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**DRAMATIC SONGS IN
THE *JÁSZFÉNYSZARU SONG-BOOK* (1788)**

The source material of Nativity plays collected and edited by István Kilián in *Dramatic plays of Christmastide in Hungary, 11-18th centuries*¹ was complemented with an 18th century Catholic song-book as a courtesy of Norbert Medgyesy.² The current location of the so-called *Jászfényszaru Song-book* (library of the Vác diocese) was identified by Vera Szádóczki, who clarified apparently contradictory or erroneous data in the literature and listed the incipits of texts in the manuscript.³

On the spine of the small book, the following inscription could be read even as late as the 20th century: “Cantionale Ladislai Molnár Cantoris Jászfényszaruensis 1788”. That is, the cantor of Jászfényszaru, László Molnár recorded folk hymns in a notebook in 1788 – “for lack of a central hymnal, he collected and arranged the songs in a book for his own use”, as Szádóczki claimed. This assumption seems much more realistic than the book being inspired by the bishop of Eger Károly Eszterházy to collect songs for the Szentmihályi song-book.⁴ The surviving hand-written song-book is incomplete and defective, and in the blank spaces hand-written hymn texts from the late 19th century appear. (Béla Holl claims that this author added songs of the Eucharist⁵). It does not only contain religious folk hymns; there are, for example, “3 songs sung at the house of the nuptials or wedding”, which are to be performed to secular tunes to boot (similarly to the song of the Wedding at Cana with the incipit “Kánabéli lakodalomra/For the wedding at Cana” which was instructed to be sung to the “Song of the Rabbits” – an extraordinary example in Hungarian music history). László Molnár thus also perpetuated songs on religious themes that were related to folk customs.

In the first part of the paper, the songs – more precisely, the tunes of the songs – that are published in the mentioned book of Nativity plays are introduced, followed by the rest of the dramatic songs in the *Jászfényszaru Song-book*.

¹ KILIÁN 2017.

² KILIÁN 2017, 799–819. (Nr. 29.).

³ SZÁDOCZKI 2015.

⁴ SZÁDOCZKI 2015, 247.

⁵ SZÁDOCZKI 2015, 242, 247.; Posthuma of Béla Holl: Budapest., Piarist Archives, IV. 229.

I.

Although the string of songs is not explicitly labelled as a Nativity play in the *Jászfényszaru Song-book*, there are unambiguous references to dramatization. Such are the song titles (“Carrying the Nativity crib”, “Next are the songs of the Angel and the Shepherds” and “The Angel’s joyful tidings to the Shepherds”) as well as the typical names occurring in Christmas plays (Angel, Corydon, Mopsus, Tityrus, Menalcas, Chorus, Shepherds 1–4). According to the new numbering the manuscript acquired during restoration, the eleven songs are on pages 45–47 and 51–58. As for the narrative, they speak about shepherds who go to Bethlehem upon the angel’s call to greet the Infant Jesus and bear gifts.

The tunes of four songs – actually three melodies – have not been found yet.

1) The third piece of “The songs of the Angel and the Shepherds” beginning with *Nagy örömet, ó pásztorok, néktek hirdetek* [I announce a great joy to you, oh shepherds]⁶. 2) and the second song of “Carrying the Nativity crib”, with the incipit *Tekints, ember, istállóban* [Behold, humans, in the stable] instructed to be sung to the melody of a Lenten song.⁷ These two sets include another song each: 3) *Jer, mindnyájan örvendjete*k [Come ye all and rejoice]⁸ to be sung at the houses, and 4) *Dicsőség mennyben Istennek* [Glory be to God in heaven],⁹ the latter to be sung to the melody of the former.

