
MÁTÉ, Zsuzsanna**On the Musical Impact of Madách's *The Tragedy of Man***

Imre Madách wrote his dramatic work, the *Tragedy of Man* from 7th February 1859 to 26th March 1860. In 2014, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the death of Madách and the memory of Madách. The *Tragedy* is almost as old as its history of interpretation and impact. In the history of Hungarian literature this writing has the richest professional literature and history of impact which prevails in the different artistic branches.¹ This study gives a short review of the *Tragedy's* history of musical interpretation and impact on polite musical art.

132 years ago, on 21st September 1883, the first performance from the *Tragedy of Man* was carried out by Ede Paulay, who was the dramatic director of the National Theatre from 1878, and, from 1884 for 10 years until his death, he worked as executive director. We can attribute other plays' first presentations to him as well: Vörösmarty's *Csongor and Tünde* (1879), Goethe's *Faust* (1887), Byron's *Manfred* (1887) and Lessing's *Wise Nathan* (1888). Besides directing *The Tragedy of Man*, his activity had spread to almost everything; the original, handwritten director's copy proves this. He attributed great importance to the scenery and setting which had to be historically appropriate (he had designed and drew them as an indication). In the National Theatre he was the first to use electric illumination on the stage (for example moonlight, shade, darkening of the stage, bright morning, little light). For him, the composition of the scenes, the casting, the instructions, the setting and the designing of the 504 different costumes carried the same importance. Except for the costumes of Eve; there were 11 types of them. Mari Jászai, who played Eve, performed in her own costumes which she designed with the help of painters Ferenc Paczka and Árpád Feszty. With regard to the great success, it was played 13 more times in the same year and eleven years later, on 13th May 1894 the the hundredth performance in the National Theatre took place, still the Paulay's version was still on stage until 1905, the revival of Imre Tóth. And it was played not only in the capital. The premiere of the *Tragedy* was held in 1883, the director approach of Ede Paulay had lived on Hungarian stages for 22 years. Paulay's approach of direction has followed the contemporary meningenism, the pictorial history which was a kind of theatre loyal to its era. In the historical scenes Ede Paulay emphasized the realistic and historical loyalty and concentrated on the spectacular presentation rich in visual effects. Thus, he basically amplified the dramatic action of the scenes with pragmatism of human struggle and disillusionment and not the abstract thoughts. The mental unity and philosophy of the work was damaged, however, the *Tragedy* has gained on the other side, in popularity and the strengthening of the inclination to read.²

¹ MÁTÉ 2013, 242-254.

² MÁTÉ 2008. 57-67., MÁTÉ 2009. 3-16., MÁTÉ 2013, 263-271.

Cf.: PAULAY 1988, 206-232., PAULAY 1883.

Paulay attributed great importance to the nature of the musical background, exactly describing it (quiet, strong, song-like, sung, fanfare-style). The incidental music of the premiere was composed by Gyula Erkel.

As Ede Paulay put it in his article published in *Fővárosi Lapok* in September, 1883, attempting to prepare the public for the premiere: „Nowhere have I tried to distract attention from the poem by using external lighting, however I have attempted to achieve and create everything available to make it as clear and as easily understandable as possible. Moreover, I had to emphasize certain sections by using music, and I have found an eager and wholehearted partner in Mr. Gyula Erkel.”³ In those days, Gyula Erkel was number one conductor of the Hungarian National Theatre. His incidental music consisting of 33 closed parts is a precious piece of work.⁴ This notion is nicely verified by the fact that his incidental music was played for some half a century during theatrical performances of the *Tragedy*. Separating distinct musical groups, as a director, Paulay assigned dramaturgical, and predominantly highlighting functions to the incidental music. In addition, Erkel’s incidental music also excellently served as a director’s ambition to achieve perfect illusion, and the pictorial-historical performance theatre. Thus, adapting to the special genre characteristics of incidental music, he also followed and emphasized the emotional motions of the various colours and scenes, „on occasions acoustically well isolating them as determining tone-elements, or effects of creating and atmosphere”.⁵ Therefore, Gyula Erkel’s incidental music can rightly be considered as a great opening in the history of *The Tragedy of Man’s* musical settings.

