought the journal's proprietary rights, thus relieving Ábrányi of the burden of production costs. Naturally, this new turn of events resulted in yet another change of orientation for the journal. Beginning with Volume ten, Ábrányi, whom the Society had appointed editor-in-chief, made the support of the Hungarian choral movement his new goal. This was unavoidably accompanied by a certain decline in the quality of the journal's contents. News reports of local and provincial interest increased in number, and disproportionately lengthy articles appeared concerning the internal organizational problems of the choral societies. This narrowing in scope was somewhat offset by the fact that the readership was then at its largest. People from every region of Hungary, including the journal's shareholders, the landed gentry, the clergy, teachers, lawyers, and minor officials, were all reading *Zenészeti Lapok*.

The change in ownership, however, soon resulted in strained relations between Ábrányi and the Hungarian National Choral Society. The Society's directors considered the amount of money spent on the journal's production to be excessive, and they demanded the continued expansion of choral-related coverage at the expense of other columns.

Ábrányi, on the other hand, clung to his earlier, broader editorial concept. By the fall of 1872 a split had become inevitable, and this led the journal to suspend publication for almost three months.

After this hiatus, publication of *Zenészet* resumed with Volume thirteen on 12 January 1873. Ábrányi repurchased the journal's proprietary rights, thus reclaiming the right to determine its intellectual profile. Following the conflicts of the preceding year, he was no longer willing to support the dominating policies of the choral movement; instead he strove anew for universality in the journal's content, manifested primarily through the revival of the educational columns. Regrettably, however, the newly-resumed series in music theory, musicology, and music aesthetics were unable to attain the high standards of the similar series from the journal's initial period (1860-1866).

With the exception of occasional contributions from a few writers (Károly Megyeri, Imre Gáspár, and László Hajdu), the journal was virtually written by Ábrányi himself. It was he who generally produced the news columns about the capital's musical life and the concert reviews, both of which were very extensive. Along with news about Liszt and his works, the journal featured coverage of the growing number of newly-formed choral and music societies which deserved broader public attention because of the high quality of their activities. Beginning in 1871, the Hungarian-born Wagnerian conductor Hans Richter (1843-1916), who was later widely celebrated throughout Europe, became active in Budapest, where he created a Wagner cult as conductor at the National Theatre. In addition to treating the highlights of the thriving opera and concert life, the journal, during its final two years, regularly devoted space to news about the recently-founded Budapest Academy of Music and its first session.

Several factors led to the demise of the journal. For example, Hungarian music textbooks began to appear in rapid succession, making the educational aspects of *Zenészet* no longer indispensable.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, in 1872, competition appeared in the form of the journal *Apollo*, edited by Viktor Fellegi. Although the new journal consisted primarily of music and appeared bi-weekly rather than weekly, its cover contained a text supplement with a summary of the most important Hungarian musical news. Its low subscription price—five forints, as opposed to *Zenészet*'s ten—further enhanced the new journal's attractiveness, and reduced the number of *Zenészet*'s already small circle of readers.

Despite the competition and the changing needs of its readership *Zenészet* fought heroically for survival. In its final four years, however, it was published with increasing irregularity: the earlier number of 52 annual issues fell to 41, 33, 38, and then to 15. After

<sup>5</sup> See, for example: István Bartalus, *Zene-káté Lobe után* [Musical catechism after Lobe] (Pest, 1863); *Elemi összhangzat- és számjelzéstán Wohlfahrt után* [Elementary harmony and figured bass after Wohlfahrt] (Pest, 1867); and Kornél Ábrányi, *Elméleti s gyakorlati összhangzattan* [Theoretical and practical harmony] (Pest, 1874).

1875, other factors also hastened its demise. With the opening of the Academy of Music on 14 November 1875, Ábrányi assumed two roles there: that of secretary and of professor of several important subjects (music theory, aesthetics, history and Hungarian music). His duties at the Academy clearly left him with increasingly less time for the one-man operation of the journal: its final, fragmentary volume provided ample evidence of this. Clearly, before the start of the Academy's second academic year, Ábrányi had to make a choice; he chose the Academy of Music founded by Liszt.

After some years in his functions at the Academy of Music, Ábrányi may have become somewhat dissatisfied, for the post of secretary required a great deal of purely paper work. Moreover, as a teacher he was not awarded the full professorship he expected. These elements may have led him to turn back to the editorial work he so much appreciated, and to launch a new music review with the title *Zenészet*i Közlöny [Musical Journal], which was published in Budapest three times a month from 10 January to 5 August 1882.<sup>6</sup> The short-lived run of *Zenészet*i Közlöny was all the more regrettable because this journal was intended to be the direct continuation of *Zenészet*i Lapok. This is hinted at by the similarity of titles, and in the editorial introduction to the first issue, entitled "After six years."

The following table lists identified pseudonyms and initials of contributors:

<b>Pseudonyms and Initials</b>	<b>Authors</b>
a, Á, Á. K., y, Eakosz, Minos, Radamanthosz	Ábrányi Kornél
Amarus, B...s, ...s	Bartalus István
Asmodi	Mosonyi Mihály
Bodoki Zalán	Szénfy Gusztáv
F...g	Fechtig Károly
g. i.	Gáspár Imre
Sanyi	Bertha Sándor
Török Orbán	Engeszer Mátyás
Tp	Thaisz Péter

<sup>6</sup> See *Zenészet*i Közlöny, *Zenevilág*, *Zeneirodalmi Szemle-Művészeti Lapok*, in Répertoire international de la presse musicale (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1996).

This RIPM publication is based upon the copies of *Zenészeti Lapok* in the Central Library of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, and in the Newspaper and Periodical Collection of the National Széchényi Library. The reader should note that in the Calendar the text is cited as it appears in the original (i. e., a dotted “i” and “ü” might today appear as “í” and “ű”). In bracketed editorial commentary and in the leadterms of the Index today’s orthography is employed.

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