The remaining seven songs are either to be sung to well-known tunes or adequate melodies can be found to them. 5) The second song of “Songs of the Angel and the Shepherds”, *Ne féljete*k, *pásztorok, pásztorok* [Have no fear, shepherds]¹⁰ only appeared in print in the mid-19th century.¹¹ In our publication, not this tune, but a folk tune collected in the Jászság, the close environment where the manuscript was written, was coupled with the text. Its peculiarity is the strong dominance of the so-called Christmas sixth leap in line three. It is easy to sing the text variant in the Jászfényszaru song-book to the tune of this folk music source (with e.g. the last work in crotchet motion): *Ne féljete*k, *pásztorok, pásztorok, örömet hirdete*k, / *mert ma nektek született az, mi jövendölte*tett, / *egy Szűznek méhéből, szüzen szült véréből,* / *Megváltó Istente*k s *Üdvözítőtök*. In English: Have no fear, shepherds, shepherds, I bring joyful tidings / what has been prophesied has been born today / from the womb of a Virgin, from virgin blood / your Redeeming God and Saviour.

⁶ KILLÁN 2017, 806–807. (Nr. 29/V.).

⁷ KILLÁN 2017, 802–803. (Nr. 29/II.) ad melod.: Serkenj fel, ó bűnös lélek, vétkeidet valld meg, kérlek. [Rise, oh sinful soul, repent your sins]

⁸ KILLÁN 2017, 801–802. (Nr. 29/I.) „Betlehem hordozásakor” [“Carrying the Nativity crib”].

⁹ KILLÁN 2017, 803–804. (Nr. 29/III.) „Az Angyalnak és a Pásztoroknak éneklési” [Song of the Angel and the Shepherds], ad melod.: Jer, mindnyájan örvendjetek [Come ye all and rejoice].

¹⁰ KILLÁN 2017, 805–806. (Nr. 29/IV.) „Második ad notam propriam” [The second to its own melody].

¹¹ TÁRKÁNYI – ZSASSKOVSZKY – ZSASSKOVSZKY 1855, 103. (Nr. 95.).

Ne fél - je - tek pász - to - rok, ö - rö - met hir - de - tek,
Mert ma nék - tek szü - le - tett, ki meg - jö - ven - döl - te - tett.
Egy Szűz - nek mé - hé - ből szü - zen szült vé - ré - ből,
Meg - vál - tó Is - ten - tek, Al - le - al - le - lu - ja.

Ex. 1: Jászakisér (Szolnok), Mrs József D. Kiss b. Zsuzsanna Nagy (aged 74). Col.: Géza Paulovics, 11 Nov. 1960. Marked: Lsz 15.695.

6) The song “The Angel announcing good tidings to the Shepherds” (*Mely nagy vigasságos örömet hirdetek* [What great joyful tidings]) can be found with several incipits.¹² The melody that is also known from folk music collections uses the steadier swineherd’s dance rhythm also notated for 20th century song-books. Its rhythmically more varied tune is taken from its first occurrence in a printed song-book, *Cantus Catholoci* of 1651. The first stanza and its translation: *Mely nagy vigasságos örömet hirdetek / néktek, ó, pásztorok, mely nagy jót jelentek, / mert Úr Krisztus Jézus született ma néktek, / ki lesz Üdvösségtek.* What great joyful tidings / I’m announcing to you, shepherds, what good news, for Lords Jesus Christ is born to you today, / who will be you Saviour.

¹² KILLÁN 2017, 807. (Nr. 29/VI.). E.g. *Vigasságos, hangos nagy örömünk támadt* [We have hilarious great loud joy], *Hozsanna* Nr. 36., *Éneklő Egyház* Nr. 30., *DOBSZAY* 2006, Nr. 415.



En nagy vi-gas-sá - gos ö - rö-met hír-de - tek:
Mert a' Krisztus Jé - zus Szűz - től szü - le - te - tett:
meny - nye - i Ki - rá-lyunk, Menynek, föld-nek U - ra,
meg - je - le - nék né - künk.

Ex. 2: Cantus Catholici 1651, 26. (PAPP 1970, Nr. 121/I.)