Incidental musics of *The Tragedy of Man* are generally characterised by scarcity of information, lack of printed scores, just as in the case of Erkel’s incidental music, where only a few handwritten sheets and copies were left as a legacy for the ages. Henceforth, I am only going to mention only a few incidental music composers for this reason, based on the work of Miklós Gyórfy. Such are Viktor Langer (1842–1902), first director of the Szeged conservatoire, later a theatre chorus-master on Pécs (both in Hungary) – he completed his incidental music in 1885, for the first performance of the *Tragedy* in Pécs. Moreover, we can mention the incidental music of Ákos Buttkay (1871–1935), prepared in 1905, then in 1910 one was made by Rezső Máder (1856–1940), chorus master of the Hungarian Opera House. The version written by Ferenc Farkas was first performed in 1937, and was later often presented on stage even after World War II. Looking back the past half a century, we can highlight Viktor Vaszy’s (1903–1979) incidental music written in 1965 for symphony orchestra, organ and mixed choir. The *Tragedy* was performed in Subotica (Szabadka) the same year, with the music composed by the then only 21-year-old composer Péter Eötvös, who aspired to create a modern approach. He had „borrowed” two songs of the

³ PAULAY 1988, 211.

⁴ In total, 34 songs are distinguished in Paulay’s cue sheet from the 1883 First Performance, including the overture. cf: PAULAY 1883.

⁵ KAIZINGER 1997. 42-45.

Rome Scene from Vaszy. Finally, a Kodály student, Gyula Dávid (1913-1977), formerly the chore master of the National Theatre, presented his incidental music of various euphony in 1970.⁶

The first composition was created after some two decades of tradition of the incidental music closest to the *Tragedy's* text, serving the impact of the theatrical play and emphasising the emotional and mood elements of the script. This composition written as a song to the *Tragedy's* text can however be considered as the first to be sovereign. Gábor Veress, teacher of the Nagyenyed Boarding School dedicated his composition titled '*Glory in the Heights*' 'reverently to 'Bartók György of Málnás, Lutheran Bishop in Transylvania' in 1905. This opera is a piece written to vocals, organ accompaniment (mezzo-soprano harmonium) and a band featuring a violin-cello duet.⁷ Then again, two decades had passed by until the next sovereign musical piece was authored, this time by Lajos Bárdos, in 1935, a 18-stave maestoso three-part canon titled „*Following Madách's words: Man, strive on!*”.⁸ Both compositions were written to be certain transformations inspired by specific text parts of the *Tragedy*.

Out of the sovereign compositions written inspired by the *Tragedy*, Ernő Dohnányi's *Cantus vitae* (*A Song of Life*) has proved to be the one outstanding by far. The premiere of the *Cantus vitae* took place on 28th April 1941 (and was repeated the next day) in the Hungarian Royal Opera House, featuring the Budapest Filmharmonic, conducted by Dohnányi himself. Ernő Dohnányi, despite his musical legacy having been ignored for half a century, proved to be one of the most highly regarded performers, pianists, conductors and an eminent pedagogue of the 20th century. A particularly inspired interpreter of the works of Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann and Brahms, he also performed compositions in all musical styles, including ones that of Bartók and Kodály. Dohnányi regarded himself as a composer in the first place, therefore dozens of piano pieces, operas, theatrical plays, orchestral works and concertos feature the greatness of his overall legacy.⁹ As he puts it in his autobiography titled '*Farewell and*

⁶ Composers of incidental music to *Tragedy* premieres abroad, based on Miklós Gyórfy's collection: Rudolf Walner (Münich), William Sichel (Hamburg, Vienna), Franz Salmhofer (Vienna), Peter Janssens (Vienna), Péter Vermesy (Cluj-Napoca), Tibor Oláh (Târgu Mureş), Peter Michale Hamel (Kassel). GYÓRFFY 1999, 133-136.

⁷ Gábor Veress, *Glory in the Heights (Dicsőség a magasban)*, 1905. (Notes engraved and printed in Pest. Bound in Cluj-Napoca.) Cf.: BARTHA 1965.

⁸ GYÓRFFY 1999, 127-128.