7) One of the best-known Hungarian Christmas songs (*Mennyből az angyal* [The Angel from heaven])¹³ has already appeared in an earlier volume of the Christmastide plays volume (István Herschmann: *Három szent királyok utazása* [Journey of the three Holy Magii]), and its tune was added from its first printed source, a mid-19th century song-book, in the note.¹⁴ In the note of the *Jászfényszaru Song-book*, we presented a folk variant also from the Jászság, which only deviates from the former in one note. The starting stanza: *Mennyből az angyal / nagy sokasággal / leszállta, / a pásztorokhoz, / nyáj vigyázókhöz / így szóla.* In English: *The Angel from heaven / with a great host / has descended / addressing the shepherds, / guardians of sheep, / in these words.*

¹³ KILLÁN 2017, 808–809. (Nr. 29/VII.).

¹⁴ KILLÁN 2017, (Nr. 27.), 768.: TÁRKÁNYI – ZSASSKOVSZKY – ZSASSKOVSZKY 1855, 104. (Nr. 96.).

Menny -ből az an - gyal le - jött hoz-zá - tok
 pász - to - rok, pász - to - rok,
 hogy Bet-le - hem - be si - et - ve men - ve
 lás - szá - tok.

Ex. 3: Jánoshida (Szolnok), Tibor Szikszai (aged 9). Col.: Pál Péter Domokos, 1961. Marked: AP 4388c.

The title of the rest of the four songs is “Now come the songs of the shepherds”.
 8) Only indirect allusions can be made to the first song’s own melody (*Hej, hej, bezzeg jó hír ez minékünk* [Hey, hey, what good news this is for us]). Although several motifs of the text¹⁵ recur in other Nativity songs (e.g. st. 3 in the section of *Ó, te dudás, mit szundikálsz* [Why are you asleep, bagpiper] of *A kis Jézus aranyalma* [Little Jesus is a golden apple] or *Karácsonynak éjszakáján* [In the night of Christmas]; these songs were collected in Voivodina where settlers had arrived from the Jászság, too),¹⁶ yet we have not managed to attach a single melody to the text. By combining the two folk music items given in the book, the text of the manuscript can be sung as follows: the song from Esztergom county (Ex. 4) is identical with the second half of stanza 1 word for word, while the item collected in Szolnok county (Ex. 5), the geographic surroundings of the *Jászfényszaru Song-book* contains the exclamations “Hey, hey!” at the head of a stanza, giving a sure solution as to the first half of the text.

¹⁵ KILÁN 2017, 810. (Nr. 29/VIII.).

¹⁶ Beside *Magyar Népzene Tára II.* (MNT II.) see several songs in a more recent book, BODOR – PAKSA 2016, between Nr. 199 and 229, or even independently, *ibid.* Nr. 202/III.

The first stanza in the manuscript:

The translation:

Hej, hej, bezzeg jó hír ez minékünk,
nosza, pajtás, örvendezzünk!
Betlehem tündöklük, mi dolog ez?
Talán a Messiást jelenti ez?
Hej, hej, nagy öröm ez!

Hey, hey, what good news this is for us,
come on, buddy, let us rejoice.
Bethlehem is resplendent, what's the reason?
Does that perhaps mean the Messiah?
Hey, hey, it's a great joy!

Moderato

No-sza, Jan - kó, nézz az ég - re,
mi tün - dök - lik fenn a menny-be?

Bet - le - hem tün - dök - lik, mi do - log ez?
Ta - lán a Mes - si - ás je - len - ti ezt,

hej, hej, hej, hej, je - len - ti ezt.

A 2. sortól: Vedd fel a furulyát és a dudát,
majd én egyet ugrok, húzz egy nótát,
héj-héj, héj-héj, egy szép nótát!

Ex. 4: Esztergom (Esztergom). Col.: István Volly (MNT II, Nr. 568.)

Hej, hej, új hírt mondok, hall-gas-sá - tok,

Hej, hej, gyer-tek i - de mu-zsi-ká - sok,

Kis Jé - zus szü - le - tett Bet - le - hem - ben,

Vi - gad-junk mind - nyá-jan e - gye-tem - ben.

Ex. 5: Jánoshida (Szolnok), Mrs István Balogh. Col.: Pál Péter Domokos, 1961. Marked: AP 4387e.

9) Based on the syllable number, the four-lined version of *Betlehem kis falucskában* [In the little village of Bethlehem]¹⁷ can be paired with the next song (Kelj fel, Mopsus, hamar, kelj fel [Get up, Mopsus, get up quickly]¹⁸ in the manuscript. The first stanza in Hungarian and English: Kelj fel, Mopsus, hamar, kelj fel, / Angyal hirdet, hogy menjünk el, / köszönteni Új Királyt, / juhokat Istenre hagyj! Get up, Mopsus, get up quickly, / the Angel tells us to go / and greet the New King, / leave the sheep to God's care.

¹⁷ For its variant – in which the second note *f*³ in b.2 and b.4 results in a more colourful scale – see (with audio version) in BODOR – PAKSA 2016, Nr. 222.

¹⁸ KILLÁN 2017, 810–811. (NR. 29/IX.).

Gyerünk mi is Bet-le-hem-be részt ven-ni a nagy ö-röm-be,
me-lyet mennye - i A-tyánk á-rasz-tott az éj - jel ránk!

Ex. 6: Nézsa (Nógrád), boys aged 7–12. Col.: György Kerényi, May 1952. (MNT II, Nr. 382/IV.)

10) Similarly to the song starting with *Hej, hej...* (see. 8), parts of the text of *Nosza, Mopse, siessünk, siessünk* [Come on, Mopse, let's hurry]¹⁹ can be discerned in several Nativity songs.²⁰ The first verse in the manuscript and its notated music can be found in an 18th century manuscript (Ex. 7) and in several historical sources, and its type is also included in the catalogue of folk music types with the incipit *Betlehem-be jer, pajtás* [Come, buddy, to Bethlehem])²¹ where it also has a low-starting variant from Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county (Ex. 8). The version in the manuscript is more complete.

Its first stanza:

Nosza, Mopse, siessünk, siessünk,
hogy Betlemben mehessünk.
Ott született Királyunk, Királyunk,
kit méltó, hogy uraljunk.
Azat mondják angyalok,
hogy megváltja világot,
jer, köszöntsük, pásztorok, pásztorok,
üdvözöljük, jámborok!

The translation:

Come on Mopse, let us hurry, let's hurry,
and go to Bethlehem.
There is born our King, our King,
who is worthy of our worship.
The angels say
he will redeem the world,
c'mon, let us greet him, shepherds,
let us hail him, pious folks!

¹⁹ KILIÁN 2017, 811–812. (Nr. 29/X.).

²⁰ E.g. a version of st. 2 in „Vedd rád, juhász, a bundád, a bundád” [Put on, shepherd, your fur coat] (e.g. MNT II, Nr. 359/III.), or a variant of st. 3 in „Fújjad azért a dudát, hogy szóljon víg nótácskát” [Blow therefore your bagpipe, let it sing a merry song] (MNT II, Nr. 383/VII.).

²¹ DOMOKOS – PAKSA 2016, Nr. 100.

Nosz-sza lel-kem, si - es-sünk, Bet-le-hem-ben bé-lep-jünk,
 Ot-tan fek-szik Je - su-sunk, a' kit ré-gen ke - re-sünk.
 esz - tet mond-ják An-gya-lok, Űd-vö - zé-csük pasz-to-rok.
 hogy meg-vál-tya vi - la - got,

Ex. 7: Gábor Koncz's manuscript, 1771. (MNT II, Nr. 468.)

Tempo giusto ♩ = 120

Rázd meg, öreg, a bun-dát, fogjunk be-le bá-rány-kát, bá-rány-kát!
 Vigyed ha-za a-nyád-nak, főz-zön le-vest fi - á - nak, fi - á - nak!