⁹ Ernő Dohnányi (Bratislava/Pozsony – 1877; New York - 1960.) first appeared in a public performance at age 9, in Bratislava, in 1886. He meets Béla Bartók, four years his junior, at the Bratislava Secondary School, later on they became good friends. From 1894 to 1896, he studied piano and composing at the Royal National Academy of Music, composing from István Thomán (former student of Liszt), piano lessons he took from from János Koessler (Brahms's friend, later teacher of Bartók and Kodály). In 1895, at age 18, he completes his Piano Quintet No. 1 in C minor, which Hans von Koessler (Koessler János) intervened to be presented and performed by Johannes Brahms in Vienna, in 1895. Brahms allegedly commented the composition as "I couldn't have composed it better myself". Between 1896 and 1899, his years at the Berlin Academy of Music are followed by tours all over Europe. From 1905 onwards he works as the piano teacher of the Königlische Musikhochschule in Berlin for ten years, the youngest professor there ever. From 1919 to 1944, he is the leading conductor of the Budapest Philharmonic. The Hungarian Opera House presented his Opera titled „*The Tower of the Voivod*” in 1922. From 1925 Dohnányi works as the leading conductor of the New York State Symphony Orchestra. He taught from 1916 at the Academy of Music, then became a professor there in 1928, being appointed its director in 1934. In 1930, he composes the „*Szeged Mass*” for the inauguration of the Votive Church of Szeged. In 1931, he becomes the music director of the Hungarian Radio, which position he holds for 10 years. On 9th November, 1936, Dohnányi conducted the Hungarian premiere of *Cantata Profana* (Bartók) featuring the Budapest Philharmonic. He largely contributed to the establishment of the world fame of the Budapest Philharmonic. Dohnányi immigrated to Austria in 1944, and lived in South America between 1946 and 1948. From 1949 to his death, he worked as a professor of piano and composing at the

Message, 'I mostly define myself as a composer, once I have acted in more roles. The reason is that it is only the composer that does creation. Then, what he has created will live on even after his death, making him immortal and carry on his name for posterity. Again, talking about my composition, I can only repeat myself and declare that I have not been particularly diligent at all, yet I have tried to be perspicacious and punctual in expressing myself.'¹⁰ He, as a composer, grew witnessing and adapting the musical style late romanticism at the turn of the century, then became a renowned master of post-romantic tradition and classicist endeavour. The regime change of Hungary put an end to his half-century ignorance and oblivion, so, in 1990, he was awarded a posthumous Kossuth Prize. His works have continuously been performed from 1995 onwards, pleasing performers and music-lovers alike.

Ernő Dohnányi's symphonic cantata *Cantus vitae* (A Song of Life) Op. 38 was considered by critics as his magnum opus already in 1941, its premiere year, as it provides a framework of his philosophy, expressing his life statement. Dohnányi first started working on the *Cantus vitae* during his successful debut tour of America in 1900. He had brought with him a copy of Imre Madách's Hungarian dramatic poem *The Tragedy of Man* (1862), which proved to provide the basis of a later libretto. It took him years to select and find the right grouping regarding the text of *The Tragedy of Man*. Dohnányi had decided not simply to create a condensed version of Madách's original text but instead to rearrange various excerpts from the poem to convey his own philosophy. He completed the libretto sometime prior to 1927, and completed the score of one of his major work on 23 March 1941.¹¹ This symphonic cantata is the most lengthy and voluminous piece of his legacy. On the one hand, it parades the largest apparatus ever used by a composer, being scored for four soloists, at times a four-part female and male choir (of a large choir), a children's choir, an entirely bass Chorus mysticus, and an immense orchestra. On the other hand, it is over ninety minutes in length, one of his longest pieces. The premiere of the symphonic cantata, repeated the very next day, featured the Budapest Philharmonic, conducted by Dohnányi himself, with the Budapest Municipal Choir and the choir from the Erzsébet School for Women. The four soloists were Magda Rigó, soprano; Mária P. Basilides, alto; Endre Rösler, tenor; and György Losonczy,

Florida State University in Tallahassee. He was charged with war crimes by a Hungarian Commission groundlessly in 1945. He was acquitted of charges, however, the suspicion remained, which cast a shadow over his career later on. Dohnányi had been given undue and unjust ignorance until the regime change in Hungary in 1989, what's more, his legacy became forgotten. Cf: VÁZSONYI 2002. DOHNÁNYI 2005.

¹⁰ KUSZ 2014, 85.

¹¹ During the time of his immigration in the US, when being asked by students about „his favourite composition”, he answered: „Well, my answer is that I have none, Undoubtedly the one I am most proud of is *Cantus vitae* [Op. 38], which I worked on for three years, yet I had been collecting and maturing my thoughts and ideas for it for long-long years. Another one is *Symphony No. 2*, which I had totally recomposed after 10 years of resting here in Florida, (...). I don't only stick to these works of mine so much for their being the most monumental ones, but these express my ideas and life philosophy the best.” Taken from Dohnányi's autobiography *Farewell and Message*. Translated and quoted: KUSZ 2014, 86-87.

„The Symphony was written – in its first version – about 12 years ago, after I had composed my 'Cantus vitae', a work for Soli, Chorus, and Orchestra based on words taken from Imre Madach's dramatic poem 'The Tragedy of Man'. [...] the Symphony [...] arose under the influence of the same ideas. The essence of these, – in my opinion, also Madach's work: 'The goal is the end of the glorious fight; the goal is death, *life is a strife*.'” Dohnányi's letter to Donald Ferguson, 17 February 1957. (FSU Dohnányi Collection). Quote: KUSZ 2014, 87.

bass.¹² Of the premiere of the *Cantus vitae*, Géza Falk wrote, „Hungarian music is attending a great baptism. A new and monumental creation has been born that is perhaps the favourite ‘musical’ child of a father and his large family: Dohnányi and the Hungarian nation. In the great noise of was the poet barely sang. Dohnányi broke this silence and surprised the public not with a pleasing little work but by instead presenting the musical world with the greatest and maybe the most important creation of his life”.¹³

On 2 February 2002, over fifty years of ignorance by the public, the Musical Faculty of the Florida State University performed his ill-fated piece for the first time since its premiere, in the course of the International Dohnányi Festival. In 2004, conducted by Kálmán Strausz, and with the contribution of the music bands and orchestras of the Hungarian Radio, the first recording on CD was performed.¹⁴ According to Tamás Pallós, music critic, „When listening to Dohnányi’s music, as a first reaction, one unconsciously seeks parallels of music here. Much as it seems an obvious and convenient solution, this piece of music with an immense orchestra involving a mixed and a children’s choir, four soloists just simply cannot be classified as an eclectic and post-romantic work. Certainly the impact of Wagner, Mahler, Richard Strauss, and, what’s more, Respighi is perceptible, however, without a doubt Dohnányi created something entirely unique and authentic. *Cantus vitae* includes all the musical aspirations of its age, while the nature and momentum of characterisation almost forecasts Shostakovich. The intensity and constant glow of the magnificent, varied and lavish instrumentation does not allow listeners to lose attention for even a moment. The soprano solo stands for the victory of art, resumption and faith. The amazing beauty of Dohnányi’s lyre manifests the most in such details. (Similar means were used by the composer during Iva’s farewell in his opera *The Tower of the Voivod - A vajda tornya*). The last two items praising God in the ending is in close relation with the final scene of Wagner’s *Parsifal*. Dohnányi’s symphonic cantata is undoubtedly a lofty, non-pretentious and high-class opus, enriching the list of significant works in Hungarian music history.”¹⁵

The lyrical symphonic cantata abounds complicated canons and fugues, while the counterpointing of post-romantic harmonies demonstrates Dohnányi’s virtuoso compositional style. Formally, his 21 movements constitute 5 larger parts, most movements follow each other without a break, and the final movement closes the whole with a prayer to God. All lines of the libretto are taken from Dohnányi’s favourite literary work, *The Tragedy of Man*. However, the *Cantus vitae* is not a setting to music of Madách’s *The Tragedy of Man*, but he used the *Tragedy* as a raw material, to rework and compile it into a new whole to create his own intellectual creed.¹⁶ This type of reshaping is a transformation and a reflexion in one, if we consider the relation with the original work. The phenomenon tend to be typical in our postmodern age, yet it proves to be unusual in the middle of the twentieth century. However, not every movement is dominated by the text, e.g. in the fifth, for example, the orchestra plays alone,

¹² GYÓRFFY 1999, 129. For the creation of *Cantus vitae* see James A. GRYMES: „The creation, musical structure and premiere of the symphonic cantata *Cantus vitae* (op. 38)” (transl. Mészáros Erzsébet) = DOHNÁNYI 2005, 3-20.

¹³ FALK 1941.

¹⁴ Dohnányi 2004.

¹⁵ PALLÓS 2004.

¹⁶ James A. GRYMES, 2005, 3-20.

representing the world and spirit of the French Revolution through the Marseillaise. The melody gradually becomes more and more distorted and diabolic, where at a point the brasses introduce the Internationale, so it sounds threatening (cacophony) and recalls the world of dictatorships. The bass soloist passes a sentence upon it, referring to how the three ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity had been distorted. However, there are no protagonists in the libretto, yet taking the original source of the *Tragedy* as a reference for comparison, then the bass soloist tends to remind us of Lucifer's words, the tenor soloist that of Adam, while the soprano refers to Eve, finally the alto echoes the people or some of the supporting characters. Generally speaking, soloist incline to sing recitatives and monologues. The Mixed Choir opens the symphonic cantata with the lines from the London scene of the *Tragedy*, therefore in the first movements the clash between mere matter and ideas can be heard. In the second movement the arguments of materialism are cited, here the bass gives voice partly to Lucifer, partly to the materialist views from the Scientist in the Phalanstery. Opposing this, the tenor is desperate to find an ideal and declares the importance of seeking them. This dispute rages through the first 8 movements, then is closed with the argument of „That all should have enough to live on; this. / This is the ideal that linketh us“. Bacchanalia, the second part of the cantata takes it as a basis, and recalls the age of the composer, that is the 20th century. Musically speaking, the harmonies and rhythms of the waltz and the foxtrot sets up the opening, which gradually transforms into the hedonic orgies and feasts the actualised, era-typical danse macabre after the Fall, intertwined with the soulless noises and squeaking of a factory in capitalism. The songs of Hippias and Clivia draw a parallel between the collapse and decline of the Roman Age, its relative set of values, and the crises of its own era, the twentieth century. The tenor speaks through the words of Adam in the London scene, while missing „unselfish elevation“ and „sacred poetry“. Then Dohnányi keeps employing the stance of the musician in the London scene to make the situation up-to-date. The part titled *Funeralia* (III.) is actually a funeral march, the chorus of gravediggers sings. The part envisions the danse macabre of the twentieth century, and at the end of it the bell starts to toll. Then from the abyss the violin soars up high, enhancing the light of Eve's words, endeavouring to reach the way that leads up to God. The tenor voice of the fourth part, in Adam's words, questions, seeks and longs for laws directing our world, and also knowledge and certainty. The mixed choir of Chorus Mysticus answers with a „life is strife“. This „philosophy of strife“ is enhanced by the composer with a divertissement of the orchestra. Following this, the lines depicting God's rearrangement of the world and the tasks and roles of the individual in the final scene of the *Tragedy* sung by the soprano emphasising man's spirit for strife are cited. The Children's Choir sings the Choir of Angels, and emphasises the free will and transcendent determination of man, as well as God's grace. In the end, this fourth part is finished with the law of Peter Apostle, with the law of love, meaning the chance for redemption at the same time. The praising of creation in the *Tragedy's* first scene is played in the last part of the symphonic cantata, which is the Final. As regards the composition, according to Tamás Pallós, the concordance of text and music are determined by creation-fall-redemption concerning the fate of mankind, and strife and the trio of awakening, strife and hope for eternal life regarding the individual.”¹⁷ Dohnányi's optimistic life philosophy – „We aim at doing good, yet it turns out to be bad;

¹⁷ PALLÓS 2004.

at the same time, strangely enough, evil can transform into good,"¹⁸ – echoes from the summary of the whole piece.

György Ránki (1907 – 1992), composer, had the premiere of his opera version of *The Tragedy of Man* on 4th December, 1970, which he considered his magnum opus. His own music style he characterised as neo-normal, thus picturing the harsh contrast existing between avantgarde trend and his own musical language in contemporary Hungarian music.¹⁹ Some ten years of preparation had passed before Ránki had started writing the opera, and adapting the text also took a year to complete. Extracting and editing of the text mostly effected historical-philosophical contemplations of Madách. Yet one significant element and an updating aspect making a difference emerged between the opera and Madách's work: the vision of nuclear disaster wedged in between space travel and the icy desert. Originally, Ránki had meant his composition to be an opera-trilogy, however later on he changed his plan and composed a two-act mystery-opera expressing universal artwork endeavours. He truly believed that music has to serve Madách's dramatic poem with the stage and visual-verbal effects jointly: „I had to build up a concept arranged relying on 'total work of art' (Gesamtkunstwerk-like composition), in which all stage elements to be seen and heard can serve the given main value in a unique synergy and shared rhythm: such are the thoughts and visions that of Madách (...) An opera-stage mystery play (...) came into existence, where oratory-like scenes of Madách and spectacular-stage-like and modern interacts, solos, choir, moving choir and an orchestra alternate and vary rhythmically, at an almost film-like pace, in an uninterruptible continuity. (...) The dreamlike nature of the play gives a good reason for this almost film-like speed.”²⁰ In order to make the stage act more and more vivid, interludes relying on moving choirs of pantomimic motion, that is a balett choir and a recitative Greek choir were inserted in between the 15 scenes to serve as a transition. The high number of supernumeraries in the play (angels, the people, heretics, friends etc.) and the Greek choir of similarly numerous members also significantly contributed to the musical illustration and narration of the plot. A convex slice of globe with a crater drawn on it was also a permanent item of the scene setting, as the actors and characters were moving on it, and images (connecting to respective scenes) were projected on a canvas placed backstage. For instance, the music dubbing the birth of the cosmos was coupled with an image suggesting cell division. Also, the cog wheels and rotating pulleys of the Phalanstery, the red and glowing sun-disk of the icy desert are good examples, yet even the ballet dance and choir interludes scenes were accompanied by projected images. The new light organ of the Opera House was amply applied here, too. In his author's instructions to the *Tragedy*, Madách often refers to various sounds and noises (branches shaken by a storm, the approval and laughter of the people, yammering, reverential hymns heard from the outside, buzz of the wild crowd, clattering masses, church music, bell tolling, ringing, sea roaring, sound of seals etc.). Ránki accomplishes these sounds by means of musical instruments, neglecting the use of electronic devices or recordings.²¹ Such Gesamtkunstwerk efforts strengthened the connection and communication between the ideas of the *Tragedy* and the listener, promoting the interpretation of notions in the dramatic

¹⁸ KUSZ 2014, 69.

¹⁹ PETHŐ 2002, 18.

²⁰ RÁNKI 1971, 3-4.

²¹ LOHR 1971, 22.

verse. The opera stage mystery play was directed by László Vámos. The play was conducted by Miklós Erdélyi, while Gáza Oberfrank and Amadé Németh also contributed in rehearsals.²²

The music of the opera composed to the grand orchestra was particularly varied, yet it managed to remain unified, primarily due to the ariosos carrying recitatives and lyricism, recurring themes, and identical melody schemes.²³ For example, the scornful reflections of Lucifer, or the love confessions of Adam, the threats imposed, fighting, war, vulnerability of people are all linked together by leitmotifs of music. Diversity of music derives from the style aspirations of the author familiar with film music, accomodating historical descriptions and scenes in the *Tragedy*, thus the Rome scene is dominated by *Andante erotico* (Tempo di Habanera), a style of Southern-like rhythms and melodies, Bacchanalia was governed by the *Allegro feroce* rhythm of asymmetric-beat, later made peculiar by the Hippias-song of asymmetric melodies. The witch Saturday in the Constantinople scene, the madrigal voice of the Prague scene, the revolutionary march of Paris, the jazzy atmosphere and the barrel-organ melody of the London Fair, the tarantella-like danse macabre, and, finally, the mechanic music of the Phalanstery are all characteristic and are typical features depicting the given age and their scenes.

György Ránki's mystery opera proved to be a magnificent adaptation and reshaping of the dramatic poem *The Tragedy of Man* to the medium of music. According to István Raics (writer, poet, pianist and music critic), Ránki's insisting on emphasising the name and intellectuality of Madách proved Ránki's modesty, as „he (Ránki) adhered to Madách only literally, but spiritually as well...”, thus the figures and characters, the situations, the movement all remained despite the oratorical style of the mystery-opera framework.²⁴ Further enlarging the Gesamtkunstwerk genre features of the opera, in accordance with it Ránki only carried out only minor transformation to Madách's main epos. The theater performance constituted a unity, including the equally-leveled dialogue of music, ideas and drama, view and motion, rhythm and the quoted text, the universal artwork unity of music-word-view. Hans Heintz Stuckenschmidt, a German music historian and critic, praised and acknowledged the opera, its direction and musical realisation alike, and rated the performance to be at a European quality level: „Ránki has his own personal message and his peculiar voice can always be found, even if it is made heard through the language of traditions in certain cases. I consider it as a closed, sovereign unit, which is irregular in its era.”²⁵ The opera was played on stage for one season.²⁶

²² FEUER 1971, 21.

²³ TILL 1973. 466-470.

²⁴ RAICS, KERTÉSZ 1971, 3-5.

²⁵ BOROS 1971, 1-2.

²⁶ Kossuth Radio broadcasted the play at 7 pm on 4 December, 1970. The recording was repeated several times in Bartók Radio in the 70s. Letar Hungaroton made an LP of it. The record contains the danse macabre, visions of the phalanstery, space travel, the nuclear disaster and the devastation of the Earth, images of awakening and reckoning. The LP features György Melis, Margit László, István Rozsos, József Gregor, Árpád Kishegyi, Albert Antalffy, Imre Turza, Kornélia Tóth, László Egri, Erzsébet Kovács, Mihály Illés, Béla Hami, Mária Jakobinyi, Miklós Mosolygó, a The Kodály Choir of Debreceni and the Orchestra of the Hungarian Opera House were conducted by János. The family recently handed over the composer legacy of György Ránki to Institute of Musicology, containing so far non-public and non-disclosed documents that are connected to the *Tragedy*. Among the documents are several sketches of the libretto and the complete sound recording of the opera featuring amateur singers, with Ránki's accompaniment.

When further examining the adaptation of *The Tragedy of Man* to music in the life of art, one must mention the opera²⁷ of world-famous Péter Eötvös, titled *Paradise reloaded* (Lilith), as the most distant reference to the text script. It was performed on stage at the Palace of Arts (Művészetek Palotája) in Budapest, on 23th January, 2014. It is related to the *Tragedy's* text in two ways, by means of the very basic idea of the opera and its structure. This way we can regard the relation to the original work as an inspiration. Madách's magnum opus is a source of inspiration and ideas, however, unlike Madách, the starting point for the story is not rooted in the Genesis story canonised in the Old Testament, but in Hebrew Biblical apocrypha sources. According to these, Adam's first wife was Lilith, who was expelled from Paradise for persuading God to tell her his sacred name. The opera is structured similarly to *The Tragedy of Man*, the couple expelled from Paradise wanders through the past, present and future, led by Lucifer, this latter being equal to God. The opera poses us with a question: what would have happened if our Bible-based culture considers Adam's first wife, Lilith as its ancestress instead of Eve? At the beginning of the opera Lilith is expelled from Paradise, and she is punished to live in the desert as a female demon. She returns to give life to a child, conceived by Adam, which child later frees her from her demonic existence. However, Adam's second wife, Eve hinders her in reaching her goal, and the conflict of the two women pervades the whole play. The reason is that God created Lilith in the same way as he did Adam, equal with him, an independent person, while Eve was created from Adam's rib, as an 'accessory' of his. Lilith represents free will, power, conspiracy and emancipation, while Eve stands for effeminacy, purity and cleanliness, sacrifice. Actions are being formed according to Lilith's will, this fiction of the future displays what it would have been like to have Lilit as our ancestress. The opera does not tell us about the emancipation of man and women, but instead it shows a fiction as to how social structures of the European civilisation would have been shaped, had Lilith been the one chosen to be the ancestress instead of Eve. In the end, Lilith reaches her aim, and gives birth to a child to Adam, still Adam does not choose Lilith to be his partner. Unlike in Madách's work, here Adam is not forced to take a stand between life and death, but the dilemma lays between two women with a totally different approach to life. His decision will determine the next generation. According to Péter Eötvös, the fundamental question of the opera still remains open: „if both women are pregnant, who is actually our ancestress? Are we the descendants of the demonic Lilith, or Eve, lacking independence and permanently seeking her partner?”²⁸

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²⁷ The latest opera authored by Péter Eötvös is based on the adaptation of the drama written by a young German writer, Albert Ostermaier. The main character in the original Ostermaier plot is Lucifer, which plot Eötvös used to write his *The Tragedy of Devil*, later put on stage as an opera in Munich in 2010, directed by Balázs Kovalik. Yet Eötvös was not fully satisfied with this play, therefore he designated Lilith, to himself the most intriguing character, to be the title person for his new opera.

²⁸ Interview with the composer on Színház.hu, the Hungarian Theatre Site (Magyar Színházi Portál), on 18th January, 2014.

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