Ex. 8: Dévaványa (Jász–Nagykun–Szolnok), Mrs Imre Bereczki b. Mária Hollósi (aged 67).
 Col.: Rudolf Víg, 1948. (MNT II, Nr. 469.)

11) The beginning of our last Nativity song (Halljad, pajtás, új hír mondás [Listen to good tidings, friend])²² is found in Zoltán Kodály's Nyitra county collection (Ex. 9). It reveals that the second half of the text of a compound structure is to be sung to the 2nd and 3rd melody lines, retaining the written out repetition.

²² KILLÁN 2017, 812–813. (Nr. 29/XI.).

The first stanza of the handwritten
song-book:

Halljad, pajtás, új hír mondás,
angyalok énekelnek, pásztoroknak
hirdetnek,
hogy új király született, ki régen
ígértetett,
mi üdvösségünkre, mi üdvössé-
günkre.
Tiszta Szűznek méhéből, Istennek
kegyelméből,
alászállván mennyégből, hozzánk
jött jó kedvéből,
a mi örömünkre, a mi örömünkre.

The translation:

Listen to good tidings, friend
angels are singing, announcing to
shepherds
that a new king is born who was
promised in times of yore
to our salvation, to our salvation.
From a pure Virgin's womb, from
the grace of God,
He descended from heaven and
came to us in good spirit,
to our greatest joy, to our greatest
joy.

Hal - lod Paj - tas, ujj hér - mon - das,
An-gya-lok é - ne-köl-nek, Pász-to - rok-nak hér-det-nek,
Hogy Me-szi-ás szü - le-tett, Ki meg-jö - ven - döl-te-tett,
A mi ö - rő - münk - re, a mi ö - rő - münk - re.

Ex. 9: Menyhe (Nyitra). Col.: Zoltán Kodály, 1916. (MNT II, Nr. 391.)

II.

In addition to the Christmas carols, two dramatic songs with dialogues and named characters represent the period of Lent. 12) One is the 20-stanza dialogue between Jesus and the sinner on Black Friday-Saturday with the incipit *Én, ki mindent alkottam, íme mire jutottam* [Behold, what end has come to me who created all], for the title is “Az Úr koporsójánál Kristusnak bűnöshöz beszélgetése” [Christ’s conversation with the sinner at the coffin of the Lord].²³ In several plays and song-books, there are songs or texts involving similar characters (Jesus or an angel and the sinner). The overture of this song is the most intriguing part: listening to the “lament” of Christ left alone in the coffin, the Sinner starts searching for the source of the voice. Then, inquiring about the cause for Christ’s lament, the Sinner recognizes the source of complaint in himself, and upon his remorse, the Lord pardons him. Finally, when Christ promises him eternal glory, he begins to worship God. In versions in different song-books, Jesus usually admonishes human beings who are submerged in matters of secular life in the Carnival season. This variant is more intimate, giving a deeply humane description of Christ.

It is to be sung to the tune of *Passionem Domini*, which first appeared in Szelepcsényi’s *Cantus Catholic* of 1675 and in Géza Papp’s opinion, it is of Hungarian origin. Several Hungarian textual variants are known in religious use and in folklore, and most of them are sung along the Stations of the Cross or during an death vigil.²⁴ The first stanza of the dramatized text and its translation is the following:

Krisztus:	Én, ki mindent alkottam, íme mire jutottam: Mindentől elhagyattam, csak egyedül maradtam, Nincs, ki szánjon s vigasztaljon, hozzám szóljon, vélem együtt bánkódjon.
Christ:	Behold, what end has come to me who created all All have deserted me, I am left alone, There’s no one to pity or console me, to speak to me, to share my sorrow.

²³ Jászfényszaru Song-book pp.122–126.

²⁴ PAPP 1970, Nr. 229.

Pas - si - o - nem Do - mi - ni re - co - la - mus pa - ri - ter.
Fle - tu in - ces - sa - bi - li om - nes un - a - ni - mi - ter.

In vo - ci - bus fle - bi - li - bus, ge - mi - ti - bus

in - e - nar - ra - bi - li - bus.

Ex. 10: Cantus Catholici 1675, 290. (PAPP 1970, Nr. 229/I.)

13) The other Lenten song, and the last dialogic song with characters in the *Jászfényszaru Song-book* is *Ó, egek, nyiljatok, kősziklák, sírjátok* [Oh, heavens, open up, cliffs and rocks, start weeping]. The title is “Jesus and Mary are talking and bidding farewell, ended by sinful Adam”.²⁵ It is none other than the scene in Bethany known from the Bible and diverse mystery plays, Norbert Medgyesy mentions in detail in his monograph about the Passion plays of Csíksomlyó.²⁶ He also includes the textual sources. The song appears here and there in folk music collections, and its religious broadsides also contributed to its spreading.²⁷ The 30-stanza text in the *Jászfényszaru Song-book* contains the following elements: Mary’s plaintive farewell to her son; upon her request Jesus tells her what suffering awaits him; Mary begs him to change it, to which Jesus replies that the prophets had foreseen it; Mary insists that he should at least change the mode of death („Tisztességes halált válassz hát magadnak, / ne vedd Keresztfáját a gonosz Latornak” “Choose a decent death for yourself, / don’t take the cross of wicked thieves”), but the cross also has the brazen serpent as its archetype; finally Mary asks his holy son to render her insensitive or dead, but Jesus is adamant, wishing to fulfil his Father’s will („A bűnös Ádámért, annak váltságáért, / megyek fizetni bért” “for sinful Adam, for his redemption, / I am going to pay the price.”) At the end the mentioned Adam also speaks, repenting his sin and asking for mercy. This ending of the song echoes the words and prayers of all sinful human beings.

²⁵ *Jászfényszaru Song-book* pp. 128–133.

²⁶ MEDGYESY 2009, 262–280.

²⁷ MEDGYESY 2018, Nr. 329–330.

The *ad melodiam* reference of the song is *Bágyad sérelmétől mártírok asszonya* [Faint is the lady of martyrs from her grief], the tune of which first came out in print in Szelepcsényi's *Cantus Catholici* in 1675, then slightly modified via Bozóki's and Zsaskovsky's hymnals it got into songbooks Hozsanna.²⁸ After the first two stanzas of the dialogic song in the *Jászfényszaru Song-book* and their translation, the late 18th century tune version of Bozóki's song-book is presented (modifications indicated above the notes as in present-day practice):

Mária:	Ó, Egek, sírjátok, kősziklák, nyíljatok, siralxim halljátok, kínjaim szánjátok, nékem, Máriának, Szomorú Anyának, mint szegény árvának.
Jézus:	Mit sírsz, édes Anyám, oly sűrű könnyekkel? Miért sóhajtozol felemelt kezekkel? szívem megsértette, mélyen által verte siralmidnak töre.
Mary:	O heavens, open up, cliffs and rocks, start weeping, hear my laments, take pity on my grief, On me, Mary, Sorrowful Mother, like a poor orphan.
Jesus:	Why are you crying, Mother dear, with a shower of tears? What are you sighing with arms raised high? My heart is hurt, pierced deep by the dagger of your lamentation.

²⁸ PAPP 1970, Nr. 127.; Hozsanna Nr. 67A.

Bád-jad sé - rel - mé - től Már - ty - rok' Asz - szo - nya.
Ol - vad sze - rel - mé - től, Szü - zek' Ki - rály - né - ja.

Ah jaj ha lát - ná - tok, hi - vek meg - szán - ná - tok,

Szűz Szent A - nyá - to - kat.

Ex. 11: Bozóki 1797, 167. (PAPP 1970, Nr. 127/II.)

Abbreviations:

- AP Pyral dics of the Folk Music Archives of the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences
- LSz Base-sheet with inventory number in the Folk Music Archives of the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences