

Musical Monuments of Hungarian History: Ferenc Erkel's Pre-Revolution Operas

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DPhil in Music

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ABSTRACT

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A rapidly shifting social and political climate characterised the period between the 1825 Hungarian Diet and the revolution of 1848. An inherited fear of *nemzethalál*, 'nation death', drove attempts to fight the spectre of obscurity through language cultivation, social-political reform, nation-building projects, and representing history artistically. Exemplified by the national theatre project, opera became embroiled in discourse surrounding the educative potential of Hungarian-language artforms. Anxieties stemming partially from imperialism shaped a cyclic understanding of a sinful past, punished present and uncertain future.

Erkel's *Bátori Mária* which inaugurated the *Nemzeti Színház*, 'National Theatre', encapsulates an ambiguous representation of Hungary's history. Abortive attempts to disrupt a series of calamities only reinforced the understanding of Árpád history as a cycle of trespasses with repercussions reverberating into the nineteenth century. As the 1840s progressed, the revolutionaries anticipated a rupture with the past. During the revolutionary year, the theatre staged a programme comprising musical-theatrical pieces embodying overt revolutionary messages. Numbers from Erkel's second opera *Hunyadi László*, a work littered with anti-Habsburg textual and musical references, featured prominently in this repertoire. This study challenges traditional understandings of how *Hunyadi László* relates to revolutionary rhetoric, illuminating how the tropes of defeat, victimhood, sacrifice and resurrection are in tension in this medieval narrative.

Erkel's operas composed in the pre-revolution decade illuminate how historical interpretation related to fears surrounding legacy. Operatic models familiar to the Pest-Buda audiences became vessels for presenting versions of history beholden to contemporary understandings of the past in relation to the future. The contrast between *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László* not only reflects the rapid momentum radical ideologies gathered approaching 1848, but how historical interpretation shifted through political and artistic polemics. This study illuminates how anxieties relating to identity interpolate with presenting history on the stage in Erkel's pre-revolution operas.

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For Mike

Chapter 1

Situating Erkel

Introduction

In music history, repertoires referred to as ‘national’ opera are perceived as somehow separate from the genre generally. Works in Italian, French and German constitute ‘opera’, whereas repertoire in Hungarian, Polish, Croatian, Czech, Spanish or numerous other languages are dubbed ‘national opera’. The latter category is explained by their ‘national’ context and content, whilst ‘mainstream’ traditions are investigated for what they can reveal relating to a wide variety of topics.

Any study engaging with composers whose operas fall into the latter category must grapple with the stubborn framing of ‘centres’ and ‘peripheries’. Taruskin’s often-quoted ‘double bind’ encapsulates a central problem. The appeal of composers hailing from musical ‘peripheries’ in international contexts stems largely from musical ‘exotic native dress’, yet their stature as a national composer means their works are viewed through this identity.¹ As Derek Katz describes this context: ‘Beethoven and Brahms are composers, without any need or modifiers’, meanwhile ‘Smetana, Dvořák, and Janáček are *Czech* composers.’² Nevertheless, in the Czech example, the representation of these repertoires internationally means these composers are increasingly accessible through widely-read languages. This context has facilitated attempts to define and challenge understandings of ‘Czech’ music.³ For figures such as Erkel, inaccessibility reflects a broader lack of significance.

¹ Richard Taruskin *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 48.

² Derek Katz, *Janáček Beyond the Borders* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 3.

³ For example, Michael Beckerman, ‘In Search of Czechness in Music’, *19th-Century Music*, Vol.10, No.1 (1986), 61-73 and more recently Eva Brenda, ‘Representations of Antonín Dvořák: A Study of his Music through the Lens of Late Nineteenth-Century Czech Criticism’ (DPhil Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2014), and Kelly St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana. Myth, Music and Propaganda* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2017).

Erkel research is undertaken almost exclusively by and for Hungarian scholars. His compositions are currently largely inaccessible linguistically and logistically to other researchers. Nevertheless, Erkel's operas—the first in the Hungarian language—are a significant repertoire in music history. That hardly any discussions of these works exist in widely read languages reinforces the notion that 'national opera' is of little significance. However, without understanding the cultural weight of such works, grasping the international, transnational and inherently hybrid nature of opera can only ever be partial. This study hopes to challenge the traditional framings through which works 'become' national, as traditionally understood through musical markers and reception.

In the case of Hungary, nineteenth-century musical traditions have been neglected partially resulting from assumptions related to the *verbunkos*. There is currently a void in anglophone literature with regard to musical culture in Hungary considered beyond the stylistic trope *style hongrois*. Nevertheless, early nineteenth-century Hungarian contexts relate to lively branches of scholarship examining the processes through which identity, history and musical traditions are negotiated. The relationships explored throughout this dissertation, namely how anxieties surrounding identity interpolate with presenting history artistically, contributes to broader lines of enquiry. After briefly outlining Erkel's life and professional activities and establishing the Hungarian-language research context, this chapter situates Erkel amidst these wider phenomena.

Ferenc Erkel⁴

Ferenc Erkel spent his career in Hungary, becoming an active and crucial figure in the musical life of Pest-Buda⁵ from the mid-1830s until the late 1880s. Born on the 7 September 1810 in the city of Gyula, located on the Southern plain in present-day Eastern Hungary, Ferenc was the second child to József Erkel, a cantor and teacher, and Klára Ruttkay. Erkel received a robust musical education in early life whilst attending the school at which his father taught, studying the piano from childhood.⁶ He made his performance debut aged 11, and even deputized for his father as organist at the church in Gyula.⁷ He spent periods during early adulthood in significant musical centres of Habsburg Hungary, in Pozsony (Bratislava) and Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), before settling in the newly-emerging capital in his mid-twenties.

Pozsony was the political centre of Hungary from the early sixteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century. It was also the musical capital of greater Hungary, where large numbers of Hungarian professional musicians received training including Erkel and his brothers.⁸ This musical centre was historically the only city in Hungarian territories with a semi-public opera on a par with other operatic nuclei in Europe in the early nineteenth century, on account of Count Erdődy's cultivation of opera culture.⁹ Erkel studied under Henrich Klein (1756-1832), who acquainted him with the works of Bach, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, and attended opera performances at the Pozsony Theatre.¹⁰

⁴ In the Hungarian language, family names precede first names: Erkel Ferenc is the Hungarian form of the composer's name.

⁵ Buda, Óbuda and Pest officially unified as 'Budapest' in 1873. Throughout this study, I use the customary 'Pest-Buda' when referring to the cities simultaneously and distinguish between 'Pest' and 'Buda' where appropriate.

⁶ Amadé Németh, *Az Erkelek a magyar zenében. Az Erkel család szerepe a magyar zenei művelődésben* (Békéscsaba: Békés Megyei Tanács, 1987), 35.

⁷ Németh, *op. cit.*, 35-36.

⁸ Of Erkel's ten siblings (seven brothers and two sisters) only József Erkel pursued a musical career alongside Ferenc. Born in 1813, József Erkel conducted at the Kolozsvár Theatre before joining the *Nemzeti Színház* as a tenor at the year of its opening. He moved to Hamburg in 1840 where he lived until his death in 1859. He performed the role of Prince István in the première of Erkel's *Bátori Mária*. For a discussion of Erkel's siblings, see Németh, *op. cit.*, 27-34.

⁹ See Tibor Tallián, 'Operaművelés magyarországon' in Ágnes Gupcsó (ed.), "Szikrát a dobott a nemzet szívébe" Erkel Ferenc három operája. *Bátori Mária – Hunyadi László – Bánk bán*. Szövegek könyvek – tanulmányok (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2011), 15.

¹⁰ Németh, *op. cit.*, 37.

Erkel moved to Kolozsvár, the capital of today's Transylvania (in Romanian: Cluj-Napoca), in late 1827 or early 1828 for piano instruction.¹¹ This was a prominent musical centre of markedly different character to Erkel's former location. In Kolozsvár Erkel became acquainted with influential figures in the musical life of the city, notably József Ruzitska¹² and József Heinisch.¹³ These individuals actively sought to establish a distinct 'Hungarian' musical culture, facilitated in large part by the permanent Hungarian Theatre troupe (established in 1792) and the stone theatre (which opened in 1821). As Dezső Legány comments: 'Unlike Pozsony, Kolozsvár was a culturally Hungarian city, it was the cradle of Hungarian theatre and opera'.¹⁴ Owing to the musical-theatrical institution, operatic life was animated, involving both local compositions and productions of the international repertoire.¹⁵ Significantly, the Hungarian theatre in Kolozsvár staged the first Hungarian-language operatic experiment (rather, a *singspiel* piece) of any significant success, József Ruzitska's *Béla futása*, 'The Flight of Béla', first performed in 1821 in Kolozsvár (in 1826 in Pest-Buda). *Béla futása*, based on Béla IV's exile from Hungary, is a comic piece in two acts derived from August von Kotzebue's *Bela's Flucht* (1813).¹⁶ Ruzitska clearly wrote the work in haste, and he was greatly confined by the small orchestral ensemble

¹¹ István Almási, 'Erkel és Kolozsvár' in Ferenc Bónis (ed.), *Erkel Ferencről és koráról* zenetörténeti tanulmányok (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 1995), 96-102.

¹² József Ruzitska (1775-1823) composed a number of Hungarian-language musical theatre pieces and worked as conductor of the Hungarian Theatre of Kolozsvár. Erkel later dedicated the overture to *Bátori Mária* to Ruzitska in acknowledgement of both his friendship and influence on his own musicianship. Almási, *op. cit.*, 99. The overture bearing the dedication in Erkel's hand is now held in the music collection of the National Széchényi Library, shelf number Ms. Mus. 2644.

¹³ The Austrian musician József Heinisch (1800-1840) also conducted at the Hungarian Theatre in Kolozsvár between 1825-1830. Heinisch is credited with improving the level of opera performance in Kolozsvár during his tenure, even to the standard practiced in Vienna. See Krisztina Lajos, *Staging the Nation: Opera and Nationalism in 19th-Century Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 69.

¹⁴ 'Kolozsvár, Pozsonnyal ellentétben teljesen magyar kultúrájú város volt, a magyar színház, sőt a magyar operaelőadások bölcsője.' Dezső Legány, 'Örökségünk Erkel Ferencről', *Muzsika*, Vol.36, No.7 (1993), 13.

¹⁵ A sample of premières and Kolozsvár premières follows: Mozart's *Don Juan* (1789:1827), Rossini's: *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1816:1827), *Otello* (1816:1830), and *La Gazza Ladra* (1817:1826), Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821:1825), Bellini's *La sonnambula* (1831:1842) and *Beatrice di Tenda* (1833:1839), Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* (1832:1840). See István Lakaos with an introduction by András Benkő, *A kolozsvári magyar Zenés színház (1792-1973)* (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1979), 8.

¹⁶ Copy excerpts of József Ruzitska's *Béla futása* consulted in the Music collection of the National Széchényi Library, Ms. Mus. 6977. *Béla futása* still enjoys occasional revivals, recently staged in May of 2017 at the Hungarian Theatre in Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca.

available (between ten and fifteen instrumentalists) and the limited abilities of the singers. It was nevertheless wildly successful in Kolozsvár, where it was staged for several decades.¹⁷

During this period, Erkel not only honed his piano skills,¹⁸ but studied orchestration, gained his first conducting experiences, and became further acquainted with operatic repertoires.¹⁹ His experiences with the attempts to create a local operatic tradition inspired his own undertakings in the following decade, and which would occupy him for the rest of his life.²⁰ Erkel's first three operas, *Bátori Mária* (1840), *Hunyadi László* (1844) and *Bánk bán* (1861) established his legacy as the founder of Hungarian-language opera, and he produced a further five operas based on Hungarian history in the latter half of the nineteenth-century.²¹

Erkel and his wife, Adél Adler, with whom Erkel had nine children after their marriage in 1839, separated in 1860. Adél moved to Gyula and remarried. Three of their sons—Gyula,²² Elek,²³ and Sándor²⁴—were involved to varying degrees with the *Nemzeti Színház*.²⁵ Ferenc Erkel remained a significant figure in the musical life of Pest-Buda. He founded the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra (*Budapesti Filharmóniai Társaság Zenekara*) in 1853, and was closely

¹⁷ István Lakatos, 'Az első erdélyi magyar opera', *Korunk*, Vol.31, No.11 (1972), 1721-1722.

¹⁸ From the repertoire Erkel performed it is clear that by 1834 he was deeply familiar with works by Beethoven, Weber, Hummel, Moscheles, Herz and Kalkbrenner. Németh, *op. cit.*, 39. When he first settled in Pest, he was revered as a pianist: 'In quality he was the capital's most outstanding pianist, both as soloist and as accompanist, and was the most frequent to appear in concert.' See Legány, *op. cit.*, 19.

¹⁹ In Kolozsvár, Erkel was able to attend performances of Mozart's *Don Juan*, Auber's *Fra Diavolo*, Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Tancredi*, *Otello*, *La gazza ladra* and *L'italiana in Algeri*, as well as Cherubini's *Les deux juennées, ou Le porteur d'eau*, Boieldieu's *La dame blanche* and *Jean de Paris*, Donizetti's *Il borgomastro di Saardam*, Mercadante's *Elisa e Claudio*, Weber's *Der Freischütz* and *Preciosa* alongside works by Hungarian composers including József Szerdahelyi's *Tündérlak Magyarban* (Szerdahelyi became an important member of the *Nemzeti Színház*, see Chapter 3), József Zomb's *Mátyás deák* and Ruzitska's *Béla futása*, which had premièred on 26 December, 1822. See Almási, *op. cit.*, 96-102.

²⁰ 'Magyar operaélményei felébresztették benne a vágyat, hogy ő is alkosson magyar operát' ('Experiences of Hungarian opera awakened in him [Erkel] a desire to create Hungarian operas himself'). Németh, *op. cit.*, 38.

²¹ See Appendix I.

²² Gyula Erkel (1842-1909) was involved with the Music Academy, teaching at the piano department from 1878 until 1908, and also conducted at the *Nemzeti Színház* and subsequently the *Királyi Operaház*, the Royal Hungarian Opera House (opened in 1884, today the Hungarian State Opera), between 1863-1889.

²³ Elek Erkel (1843-1893) was a percussionist at the *Nemzeti Színház*, later becoming the first conductor of the *Népszínház* (first opened in October 1875, and closed in 1908) between 1875-1893. He also composed musical-theatrical works.

²⁴ Sándor Erkel (1846-1900) was a timpanist at the *Nemzeti Színház*, and took on conducting duties from 1868. He later became first conductor under the directorship of Hans Richter (who assumed this role from 1874-1886, succeeding Ferenc Erkel), and was the Musical Director until 1890. Sándor was the son most involved in Ferenc Erkel's compositions from *Bánk bán* onwards, and became a semi-successful composer in his own right.

²⁵ László Erkel (1844-1896), the third of Ferenc and Adél's nine children, is also known in music history as a pedagogue and choral conductor who taught piano to the young Béla Bartók in Pozsony. See Németh, *Az Erkelek*, *op. cit.*, 95-138 for an overview of Erkel's children's biographies, musically-related activities, list of compositions and involvement with Erkel's compositional processes from the 1860s.

involved with establishing the Academy of Music (*Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem*), which opened in 1875, with a speech by Erkel.²⁶ He was Director of the Academy until 1887, and Professor until 1888.²⁷ From the late 1860s, Erkel was also principal conductor of The National Hungarian Choral Association (*Országos Magyar Daláregyesület*) shortly following its creation in 1867, leading performances in several provinces in greater Hungary until 1881.²⁸ He officially retired from all his roles in 1887 (from the *Nemzeti Színház* in 1874).

Erkel died in his home in Budapest on 15 June 1893, buried three days later in a public event. The funeral march from his own *Hunyadi László*, and his setting of Ferenc Kölcsey's poem *Himnusz*, the Hungarian national anthem, accompanied the journey to his final resting place.²⁹

Erkel Scholarship

The stairs leading to the entrance of the *Magyar Állami Operaház*, the Hungarian State Opera, in Budapest today are framed by two statues. On the left-hand side sits Ferenc Erkel, and on the right, Franz Liszt.³⁰ The opera division of the *Nemzeti Színház*, which was the centre of Hungarian-language opera in the capital since its opening in 1837, moved to this new home in 1884. The programme inaugurating the new theatre included excerpts of Erkel's operas, performed under the composer's own baton.³¹ Although Liszt's little-known opera *Don Sanche* has never been staged in Hungary,³² he is nevertheless today visually presented as an equal to the 'father of Hungarian opera' at the largest opera house in the country.

²⁶ This speech was reported in the *Zenészet* *Lapok*, 'Musical Pages', 25 November 1875, cited in Legány, *op. cit.*, 24-25.

²⁷ 'Erkel's worries, for the most part, came from this. Aside from his directorial duties, Erkel was, for nearly ten years, the teacher with the heaviest schedule in the Academy. Aside from the foreigners, most Liszt students worked with Erkel during Liszt's absence.' Legány, *op. cit.*, 30-31. See also Dezső Legány, 'Erkel és Liszt Zeneakadémiája (1875-1876)' in Bónis, Ferenc (ed.), *Szabolcsi Bence 70. Születésnapjára Magyar zenetörténeti tanulmányok* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1969), 247-266.

²⁸ Németh, *Az Erkelek*, *op. cit.*, 87-89.

²⁹ Amadé Németh, *Erkel Ferenc életének krónikája* Napról napra 10 (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1973), 229.

³⁰ In Hungarian: Liszt Ferenc.

³¹ The first act of Erkel's *Bánk bán*, and the overture to *Hunyadi László* were conducted by the composer himself and act I of *Lohengrin* was led by Sándor Erkel (Ferenc's youngest son).

³² Liszt's *Don Sanche, ou le Château d'Amour* was staged four times at the Paris Opéra in 1825, as a novelty, 'received indulgently' (written by a thirteen-year-old), and quickly forgotten. See Kenneth Hamilton, 'Not with a Bang but a Whimper: The Death of Liszt's "Sardanapale"', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol.8, No.1 (1996), 46. David Trippett is currently leading a project to edit and re-construct Liszt's lost *Sardanapalo* which is planned for publication in 2019 by Universal

A similar phenomenon is found in Budapest's cultural institutions, such as the *Nemzeti Galéria* 'National Gallery'³³ and the metropolis generally. Budapest airport bears Liszt's name (*Budapest Liszt Ferenc Nemzetközi Repülőtér*), and the *Liszt Ferenc Tér*, 'Franz Liszt Square', stands adjacent to the Liszt Academy of Music (*Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem*). Although Liszt was a key figure in founding the Academy, Erkel directed and consistently funnelled time into the musical institution, including supervising Liszt's piano students for the majority of the year while his internationally renowned colleague conducted his 'threefold' existence.³⁴ The preoccupation with Liszt as a representative of nineteenth-century Hungarian music is also present in Hungarian-language musicology, and certainly in the field internationally.

However, an ongoing project to produce a complete critical edition of Erkel's operas has recently improved the accessibility of this repertoire even within Hungary. To commemorate the bicentenary of his birth in 2010, the conference 'Opera and Nation—in Pest-Buda and the World' placed this neglected repertoire under the spotlight in an international context.³⁵ The recent re-evaluation of Erkel in Hungarian music history provides an opportunity to (re)address this composer in Anglophone scholarship afresh.

Music Publishing. The project-in-progress has recently been presented in the paper: 'Finally Crossing the Rubicon? Hearing and Editing Liszt's *Sardanapalo* (1851)' on Wednesday 4 July at the twentieth Nineteenth-Century Music Conference, University of Huddersfield, 2-4 July 2018.

³³ In the *Magyar Nemzeti Galéria*, Hungarian National Gallery (Budapest), there are four pieces held with Liszt as the object of study (Károly Dosnyay's sculpture: 'Portrait of Composer Franz Liszt' (1848), Ferenc Kugler's Bust of Liszt (1871), Mihály Munkácsy's oil painting: 'Ferenc Liszt I' from 1886, and a plaque by Fülöp Beck from 1911), whilst there are no pieces commemorating Erkel.

³⁴ Liszt's so-called *vie trifurquée* began in 1869, from which time onwards his time was divided between Weimar, Rome and Budapest. See, for example, Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Final Years, 1861-1886* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 228-248. For the duration of Liszt's piano instruction, see Dezső Legány, 'Liszt's and Erkel's Relations and Students', *Studia Musicologica*, Vol.18, No.1 (1976), 19-50, especially 25-26.

³⁵ 'Opera and Nation—in Pest-Buda and the World: International Musicological Conference for the 200th Anniversary of Ferenc Erkel's Birth' took place at the Institute for Musicology, Division for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences between 28 and 30 October 2010. The Proceedings were published as a special issue in the journal *Studia Musicologica*, Vol.52, Nos.1-4.

The music collection of the National Széchényi Library³⁶ has held the Erkel estate since the early twentieth century, and has since also purchased the heritage of Gyula Erkel in 2010 (to mark the bicentenary). The theatre history collection inherited materials from the Budapest theatres: the *Nemzeti Színház*, the *Népszínház*, and the *Királyi Operaház* (today the *Magyar Állami Operaház*), as well as materials relating to musical-theatrical activity from various cities in greater Hungary since the first half of the nineteenth century. Further primary sources are held in the Erkel memorial house and museum in Gyula,³⁷ and in collections inherited from theatres which staged his works throughout former Habsburg Hungary.³⁸

The composer conducted his own operas in the capital almost exclusively throughout his career and the dozens of revisions he made over several decades resulted in source material which is often puzzling.³⁹ Therefore, primary source study has necessarily taken precedent over interpretive or musical-analytical studies within Erkel scholarship.⁴⁰ Issues of authorship has been a point of contention in the literature practically since the première of Erkel's *Bánk bán* in 1861.⁴¹ László Somfai's study published in 1961 addressed these issues systematically for the first time,⁴² however significant clarifications have only recently come to light during the preparation

³⁶ The *Zeneműtár*, Music Collection and the *Színházstörténeti Tár*, the Theatre History Collection share a reading room on floor six of the National Széchényi Library, Budapest.

³⁷ Important sources currently held at the Erkel Memorial House and Museum, *Erkel Ferenc Emlékház* and *Erkel Múzeum*, Gyula, include the autograph of later versions of the No.19 cabaletta of *Hunyadi László*, and a fragment of the first act of the libretto of *Bánk bán* in Benjámin Egressy's hand.

³⁸ Contemporary (copy) performing materials of the overture, No.1 Chorus, No.8 finale and No.17 aria from *Hunyadi László*, and contemporary orchestral materials for *Bánk bán* are held in the Arad Museum of Fine Arts, *Arad Szépművészeti Múzeum*.

³⁹ See, for example, Katalin Szacsvai Kim, 'Erkel egyedül: Az *Erzsébet* néhány talányos szerzői kéziratoldala', *Magyar Zene*, Vol.53, No.2 (2014), 270-315; Miklós Dolinszky, 'Revision als Original? Erfahrungen mit der Erstausgabe von *Bánk bán*', *Studia Musicologica*, Vol.49, No.3-4 (2008), 231-244, and Miklós Dolinszky, 'Két *Bánk bán*-tanulmány. I: *Bánk bán* szenvedései; II: Pas de deux: Páros tánc a szerzőség körül', *Magyar zene*, Vol.41, No.3 (2003), 259-286. The sources regarding *Bánk bán* are further complicated by the re-setting of the libretto and re-arrangement of the music in the 20th century: see Tibor Tállaián, 'Meghalt Erkel—éljen Rékai? Plaidoyer az eredetiért', *Musika*, Vol.36, No.8 (1993), 6-11.

⁴⁰ Attempts to systematically arrange the often confounding primary sources into a catalogue of works has occupied Erkel scholarship throughout the twentieth century until today. A sample follows: Major Ervin, 'Erkel Ferenc műveinek jegyzéke. Bibliográfiai kísérlet', *Zenei Szemle*, Vol.2, No.3 (1947); Ferenc Bónis, 'Adalék Erkel műveinek bibliográfiájához', *Musika*, Vol.3, No.5 (1960), 8-11; Major Ervin, 'Erkel Ferenc műveinek jegyzéke. Második bibliográfiai kísérlet' in Bónis Ferenc (ed.), *Írások Erkel Ferencről és a magyar zene korábbi századairól* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1968), 11-19; Dezső Legáný, *Erkel Ferenc művei és kallabeli történetük* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1975); Margit Szőke (ed.), *Erkel Ferenc lelőhely-bibliográfia* (Gyula: Mogoróssy János Városi Könyvtár, 2010).

⁴¹ Katalin Szacsvai Kim, 'Források és változatok' in Gupcsó (ed.), *op. cit.*, 261.

⁴² László Somfai, 'Az Erkel-kéziratok problémái', Bence Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha (eds.), *Az opera történetéből* Zenetudományi tanulmányok IX (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1961).

of the critical editions. Though an attempt to establish this project was initiated already in 1962 by Ferenc Bónis, László Somfai and Jenő Vécsey (former head of the Music Collection of the National Széchényi Library), their efforts did not reach the stage of publication.⁴³ In 1998 this mission was re-initiated, now with support from several institutions.⁴⁴ The thorough editorial process drew on the newly available rich collections, involving analyses of the autograph scores, as well as copy scores, vocal, choral and instrumental part books, *banda* scores, promptbooks, where possible contemporary performance material from theatres in greater Hungary, published and unpublished *libretti*, contemporary archival documents (such as censor's reports and minutes of the Board of Theatre Director's meetings)⁴⁵ and press reports.⁴⁶ These undertakings have also enriched understandings of Erkel's other stage works.⁴⁷ The three operas which are currently published⁴⁸ are the first critical studies analysing all available surviving primary sources, despite two of these works historically holding significant stature in the repertoire of Hungarian opera houses in an almost unbroken performance tradition since their premières.⁴⁹ As Krisztina Lajosi aptly describes this former context:

⁴³ See Szacsvai Kim, 'Erkel Egyedül', *op. cit.*, 276.

⁴⁴ Office for Higher Education, the Office of the Government Commissioner for the Hungarian Millennium, the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund, the Pro Musicologia Hungarica Foundation and the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music. See Tibor Tallán, 'Előszó' in Gupcsó (ed.), *op. cit.*, 7-11.

⁴⁵ Now held in the *Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, Pest Megyei Levéltára*, the Hungarian National Archives, Pest County Archives, and the *Országos Színháztörténeti Múzeum és Intézet*, The Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute, which also holds the Simoncsics Estate (former director of the *Nemzeti Színház*).

⁴⁶ Upon the initiation of the Erkel Critical Editions, sketches and drafts, inherited from the Erkel estate, as well as documents such as promptbooks, early editions of scores and published libretti from the *Nemzeti Színház* and the *Királyi Operaház* came into the collections of the National Széchényi Library, and were critically analysed for the first time. See Katalin Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-műhely: közös munka Erkel Ferenc színpadi műveiben (1840-1857)', (PhD Dissertation, Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem, 2012), 4.

⁴⁷ Until recently, it was assumed that Erkel's contribution to *Népszínmű*, 'folk play' (the majority of which he wrote in the 1840s) meant he composed popular style melodies. Katalin Szacsvai Kim—with the aid of newly discovered drafts of Erkel's later stage works—has demonstrated that Erkel rather set and orchestrated melodies popular in nature, but was not the author. See Katalin Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel Műhely kezdetei: közös munka az *Erzsébet* előtti színpadi zenékben', Gábor Kiss (ed.), *Zenatudományi dolgozatok 2009* (Budapest: MTA Zenatudományi Intézet, 2009) 191-244.

⁴⁸ Erkel's first opera, *Bátori Mária*, was published in 2002: Miklós Dolinszky and Katalin Szacsvai-Kim (eds.), *Bátori Mária. Opera két felvonásban I-II* Erkel Ferenc Operák 1 (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2002), his second, *Hunyadi László*, was published in 2006: Katalin Szacsvai Kim (ed.), *Hunyadi László. Opera négy felvonásban I-III* Erkel Ferenc Operák 2 (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2006), and his third, *Bánk bán*, in 2009: Miklós Dolinszky (ed.), *Bánk bán. Opera három felvonásban I-III* Erkel Ferenc Operák 3 (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2009).

⁴⁹ *Hunyadi László* and *Bánk bán* were the only operas previously published in full-length, albeit in various versions: *Hunyadi László* was published as a piano vocal reduction with Hungarian text and German translation: Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László* (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 1896). *Bánk bán* was published in a two-hand piano score without vocal parts in 1861 (Ferenc Erkel, *Bánk bán* (Pest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 1861)), a piano score with Hungarian and German text was later

Erkel's works became musical monuments to the nation, they remain popular favourites and are performed regularly; but they suffer the fate of most public monuments: they are taken for granted and rarely receive close attention.⁵⁰

From these pivotal developments, it is clear that the pre-revolutionary operas, *Bátori Mária* (1840) and *Hunyadi László* (1844) were composed by Erkel, aided by József Szerdahelyi with orchestration in the case of the former⁵¹ but otherwise without any significant aid from foreign hands beyond copyists.⁵² Further studies concerned with the complexities of the source materials, deriving from the critical editions project, are published as separate articles which supplement the published scores.⁵³ Erkel's later operas are still largely uncharted; the continuing efforts to produce a complete representation of his operas will crucially increase the accessibility of this repertoire.

printed (Ferenc Erkel, *Bánk bán* (Pest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 1902)), and a piano vocal score of the reworked opera first performed in 1940 was published in 1957: Ferenc Erkel, *Bánk bán* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1957). Excerpts of popular pieces, most often arias and dances of almost all of Erkel's operas were usually published in piano and/or piano vocal arrangements in the decades following a works' première and throughout the nineteenth century, such as the March (Act I, No.2) from *Bátori Mária* and the *Hattyúdal* 'swansong' from *Hunyadi László* (published before the operas' première) appeared in several editions. See the listed items in Ilona Mona's study, *Magyar zeneműkiadók és tevékenységük, 1774-1867* (Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi intézet, 1989).

⁵⁰ Lajosi, *op. cit.*, 11.

⁵¹ Szerdahelyi orchestrated the Hunting Chorus (No.12), the Drinking song (No.13), and filled out the wind orchestration from Erkel's notes in *Bátori Mária*. See Katalin Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-Műhely. Közös munka Erkel Ferenc színpadi műveiben (1840-1857)' (PhD Dissertation, Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem, 2012), 9.

⁵² In *Hunyadi László*, only the authorship of the *palotás*, 'Palace dance' is questionable. Katalin Szacsvai Kim, 'Források és változatok' in Gupcsó (ed.), *op. cit.*, 261-294.

⁵³ Regarding *Bátori Mária*, see Szacsvai Kim, 'Bátori Mária – források és változatok', *Muzsika*, Vol.46, No.1 (2003), and Katalin Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-műhely', *op. cit.*, especially 33-58. For *Hunyadi László* see Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-műhely', *op. cit.*, 61-86, and Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel műhely kezdetei', *op. cit.*, 191-244. See also Miklós Dolinszky, 'Erkel kritikai operakiadás: múlt, jelen, jövő', *Muzsika*, Vol.44, No.8 (2001), 24-26, and Miklós Dolinszky, 'Előadás az Erkel Operakiadás első kötetének sajtóbemutatóján', *Magyar zene*, Vol.41, No.1 (2003), 105-111. The critical notes detailing the editorial process for the currently completed scores are published in a multiauthor volume alongside analyses of their historical and literary contexts and performance history: Ágnes Gupcsó (ed.), *Székért dobott a nemzet szívébe: Erkel Ferenc három operája Bátori Mária – Hunyadi László – Bánk bán. Szövegkönyvek, tanulmányok* (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2011), 238-240. See also Dezső Legáný, *Erkel Ferenc művei és korabeli történetük* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1975).

Erkel's life and lineage has been chronicled fairly thoroughly.⁵⁴ In relation to musical analysis, aside from his frequently-performed setting of Ferenc Kölcsey's poem *Himnusz* (1844),⁵⁵ Erkel's most popular operas *Hunyadi László* and *Bánk Bán* have received attention, largely regarding *verbunkos* elements.⁵⁶ As a composer notoriously unwilling to partake in debates relating to national art or politics in Pest-Buda during his lifetime, a document discovered in 1960 in Erkel's own hand discussing *Bánk bán* provides a rare insight into Erkel's thoughts and methods of composition.⁵⁷ Focus has otherwise centred on abortive attempts to stage these works in Paris, Vienna and Weimar during the composer's lifetime,⁵⁸ and as related to reception history.⁵⁹

Despite setbacks, the critical editions build on robust foundations pertaining to nineteenth-century musical traditions in Hungary. Mapping musical activity during this period forms a vibrant branch of Hungarian-language musicology.⁶⁰ During the past decade,

⁵⁴ The first Erkel biography was written by his contemporary and colleague at the Music Academy, Kornél Ábrányi (1822-1903). This text contains numerous factual errors, yet it is nevertheless a valuable contemporary document. Ábrányi Kornél, *Erkel Ferenc élete és működése* (Budapest: Schunda V. József Zeneműkereskedő és Kiadó, 1895). More recently the standard biographies are: Amadé Németh, *Az Erkelek a magyar zenében. Az Erkel család szerepe a magyar zenei művelődésben* (Békéscsaba: Békés Megyei Tanács, 1987) and András Nagy, *Az Erkel család krónikája* (Gyula: Gyula Város Önkormányzata, 1992).

⁵⁵ For example see Rudolf Borlói, 'Gondolatok a magyar Himnuszról', *Árgus*, Vol. 1 (1999). 29-38, and the study of the sacred and secular implications of Kölcsey's text and Erkel's setting in Géza Szentmártoni Szabó, 'Kölcsey *Hymnus*-a és a Magyar nemzeti himnusz', *Magyar egyházzene*, Vol. 18, No.1 (2010), 63-70.

⁵⁶ For examples see Gyula Véber, *Ungarische Elemente in der Opernmusik Ferenc Erkel's*, (Bilthoven: A.B. Creighton, 1976), and János Maróthy, 'Erkel's Weg von der "heroisch-lyrischen" Oper zum kritischen Realismus', *Studia Musicologica*, Vol.1, No.1 (1961), 161-174.

⁵⁷ This document is reproduced in Ferenc Bónis, 'Erkel Ferenc a Bánk bánról' Ferenc Bónis (ed.), *Írások Erkel Ferencről és a magyar zene korábbi századairól* Magyar zenetörténeti tanulmányok I (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1968) 63-74.

⁵⁸ Bene Kálmán, 'Egy tanulságos balsiker története: Erkel Ferenc Hunyadi Lászlójának külföldi bemutatójáról', *Színháztudományi szemle*, Vol.30, No.31 (1996), 153-161, and Ferenc Bónis, 'Erkel Hunyadi Lászlójának megghiúsult előadási kísérlete a bécsi udvari operaházban' in (ed.) *Szabolcsi Bence 70. születésnapjára*, Magyar zenetörténeti tanulmányok (Budapest, Zeneműkiadó, 1969), 267-293, and Igne Birkin-Feichtinger, 'Franz Erkel und das K.k. Hofopertheater in Wien', *Studia Musicologica*, Vol.46, No.3-4 (2005).

⁵⁹ Regarding reception history of Erkel's operas, earlier studies include: István Barna, 'Erkel Ferenc első operái az egykorú sajtó tükrében' in Bence Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha (eds.) *Erkel Ferenc és Bartók Béla emlékére* Zenetudományi tanulmányok II (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1954), 175-218, Erkel's piano performances between 1834-1841 as chronicled in the press are examined in Marianne Pándi, 'Erkel Ferenc, az előadóművész—a *Honművész* tükrében', in Ferenc Bónis (ed.), *Írások Erkel Ferencről és a magyar zene korábbi századairól* Magyar zenetörténeti tanulmányok (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1968), 45-56. More recent examples include Máté Mesterházi, 'A Nemzeti opera eszményének átértékelődése a 19-20. század fordulóján: a korabeli bécsi, budapesti, prágai sajtóvisszhang és egy némely tanulságai', *Magyar Zene*, Vol. 49, No.2 (2011), 190-205.

⁶⁰ Many contemporary documents chronicling nineteenth-century discourse in matters of music theory, aesthetics and critique are published in critical volumes, such as the works of Gábor Mátray, generally acknowledged as the founder of Hungarian-language musicology, and a prominent journalist and author active in Pest-Buda throughout the reform period (See Chapter 3). Gábor Mátray, collected and edited by György Gábray *A muzsikának közönséges története és egyéb írások* (Budapest: Magvető, 1984). Series of volumes, such as the *Zenetudományi tanulmányok*, 'Musicological studies' deal with a wide scope pertaining to aspects for musical life, culture and practices. See for example the tome on opera history: Bence

scholars such as Tibor Tallián (General Editor of the Erkel critical editions), have re-examined reception history in the nineteenth century.⁶¹ Studies concerned with theatre history form a further important body of primary sources and secondary literature which are closely intertwined with nineteenth century musical traditions in Hungarian territories.⁶²

Interest in Hungarian composers, internationally considered, concerns figures who spent significant periods of their careers abroad: Liszt, Bartók and Ligeti. There is a void in relation to anglophone studies concerned with musical traditions within Hungary during the early nineteenth-century. This dissertation takes advantage of a research context which makes a study of Erkel and pre-revolutionary Hungary viable, largely thanks to the critical editions so far completed. Before exploring Hungarian historical, literary and institutional contexts in the following chapters, the remainder of this chapter outlines the broader contexts through which my study aims to illuminate the role of history in *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László*.

‘National’ Opera

The reception of operas as ‘national’ has long been understood through musical markers perceived as representing a national identity, and a context of fervent nationalism. Traditionally, this is framed as a national movement functioning as a ‘sub textual program’⁶³ which even

Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha (eds.), *Az opera történetéből* Zenetudományi tanulmányok IX (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1961).

⁶¹ For example see Tibor Tallián, ‘Csoportkép primadonnával—Operakritika a reformkorban’, in Gábor Kiss (ed.), *Zenetudományi dolgozatok* 2010 (Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet, 2011), 141-222, and most notably Tallián’s weighty study which examines the beginning of professional opera performance in Hungary as relates to the widely popular, though divisive figure, the soprano Rozália Schodel: Tibor Tallián, ‘Schodel Rozália és a hivatásos magyar operajátszás kezdetei’, (Akadémiai doktori értekezés, Budapest, 2011).

⁶² A collection of the most important articles published in contemporary journals concerning the aesthetical debates surrounding national art and music in the reform period are reproduced in Anna Szalai (ed.), *Tollharcok. Irodalmi és színházi viták 1830-1847* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1981), and further contemporary writings are reproduced in collected volumes, for example the writings of József Bajza, first Director of the *Nemzeti Színház*, edited and notated by Imre Kordé and Dezső Tóth, *Bajza József válogatott művei* Magyar Klasszikusok (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1959), and Kerényi’s three volume collection of the beginnings of theatre criticism from across greater Hungary until the opening of the *Nemzeti Színház*: Ferenc Kerényi (ed.), *A Magyar színházkritika kezdetei, 1790-1837* (Budapest: Mundus Magyar Egyetemi Kiadó, 2000), see Chapter 3 for further context. Standard histories of Hungarian theatre history include the two-volume György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színházstörténet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990).

⁶³ Michael Beckerman, ‘In Search of Czechness in Music’, *19th-Century Music*, Vol.10, No.1 (1989), 73. Similarly, ‘What transforms an opera from national to nationalist is not the musical ideas themselves, but rather their social function’ William A. Everett, ‘National Opera in Croatia and Finland, 1846-1899’, *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol.18, No.2 (2002), 197.

predestines a composition for enthusiastic reception. Dahlhaus described this as: ‘a style becomes a national style not so much on its own merits as by popular decree.’⁶⁴ Riley and Smith recently termed this relationship a ‘contract’, ‘in which the composer agrees to use certain conventions and the listener to interpret them in a certain way’.⁶⁵

Scrutinising contemporary interpretations through these categories, or how these readings morph over time through productions, editions, censorship and propaganda has accordingly occupied much scholarship concerned with geographically and culturally peripheral or isolated traditions.⁶⁶ Although these understandings attempt to situate works in specific contexts, these frames can become constraints through which anticipation, creation, and reception ‘explains’ how works ‘become’ national. The processes through which works relate to contextual elements risk being overlooked and simplified in favour of more cohesive, satisfactory narratives.

Erkel shares a fate similar to other largely inaccessible representatives of ‘peripheries’ such as Stanisław Moniuszko (1819-1872) or Ivan Zajc (1832-1914). Their names may be familiar to musicologists, and even undergraduate students from music history handbooks outlining ‘national schools’, but their works allude analysis through any other approach. Where Erkel’s operas do receive space in English-language music histories, this inevitably involves discussion of

⁶⁴ Carl Dahlhaus, translated by J. Bradford Robinson, *Nineteenth-century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 68. He continues: ‘the national side of music is to be found less in the music itself than in its political and sociopsychological function’, Dahlhaus, *op. cit.*, 217. Similarly: ‘The understanding what is national and what is international, and for whom, opens the question if “national opera” exists at all. It seems that the key criterion in this respect is actual reception’ Tatjana Marković, ‘The Myth of the “First National Opera”: The Cases of Serbia and Croatia’, *Studia Musicologica*, Vol. 52, No.1 (2011), 165.

⁶⁵ Matthew Riley and Anthony D. Smith, *Nation and Classical Music: From Handel to Copland* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), 16.

⁶⁶ The passage from Glinka’s *A life for the Tsar* to *Ivan Susanin* is a prominent example of how operas often become revised or even re-composed to align with ‘official nationalisms’ and other circumstances dependent on political developments. See Jennifer Baker, ‘Glinka’s *A Life for the Tsar* and “Official Nationality”’, *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, Vol.24 (1980), 92-114 and Marina Frolova-Walker, ‘The Soviet Opera Project: Ivan Dzerzhinsky vs. *Ivan Susanin*’, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol.18, No.2 (2006), 181-216. Further studies shedding light on these revisions include Halina Goldberg, ‘Appropriating Poland: Glinka, Polish Dance, and Russian National Identity’ in David L. Ransel and Bozena Shallcross (eds.), *Polish Encounters, Russian Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 74-88 and Emanuele Bonomi, ‘Conflicting Ethnicities on the Russian Imperial Stage: The Case of Otto Dütsch’s *The Croatian Girl*’ in Jens Hesselager (ed.), *Grand Opera outside Paris: Opera on the Move in Nineteenth-century Europe* Ashgate Interdisciplinary Studies in Opera (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 178-198.

the ‘local’ (*verbunkos*), and ‘borrowed’ (Italian, French and German operatic) devices,⁶⁷ a blueprint from which apparently no ‘peripheral’ composer can escape.

Philip Ther’s recent study similarly reduces composers of opera whose careers remained on the European cultural margins as following either an ‘Italian’ (Moniuszko, Glinka, Erkel and Zajc), or a ‘German’ path (Smetana and Lysenko).⁶⁸ Ther even argues that engagement with ‘national’ musical markers in Wagner studies is needed, as the aforementioned composers are denied the converse.⁶⁹

In instances where posterity has allowed canonic composers to be both of national as well as international stature, the composer first becomes established in a ‘central’ musical arena, and their nationality comes to complement, rather than dictate, their identity. Liszt became the nineteenth-century representative of Hungarian music, largely through *verbunkos* stylisation in his compositions, the ‘tourist appeal’⁷⁰ (as opposed to ‘nationalist appeal’) contributed to his international successes. As Gregor Kokorz has recently written: Liszt could ‘become a national icon only because he was the admired representative of the modern European world.’⁷¹ Becoming established as performers and composers in major European musical centres meant such composers were not perceived as merely ‘national’.

Emulations of *verbunkos* traditions, particularly by Austrian and German composers, became a musical trope known as the *style hongrois*.⁷² The stylisation of the *verbunkos*, despite

⁶⁷ See John Tyrrell, ‘Russian, Czech, Polish, and Hungarian Opera to 1900’ in Roger Parker (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 237-278, where Tyrrell literally subdivides his discussion between ‘Local elements: subject-matter and folk music’ (246) and ‘foreign elements’ (258).

⁶⁸ Philip Ther, translated by Charlotte Hughes-Kreutzmüller, *Centre Stage: Operatic Culture and Nation Building in Nineteenth-Century Central Europe* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2014), 116-117.

⁶⁹ Ther, *op. cit.*, 117.

⁷⁰ James Parakilas, *Ballads Without Words: Chopin and the Tradition of the Instrumental Ballade* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1992), 152.

⁷¹ Gregor Kokorz, ‘Border, Transborder, and Unification: Music and Its Divergent Roles in the Nineteenth-Century Habsburg Territories’, in Helga Mitterbauer and Carrie Smith-Prei (eds.), *Crossing Central Europe: Continuities and Transformations, 1900 and 2000* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 57.

⁷² *Verbunkos* is a general term, a ‘magyarised’ version of *verbung* (‘advertising’, but here more accurately understood as ‘recruitment’) for the tradition deriving from villages in Hungarian territories but developed through virtuosic performance practice of (primarily) Roma musicians. The defining features of this repertoire usually involves fast-slow-fast structure, augmented seconds, lavish ornamentation and improvisation, to name a few prominent elements. See Shay Loya, *Liszt’s Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-gypsy Tradition* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2011), particularly Chapter 2 (58-85). The term *style hongrois* refers to the emulation of this tradition in art music, usually

garnering scholarly interest as a reoccurring trope in the ‘canon’, has simultaneously discouraged engaging with nineteenth-century musical traditions within Hungary. In the context of their campaign to create a school of composition and educate the public in ‘genuine’ folk music, Kodály searched for such elements in Erkel’s operas, whereas Bartók out-right dismissed Erkel’s works as lacking in worth.⁷³ Their epochal break with nineteenth-century understandings of the *verbunkos* as ‘Hungarian’ subsequently inflected scholarship. Since establishing scholarly distinctions between ‘folk’ and *verbunkos* traditions in the early twentieth century, discussions concerned with Erkel’s use of local musical elements are even apologetic. As Shay Loya puts it: ‘the comparative failure of the national school [of Erkel, Mosonyi and composers within Hungary during the nineteenth century] was finally blamed on the inadequacy of the *verbunkos* itself.’⁷⁴ Musical traditions within Hungary have been almost entirely overlooked outside Hungarian-language scholarship. A lack of dialogue between scholars working in related fields has only deepened this disjuncture.⁷⁵

The small number of English-language studies which complicate these understandings are critical steps towards readdressing assumptions relating to Hungarian musical traditions. David Schneider’s interest in Bartók led to critically re-situating the composer in the context of his musical lineage: arguing that nineteenth-century composers within Hungary, namely Erkel and his contemporary Mihály Mosonyi, influenced their successor more profoundly than Bartók

associated with composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert, Liszt and Brahms. See Matthew Head, ‘Style hongrois’ in *Grove Music Online*, ed. Accessed 26 Sep. 2018.

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000044652>> and Jonathan Bellman, ‘Verbunkos’ in *Grove Music Online*, ed. Accessed 26 September 2018.

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000029184>> See Jonathan Bellman, *The “Style Hongrois” in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993).

⁷³ See Mihály Ittész, ‘Erkel és Kodály’ in Ferenc Bónis (ed.), *Erkel Ferencről és koráról Magyar zenetörténeti tanulmányok* (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 1995), 172-202, and Béla Bartók, ‘On Hungarian Music’ in Benjamin Suchoff (ed.), *Béla Bartók Essays* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 301-303.

⁷⁴ Shay Loya, *Liszt’s Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-gypsy Tradition* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 66.

⁷⁵ Until 2010, no discussion of Bellman’s study appeared amongst Hungarian musicologists. The critique which has begun to emerge, such as by Pál Richter, is currently unavailable to the reader without facility in Hungarian. Pál Richter, ‘Egzotikum és depresszió: Értelmezések és félértelmezések a magyaros stílus kapcsán’, *Magyar zene*, Vol.48, No.1 (2010), 33-47.

himself or scholars have acknowledged.⁷⁶ Lynn Hooker's premise to examine concepts of 'Hungarian' music in relation to Erkel necessarily does not unpack 'national' opera beyond musical features which act as identity markers.⁷⁷ Hooker discusses the example of the aria 'Hazám Hazám, te mindenem' ('My homeland, my homeland my everything') from Erkel's *Bánk Bán* (1861 Act I, Scene ii), as an example of 'Hungarian rhythm' contextualised through contemporary music theory.⁷⁸ Though her study forms a crucial contribution, enriching understandings of how musical identity was conceived and perceived in Hungary, Erkel's opera remains framed by an amalgamation of European operatic devices made 'national' by rhythmic features. Krisztina Lajosi has recently examined the relationship between musical and dramatic repertoires and national identity in Hungary—what she terms the 'performative nature of national identity'—and how nationalism impacted 'historical recycling'.⁷⁹ Lajosi demonstrates how political consequences emerged from the tensions surrounding genre on the Hungarian stages.⁸⁰ This vital contribution forms a significant step in (re)addressing the relationships between nationalism and musical culture in nineteenth-century Hungary.

Analyses of musical markers relating to national musical tropes have improved understandings of the creative processes pertaining to creating stylistic effects. However, this has been at the cost of neglecting other crucial aspects, and even over-stating the role of local influences. This is despite a general rejection of cultural essentialism which, as Rutger Helmers states: 'leads to exoticism and distorting simplification'.⁸¹ Aims to detangle canon formation

⁷⁶ See David E. Schneider, *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition: Case Studies in the Intersection of Modernity and Nationality* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2006), Chapter 1: 'Tradition Rejected: Bartók's Polemics and the Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Musical Inheritance', 8-32 particularly 12-13 and 29-30.

⁷⁷ See Lynn Hooker, *Redefining Hungarian Music from Liszt to Bartók* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Chapter 4: 'Writing Hungarian Music', 154-229, particularly 175-194.

⁷⁸ 'The grandeur of this aria has something of the character of a national anthem, and it is marked by repeated use of the Hungarian iamb' Hooker, *op. cit.*, 179.

⁷⁹ Krisztina Lajosi, *Staging the Nation: Opera and Nationalism in 19th-Century Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 11.

⁸⁰ Lajosi, *op. cit.*, 2.

⁸¹ Rutger Helmers, *Not Russian Enough? Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in 19th Century Russian Opera* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2014), 2. At the other extreme, as a recent project reminds us, 'anti-essentialism', an inflexible framework in which genre is tied to categories of, for example, gender, can also 'turn into a ...reductive musical essentialism, whereby sonic forms are thought of as coded politically.' See the preface to Rūta Stanevičiūtė, Nick Zangwill and Rima Povilionienė (eds.), *Of Essence and Context: Between Music and Philosophy* Arts and Humanities in Progress Volume 7 (Cham: Springer, 2019), v.

means musicology has progressed beyond fetishizing ‘unique’ characteristics of individual composers, too.⁸² Yet despite these strides de-narrativizing what Abbate terms ‘controlling’ labels,⁸³ engaging with opera from anywhere other than Italian, French and German regions equates with attempting to define these repertoires by how they diverge from or conform to such models. Jim Samson summarised this situation: ‘we may skew the plot in favour of the values of a dominant culture’ resulting in a narrative which assimilates founding figures of musical peripheries into European trends whilst disproportionately marginalising divergencies. Conversely, writers may be tempted to fetishize what they perceive to be the uniqueness of a tradition.⁸⁴

Any study of a composer such as Erkel must grapple with issues relating to musical markers of nationalism and utilisation of (or divergence from) operatic models. However, to begin unravelling the relationships between musical traditions and (historical) identity within Hungary in the nineteenth century, an approach which privileges aspects other than the use of *verbunkos* elements and reception is paramount. Accordingly, this study is not primarily concerned with what was considered ‘Hungarian’, or ‘Hungarian-ness’ in music. There were hardly any written attempts to create a hypothetical framework for Hungarian language opera during the pre-revolution period. Critics established discourse pertaining to these concepts in the latter half of the nineteenth century, which has been illuminatingly explored elsewhere.⁸⁵ Rather, approaching Erkel’s pre-revolution operas, *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László*, through how discourse surrounding presentations of the past informed contemporary fears for the future, complicates how history is negotiated in these operas.

⁸² See, for example, Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 12, or more recently, Richard Taruskin, *Russian Music at Home and Abroad: New Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 14. Though this factor still inspires engaging arguments, Nina Penner for example argues that ‘Accepting that authorial intentions are pertinent to interpretation does not entail regarding authors as infallible, nor does it devalue the role of the interpreter’. Nina Penner, ‘Opera Singing and Fictional Truth’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.71, No.1 (2013), 83.

⁸³ Abbate, *op. cit.*, 12.

⁸⁴ Jim Samson, ‘Nations and Nationalism’ in Jim Samson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, Volume I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 591.

⁸⁵ Hooker, *op. cit.*, 95-229.

To be sure, contextualising and historicising music is beset with challenges. Examining relationships between opera and context involves considering how numerous factors in the decision-making process may be coincidental or pragmatic (such as selecting a libretto topic which lends itself easily to operatic structure). Simultaneously, attempting to distil vibrant discourse into a backdrop through which to examine understandings of history involves acknowledging ‘affinity and proximity alongside difference’.⁸⁶ Situating the role of historical tropes in artforms and how the past is negotiated in political and artistic polemics involves considering competing goals and how ambiguous representations of the past might relate to conceptions of the future. One way to approach these challenges is to embrace ambiguities and examine how uncertainties might inform how the past is interpreted and presented on the stage. Situating nexuses between identity and history in relation to broader understandings of how these aspects shape European musical traditions can facilitate the creation of a more nuanced account of what is distinct in ‘national’ operatic repertoires.

Anxiety relating to identity and legacy variously characterised a significant proportion of political and literary discourse in pre-revolution Hungary. Uncertainties relating to the survival of shared identity meant practical attempts to fight *nemzethalál*, ‘nation death’. This included nation-building projects such as establishing the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; attempts to reform the political power-structure; creating literary works in the vernacular to revive and reform the Hungarian language, and drawing on a shared past in historical plays, novels, artworks and Erkel’s operas on historical themes. These endeavours were partially motivated by fears that the Hungarian identity could fall into obscurity.⁸⁷ Examining the use of history whilst taking into account these broader contexts aids complicating what could otherwise potentially become a reductive examination of *verbunkos* elements and contemporary political nationalism. Historical

⁸⁶ Rita Felski, “Context Stinks!”, *New Literary History*, Vol.42, No.4 (2011), 578.

⁸⁷ These contexts are set out in Chapter 2.

tropes in relation to legacy adds nuance which traditional understandings of ‘national schools’ lack.

Interpreting the Past

The rise of historiography as an academic discipline in the nineteenth century informed or was in tension with historical artistic representation. The relationships between the past and identity frequently related to political contexts and conflicts.⁸⁸ Historiography decidedly influenced literary modes of narration.⁸⁹ These changing contexts had significant implications for opera. As Peter Rietbergen puts it, history in opera in the nineteenth century could ‘present past contexts for present-day ideas’. It is not “the” past as it was reconstructed by historians, but “a” past that recreated a specific vision of the present.⁹⁰

Broadly considered, drawing knowledge from the past prior to the late eighteenth-century formed part of historiographical understanding in which ‘nothing essentially new could occur’ in the future.⁹¹ The reverberating influences of the French Revolution brought a shift from instructive readings of history to ‘a future that had never yet existed’⁹² particularly in France, but which infiltrated historical thinking across Europe. The rise of historical methods impacted historical representations in literary forms, echoing these instabilities.⁹³ The turbulence

⁸⁸ Erika Fischer-Lichte, translated by Jo Riley, *History of European Drama and Theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 230.

⁸⁹ Brian Hamnett, *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Representations of Reality in History and Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

⁹⁰ Peter Rietbergen, ‘Singing of Conquest? Opera, History, and the Ambiguities of European Imperialism’ in Lotte Jensen, Joep Leerssen, and Marita Mathijssen (eds.), *Free Access to the Past: Romanticism, Cultural Heritage and the Nation* National Cultivation of Culture Volume 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 225.

⁹¹ As Koselleck puts it: ‘Until the eighteenth century it was an almost universally accepted doctrine that one could, from the history of the past, learn lessons for the future. Knowledge of what had been and foreknowledge of what was yet to come remained connected through a quasi-natural horizon of experience, within in which nothing essentially new could occur. ...History (*historie*) comprised a collection of instructive alien experiences which could be appropriated by learning. Thus one held oneself to be equipped to repeat the successes of the past instead of committing old mistakes in the present. ...During the Enlightenment all this changed slowly and then, with the French Revolution, quite radically.’ Reinhart Koselleck, Translated and Introduced by Keith Tribe, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 2004), 58.

⁹² Koselleck, *op. cit.*, 58.

⁹³ Hamnett, *op. cit.*, 5.

following 1789 ‘made it painfully clear’ to French citizens the new uncertainty of the future: ‘that the world they lived in was far from perpetual.’⁹⁴ In German-speaking regions, a general shift from *historia magistra vitae* (history as ‘life’s teacher’) to *Geschichte* (history conceived ‘in the singular as a unitary whole’),⁹⁵ meant ‘old worldviews became submerged under the new horizon of an unprecedented present with an open future’.⁹⁶ Theological traditions under which Europe was organised meant prior to these shifts, understandings of ‘fate’ and tragedy were largely related to a community’s conduct and divine appeasement.⁹⁷ Founding figures of German historiography, such as Leopold von Ranke, ‘saw in the idea of the ‘nation’ a moral entity and a principle of divine origin’ which surpassed the church or the Holy Roman Empire.⁹⁸

One of the most significant shifts in the nineteenth century was transferring presentations of the past through monarchies and the clergy to common people, bringing new perspectives and experiences onto the stage and page. Christendom as the primary source of authority in the pre-modern world meant legacies relating to fears of punishment and damnation infiltrated national movements across Europe. For centuries, moral orders were defined at least partly in terms of securing atonement and escaping the spectre of divine punishment.⁹⁹ Shifting political power dynamics meant civil liberties came to the forefront of both historiography, and historical representation in the novel and in drama in which: ‘fear of the consequences of tyranny, personal power, and revolutionary violence’ became topics of historical narratives.¹⁰⁰

Historical commemoration drew new fears into public spheres, in particular, as means to explore

⁹⁴ Bradley Stephens, ‘The Novel and the (Il)legibility of History: Victor Hugo, Honoré de Balzac, and Alexandre Dumas’ in Paul Hamilton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 88.

⁹⁵ See Koselleck, *op. cit.*, 35.

⁹⁶ Wolf Schäfer, ‘Knowledge and Nature: History as the Teacher of Life Revisited’, *Nature and Culture*, Vol.1, No.9, 2.

⁹⁷ Elemér Hankiss, *Fears and Symbols: An Introduction to the Study of Western Civilization* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 158.

⁹⁸ Hamnett, *op. cit.*, 134.

⁹⁹ As Iain Hampsher Monk puts it: ‘Christians...required a sanction in order for people to be motivated to adhere to it. That motivation was provided by the fear of divine punishment—Hell Fire.’ Iain Hampsher Monk, ‘Introduction’ in Iain Hampsher Monk (ed.), *The Impact of the French Revolution: Texts from Britain in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 16.

¹⁰⁰ Hamnett, *op. cit.*, 5.

existential crises relating to identity. Individuals were willing—and did—sacrifice their lives for new national crusades in revolutions.

In German-speaking regions, rallying against ‘Enlightenment universalism’, figures such as Johann Gottfried Herder privileged aspects relating to ‘intense subjective experience’ in what proved to be an enduring (though not unchallenged) shift in historiographical thinking which emphasised studying the past ‘according to their own social and cultural terms.’¹⁰¹ History was conceived broadly considered as either lacking any ‘discernible shape or pattern’: an ‘open-ended’ view associated primarily with what are now often referred to the ‘German Romantics’, or a conception of the past framed through Idealism, in which history formed a ‘rational process’. In the latter view, associated with Hegel, ‘history was meaningful, and this meaning could be grasped by the use of reason’.¹⁰² The Hegelian view of ‘the past in terms of progress, continuity and increasing freedom’ (also influential in currents of understanding the past in Britain and France), conceived ‘the present as the culmination of the historical process’.¹⁰³

The early period of the German-language historical novel displays a general nostalgia for medievalism (which became a Pan-European phenomenon partially through Scott’s novels), and specifically the tales of knights, whose ‘medieval chivalric values acted as social cement’. The decline of these values was presented in novels and drama drawing on medieval themes as nostalgia for chivalric virtues.¹⁰⁴ Representing historical figures and events accordingly frequently concerned contemporary power structures, and aspirations to create historical shifts which might redefine the community. Shaping history in a manner which could satisfy ‘a deep-seated desire to find orientation and identity in a changing world’¹⁰⁵ resulted in authors drawing from their own histories in historical drama and novels in relation to their own pasts in the context of the

¹⁰¹ Harold Mah, ‘German Historical Thought in the Age of Herder, Kant, and Hegel’ in Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza (eds.), *A Companion to Western Historical Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 143.

¹⁰² Walter Kudrycz, *The Historical Present: Medievalism and Modernity* (London: Continuum, 2011) 70.

¹⁰³ Kudrycz, *op. cit.*, 79.

¹⁰⁴ Kudrycz, *op. cit.*, 58.

¹⁰⁵ Fischer-Lichte, *op. cit.*, 231.

present. History could further serve as a mode of escapism from ‘an increasingly complex and depressing reality’ brought about by rapidly shifting ways of life.¹⁰⁶ These presentations of the past through drama also coincided with the new role of the theatre in the nineteenth century. The ‘moral institution’ of the stage in the eighteenth century now became ‘a therapeutical institution which was based upon the psyche of the individual.’¹⁰⁷

Tragic drama in German-speaking regions in the eighteenth century were often centred around moral instruction: enlightened rulership and upholding virtue.¹⁰⁸ The ‘struggle for liberty’ became a common trope, arguably beginning with *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773),¹⁰⁹ in which Goethe used the late fifteenth-century wanderer as a means through which to explore Germany’s lost liberties.¹¹⁰ Schiller as well as French dramatists, notably Hugo, championed ‘that a legitimate state should be founded on the will of “the people” rather than a God, dynasty, or imperial domination’.¹¹¹ Dealignment in the authority of monarchies and the clergy, in broader contexts of economic and scientific developments, contributed to destabilising the instructive understandings of the past: a reform which reverberated in historical drama, novels, and opera drawing on history.

Historical drama such as Goethe’s *Egmont* (1788), or Schiller’s *Don Carlos* (1783-1787) centred around challenging oppression. In *Egmont*, the title role opposes tyranny (embodied in the Duke of Alba) through personal sacrifice: the title role, a ‘champion of freedom’,¹¹² dies for his ideal of liberty. The political struggle to free Flanders from Spanish rule in *Don Carlos* similarly leads to the death of the champion of liberty (the Marquis de Posa). The struggle for enlightened government, a need exemplified by representing the suffering caused through

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Fischer-Lichte, *op. cit.*, 244.

¹⁰⁸ As Robert R. Heitner puts it: ‘there was really no one to be found who did not believe that tragedy, as a prominent part of literature in general, was charged with the serious responsibility of improving the character of the German public.’ Robert R. Heitner, *German Tragedy in the Age of Enlightenment. A Study in the Development of Original Tragedies, 1724-1768* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), xv.

¹⁰⁹ Hamnett, *op. cit.*, 53.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Krisztina Lajosi: *Staging the Nation: Opera and Nationalism in 19th-Century Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 17.

¹¹² Hamnett, *op. cit.*, 53.

tyranny, is presented as instructive.¹¹³ History became opportunities for ‘preservation and propagation’ which was not concerned with faithfulness to factual accuracy so much as ‘in terms of tropes and fables with redemptive potential.’¹¹⁴ Barbara Eichner describes the function of historical myths (*Geschichtsmythen*) in how German identity was negotiated musically in the later nineteenth century in similar terms. Drawing on the past related to aspirations for the future: ‘justifying political actions and attitudes in the present.’¹¹⁵

In France, historical novels of the first half of the nineteenth century often reflect the instability and uncertainties of the post-revolution. Authors sought to ‘accommodate the ever-changing social experience’.¹¹⁶ Significantly, this was attempted through recounting events through ‘the spirit’ of ‘the time and place’: historical realism. Figures such as Hugo, Balzac and Dumas established modes of narration in which first-hand accounts and vividly described scenes relay events through subjective experiences, and drew on events, locales and individuals familiar to their readership. The historical novel embodied the capacity to ‘construct a narrative understanding of experience as both subjective and transient’:¹¹⁷ reflecting both the experience of individuals and constantly shifting contexts. For example Hugo’s *Notre-Dame de Paris* of 1831 richly depicts the iconic cathedral and medieval Paris, and simultaneously uses the experience of Quasimodo as a ‘plea’ for tolerance.¹¹⁸ In Balzac’s *Le Lys dans la Vallée* (1835), the backdrop of Touraine is intimately implicated in the death of several (female) characters.¹¹⁹ Subjectivity and portraying viewpoints from differing social statuses created narratives in which sharp distinctions of morality blur and viewpoints of previously rejected or under-represented members of society

¹¹³ Hamnett, *op. cit.*, 55.

¹¹⁴ Azade Seyhan, ‘Allegory as the Trope of Memory: Registers of Cultural Time in Schlegel and Novalis’ in Jon Whitman (ed.), *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2003), 437.

¹¹⁵ Barbara Eichner, *History in Mighty Sounds: Musical Constructions of German National Identity, 1848-1914* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012), 15-16.

¹¹⁶ Bradley Stephens, ‘The Novel and the (Il)legibility of History: Victor Hugo, Honoré de Balzac, and Alexandre Dumas’ in Paul Hamilton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 88.

¹¹⁷ Stephens, *op. cit.*, 89.

¹¹⁸ Stephens, *op. cit.*, 98.

¹¹⁹ Owen Heathcote, *Balzac and Violence. Representing History, Space, Sexuality and Death in La Comédie humaine* French Studies of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 127-145.

could come to the fore. Anticlericism and emphasising the evils of tyranny underlay depictions of historical power struggles.¹²⁰

Historian Michelet sought to present common people as performing ‘decisive’ roles in history, and therein shifted emphasis from monarchs and individuals to the experience of ‘the people’ at large.¹²¹ Michelet understood the past as a variously instructive cycle of rebirth. Reacting to the ‘July’ revolution of 1830, he wrote:

My first pages [following the Revolution] ...written on the burning cobblestones, were a vision of the world, of universal history, as freedom’s struggle, its ever-repeated victory over the world of determinism.¹²²

In this view, the ‘progressive displacement of “fatality” by “freedom”’, ‘the endlessly repeated cycle of birth and death’ were gradually overcome by the ‘power of reason, law and scientific understanding’.¹²³ Michelet viewed the struggle between mankind and nature as endless, yet a *mêlée* in which the former could emerge continually victorious.¹²⁴ These distinctly progressive views of the past in relation to the contemporary present throw the decided pessimism and fears characterising understandings of the past in Hungary into sharp relief. Uncertainty in Hungarian nationalisms did not embody the progressive hopes and beliefs in German-speaking regions and France. Uncertainty was both born from and reinforced by viewing the past as a threat to the future.¹²⁵

As in Hungary, manners of inferiority complexes emerged in efforts to cultivate Italian-language literature: ‘the nation’s controversies over Romanticism [embodied] a dramatic, almost

¹²⁰ Fischer-Lichte, *op. cit.*, 233.

¹²¹ Hamnett, *op. cit.*, 31.

¹²² From Michelet’s preface to ‘History of France’, quoted in Jules Michelet, translated by Flora Kimmich, Lionel Gossman and Edward K. Kaplan, foreword by Lionel Gossman, *Jules Michelet on History* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2013) 7.

¹²³ Michelet, *op. cit.*, 7-8.

¹²⁴ ‘What should hearten us in this endless struggle is that...the odds are in our favour. ...Nature remains the same, while man daily gains some advantage of her.’ Jules Michelet, translated by Flora Kimmich, ‘Introduction to World History’ in Michelet, *op. cit.*, 25.

¹²⁵ See Chapter 2.

desperate air, as the subtext over whether Italy would become ‘Romantic’ was equal to asking whether it would become ‘modern’.¹²⁶ Similar anxieties plagued intellectuals in the Hungarian reform period as efforts to establish Hungarian-language literature and drama dominated the press.¹²⁷ In Italy however, interest in the past as a source of lament was nevertheless also understood as instructive. As Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri demonstrates, a lack of a foundational framework based on conquest and/or unification (as in France or England) meant in Italy historians and novelists utilised the middle ages as ‘a veritable reservoir of medieval political events’ which symbolised Italy’s liberation.¹²⁸ The Battle of Legnano against Fredrick I in the early twelfth century, for example, became a metaphor for the struggle against Austrian oppression in the nineteenth century.¹²⁹ Massimo d’Azeglio drew on medieval events in his novels partially as attempts to cultivate a unified Italian identity amidst the politically and linguistically fragmented Italian regions.¹³⁰ Manzoni’s *I Promessi Sposi*, ‘The Betrothed’ (1827), set in seventeenth-century Spanish-occupied Lombardy, similarly engages with liberal nationalist discourse. Depicting vivid scenes of plague and starvation demonstrating the evils of tyranny, Manzoni’s novel allegorically championed Italian unification.¹³¹ These uses of the past were ‘considered explicit allegories and anticipations of the necessary redemption of the nation’: the aspiration to become a unified, independent Italy.¹³² The past in these instances could provide instruction for the future.

Across several European state-seeking national movements in the nineteenth century, identifying the present community with heroic figures, usually from a ‘golden age’ of history,

¹²⁶ Joseph Luzzi, ‘The Task of Italian Romanticism: Literary Form and Polemical Response’ Paul Hamilton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 378.

¹²⁷ See chapters 2 and 3.

¹²⁸ Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri, ‘Medieval’ Identities in Italy: National, Regional, Local’ in Patrick J. Geary and Gábor Klaniczay (eds.), *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe* National Cultivation of Culture (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 324-328.

¹²⁹ Falconieri, *op. cit.*, 325.

¹³⁰ David Ward, ‘Massimo d’Azeglio’s Ettore Fieramosca. The Necessity and the Joy of Fiction’ in Graziella Parati (ed.), *New Perspectives in Italian Cultural Studies* Volume 2: The Arts and History (Plymouth: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), 7.

¹³¹ John A. Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 45.

¹³² Falconieri, *op. cit.*, 334.

could similarly embody an instructive function. The present ‘slumbering’ nation can find direction for how to salvage the community from their present inertia. John Hutchinson, discussing the relationships between the emerging intelligentsia and historical sacrifice narratives in Greek nationalism writes that the past in this manner ‘evoked a call to action’.¹³³ Commemorating historical figures and events in periods of political oppression can be variously inspirational to a collective: identifying the ‘great and heroic moments’ could provide an example for how to retrieve lost power and glory: a ‘corrective to the misery of the current circumstances’.¹³⁴ Similar themes preoccupied historians, playwrights and literary figures across early nineteenth-century Europe. History was nevertheless shaped by local social-political contexts: the past could be reimagined or reinvented for various purposes as context and ideology required.

The role of history in reconciling musical legacy with nineteenth-century identities further illustrates how similar phenomena become reinvented in various contexts. Anxieties over prestige, or even existence, of musical heritage could drive discourse and attempts to cultivate musical traditions. In geographical regions with established legacies of art music, discourse demonstrates how insecurities are formed around musical traditions in light of one another. This is particularly evidenced by musicians of the past becoming integral to championing the merits of a tradition.¹³⁵ Perceived threats to identity drove debate surrounding what constitutes a musical identity as distinct, as well as attempts to create repertoires in relation to these ideals.

In nineteenth-century France, musical identities were tied to an inferiority-complex relating to contemporary cultural prestige. As Katharine Ellis has demonstrated, preserving French musical traditions related to a manner of national ‘self-esteem’ informed by legacy: ‘the musical writings of the entire century are peppered with references to France’s fragile musical

¹³³ John Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict* (London: SAGE, 2005), 53.

¹³⁴ Alexander Rehding, ‘Liszt’s Musical Monuments’, *19th-Century Music*, Vol.26, No.1 7(2002), 57-58.

¹³⁵ See Samson, *op. cit.*, 538.

reputation'.¹³⁶ Studies of Italian and German nationalisms in the nineteenth century trace anxieties surrounding fragmented identities as stimulating reactionary attempts to assert unity through political manifesto and cultural affirmations. For example, the arrival of Meyerbeer's and Wagner's operas in Italian-speaking regions drove attempts to define what was 'Italian' about Italian-language opera.¹³⁷ The fall of the Holy Roman Empire and the Napoleonic wars which ravaged many German-speaking regions resulted in tensions surrounding territorial borders and fears of loss.¹³⁸ The 'operatic invasion' in the form of the prominence of *opéra comique* in German territories at least partially drove efforts to cultivate 'home grown' works, including the desire to nurture a repertoire of 'national' opera.¹³⁹ By the *fin de siècle* in Vienna, as Brodbeck has argued, music critics engaged with pressing questions relating to identity in their reviews. Presenting competing versions of *Deutschtum*, musical 'German-ness' was apparently threatened by the presence of 'Czechness' in the imperial city.¹⁴⁰ Perceived dangers to identity drove attempts to create 'home-grown' artforms as a safeguard against cultural obscurity.

In the cases of minority peoples in the Habsburg Empire, reactions to established musical legacies of dominant and dominating cultures motivated efforts to nurture 'native' art on a par with these traditions. Efforts to preserve and cultivate the Hungarian language and culture formed part of the fight for survival within the Habsburg Empire, rather than an attempt to compete with dominating cultures, as in France and many Italian- and German-speaking regions. In the latter half of the nineteenth century in particular, the controversial figure of Wagner and

¹³⁶ Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xviii

¹³⁷ Anna Tedesco, 'National Identity, National Music and Popular Music in the Italian Music Press during the Long 19th Century', *Studia Musicologica*, Vol.52, No.1 (2011), 270.

¹³⁸ As Alice Freifeld puts: 'Although Austrians and Germans have belittled Hungarians for this obsession, the Hungarian paranoia was different only in degree from the fear of language death propelling much of the German *Sturm und Drang*. In this case, Germany seemed to be rotting in its provincialism, at least if it did not exert itself vis-a-vis the French.' Alice Freifeld, 'The De-Germinization of the Budapest Stage' in Keith Bullivant, Geoffrey Giles and Walter Pape (eds.), *Germany and Eastern Europe: Cultural Identities and Cultural Differences* Yearbook of European Studies, Volume 13 (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999), 151.

¹³⁹ Stephen C. Meyer, *Carl Maria von Weber and the Search for a German Opera* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 52.

¹⁴⁰ David Brodbeck, *Defining Deutschtum. Political Ideology, German Identity, and Music-Critical Discourse in Liberal Vienna* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). See particularly Chapter 5: 'Language Ordinances, *Nationalbesitzstand*, and Dvořák's Reception in the Taaffe Era', 143-198.

the ‘war of the Romantics’ saw deep divides in not only German-speaking musical locales, but became a dichotomy with which practically every musical centre encountered (including Hungary).¹⁴¹ Amongst minority groups within the Habsburg Empire, composers contended with whether to utilise contemporary Wagnerian techniques, whilst simultaneously grappling with the challenges of creating art of competitive European standards more broadly considered, and with concepts surrounding what constituted ‘local’ traditions. In late nineteenth-century Prague, disagreements surrounding the path opera should take between the ‘Old Czechs’ and the ‘Young Czechs’, hinged upon Wagner’s operatic innovations as apparently harmful and integral to national culture, respectively. The ‘Young Czechs’, embraced Wagnerian music drama ‘in the hope that Czech art might be able to stand up to the works being composed for the operatic style of other European countries.’¹⁴² In Hungary, this desire to keep pace with broader trends was simultaneously an anxiety surrounding ‘diluting’ Hungarian musical traditions and a wariness of metaphorically fraternizing with the enemy. In Hooker’s words, musicians in Hungary

were plagued by the anxieties of a “peripheral” culture: the fear that either their music would not be elevated enough to compete with the great German traditions, or that it would not be distinct enough for them, or both.¹⁴³

In early nineteenth-century Hungary, as in comparable regions in Central-Eastern Europe, cultivating national culture was tied to urgent needs to address (what were perceived as) pressing political, social, and cultural crises.¹⁴⁴ In Hungary, fears for the future stimulated political and cultural strategies to ‘awaken’ and preserve the nation in the modern period. Attempts to salvage identity from the verge of extinction in pragmatic and artistic endeavours meant cultural and

¹⁴¹ See Ferenc Bónis, ‘Erkel és Mosonyi kapcsolatáról’ in Ferenc Bónis (ed.), *Erkel Ferencről és koráról* (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 1995), 122-130 for a discussion of the tension between Erkel and Mosonyi, stemming partially from Erkel’s resistance to conducting Wagner’s operas as well as his resistance to Wagnerian compositional techniques in his operas.

¹⁴² Eva Brenda, ‘Representations of Antonín Dvořák: A Study of his Music Through the Lens of Late Nineteenth-Century Czech Criticism’ (DPhil Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2014), 77.

¹⁴³ Hooker, *op. cit.*, 227.

¹⁴⁴ See for example Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Mónika Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe* Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the ‘Long Nineteenth Century’ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 168-181.

political nationalisms became inseparable and involved individuals from all social strata. Debates between ideological factions often became vehement, emotionally-charged, and *ad hominem*. This stemmed at least partially from the fears that perusing the ‘wrong’ political and cultural paths would hasten the gallop to the abyss. Whereas discursive contexts such as the aforementioned examples of France and Vienna were sparked by outrage that their dominant culture might become ‘diluted’, in the Eastern empire discourse stemmed from the anxiety that identity would become extinct. France, Germany and Italy competed with one another in terms of prestige, whereas Czechs and Hungarians sought to establish operatic traditions as part of the fight for survival within an empire. How history was utilised in these contexts, however, illuminates the divergence between celebratory or instructive operatic representation of the past with the fatalistic understandings underlying Hungarian nationalism in the early nineteenth century.

History and Opera

Power struggles, whether divine, dynastic, social, patriarchal, or in the form of tensions between ethnic or religious groups are features reaching across operatic subgenres and historical periods. Shifting perceptions of authority informed operatic representations of the past in the nineteenth century. As research by scholars concerned with French operatic traditions have shown, Grand opera was an ideological state apparatus in which historical narratives could serve partially as a mode of legitimising contemporary authority.¹⁴⁵ As the century progressed, working through ‘negativity and redemption’, ‘presenting turmoil as the result of corruption of a strong central authority’ underlay many operas on the stage of the Paris *Opéra* (*Académie Royale de Musique*). The political success of this repertoire from the late 1820s even hinged on representing the tragedy of characters embroiled in chaos, to exemplify ‘the immorality of insurrection’.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Jane Fulcher, *The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁴⁶ Peter Mondelli, ‘The Sociability of History in French Grand Opera: A Historical Materialist Perspective’, *19th-Century Music*, Vol.37, No.1 (2013), 41.

During the early July Monarchy, the relationships between libretto, score, and stage effects could also represent a history which anticipates an undetermined future informed by contemporary historical thinking. Sarah Hibberd reads such uncertainties deriving from revolutionary experience, regime changes, and discourse surrounding the past, present and future as variously utilised in operatic repertoire in this period. Conceptualising the future could draw simultaneously on anxieties as well as the possibilities of history understood as ruptured by revolutions. Ideological clashes in particular could navigate revolutionary trauma. Hibberd understands Auber's *La muette di Portici* (1828) as ambiguously negotiating authoritarianism (legitimacy through depicting the turmoil resulting from opposing a strong authority), whilst simultaneously championing the revolutionary symbolism of the 'popular voice' in the form of the sympathetically-depicted Masaniello. The final moments culminate with the eruption of Mount Vesuvius which 'not only heightened the emotional states of the characters in visual terms', but 'gestures to various (conflicting) political overtones – the threat of a mob, repressive authority and the force of events'.¹⁴⁷ These depictions of conflict use the shock of spectacle to create dramatic effects which have mixed meanings and personify several viewpoints in a politically tumultuous climate.

In the following years, in Auber's *Gustave III* (1833) the excess of stage effects itself (in Hibberd's reading) 'encapsulates the excess of diverse political opinions' symptomatic of the July Monarchy. The Swedish King Gustav III is assassinated during a masked ball, a scene involving hundreds of people crowding the stage, which utilises 'pure spectacle' to represent a rupture with historical determinism.¹⁴⁸ As in *La muette*, personal tragedy is tied to political developments. In Auber's earlier work, Masaniello's personal vendetta against Alphonse (who seduced and abandoned his sister Fenella, 'the mute' of the title) is sublimated into the revolt against the Spanish oppressors. In *Gustave*, the 'personal tragedy of the protagonists is expanded into

¹⁴⁷ Hibberd, *op. cit.*, 49.

¹⁴⁸ Hibberd, *op. cit.*, 82.

collective shock'.¹⁴⁹ Negotiating broader implications which stem from the protagonist's struggles are defining features of such works. In 'national' opera, the relationship between historical heroes and the fate of 'the nation' are also linked.

In 'national' operas, oppressed peoples are usually led by a mythical or heroic figure. In these examples, power struggles are overtly allegorical and instructive: a united Czech community can reclaim the independent golden age and the heroic Croatian past is instructive for future emancipation (discussed below). As Jutka Dévényi notes, didacticism was common in countries or regions politically dominated by a central (foreign) power.¹⁵⁰ Historical feats could represent hopes for a future period of national glory, a potential demonstrated by the golden age.¹⁵¹ Alternatively, past military feats could serve as allegories for the contemporary political context. As Krisztina Lajosi puts it: history in 'national' opera 'was deployed and understood as a political subtext and an allegorical expression of contemporary political struggle.'¹⁵²

In regions ruled from an imperial centre in the nineteenth century, conflict with authority in historical opera can act as a determining force which must be overcome or reconciled in order to satisfy a nationalistic message. Recounting historical periods prior to foreign control can embody future aspirations for independence. Ivan Zajc's historical operas, for example, are concerned with events centred upon Croatian attempts to defend their territories from foreign invaders. *Nikola Šubić Zrinski* (1876), which became Zajc's most acclaimed opera, recounts the title-role's defence of the border fortress at Szigetvár from an Ottoman attack, as an allegory for contemporary (Habsburg) oppressors.¹⁵³ Zajc's opera drew on historical heroic efforts opposing subjugation to depict contemporary anti-Habsburg rhetoric.

¹⁴⁹ Hibberd, *op. cit.*, 77.

¹⁵⁰ Jutka Dévényi, *Metonymy and Drama: Essays on Language and Dramatic Strategy* (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), 21.

¹⁵¹ See, for example, Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 95.

¹⁵² Krisztina Lajosi, *Staging the Nation: Opera and Nationalism in 19th-Century Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 111.

¹⁵³ William A. Everett, 'Opera and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Croatian and Czech Lands / Opera I Nacionalni Identitet u 19. Stotljeću u Hrvatskin I češkim Zemljama', *International Review of the Aesthetics of Sociology of Music*, Vol.35, No.1 (2004) 66.

Anton Foerster's *Gorenjski slavček*, 'The Nightingale of Carniola' (1872) uses a different (social) framing of power-hierarchy to depict similar tensions. Centred on Minka, a Carniolan whose vocal talent attracts the attention of a Parisian, Minka's eventual rejection of the prospect of leaving her home and her betrothed for Paris champion the virtues of sacrifice for family and national values.¹⁵⁴ As Vlado Kotnik puts it: 'Minka's romantic "no" to the Frenchman could be understood as the Slovenians political "no" to the long-lasting Austrian supremacy.'¹⁵⁵

The trope of inner conflict could also become a vehicle of social and political critique, and a tension from which the (national) community emerges stronger as a result of such struggles. In Smetana's operas *Braniboři v Čechách* 'The Brandenburgers in Bohemia' (1863), and *Libuše* (1872), whilst both containing anti-Habsburg messages they also, in Kelly St. Pierre's readings, suggest 'that the disloyal Bohemian was an even greater cultural nemesis':¹⁵⁶ the former in the discord between the occupied Prague Czechs and the latter in the conflict between the brothers Chrudoš and St'áhlav together with a general lack of faith in Libuše's rule. In Bohemia, where the upper strata formed a significantly smaller proportion of citizens than in Hungary, and a conspicuously less significant role in national discourse, Smetana's depictions of lower strata is steeped in the liberal nationalisms of the era.¹⁵⁷

In Mussorgsky's historical tragedies *Boris Gudonov* (1868) and *Khovanshchina* (1880) internal strife amongst the upper strata and the Russian people become the 'main character': 'the suffering mother Russia ... as a victim of violent struggles between aristocrats and the Tsar.'¹⁵⁸ In Glinka's *Zhizn za tsarya* 'A Life for the Tsar' (1836), there is practically no internal conflict,¹⁵⁹ whereas Mussorgsky's later historical operas are based patently on such strife, beholding political

¹⁵⁴ Vlado Kotnik, 'The Idea of Prima Donna: The History of a Very Special Institution', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, Vol.47, No.2 (2016), 257.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Kelly St. Pierre, 'Internationalism and Nationalism in Smetana's "Brandenburgers" and "Libuše"', (MA Dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 2009), 49.

¹⁵⁷ See for example Otto Urban, 'Czech Liberalism, 1848-1918' in Iván Zoltán Dénes (ed.), *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 274.

¹⁵⁸ Ther, *op. cit.*, 114.

¹⁵⁹ See Rutger Helmers' discussion in relation to contemporary opera plots: "'It Just Reeks of Italianism': Traces of Italian Opera in 'A Life for the Tsar', *Music and Letters*, Vol.91, No.3 (2010), 383.

messages relevant to shifting contexts.¹⁶⁰ The representation of social classes in national opera was tied to such discourse, and timeliness was crucial to these successes. This is partially how the notion of ‘national opera’ as a handful of representative works from geographical ‘peripheries’ formed. However, situating lesser known operas (such as Erkel’s *Bátori Mária*) amidst interpretations of the past more broadly provides a fuller portrait of musical traditions in relation to their social, political and historical context, and complicates the traditional framings of these side-lined repertoires. Rich and complex legacies are otherwise reduced to one or two ‘representative’ operas.

In Erkel’s second opera, *Hunyadi László*, the conflict between Ladislaus V and the Hunyadi family is a conspicuous depiction of both contemporary anti-Habsburg feeling and ‘inner-conflict’ between social strata (see Chapter 5). Nevertheless, though this opera embodies an underlying instructive element relating to martyrdom, the community does not overcome these tensions, as for example in *Libuše*, or resolve with a clear moral lesson from tragedy, as in Moniuszko’s *Halka*. Erkel’s first opera neither encompasses an anti-Habsburg message, nor a glorification of the previously self-determined Hungarian Kingdom. *Bátori Mária* is concerned solely with internal conflict, presenting contemporary political subordination as a result of historical trespasses, reverberating throughout the centuries in the form of a punished cycle. Erkel’s first opera depicts a community which oppresses itself.

Approaching Erkel’s pre-revolution operas through an analysis of the way that history functions adds a new dimension to the ‘sub textual programme’ of an opera’s ‘national-ness’. Fears for the future shaped understandings of the past in a manner distinct from the examples of Grand opera, or the glorification of a national golden age in light of hopes for the future.

¹⁶⁰ See Anthony Arblaster, *Viva la Libertà!: Politics in Opera* (London and New York: Verso, 1992), 200-208.

Objectives, Scope and Chapter Overviews

This study examines the political and cultural contexts in which the first Hungarian-language operas were composed and premiered, illuminating how history related to identity and nation-building projects approaching the 1848 revolution. Specifically, this study is concerned largely with Pest-Buda, and the *Nemzeti Színház* where Erkel spent his career. Through contextualising historical tropes in relation to broader political developments, and tracing how discourse grew partially from nation-building projects, I illustrate how Erkel's early operas relate to understandings of the past, present, and future. This study thereby contributes—through a neglected repertoire—to the lively scholarship concerned with the relationships between music, identity, and history.

The scope of focusing on the pre-revolutionary period is a pragmatic decision to build on the integrity of the critical edition research currently in progress. Simultaneously, the lesser-chartered territory of the first half of the nineteenth century allows this study to venture into almost completely untrodden ground in Anglophone musicology.

The following chapter introduces broad political developments and historical context in relation to early nineteenth-century Hungary, focusing primarily on the second quarter framed by the initiation of the 1825 Hungarian Diet, and the mid-century revolution. Chapter 3 concentrates on the Hungarian-language theatre in Pest, first opened as the *Pesti Magyar Színház*, and re-opened as a legally nationalized institution as the *Nemzeti Színház* in 1840: a re-christening marked by the première of Erkel's first opera. Establishing the nature of audiences and repertoires at the Pest-Buda theatres in the reform period, the 'opera war' is contextualized through how the genre related to identity and legacy in discourse concerned with the instructive role of the arts. Chapters 4 and 5 situate Erkel's two pre-revolution operas amidst the discursive contextual backdrops and through contemporary historical interpretation. The diverging receptions of these works illustrate the increasingly radical contexts and shifting utilizations of the past. The use of musical markers associated with Hungarian traditions and operatic models

are examined relative to how historical figures and events are represented in these narratives. Through these means, this study illuminates that *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László* defy understandings of ‘national’ opera as two-dimensional. These works are not simply ‘national’ operas through a primed audience’s reception. They both relate to the contexts of Pest-Buda and Hungarian nationalism in various ways. Erkel’s pre-revolution operas reflect some of the complexity of contemporary discourse and imaginings of the future: as ambiguous, as instructive, and to be fought for.

Chapter 2

From *Extra Hungariam non est Vita* to *La Liberté ou la Mort*:

The Hungarian Reform Period

Introduction

In 1835 the population of Pest-Buda approached seventy thousand. Roughly a fifth comprised Hungarians, and the remainder were Germans and other (largely Slavic) minorities. The dominant language of daily affairs was German.¹ From the late decades of the eighteenth century, many Hungarian counts and magnates owned houses in Vienna (alongside their residential estates in the Hungarian counties), wore German fashion, and it was common for Hungarian and Austrian aristocrats to intermarry.² Simultaneously, the gentry, broadly considered, became more ‘demonstrably Hungarian’: ‘focused on provincialism, in deliberate contrast with the cosmopolitan magnates.’³ The lower gentry and the new intelligentsia classes, already involved in county affairs across Hungary, began to take lead roles in the lively cultural twin cities of Pest-Buda.

The 1825 Hungarian Diet⁴ and the revolution of 1848-1849 bookend the development from imperial absolutism to the briefly politically emancipated Hungarian cabinet government in the revolutionary year: a timeframe referred to as the ‘Hungarian Reform Period’. Throughout these decades, inter-generational and inter-class conflict in the upper and lower chambers became battle grounds between ideologies. Much debate related to political, social, and cultural progression, fuelled by fears that Hungarian identities would perish if Hungary’s interests were

¹ Zoltán Imre, ‘Staging the Nation: Changing Concepts of a National Theatre in Europe’, *New Theatre Quarterly*, Vol.24, No.1 (2008), 79.

² Bryan Cartledge, *The Will to Survive: A History of Hungary* (London: Timewell Press, 2006), 133.

³ Cartledge, *op. cit.*, 133.

⁴ The Hungarian Parliament since the medieval period, and subsequently the legislative institution in Hungary in the Hapsburg Empire (and still today). In the reform era, the ‘upper chamber’ hereditary House of Magnates, and the elected ‘lower chamber’ of the House of Representatives constituted the Hungarian Diet.

not protected. Nation-building projects such as establishing an Academy of Sciences also became a focus. Existing attempts to revive and cultivate the Hungarian language eventually became one of the issues with which the Diet won ground from Vienna when Hungarian became the official language of administration in 1844.⁵ In the same year, Erkel's *Hunyadi László* premièred at Pest-Buda's first Hungarian-language theatre.

The following discussion outlines the broad shifts in political rhetoric, characterised in large part by reform proposals, and the subsequent emerging radicalism of Erkel's generation. Establishing various political stances is vital to understanding the discourse surrounding the opening of Pest-Buda's Hungarian-language theatre in 1837, and how interpretations of Hungary's past were linked to cultural progression and even survival. Chapter 3 demonstrates that amidst these contexts, artforms became politicised in the pre-revolution decade. This chapter introduces historical tropes in Hungary, contextualised through competing nationalisms, three generations of attempted imperial absolutism, and a new intelligentsia class who disturbed centuries of solely the upper classes constituting 'the nation itself'.⁶ Without establishing these political and social circumstances in relation to modes of historical consciousness, Erkel's operas remain obscure (the fate which has befallen *Bátori Mária*), or understood as two-dimensional political allegories (the traditional understanding of *Hunyadi László*).

Reform and Political Fracture

Prior to the revolutions of 1848, counties across Habsburg Hungary were structured through an entrenched feudal system. The upper strata possessed three-quarters of the land,⁷ and all devolved power: they were 'the nation itself' politically.⁸ Historically, the Hungarian nobility's

⁵ See László Péter and Miklós Lojkó (ed.), *Hungary's Long Nineteenth Century: Constitutional and Democratic Traditions in a European Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 189.

⁶ George Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi and the Awakening of Hungarian Nationalism, 1791-1841* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 26.

⁷ See Cartledge, *op. cit.*, 160.

⁸ Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi, op. cit.*, 26.

rights were protected by the ‘Golden Bull’, a constitution signed by King András II in 1222.⁹ When foreign rulers began occupying the Hungarian throne following the death of Mátyás I in 1490, noble privileges remained entrenched partially through this document, retained largely to secure the nobility’s military loyalty to the Habsburg Empire.¹⁰ The network of cultural tradition comprising the ‘old order’ of the aristocratic way of life is often surmised by *Extra Hungariam non est vita, si est vita, non est ita*: ‘there is no life outside Hungary, and if there is, it is not the same’.¹¹ As Barany puts it, the aristocracy generally were ‘not concerned with the possibilities of the future’.¹²

In the early nineteenth-century, Hungary’s economy was in a state of ‘backwardness’.¹³ The reignition of the Hungarian Diet in 1825 marked the beginnings of political reform.¹⁴ Crippled by Vienna’s trade tariffs, modernising the economy and infrastructure were central to reformation proposals.¹⁵ Count István Széchenyi is inextricably linked with initiating these goals, and became instrumental to enduring nation-building projects.¹⁶ Széchenyi donated generously to the Academy of Sciences, initiated the *lanchíd*, ‘chain bridge’ connecting Pest and Buda (named after its patron, who tragically committed suicide before seeing his project completed), and

⁹ For a discussion of the legacy of the ‘Golden Bull’ in nineteenth-century Hungary, see Miklós Szabó, ‘The Liberalism of the Hungarian Nobility’ in Iván Zoltán Dénes (ed.), *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2006) 216.

¹⁰ See László Péter, *op. cit.*, 38.

¹¹ George Barany, ‘The Age of Royal Absolutism, 1790-1848’ in Peter F. Sugar, Péter Hanák and Tibor Frank (eds.), *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 180.

¹² G. F. Cushing, ‘The Birth of National Literature in Hungary’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol.38, No.91 (1960), 462.

¹³ Concessions and trade restrictions stipulated by Vienna (in turn, whose resources were drastically limited in the first decades of the nineteenth century following wars and the ensuing inflation) also hugely effected the lack of economic growth as well as a lack of capital, banks, and roads in conditions for efficient transport. See Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire a New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 103-154.

¹⁴ The previous Diet was held in 1811-1812. In the wake of the Napoleonic wars, not only the government, but a large percentage of landlords faced bankruptcy, exacerbated by bad harvests. Thousands of people in Hungarian territory died from starvation. Central government’s attempts to increase the tax burden further was met with violence, and Francis II eventually opened the Hungarian Diet in September of 1825. See Andrew C. János, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary 1825-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 35-83.

¹⁵ ‘By 1770, Austria had established a near monopoly of Hungarian trade, taking 87 percent of Hungarian exports and supplying 85 percent of Hungarian imports’ Cartledge, *op. cit.*, 135.

¹⁶ István’s father, Ferenc Széchenyi (1754-1820) also significantly impacted Pest-Buda’s cultural institutions, establishing the National Gallery and the National library, which today bears his name as the National Széchenyi Library.

penned numerous books and pamphlets setting out his propositions for reform.¹⁷ In his *Lovakurul* ('on horses') of 1828, Széchenyi states the four factors he believed were responsible for 'backwardness' in Hungary: lack of safe roads, provincialism, feudalism and the continuity of old legal practices.¹⁸ As a unionist, he advocated overhauling the political and social structures in Hungary through a process of negotiations within the empire. In his view, practical stages towards a modern economic state within the framework of the empire would by default nurture social equality.¹⁹

Diet sessions held throughout the 1830s and 1840s coincided with an emerging intelligentsia class comprised largely of the lower nobility as well as *honoratior*s: neither commoners nor nobility, but rather 'non-professional intellectuals'.²⁰ They were financially emancipated men 'who could live off their creativity'.²¹ Simultaneously, liberal nationalism began to replace the eighteenth-century concept of *Hungarus*. *Hungarus*, broadly defined, was 'the identity that characterised residents of Hungary, regardless of their ethnic and social differences'.²² Gábor Vermes has analysed how the rise of romanticism perpetuated liberalism in Hungary during the first half of the nineteenth century. He contends that 'romanticism provided powerful emotional support' for nationalism, and this laid the groundwork for the 'enormous strength' of liberal romantic nationalism.²³ Political nationalism infused with concepts of universal rights was inextricably linked with the new strata of writers, artists, lawyers and politicians, who began to significantly shape political discourse in the reform-era.

¹⁷ Széchenyi set out his political proposals to modernise Hungary's economy in a series of books beginning with *Hitel* (Credit) Pest: Landerer, 1830), followed by *Világ*, 'Light' (Pest: Landerer, 1831), and *Stadium* 'Phase' (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1833).

¹⁸ Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi*, *op. cit.*, 144.

¹⁹ Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change* (London: Routledge, 1998), 301.

²⁰ In the late eighteenth-century, an estimated forty percent of twenty thousand of the intelligentsia class less than two-thousand hailed from non-nobility. By 1840, this number had more than tripled. János Mazsu, *The Social History of the Hungarian Intelligentsia, 1825-1914* Eastern European Monographs (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 36.

²¹ For a discussion of the how an intelligentsia class emerged in Hungary, partially through the process of embourgeoisement, see Mazsu, *op. cit.*, 38.

²² Ambrus Miskolczy "Hungarus Consciousness" in the Age of Early Nationalism' in Gábor Almási and Lav Šubarić (eds.), *Latin at the Crossroads of Identity: The Evolution of Linguistic Nationalism in the Kingdom of Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 64.

²³ Vermes, *op. cit.*, 227.

By 1840, Lajos Kossuth²⁴ was the figurehead politically driving liberal-nationalist rhetoric. Kossuth took a lead role in the uprisings, embarking upon recruiting tours in greater Hungary, and rallying thousands of young men to the revolutionary armies. During the revolution, he briefly became the first governor-general of Hungary. He was a ‘rallying point for political liberty’,²⁵ enjoying practically unanimous support from liberals and also radical—republican—nationalists.²⁶ However, the radicals’ goals were informed by the Jacobin revolutionaries,²⁷ whereas Kossuth sought political emancipation through ‘due legal process’.²⁸ Thus, the statesman was ideologically differentiated from the faction who mobilised the revolution on 15 March 1848 in a fundamental way. Kossuth’s agenda was rooted in legally emancipating Hungary from Vienna. He propagated the belief that transformation into a modern prosperous society populated by members with freedom of expression and universal rights would nurture a distinctive, common, ‘Hungarian’ identity.²⁹ The aristocracy, meanwhile, though there were notable exceptions who supported and funded Kossuth and his followers,³⁰ often had little motive to challenge economic and social ‘backwardness’ because the feudal system preserved their way of life.

Political journalism in Hungary arguably began with Kossuth’s *Országgyűlési Tudósítások*,

²⁴ Lajos Kossuth (1802-1894) played an integral role in the revolution of 1848, after which he spent the rest of his life in exile. Hailing from noble, though humble, origins, he demonstrated an enormous passion for work, establishing himself as respected lawyer, journalist and statesman. He became notorious for dramatic speeches, which were fundamental to gathering public support for the liberal cause.

²⁵ András Gerő, translated by Mario D. Fenyo, *Imagined History: Chapters from Nineteenth and Twentieth century Hungarian Symbolic Politics* (Boulder: Centre for Hungarian Studies, 2006), 39.

²⁶ A demonstration of the popularity surrounding Kossuth’s ideology is the subscription to *Pesti Hírlap* ‘Pest News’, the newspaper he edited and contributed segments to for a large portion of the 1840s. It has been estimated that it reached 100,000 readers by 1845, by far the most widely-circulated contemporary Hungarian-language political journal. Judson, *op. cit.*, 146.

²⁷ The influence of the French revolution was stressed by the radicals themselves, and has planted itself in historiography concerned with this period ever since: ‘In the words of Petőfi, the bible of “young Hungary” was indeed the history of revolutions, especially the French revolution’, Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi, op. cit.*, 306. See also György Spira, *A Hungarian Count in the Revolution* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1974), 50.

²⁸ László Deme, *The Radical Left in the Hungarian Revolution of 1848* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), viii.

²⁹ See Iván Zoltán Dénes, ‘Political Vocabularies of the Hungarian Liberals and Conservatives, 1790-1848’ in Iván Zoltán Dénes (ed.), *op. cit.*, 176-177.

³⁰ István Deák, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians 1848-1849* (London: Phoenix Press, 1979), 289.

‘Parliamentary Reports’, summaries of Diet speeches, which he began producing whilst attending his first Diet meetings in 1836. Copied by hand by Kossuth, aided by a few members of the *Jurati*, ‘Dietal Youth’, the reports were widely read across Hungarian counties and free towns.³¹ The *Országgyűlési Tudósítások* was superseded by the *Törvényhatósági Tudósítások*, ‘Municipal Reports’, which summarised County Assemblies. Eventually, following a prison sentence for sedition between 1837 and 1840, Kossuth became the editor of the *Pesti Hírlap*: the first and most widely read Hungarian-language political journal of the era.³²

For the radicals the relationship between a liberated Hungary and universal freedom became a rallying cry for revolutionary rhetoric as 1848 approached. The republicans, headed by Sándor Petőfi,³³ Mór Jókai,³⁴ Pál Vasvári,³⁵ and the journalists József Irinyi³⁶ and Albert Pálffy,³⁷ became mouthpieces of ‘the people’, the serf classes, who had no legal representation in the Hungarian Diet. They became known as *fiatal Magyarországg*, ‘Young Hungary’.³⁸ Young Hungary hailed primarily, though not exclusively, from non-noble origin.³⁹ The revolutionaries were separatists who supported Kossuth’s claim for the right to political independence in economic and social matters. However, they sought political emancipation beyond Kossuth’s legal strategy, lionising freedom for Hungary and for mankind. Young Hungary’s idealised society was free

³¹ Cartledge, *op. cit.*, 167.

³² *ibid.*

³³ Sándor Petőfi was born in Kiskőrös in 1823 in the county of Bács-Kiskun in today’s South-Central Hungary, and is widely believed to have died in the battle of Segesvár between the Hungarian revolutionary army and Austrian-Russian allied forces on 31 July, 1849 in Transylvania (today Sighișoara, Romania). His body was never found following the defeat of the revolutionaries, and rumours that he had gone into hiding abounded for decades.

³⁴ Jókai (1825-1904), was from a noble family, becoming involved in politics in the Diet prior to the revolution. His literary works were widely read particularly in the post-revolution decade.

³⁵ Vasvári, born in 1826, was a writer and teacher. He was one of the radicals leading the revolution on March 15 1848, and died in 1849 on delegation in Transylvania amidst Romanian uprisings (responses to the wave of revolutions across the Empire and beyond). The exact circumstances are unknown.

³⁶ Irinyi (1822-1859) was a journalist involved in the literary life of Pest, and contributed to the liberal journal *Athenaeum*, and later the *Pesti Hírlap*, and also became a member of parliament. For his role in the revolution alongside the radicals he was sentenced to death but was eventually pardoned.

³⁷ Pálffy (1820-1897) was a writer and politician. Like many of his social standing, he trained as a lawyer, but transitioned into editing and writing, and his legacy stems from his pioneering journalistic activities. He was in Petőfi’s ‘Society of 10’; was involved in the 1848 uprising, and edited the *Márczius Tízennötödike* revolutionary paper established in the revolution. He was briefly imprisoned for his revolutionary activities, and remained variously engaged with journalism for the rest of his life.

³⁸ Deák, *op. cit.*, 69.

³⁹ See Domokos G. Kosáry, *A History of Hungary* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 221.

from class divisions and privileges, fashioning a romanticised concept of a Hungary based on equality.⁴⁰ The revolutionary rhetoric initiated largely by Young Hungary had repercussions in historical representation. Erkel's operatic portrayal of the medieval *László Hunyadi* narrative encapsulates several themes in these relationships (explored in Chapter 5). The divides between factions advocating for the feudal status quo, the unionist reformers, and liberal and radical nationalisms widened throughout the 1830s.

Historians concerned with the Habsburg Empire have acknowledged that there was discord even within what would presumably be factions with similar goals. As Evans puts it: 'the stronger their foundations ...the greater ...the tendency for feuding over social, religious, and territorial issues.'⁴¹ In the 1830s amidst the 'Cholera uprisings' in upper Hungary, some aristocrats blamed Széchenyi's reform writings for provoking discontent amongst serfs.⁴² Though he was frequently branded 'radical' by his fellow aristocrats due to his unprecedented reform proposals, Széchenyi's stance nevertheless became outdated by the time Kossuth began to yield political and popular influence in the 1840s. Széchenyi became an object of criticism for the succeeding generation of statesmen for not being radical enough: Kossuth notoriously launched vitriolic attacks against Széchenyi in the *Pesti Hírlap*.⁴³ Széchenyi urged the radical movement to advance their agenda cautiously. His book *A kelet népe*, 'People of the East', warns against drastic action that could itself culminate in the extinction of the Hungarian identity.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Petőfi even 'wished to die on the battlefield for the final victory of "World Freedom"'.⁴⁵ Competing

⁴⁰ For example, discussed in Alice Freifeld, *Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary, 1848-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 10. Approaching the nineteenth-century, the initial reaction to the French revolution was a Jacobin plot, the so-called 'Martinovics Conspiracy', after a leaders of the plot, Ignác Martinovics in 1794. Habsburg authorities thwarted their republican aspirations, and the leaders were executed.

⁴¹ R. W. J. Evans, *Austria, Hungary and the Habsburgs c. 1683-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 101-102.

⁴² George Barany, 'The Hungarian Diet of 1839-40 and the Fate of Szechenyi's Middle Course', *Slavic Review*, Vol.22, No.2 (1963), 287.

⁴³ See Mihály Lackó's study examining their (published) discourse: Mihály Lackó, *Széchenyi és Kossuth vitája Magyar história* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1977).

⁴⁴ István Széchenyi, *A Kelet Népe* (Bratislava: Wigand Károly Friderik, 1841), in particular 133-135. See also Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Mónica Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe* Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the 'Long Nineteenth Century' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 225.

⁴⁵ George Gömöri, 'Petőfi, Sándor 1823-1849' in Christopher John Murray (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850* Volume 2 (New York and London: Taylor & Francis, 2004), 866.

visions of a future Hungary led to fiery opposition amongst political figures: liberal monarchists were labelled radicals by conservatives, meanwhile constitutional liberals were branded dangerous radicals by Széchenyi.⁴⁶

However, some statesmen were inspired by Széchenyi's approach. Conservative sub-groups emerged in the Diet of 1839-1840. The 'Party of Cautious Progress' formed around Count Aurel Dessewffy,⁴⁷ Baron Samuel Jósika and Count George Apponyi (who later became the Chancellor of Hungary).⁴⁸ Széchenyi, Miklós Wesselényi⁴⁹ and Count Mihály Eszterházy united in the Diet around the ideals of enlightenment, opposition of serfdom, and Christian values.⁵⁰ These alliance nevertheless also became fragmented since Wesselényi assumed his role as the 'real leader'⁵¹ of the liberal opposition in the Diet of 1832-36, gaining the support of Ferenc Kölcsey (a prominent author in the early decades of the nineteenth century, who wrote the *Himnusz*, discussed below) and Ferenc Deák (who would later take a lead role in the 1867 *Ausgleich*). Cooperation founded on French liberalism also strengthened in the upper chamber, notably between Lajos Batthyány,⁵² and József Eötvös⁵³ who championed eliminating privileges and emancipating the serfs.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Deme, *op. cit.*, 57.

⁴⁷ Dessewffy, 1808-1842 was a politician and journalist. His father, Count József Dessewffy was an opponent of Széchenyi's in the so-called 'credit-light debate' concerned with Széchenyi's writings on political reform. See Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 110-112.

⁴⁸ See Barany, 'The Hungarian Diet of 1839-40 and the Fate of Szechenyi's Middle Course', *op. cit.*, 295-296.

⁴⁹ Wesselényi (1796-1850) became a political martyr when he was (unconstitutionally) impeached in 1835 for criticising Vienna administration in county meetings in Szátmar, see Barany, 'The Hungarian Diet of 1839-40 and the Fate of Szechenyi's Middle Course', *op. cit.*, 290, and also became a popular public figure when he took a lead role in rescue operations during the Pest flood of 1838, see Gerő, *op. cit.*, 124.

⁵⁰ Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi*, *op. cit.*, 127-128.

⁵¹ George Barany, 'The Hungarian Diet of 1839-40 and the Fate of Szechenyi's Middle Course', *op. cit.*, 288.

⁵² Batthyány (1807-1849) became a revolutionary martyr. He faced a firing squad Pest in October 1849, and simultaneously in Arad over a dozen generals were executed. The location of the official surrender on 13 August 1849 at Világos (today Şiria, Western Romania), became 'a byword for national disaster' as had Mohács previously. See Lóránt Czigány, *The Oxford History of Hungarian Literature from the Earliest Times to the Present* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 198. Ferenc Kazinczy's youngest son, Lajos Kazinczy was also executed in the wake of the failed revolution. See the biography, 'the fifteenth martyr of Arad' by Emil Pásztor and Ervin Szuhay-Havas (eds.), *A tízenötödik aradi vértanú* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1979). 6 October is a national holiday in Hungary, commemorating Batthyány and the 'Arad martyrs'. A monument honouring the martyrs, built in 1881, today stands in 13 Martyr Square, Subcetate, in Arad (today a city in Crişana, Western Romania).

⁵³ Baron József Eötvös de Vásárosnamény was born in 1813, and lived until 1871. In early life he travelled in Western Europe which influenced his ideas regarding universal rights. As a writer he gained recognition for his novels.

⁵⁴ George Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi*, *op. cit.*, 345.

By the Diet of 1839-1840, statesmen proposed fifty-five new laws, largely concerning political, economic and social reform.⁵⁵ For the reformers, modernising the economic and social structure and nation-building projects were attempts to safe-guard against obscurity. The separatist-nationalists believed direct action in the form of appeals to central administration and, ultimately, revolutionary activity, were the necessary steps to secure any future for the Hungarians.

National Awakening

The *past* has fallen out of our power, but we are masters of our *future*. ...Many people think Hungary was, but I like to think that she will yet be!⁵⁶

István Széchenyi

The fundamental tenets of Christian theology: sacrifice, sin, punishment and redemption, are *leitmotifs* in national identities.⁵⁷ In the reform era, what Gerő terms ‘nation-religion’ replaced the concept of ‘Christian mission’ which had prevailed throughout centuries of Hungary’s history. ‘The nation’ in Gerő’s words, ‘becomes a sort of secular deity.’⁵⁸ Although religion and nationalism are by no means mutually exclusive—religion is a vital element in identities in the modern period—the shift in drawing authority predominantly from religion shaped the functions of nationalisms. John Hutchinson frames this understanding of the relationship between nationalism and ‘immortality’ as a shift from religious authority and divine reward to endeavours

⁵⁵ Cartledge, *op. cit.*, 176.

⁵⁶ ‘A múlt elesett hatalmunkból, a *jövendőnek* urai vagyunk. Ne bajlódjunk azért hiábavaló *reminiscentiákkal*, de bírjuk inkább elszánt hazafiságunk s hív egyesülésünk által drága anyaföldünket szebb virradásra. Sokan azt gondolják: Magyarország – volt; – én azt szeretem hinni: *lesz!*’ István Széchenyi, *Hitel* (Pest: Landerer, 1830), 270. Italics original.

⁵⁷ In Hankiss’s words: ‘the great drama of guilt, repentance, and salvation has been one of the dominant factors, and a major driving force, of Western civilization for almost two thousand years.’ Elemér Hankiss, *Fears and Symbols: An Introduction to the study of Western Civilization* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2001), 157. For example, Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri has shown how medieval defeats and victories were often understood in the *risorgimento* as linked with contemporary and future national redemption. Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri “‘Medieval’ Identities in Italy: National, Regional, Local’ in Patrick J. Geary and Gábor Klaniczay (eds.), *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 319-345. See also Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (London: Routledge, 2009), 78-79.

⁵⁸ Gerő, *op. cit.*, 4.

to secure the community's future.⁵⁹ Elemér Hankiss argues that drawing existential solace from a source other than religion (in the nineteenth century: nationalism) provided 'protection' against meaninglessness.⁶⁰ In these understandings, nationalism in the modern period became a necessity for replacing belief systems which had begun to lose their potency as mediators of existential dread.

The 'national apocalypse tradition' (*a nemzeti apokaliptus hagyományak*) is entrenched in Hungarian identities. This trope is tied to religious legacies and contemporary fears driving nationally-orientated activity in the nineteenth century. The phenomena of seeking forgiveness for the 'sins of the nation' (*nemzet bűneiért*) in Hungary was established already in the sixteenth century.⁶¹ In Hungarian literary traditions, national fate is variously lamented and dreaded in terms familiar from texts relating religious apocalypse anxiety:

It [fear of *nemzethalál*] transforms the individual's remorse into a communal remorse; it presents individual death as a destiny of the community, too. Whilst others suffer from their original sin in their Christianity, in Hungary, it is the sin of their Hungarian-ity.⁶²

Replacing the 'apocalypse anxiety' stemming from religious dogma and prophecy in the pre-modern era, in the nineteenth-century existential fears derived from threats to linguistic and cultural identities.⁶³ In nineteenth-century Hungary, fears stemmed from the spectre of losing what was in actuality a relatively new concept of national identity. This motivated attempts to fight the perils of obscurity through proposals for legislative reform, the establishment of

⁵⁹ John Hutchinson, *Nationalism and War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 9.

⁶⁰ Hankiss, *op. cit.*, 157.

⁶¹ See Ferenc Kölcsey and Zoltán G. Szabó (ed.), *Kölcsey Ferenc: Versek és Versfordítások: Kölcsey Ferenc Minden Munkái, Vol 3* (Budapest: Universitas Kiadó, 2001), 728. József Isák also argued the *nemzethalál* phenomenon should be understood as a heritage from the 16th-17th centuries. ('A régi magyar irodalom' kincsesbányájában való nyomozás arról győzheti meg a kutatót, hogy a nemzethalál-félelem legtermékenyebb, legfogékonyabb talajának a XVI—XVII. századi magyar lelkiiség bizonyul'). József Isák, *Nemzethalál-félelem a régi Magyar költészetben* (Kolozsvár: Az Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület Kiadása, 1947), 3.

⁶² 'Az egyéni büntudatból közösségi büntudatot formál, az egyéni halál formáját a közösségre nézve is bekövetkezőnek láttatja. ...A magyarság ezt is magához lényegítette s a keresztény büntudatból nemzeti érzést formált. „Mások keresztény voltukban, a magyar magyar mivoltában szenved az eredendő bűntől s a maga vétken kívül a nemzetét is kiengeszteli. Ha csoda a magyar fennmaradás, ezt a csodát csak a keresztény önváddal lehet megmagyarázni.” Isák, *op. cit.*, 5-6.

⁶³ See József Isák's account of the nation death phenomenon in a European context, Isák, *op. cit.*, 5.

institutions which would cultivate the Hungarian language and culture, and artforms deriving from Hungarian history.

The nineteenth-century obsession with the past frequently boils down to the desire to preserve and protect cultural identity. Bohlman describes the activities of ‘collectors—anthologizers, ethnographers, and fabricators’ as ‘motivated by the anxiety of loss.’⁶⁴ Response to perceived threats to identities are evident in multiple contemporary examples, such as in Bohemian (Czech) and Moravian (Slovak) regions⁶⁵ but also across geographies comprising today’s Germany⁶⁶ and Italy.⁶⁷ In the latter cases, anxieties stemming from fragmented, often distinctly regional, identities informed discourse surrounding what constituted ‘national’ culture. In turn, this led to creating literary and theatrical works in vernaculars and drawing on themes from shared history.⁶⁸ In the Eastern Habsburg Empire, absolutist imperialism under Joseph II stimulated what became known as ‘National awakening’, the legacy of which continued into the nineteenth century.

Until the turn of the eighteenth century, Hungarian territories, roughly two thirds larger than today’s Hungary,⁶⁹ were for a century and a half carved into Ottoman-occupied lands in the South, fluctuating degrees of independence in Transylvania, and Royal (Habsburg) territory in

⁶⁴ Philip V. Bohlman, ‘Translating Herder: Translating: Cultural Translation and the Making of Modernity’ in Jane Fulcher (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 510.

⁶⁵ See John Neubauer, ‘The Institutionalisation and Nationalism of Literature in Nineteenth-century Europe’ in Stefan Berger, Linas Eiksonas and Andrew Mycock (eds.), *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media, and the Arts Making Sense of History: Studies in Metahistory, Historiography, National Culture, and Intercultural Communication Volume 11* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 103-104. Regarding national ‘awakenings’ in Eastern Europe, Hroch’s influential ‘phase thesis’, spear-headed this approach, see Miroslav Hroch, translated by Ben Fowkes, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: a Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups Among the Smaller European Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Recent studies which build on Hroch’s work include Peter Brock, *The Slovak National Awakening: An Essay in the Intellectual History of East Central Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014). See also Alexander Maxwell (ed.), *The Comparative Approach to National Movements: Miroslav Hroch and Nationalism Studies* (London: Routledge, 2012).

⁶⁶ Kevin Cramer, *The Thirty Year’s War and German Memory in the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 209.

⁶⁷ See Danielle Simon, ‘Tosca and the Nightingale: Broadcasting Opera in Fascist Italy’, *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol.34, No.1 (2018), 65-87.

⁶⁸ See for example Martin Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 43-44.

⁶⁹ This was determined in 1920 by the Treaty of Trianon. See for example Gábor Mezősi, *Magyarország természetföldrajza* (Akadémiai Kiadó, 2009), 190.

the North. The Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) meant a vast majority of formerly Ottoman occupied Hungary came under Habsburg rule: 'Buda became once again a German-speaking town', and 'other towns acquired new German majorities.'⁷⁰ Joseph II's language and education reforms to further 'Germanise' the empire in the late eighteenth century met with bitter reactions, including riots.⁷¹ Subsequently, Latin remained the language of administration in Habsburg Hungary, finally replaced by Hungarian in 1844. The attempt to impose Germanification throughout the empire however, had an enduring impact in terms of identity consciousness and the revival of the Hungarian language.

In Hungary, the *nyelvújítás*, 'language revival' of the eighteenth century was partially a response to Josephinism, but was also stimulated by a variety of other (European) influences: reactions to Rousseaus' *Du contrat social*, the Napoleonic wars, and Johann Gottfried Herder's cultural relativism.⁷² Fears of a national apocalypse, *nemzethalál*, literally: 'nation death', in Hungary was partially a reaction to Herder's prediction that the Hungarian language and culture would eventually become extinct.⁷³ In his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* first published in 1784, Herder speculated about the possibility of the Hungarian language becoming obsolete. He based this prediction on the premise that ethnic Hungarians, then comprising a smaller percentage of the population than other ethnic minorities within the empire combined would eventually become subordinate to a dominant language and culture.⁷⁴ This not only

⁷⁰ Cartledge, *op. cit.*, 115.

⁷¹ Teodora Shek Brnardić, 'The Enlightenment's Choice of Latin: The Ratio educationis of 1777 in the Kingdom of Hungary' in Gábor Almási and Lav Šubarić (eds.), *Latin at the Crossroads of Identity: The Evolution of Linguistic Nationalism in the Kingdom of Hungary Central and Eastern Europe Regional Perspectives in Global Context* Volume 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 150. 'State employees and county officials were given three years to acquire competence in German or face dismissal. ...A postscript to the decree laid down that German would henceforth be the language of instruction, apart from religion instruction, in all Hungarian secondary schools. ... Every Hungarian county and many towns fired off long petitions of protest, replete with legal and historical references, expressing total opposition.' Cartledge, *op. cit.*, 140.

⁷² See Ferenc Bíró, *A Nemzethalál árnya a XVIII századvég és a XIX századelő Magyar irodalmában* (Pécs: Pro Pannonia Kiadói Alapítvány, 2012), 247-215.

⁷³ Herder speculates the death of the Hungarian language in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Riga and Leipzig: ben Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1786). Johann Gottfried Herder, translated by T. Churchill, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1966), 476.

⁷⁴ Herder, *ibid.*

inspired efforts to create a national literary tradition,⁷⁵ but this ‘prophecy’ haunted public figures attempting to fight these threats through legislation.⁷⁶ Fears for the survival of the Hungarian identity was also related to ideas about national histories such as Hegel’s writings on metaphysics. He wrote: ‘a nation with no state formation has, strictly speaking, no history – like the nations which existed before the rise of states and others which still exist in a condition of savagery.’⁷⁷ Martin Kovachich, generally recognised as the first historian of the Hungarian enlightenment, argued that perception was, in this regard, reality, ‘emphasizing that Hungary must refute the charges of foreigners, according to whom she was to remain an uncivilized country forever.’⁷⁸ The arrival of Pan-European ideas in Hungary shaped efforts to create and assert a distinct identity.

Anxieties relating to remaining ‘backwards’, both in terms of the economic-social (feudal) structure and cultural development significantly drove the period of ‘national awakening’. The *Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum*, The National museum, founded in 1802 by Ferenc Széchenyi (father of István), was a project fundamentally founded and cultivated to challenge the stereotype of Hungary as uncultured and uneducated.⁷⁹ Mihály Csokonai Vitéz (1773-1805), a significant figure in Hungarian literary and cultural history in the late eighteenth-century (despite his brief life), viewed the future in relation to enlightenment ideals taking root. Political-cultural development would in his view ‘determine whether the nation can enter “the garden of humanity”’.⁸⁰ In the following generation, statesmen István Széchenyi and Miklós Wesselényi propagated the belief

⁷⁵ Mihály Szeged-Maszák, ‘Literature and the Arts from the beginning of the 18th century until today’ in László Kósa (ed.), *a Companion to Hungarian Studies* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1999), 387.

⁷⁶ For example, Széchenyi referred to Herder’s writings and predictions for the fate of Hungarians several times in his diaries. Discussed for example in Alan Sked, *Metternich and Austria: An Evaluation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 217.

⁷⁷ Rosie Grant McRae, *Philosophy and the Absolute: The Modes of Hegel’s Speculation* (Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), 89.

⁷⁸ George Barany, ‘Hoping Against Hope: The Enlightenment Age in Hungary’ *The American Historical Review*, Vol.76, No.2 (1971), 347.

⁷⁹ Ivant T. Berend, *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 80. Also discussed in Nóra Veszprémi’s currently unpublished study presented on 20 November 2015 at Oriel College, the University of Oxford, ‘Enthusiasm, Professionalisation and the Birth of the “National Public”: The Hungarian National Museum in the Nineteenth Century’.

⁸⁰ Barany, ‘Hoping Against Hope: The Enlightenment Age in Hungary’, *op. cit.*, 338.

that failure to, on the one hand, ‘awake’, engage *en mass* with communal identity, and on the other hand to keep pace with ‘the West’ in cultural as well as political life, would mean decay, decline, and death. In Gábor Vermes’s words, for reformers, remaining in a state of ‘backwardness’ would lead to the ‘ultimate nightmare’ of *nemzethalál*: ‘nation death’.⁸¹ Széchenyi’s characteristically pragmatic approach included establishing national ‘casinos’: cultural-social centres involving musical performances and political discourse in Pest-Buda.⁸² The triumph of establishing the *Magyar Tudományos Akadémia*, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1825, as Barany puts it, ‘can hardly be overestimated in those days when poets, writers, and the best thinkers of the nation accepted Herder’s opinion that Hungarians were a dying people.’⁸³ Széchenyi was also key in initiating Pest’s first Hungarian-language stone theatre,⁸⁴ inaugurated with the performance of Vörösmarty’s *Árpád ébredése* reflecting the goal the institution was conceived for: to promote ‘national awakening’ (see Chapter 3).

The *nyelvújítás* revived and refined the Hungarian language, facilitating a context in which repertoires of poetry, drama and musical theatre in the Hungarian language could form. It also bred fascination with the past, what Sándor Hites terms the ‘historical sensibility’ of the early reform era.⁸⁵ The very lack of these traditions stimulated creation in the interest of the future. The uniqueness of the Hungarian language and geographical isolation, surrounded by a ‘Slavic sea’, contributed to bleak outlooks regarding the survival of culture and identity.⁸⁶ József Bajza, first theatrical director of the Hungarian Theatre in Pest, became disillusioned: he ‘buried himself

⁸¹ Gábor Vermes, *Hungarian Culture and Politics in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1711-1848* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), 231-232.

⁸² Széchenyi established the first ‘National Casino’ in 1827, the success of which led to several more opening in the late 1820s and early 1830s. These became important centres of political and economic debate and trade, executed, crucially, through Hungarian language. T. Kamusella, *The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe* (New York: Springer, 2008), 441. Erkel’s first appearances in Pest, as a Pianist, was at a national casino, see Amadé, *op. cit.*, 34.

⁸³ George Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi, op. cit.*, 122.

⁸⁴ See George Bisztray, ‘Hungary, 1810-1838’ in Laurence Senelick (ed.), *National Theatre in Northern and Eastern Europe, 1746-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 276-287.

⁸⁵ Sándor Hites, ‘The Hungarian historical novel in regional context’ in Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (eds.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries* Volume I (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2004), 468.

⁸⁶ Vermes, *op. cit.*, 301.

in historical studies to escape the reality of the present.’⁸⁷ Even amongst the energetic *Márciusi Ifjak*, the writings of figures such as Petőfi often depict hopelessness for the future in their poetry. For example, in *A Magyar nemzet*, ‘The Hungarian Nation’ Petőfi envisages how Hungarians could be forgotten from world history:

One thousand years ago
Hungarians made here their home,
And if his death should now come,
What would the future find,
What would be left behind
Of Hungarian life?
What would remain in world history
Of us, there would be no record!
And if we did secure our place,
This it would simply read:
“There were a people who lived lazily and cowardly
for centuries on the river Tisza.”
Oh, my country, when will you again cast
A beam, a ray
On your rusted name?
When will you awake?

Sándor Petőfi, *A Magyar nemzet*, lines 41–56 (end). Pest, December 1846.⁸⁸

Petőfi was constantly in a war with critics over poetic matters, and attacked the aristocracy and nobility in numerous works. His critique of amateur poets was instigated by anxiety that failure to approach national literature and poetry seriously would mean a failure of not only the artform, but of the Hungarian culture entirely.⁸⁹

Preoccupation with language cultivation remained vital to these understandings of *nemzetihalál* throughout the reform period and beyond. Bajza declared in a speech at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1846:

⁸⁷ G. F. Cushing, ‘József Bajza’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol.37, No.88 (1958), 103. See also Vermes: ‘National disasters in Hungary’s past, a sense of backwardness vis-à-vis the West, and the feeling of being surrounded and threatened, especially by Slavs, kept undermining liberal optimism.’ In Vermes, *op. cit.*, 335.

⁸⁸ Ezer éve, hogy e nemzet /Itt magának hazát szerzett, /És ha jőne most halála, /A jövődő mit találna, /Mi neki arról beszélne, /Hogy itt hajdan magyar éle? /S a világtörténet könyve? /Ott sem lennénk följegyezve! /És ha lennénk, jaj minékünk, /Ezt olvasnák csak felőlünk: /„Élt egy nép a Tisza táján /Századokig, lomhán, gyáván.” /Oh hazám, mikor fogsz ismét /Tenni egy sugárt, egy kis fényt /Megrozsádásodott nevedre? /Mikor ébredsz önézretre? Sándor Petőfi, *Petőfi Sándor összes költeményei* 1-2 Kötet (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1959) 433-434.

⁸⁹ See G. F. Cushing, ‘The Irreverence of Petőfi’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol.52, No.127 (1974), 159-181.

having woke up from slumbering disintegration, let us seize this moment, which is undoubtedly the ultimate and decisive one [which will determine] whether we will be independent and Hungarian people, or servants of the Germans in language, in our customs also, and in our social constitution. Let us be Hungarians in our hearts and with our words, completely, and not as before, being mongrels fawning upon foreigners, negligent, lethargic and forgetful of everything that is national. What is needed is the belief that kow-towing to foreigners is a crime against nature, a high treason against the country. Many people will not comprehend my words—view them as redundant and a late warning when we already have a conspicuous fervour for the Hungarian language. ...Those people do not behold the heart-breaking, eternal anxiety about the future of our nation.⁹⁰

In one of Széchenyi's final published writings in the late 1850s (though written in 1835), he echoes a similar sentiment:

The main impediment of our nation's powerhouse, the greatest obstacle of our common public matters is the fact that we do not understand each other. We speak in a separate language at home; when we address each other; and in our official duties. Our lord's mother tongue [i.e. Latin] is also foreign. My friends, sons of this nation, could a chaos like this lead to any good? Or won't it rather bring all our national interests into conflict with each other, and wilt the germinating flowers of our social life, and keep us—hence our poor nation—slaves.⁹¹

In the context of a multi-ethnic Empire, language functioned as a medium through which to not only assert, but to protect, identity. Language was a tool through which to resist the spectre of national obscurity. The relationships between language cultivation, utilisations of history, and nation-building efforts are critical to unravelling understandings of the past in

⁹⁰ 'Nemzetiségünk álmos sülyedéséből újra fölébredvén, használjuk ez időpontot, mely kétségtelenül utolsó és eldöntő, mik maradjunk jövődőre, magyar és független népe-e, vagy mind nyelvben és szokásokban, mind polgári szerkezetben a németnek szolgája. Akarjunk lenni magyarok szívben és szóval és egészen, nem úgy, mint eddig, külföldieskedő korcsok, hanyagok, egykedvűek és elfeledkezők minden iránt, mi nemzeti. Győződjünk meg, hogy a külföldieskedés természet elleni bűn, és a nemzet fölségsértése. Sokan nem fognak engem megérteni, feleslegesnek tartandják szavaimat, és késő figyelemztetésnek, midőn a buzgalom a magyar nyelv iránt oly észrevehető. Ez engem nem fog meglepni, mert fájdalom, nem kevesen vannak köztünk, kik érzelme és gondolkodása nemzetiség tekintetében gyökerestül meg van romolva. Az ilyenek hidegek a nemzetiség iránt, nem tudják érezni és megfogni azon szívszorongató, csillapulni nem tudó, örökké éber rettegést, mely jobbjaink keblét aggasztja e nemzet jövődője iránt.' 'Nemzetiség és nyelv' in József Bajza, Sándor Lukácsy (ed.), *Válogatott cikkek és tanulmányok* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1954), 431.

⁹¹ 'Országos erőműünk legfőbb megakasztója, közdolgaink legnagyobb akadály, minden szövevénynek fő forrása az, hogy nem értjük egymást. Otthon külön-külön nyelven szólunk, máson tanácskozunk, ismét külön nyelven járulunk a fejedelmi székhez. Uraink anyai, szívi nyelve mindezekről megint idegen. Barátim, Hazámfiak, lehet-e ily chaos üdvös következtetés, vagy nem fogja-e inkább, hazánk minden érdekeit összeütközésbe hozván, társasági létünknek csak most csirázó szebb virágait ismét bizonyosan elhervasztani, valamint eddig is szolgaságban tartá egymás elleni indulatinakt, s ez által a szegény hazát.' István Széchenyi, *Töredékek gróf Széchenyi István fennmaradt kézírataiból*. Első kötet *Hunnia* (Pest: Heckenhast Gusztáv, 1858), 68.

nationalist and revolutionary rhetoric and representations of historical figures on the stage in the reform period. The relationship between the past, present and future motivated attempts to influence the future: political reform, cultivating culture, and establishing nation-building projects. This is also evident in various European regions, such as locals comprising today's Germany in which 'the design of the future as the task of a moral imperative' meant the past became 'temporalized house of correction for morality.'⁹² The future could function as a 'chimera'⁹³ which drove action. However, in Hungary, it was not only morality, but the very survival of Hungarian identity which was perceived to be at stake. The efforts of the contemporary community stood between the future and a national apocalypse. Cultivating language and utilising collective history were safeguards against both imperialism and cultural-linguistic obscurity.

Historical Interpretation in Reform-Era Hungary

On 15 March 1848 in Pest, the revolutionary crowd emancipated the press from censorship, stipulated as the first point in their '12 demands'.⁹⁴ Comprising approximately five thousand persons headed by the radicals, the revolutionaries arrived at the publishing house *Landerer und Heckenbast* and demanded their manifesto be printed immediately.⁹⁵ This very act of bypassing the censor established a free press. The small publisher *József Beimel* printed the first issue of the newly formed newspaper *Március tizenötödike*, 'March the fifteenth', just four days

⁹² Reinhart Koselleck, Translated and Introduced by Keith Tribe, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 2004), 203-204.

⁹³ Koselleck, *op. cit.*, 203.

⁹⁴ The '12 demands' were as follows: '1. We demand the freedom of the press and the abolition of censorship. 2. Responsible government in Buda[sic]Pest. 3. Annual meetings of the parliament in Pest. (sic). 4. Equality before the law in civil and religious matters. 5. A national guard. 6. Equality of taxation. 7. Abolition of the feudal burdens. 8. Jury system on the basis of representation and equality. 9. A national bank. 10. The armed forced should swear allegiance to the constitution; out Hungarian soldiers should not be removed from our soil. 11. Political prisoners of the state should be freed. 12. Union with Transylvania.' The '12 demands', quoted in John Neubauer, with Mircea Anghelescu, Gábor Gángó, Kees Mercks, Dagmar Roberts and Dinko Župan, '1848' in Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (eds.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries* Volume I (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), 268.

⁹⁵ This was printed alongside Petőfi's poem *Nemzeti dal*, 'National song' (discussed in Chapter 5). See Freifeld, *op. cit.*, 45-58.

later.⁹⁶ Sándor Petőfi, who mobilised the uprising which this publication fêted, warned in this new journal that the country ‘was as little prepared as before the catastrophe at Mohács’.⁹⁷

On 29 August 1526, the Ottoman army under Sultan Süleyman I defeated the Hungarian army in a battle at Mohács, a city located on the Danube in today’s Southern Hungary. The heirless King of Hungary and Bohemia, Louis II, perished in the process, and in the aftermath the very balance of power in Europe shifted in favour of the Ottoman, and subsequently Habsburg, Empires.⁹⁸ With the influx of peoples from large areas of war-torn Balkan regions into Hungarian towns and villages during the ensuing centuries, the population of Hungarians in the previous Kingdom of Hungary shifted dramatically. In 1786 the population of Hungarian territories was approximately eight and a half million, of which Hungarians comprised just under forty percent.⁹⁹ By the mid nineteenth-century revolution, ‘ethnic Hungarians’ comprised a marginal majority amongst strong German, Romanian, Slovak and Serbian minorities across Habsburg Hungary.¹⁰⁰ Divided into regions under competing Empires, an autonomous and semi-independent Hungarian state would not again exist until the *Ausgleich* of 1867. Petőfi’s reference to the medieval battle in the aftermath of the 1848 revolution mediated the uncertainty of the future through arguably the single most significant fear driving both the ‘national awakening’ and the ensuing separatist movement which had evolved into the revolution: the spectre of *nemzethalál*. Understanding contemporary oppression as part of a cycle in which Hungarians are ‘cursed’ stemmed from the legacies of historical cataclysms. As Richard Aczel puts it: the ‘cult’ of

⁹⁶ See Domokos G. Kosáry, *The Press During the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-1849* War and Society in East Central Europe XXVII (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 84-126.

⁹⁷ ‘Az ország ma úgy áll, mint a mohácsi és Sajói napok előtt.’, *Marczius Tizenötödike*, 17 May 1848, 215.

⁹⁸ The Archduke of Austria, Ferdinand, was elected king of Bohemia, Hungary and Croatia in the months following the defeat under Louis II, and crowned Holy Roman Emperor by 1558. For broader implications, see Géza Pálffy, ‘The Impact of Ottoman Rule on Hungary’, *Hungarian Studies Review*, Vol.28, Nos.1-2 (2001), 109-132.

⁹⁹ Cartledge, *op. cit.*, 154.

¹⁰⁰ See David F. Good, *The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 1750-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 19.

lamentation poetry became by the 1830s ‘a symbol of both national tragedy and a byword for the tragic take on national identity.’¹⁰¹

Hungary’s position as a major power in Europe began to wane since the decline of the ‘golden age’ following the death of Mátyás I.¹⁰² Under his two Jagiellonian successors,¹⁰³ the previously well-funded and organised military dismantled, and regions conquered by Mátyás fell under foreign monarchs. The divide between land-owning class and serfs widened, it became ‘caste-like’.¹⁰⁴ The nobility dictated policy and ran a patchwork of miniature realms. The lack of centralised management of resources meant a decline in order and administration.¹⁰⁵ Tensions between layers of the noble class became pronounced, and existing resentment directed toward the upper classes from serfs were exacerbated under new hardships.¹⁰⁶ With the crown under Louis II already increasingly unable to defend territories from Ottoman expansion, Hungary became a vassal of the Empire following the battle of Mohács. Subsequently, the Habsburg Empire engulfed large territories of formerly Hungarian lands by 1699.¹⁰⁷ In the nineteenth century, the eighteenth-century interest in conquest and founding themes of origin was replaced by an obsession with defeat and national fate.

Hungarian-language literary works in the *nyelvjáratás*, prior to an established intelligentsia class, were largely creations of the aristocracy, and frequently drew on history or local tropes to

¹⁰¹ Richard Aczel, ‘Hungarian Romanticism: Reimagining (Literary) History’ in Paul Hamilton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 367.

¹⁰² (1443-1490) Mátyás reigned between 1458 until his death.

¹⁰³ Wladislas II (1490-1516) and Louis II (1516-1526)

¹⁰⁴ Pál Engel, translated by Tamás Pálosfalvi and Andrew Ayton (ed.), *The Realm of St Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895-1526* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 325.

¹⁰⁵ From the rein of István I at the turn of the eleventh century, a royally appointed Count controlled county affairs, administration was conducted from a fortress. These appointees had a small militia to enforce taxation and judicially-related issues. By the fourteenth century, wealthy families began to monopolise Hungary’s resources, ‘ruling the region as a family fiefdom’, the county system became ‘oligarchic anarchy’. See Cartledge, *op. cit.*, 14-23.

¹⁰⁶ Engel, *op. cit.*, 359. These tensions turned into a (serf) revolt in 1514. Erkel’s 1867 opera, *Dózsa György* centres on the revolt’s leader, György Dózsa.

¹⁰⁷ The devastation of this battle for Hungarian as a European power is described by Veszprémy thus: ‘within a few hours, not only the royal army but also the medieval Hungarian kingdom itself was defeated; the king and most of the country’s prelates and dignitaries were dead. ...the defeat at Mohács paved the way for the subsequent occupation of most of the kingdom by the Turks (1541), leaving only a northern and western rump under Christian rule’. László Veszprémy, ‘Mohács, Battles of’ in Alexander Mikaberidze (ed.), *Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: A Historical Encyclopaedia* Volume I (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 590.

comment on topical issues. József Gvadányi's *Egy falusi nótáriusnak budai utazása*, 'The Journey of the Village Notary to Buda' of 1790 is a satirical novel of Joseph II's Germanization policy, whilst simultaneously criticising the cosmopolitanism of the Hungarian aristocrat.¹⁰⁸ András Dugonics¹⁰⁹ derived narratives from the early-medieval 'conquest' period to create Hungarian-language epics. The arrival of Magyar tribes to the Carpathian basin in the late ninth and early tenth centuries became known as the 'the conquest' (*honfoglalás*) period. In recent decades studies have demonstrated it is more accurate to understand this as a 'flight for survival' by Magyar tribes who previously lived nomadically throughout the central Asian steppes. As Sutt notes, the very term *honfoglalás*, 'conquest', 'belies its nineteenth-century nationalistic origins'.¹¹⁰ During the *nyelvújítás*, drawing on this era in literature was a means to elevate the Magyar conqueror above Slav 'foreigners', as in Dugonics's *Etelka* of 1788, which quickly became celebrated as both an example of the use of the vernacular and the creation of a national historical-mythical narrative.¹¹¹ By the end of the eighteenth century literary attempts to 'retrieve the lost or forgotten glories of the national past in order to foster a sense of collective historical purpose' was established in Hungarian-language literature.¹¹²

A prime example of how 'national awakening' as a political and cultural phenomenon translated into literary works is Vörösmarty's *Zalán futása*, 'Flight of Zalán', generally considered the first modern Hungarian-language epic. *Zalán futása* is concerned with 'waking up the slumbering nation and recovering the "ancient glory"',¹¹³ lamenting the lost virtues of the past akin to early German-language historical novels based on medieval knights and displaying nostalgia (see Chapter 1). Drawing on the 'conquering era' of the tribal leader Árpád's defeat of

¹⁰⁸ George Barany, 'The Age of Royal Absolutism, 1790-1848' in Peter F. Sugar, Péter Hanák and Tibor Frank (eds.), *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 180.

¹⁰⁹ András Dugonics (1740-1818) wrote the historical play on which Erkel's first opera is derived, see Chapter 4.

¹¹⁰ Cameron Sutt, *Slavery in Árpád-era Hungary in a Comparative Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 41.

¹¹¹ Ferenc Kerényi, *Szűnek, Terek, Emberek: Irodalom és Színház a 18-19. Században* (Budapest: Ráció Kiadó, 2010), 27.

¹¹² Aczel, *op. cit.*, 367.

¹¹³ János M Bak, 'From the *Anonymous "Gesta"* to the *Flight of Zalán* by Vörösmarty' in János M. Bak, Patrick J. Geary and Gábor Klaniczay (eds.) *Manufacturing a Past for the Present: Forgery and Authenticity in Medievalist Texts and Objects in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 106.

the Bulgarian prince Zolán, the territorial defence of the Carpathian basin functioned as a legitimization of the Hungarian claim to these territories.¹¹⁴ Evoking the mythological past in the manner ‘legitimized symbolically the national purposes and claims’: that Hungary’s claim to an independent state was historically justified.¹¹⁵ *Zolán futása* held particular political significance, coinciding with the re-initiation of the 1825 Hungarian Diet.¹¹⁶

Although such attempts to narrativise Hungary’s past were underway already in the late eighteenth century, both historiography and the historical novel in Hungary did not become established in earnest until the 1860s and the 1830s respectively.¹¹⁷ Poetry, meanwhile, was crucial to both expressing and shaping ideas about the past in the reform period (demonstrated below). Pan-European influences, namely seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French and German literature and newer historical drama, nevertheless significantly impacted discourse surrounding the creation of Hungarian-language canons and the role of Hungary’s past in these processes. These bodies of literature served as models to emulate and, by the opening of the Hungarian Theatre of Pest, the basis through which to negotiate representing Hungarian history on the stage.¹¹⁸

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, ‘literary organiser’ Ferenc Kazinczy¹¹⁹ was exceptional in his influence. Shaping the Hungarian vernacular into a medium fitting for high art, in Kazinczy’s view, should be achieved through translations of foreign

¹¹⁴ Imre, *op. cit.*, 82.

¹¹⁵ Zoltán Imre, ‘Building a(s) Theatre: the *Pesti Magyar Színház* in 1837’ in Marcel Conis-Pope and John Neubauer (eds.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe. Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries* Volume III: The Making and Remaking of Literary Institutions (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2004), 152.

¹¹⁶ Bak, *op. cit.*, 105.

¹¹⁷ Sándor Hites, ‘The Hungarian historical novel in regional context’ in Marcel Conis-Pope and John Neubauer (eds.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries* Volume I (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2004), 467-479.

¹¹⁸ See Chapter 3.

¹¹⁹ (1759-1831) Kazinczy was born in Érsemjén, Bihar county (today Simian, Romania) in 1759 to an old aristocratic family. He was a driving figure in efforts to reform the Hungarian language: to cultivate this medium to be suitable for all areas of scientific and artistic expression, which he was equipped for by not only his thorough training in Latin, German and ancient Greek, but his enthusiasm for careful and skilful translations (from the classics to contemporary German and French literature). He moved to Pest in the early 1780s, and was later imprisoned for his association with the Jöcabin movement (whose ‘Martinovics conspiracy’ to overthrow the government and create a republic was thwarted, and the leaders executed). He was finally released in 1801, and spent the rest of his life as a respected figure of language reform and as a translator.

works.¹²⁰ Creating original works for Kazinczy meant utilising existing models on which to base national narratives and epics from Hungarian history.¹²¹ He aided the establishment of networks of writers and a tradition of criticism across the Hungarian territories which stimulated not only a body of Hungarian-language literary works, but a context through which aesthetics could be debated. These foundations facilitated establishment of literary societies in Pest-Buda in the nineteenth century.¹²²

The ‘classical’ aesthetics Kazinczy championed had an enduring impact in relation to cultivating and refining the Hungarian language through translation and borrowed models. For example, Mihály Vörösmarty, one of the most influential literary figures of the reform era, endeavoured to translate the entire works of Shakespeare (though remaining unfinished upon his death). Vörösmarty and his colleagues, the literary ‘liberals’ in the reform era enthusiastically championed Kazinczian ‘classical’ aesthetics through which to establish a national literary canon.¹²³ These ideas dominated much of the discourse of the ‘opera war’ discussed in Chapter 3, as well as modes of historical thinking which are linked to narration in Erkel’s first opera. Furthermore, the language revival established professional literary critique in Hungarian. The repertoires of spoken drama, but also poems and Hungarian translations of plays and the international operatic repertoire were integral to the founding of the Hungarian National Theatre. Such works formed the repertoire of Pest-Buda’s first exclusively Hungarian-language theatrical institution, but literary criticism also shaped understandings of the past.

¹²⁰ This phenomenon of language reform through translation in turn was an inheritance from the endeavours of György Bessenyei (1747-1811), a member of Maria Theresa’s guard, and his contemporaries who sought to make the works of the French enlightenment philosophers available in the Hungarian language. See for example Richard Aczel, ‘Hungarian Romanticism: Reimagining (Literary) History’ in Paul Hamilton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 359.

¹²¹ András Kiséry and Zsolt Komáromy, ‘World Literature in Hungarian Literary Culture’ in András Kiséry, Zsolt Komáromy and Zsuzsanna Varga (eds.), *Worlds of Hungarian Writing: National Literature as Intercultural Exchange* (Madison: Fairleigh University Press, 2016), 13.

¹²² A prominent example is the *Aurora* circle named after the title of one of the first widely read Hungarian journals committed to academic literary commentary. This circle was associated particularly with Károly Kisfauldy (1788-1830), who became the editor quickly following his rise from obscurity as an artist when his play *A Tartárok Magyarországon* (‘The Tartars in Hungary’) was received enthusiastically in Pest. The ‘Kisfauldy Society’ was formed in the years following his death and proved an active contribution to Pest’s literary life for over a century.

¹²³ Vörösmarty’s role in reform-era Pest-Buda and the role of ‘classical’ aesthetics in relation to creating Hungarian-language drama is outlined in Chapter 3.

In the 1840s Pest-Buda became the cultural capital of Hungarian literature, and the roles of writer, critic, dramaturg and politician were indistinct. Artistic pursuits became related to political aspirations, and politicians cited history in speeches, articles and publications. In the reform period poets, dramatists and other creators of literature were ‘men of affairs as well as poets, mixing daily with politicians and members of the liberal intelligentsia’.¹²⁴

Critics debated how historiographical concepts relate to the security of national identity as reflected in cultural condition. In 1839, the fundamental importance of drama in these contexts led to a debate between Gusztáv Szontagh and Ferenc Toldy (an influential literary critic, see Chapter 3). Szontagh argued that the age did not facilitate conditions in which Hungarian drama could flourish. In Szontagh’s view, the age of drama went hand in hand with the development of man: ‘Today’s world is more suited to music than drama, and hence [the success of] opera. The botching only strengthens this preconception of the audience.’¹²⁵ In other words, amateur writers exacerbate the issue by devaluing the merit of drama further. Societal development in Hungary in Szontagh’s view had not yet advanced to the point of creating an original dramatic tradition.

Toldy agrees that the epic is a more sophisticated form than drama, but that this does not mitigate the potential of Hungarian drama.¹²⁶ Toldy, citing Vörösmarty’s success in creating poetry on a national epic fitting to the age (*Zalán futása*), rather argued these works demonstrate the societal capacity for literary progression. Naming Árpád and the Hunyadi’s, from ‘our heroic ages’ as subjects fitting for national epics, ‘[following which] the nation is no longer glowing in

¹²⁴ Cartledge, *op. cit.*, 161.

¹²⁵ ‘Ha tehát drámákat írunk, írjunk színjátékokat is; de mindenekelőtt is vizsgáljuk meg jól tehetségeinket. A mai világ inkább a hangászat világa, mint a drámáé, s ennél fogva ezek közt is főleg a daljátékokat pártolja. Hivatlanok kontárkodása pedig a közönséget ezen félszeg előszeretetében mindenesetre csak megerősítheti.’ Gusztáv Szontagh, ‘Blair Hugo retorikai és esztétikai leckéi’ *Figyelmező*, 1839, reproduced in Szalai, Anna (ed.), *Tollbarcok. Irodalmi és színházi viták 1830-1847* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1981), 323.

¹²⁶ ‘De az én barátom mellőzve az életet és népköltést, csak a literatúrát tartja, úgymond, szem előtt; s ha – hogy szavakban ne láttassunk akadozni – egyetértek vele, midőn eposzunkat sokkal magasabb fokon látja állani a drámánál, azaz hogy – mi egyre megyen ki – az eposz elérte virulása pontját, midőn a dráma még pályában fekszik: *ebből nem következik* egyéb, mint *hogy ki eposzi tehetséggel bír, könnyebben baladbat az eposz tört útján, mint a hasonmértékű drámai tehetséggel bíró, a dráma töretlenebb pályáján*. Hogy pedig nem mindig a könnyebb az egyszermind korszerű, vitatni szükségtelen.’ Ferenc Toldy, ‘Végszó az eposzi s drámai korról és drámai literatúránkról’, reproduced in Szalai, *op. cit.*, 342.

great light, nor ever will again’, he asserts that poets are the servants to now rectify the stagnant culture:

The dignity of our nation, our pride and progression of literature, requires poetry to surround this star of our glory with all its light; beyond which the epic is to fill its vocation. Do not be discouraged by an age which is not thriving: if the craft is beautiful, it can affect even a fraction of our deeper potentialities.¹²⁷

In the reform era, literature concerned with the ninth century conquest became secondary to both glorifying and lamenting the Hungarian Golden Age of Mátyás I in the late medieval period.¹²⁸ In the 1830s the historical novel was established, largely attributed to Miklós Jósika’s early historical novels, as a ‘carrier’ of the mission to cultivate and preserve Hungarian language and culture and to ‘stimulate’ historical memory.¹²⁹ In Jósika’s *A csehek Magyarországhban*, ‘The Czechs in Hungary’ (1839), he portrays historical figures as heroes and depicts virtuous heroines in the vein of Walter Scott:¹³⁰ a manner of memorialising heroes from Hungary’s *bőskor*, ‘heroic era’. Set during the Hussite invasion during the reign of King Matthias/Mátyás I, the protection of Hungary’s historical integrity and independence exemplified the lost glory since the Hungarian golden age.¹³¹

¹²⁷ ‘Ugyanis én történetünkben két szakaszt ismerek *csak*, nemzeti érdekű hőskölteményre alkalmasat: a hon elfoglaltatását, s a hon legfélelmesb ellensége első, ifjúi erővel tett megrohanásai megtöretését; s két egyediséget, egy fővel magasbat, nagyobbszerűt s dicsőbbet minden egyebeknél, félisteneket a nép képzetében; amazt alapítóját, ezt megtartóját nemzetének; mindkettőt, intézőjét nemzete *világállásának*: Árpádot és Hunyadiat; a hőskor per eminentiam amazzal kezdődött, ezzel érte végét, s a nemzeti dicsőség ezentúl nagyobb fényben nem világolt többé. Árpád meglelte éneklőit, Hunyadi még várja. Nemzetünk méltósága, büszkeségünk s a literatura teljessége kívánják tehát, hogy dicsőségünk ez estveli csillagát a költészet is körüláraszsa fényével; melyen túl az eposz be fogja tölteni hivatását. Az pedig ne csüggesse a költőt, hogy kora nem virít: szép, kevesekre is hatni, ha ezen kevesek a nemzet mélyebb keblei, az értelmesség választottai; ők közvetítői lesznek a hatásnak, s mit itt merítettek, más alakban át fogják szívárogtatni a tömegbe.’ Ferenc Toldy, ‘Végszó az eposzi s drámai korról és drámai literatúránkról’, in Szalai, *op. cit.*, 343-344.

¹²⁸ See Chapter 5.

¹²⁹ Hites, *op. cit.*, 470.

¹³⁰ Lóránt Czigány, *The Oxford History of Hungarian Literature from the Earliest Times to the Present* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 166.

¹³¹ *ibid.*

The early medieval nomadic Hungarians near-constant pillaging and destruction of territories as far as the Iberian Peninsula¹³² became understood as historical, national ‘sin’.¹³³ The Mongolian invasion in the thirteenth-century is estimated to have decreased the population settled in the Carpathian basin by between fifteen and fifty percent.¹³⁴ The devastation left more than half of towns and villages in ruins, ‘wolves and other scavengers roamed freely’; survivors starved and even reverted to cannibalism.¹³⁵ Once under foreign rulers, attempts such as the ‘Rákóczi uprising’, an emancipatory, anti-Habsburg campaign in 1723, were unsuccessful.¹³⁶ Though the historical figure of Rákóczi formed part of the legacy of revolutionary heroes eventually becoming instructive figures in the reform period, these thwarted efforts to emancipate the Hungarians simultaneously reinforced cyclic understandings of Hungary’s past. Disasters became symbolic of a perpetual national ‘curse’ relating the past to the present and future, such as in the following examples from poetry:

The red blood of heroes pours from the map,
 here lies the cemetery of our nation, Mohács!
 when anger sparked His transcendent might,
 thunderbolts and devastation scorched the land.
 The raven’s wings hover overhead, and sighs rise
 from the land where lie the valiant, fallen, dead.

from *Mohács*, Károly Kisfauldy, (1824)¹³⁷

What springs up from the bank of the Danube,
 Whose yellow corn sways in the lush grass?
 Barely a bitter groan is heard from this cemetery,
 whose name, the Magyar curse, is: ‘Mohács’.

¹³² Once established under the succession of Árpád leaders, such campaigns were a pre-emptive defence strategy of the conquered territory, as well as a means of securing resources. Nora Berend, *The Expansion of Central Europe in the Middle Ages*, The Expansion of Latin Europe, 1000-1500, Vol. 5 (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Variorum, 2017).

¹³³ For example, see Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Mónika Baár, Maria Falina and Michal Kopeček, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe: Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the ‘Long Nineteenth Century’* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 205.

¹³⁴ Engel, *op. cit.*, 101-103.

¹³⁵ Cartledge, *op. cit.*, 30.

¹³⁶ This was an attempt to emancipate regions inhabited by Hungarians from the Empire in the first decade of the eighteenth-century; so-called ‘Rákóczi uprising’ because this revolution was led by nobleman Ferenc Rákóczi II. See Paula Sutter Fichtner, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1490-1848* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 53-55.

¹³⁷ Hősvértől pirosult gyásztér, sóhajta köszöntlek/ Nemzeti nagy létünk nagy temetője, Mohács!/ Hollószárnyaival lebegett a zordon enyészet,/ s pusztító erejét rád viharozta dühe,/ s vak daidalma jelét robogó villámival itten/ Honni vitéz seregink holttetemikre süté. Károly Kisfauldy and Lajos Csetri (ed.), *Kisfauldy Károly válogatott művei* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1980), 480.

Understandings of the past in early nineteenth-century Hungary were informed by failed uprisings amidst centuries under the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires. Simultaneously, Ferdinand I's *Staatskonferenz* employed the credo of *divide et impera*: using tensions between competing identities advantageously, and instilling fears amongst ethnic groups that competing goals equated with threats.¹³⁹ Authors were inclined to present the past as not only more localised—side-stepping the universalistic application of historical lessons found in German and French-language historical novels and plays—but also implicated the future of Hungarian society in light of the trespass or failings of the past, in contrast to the instructive roles found in examples such as uses of Italian history (see Chapter 1).

Whereas the failures of the past in Germany or France could be instructive, in Hungary, they were indissoluble. This is perhaps most aptly exemplified by Zsigmond Kemény's final historical novel *Zord idő*, 'Stormy Times'. Completed in 1858 during the absolutist decade which followed the 1848 uprising, this uncertain view of the future, briefly becoming subordinate to the revolutionary rhetoric which anticipated a break with historical cataclysms, once again dominated historical interpretation. Set in 1541 during the Ottoman Siege of Buda, the Hungarian lords study historical examples in their attempts to combat the invading army. As Sándor Hites puts it, this becomes a historical interplay: nineteenth-century audiences already knew of the cataclysm awaiting the Hungarians, despite their best efforts to create a rupture in successive historical tragedies.¹⁴⁰ The manner in which uncertainties for the future underlay a wide variety of political and cultural nation-building programmes in the reform period was reflected poetically in bleak

¹³⁸ Mely föld ez, mi virágzó tér az öreg Duna partján,/ Melyen sárga kalász rengedez és buja fű?/ Nyögve felel, s csak alig hallatva s keservesen a föld:/ Hír temetője Mohács,/ s a magyar átka nevem. Mihály Vörösmarty, Károly Horváth and Dezső Tóth (eds.), *Vörösmarty Mihály összes művei: II: Kisebb Kötemények* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1960), 85.

¹³⁹ The cabinet of Ferdinand I comprised chancellor Klemens von Metternich, Count Kolowrat-Liebsteinsky, and Archdukes Franz Karl and Louis. See Egon Radvany, *Metternich's Projects for Reform in Austria* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 82-91 for the genesis and official power of the *Staatskonferenz*.

¹⁴⁰ Hites, *op. cit.*, 475.

prognoses for the future in light of the past. The failure of the 1848 revolution became incorporated into the cyclic understanding of Hungary's past, present, and future which is apparently doomed to remain unresolved. Following the defeat of Mohács, the Hungarian Lords in Kemény's novel do not anticipate the historical forces which will come to define Hungary,¹⁴¹ and the reader relives past errors without being provided a solution to halt the cycle into the present. *Zord idő* accordingly can only offer 'an allegorical structure for an always-uncertain future'.¹⁴²

Erkel's *Bátori Mária*, prior to the revolution, already presents history through anticipations of rupture which ultimately are thwarted and exemplify the uncertainties for the future which significantly characterised nation-building in the reform period (but which remained an important trope in negotiating the past into the post-revolution era). The 'sins' of the past were understood as unsolvable. This, I argue, is why ambiguity surrounding the future was ominous as opposed to inspiring in Erkel's first opera by contrast with both other examples of 'peripheral' operas, as well as 'mainstream' repertoires. Erkel's operas negotiate contemporary fears without offering solutions: they present the implications for the future from the failings of the past, rather than celebrating the golden age as pointing towards recovering independence.

As liberal nationalism segued into republicanism in the radical branch, glorifying the golden age began to anticipate a rupture at the tail end of the reform era. In particular, historical sacrifice was sacralised as exemplary martyrdom,¹⁴³ and commemorated through historical narratives such as *Hunyadi László*. The audience could re-live the spectacle of execution: creating victims could place blame for contemporary strife on an historical outsider (the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires), or an 'internal enemy' in the form of the aristocracy. As 1848 approached, the Hungarian golden age began to embody instruction as well as a means through which to

¹⁴¹ Czigány, *op. cit.*, 210.

¹⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁴³ See David Lederer, 'Honfű: Nationhood, Manhood, and the Culture of Self-Sacrifice in Hungary' in Jeffrey R. Watt (ed.) *From Sin to Insanity: Suicide in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 132-133. The trope of historical sacrifice in Hungarian nationalism is further discussed in Chapter 5.

lament lost virtue. Historical figures began to embody heroism: inspiring the present community to resist the spectre of *nemzethalál* through reclaiming past glory and independence. Anti-Habsburg figures such as Rákóczi, became exemplars to follow (these ideas are explored in Chapter 5 in relation to how the execution of László Hunyadi is depicted in Erkel's second opera).

This shift is exemplified by *Himnusz* and *Szózat*, two enduring poetic works. Ferenc Kölcsey's (1790-1838) poem titled *Himnusz, a' Magyar nép zivataros századaiból*, 'Hymn, from the stormy centuries of the Hungarian people' written in 1823, appeals to God to bless the Hungarian, who, it contends, 'Atoning sorrow hath weighed down Sins of past and future days'.¹⁴⁴ This work chronicles the conquering of the Carpathian basin (stanza 2) the medieval 'Golden Age' of Hungarian culture under King Mátyás I (stanza 3), before lamenting the suffering that followed at the hands of the Mongolians and Turks as punishment for 'sins'.¹⁴⁵ *Himnusz* proved an enduring symbol in Hungarian culture since Erkel set Kölcsey's words to music in his application for a public competition to compose a national anthem (which remains the official national Hungarian anthem today).¹⁴⁶ Vörösmarty's *Szózat*, 'appeal' further exemplifies the 'Hungarian-biblical parallel'.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ *Megbűnhötte már e nép, A múltat s jövődőt!* (first stanza, lines 7-8). English translation by William Noah Loew in *Gems from Petőfi and Other Hungarian Poets* (New York: Paul O. D'eszterhazy, 1881), 101.

¹⁴⁵ *Hajb, de bűneink miatt, Gyúlt harag kebledben, S elsújtád villámidat, Dörgő fellegedben*, 'But, alas, for our misdeed, Anger rose within thy breast, And thy lightening thou didst speed From thy thundering sky with zest.' (stanza 4, lines 1-4). English translation by Loew, *op. cit.*, 101.

¹⁴⁶ see Kata Riskó, 'Erkel Hymnuszának keletkezése és hagyományozódásának története az első világháborúig' in Magdaléna Tóth (ed.), *A Magyar Himnusz képes albuma* (Budapest: Argumentum-OSZK, 2017), 98.

¹⁴⁷ This parallel continued to function as a prominent parallel as the revolution approached. Petőfi, in his *A század költői*, 'The Poets of the Nineteenth Century' of 1847 'proclaims poets to be the new leaders of the people and therefore they must work hard to bring their flock to Canaan, as Moses had led the Israelites.' See G. F. Cushing, 'The Irreverence of Petőfi', *op. cit.*, 170.

There yet shall come, if come there must,
that better, fairer day
for which a myriad thousand lips
In fervent yearning pray.

Or shall there come, if come there must,
a death of fortitude;
and round about our graves shall stand
A nation washed in blood.

Mihály Vörösmarty, *Szózat* (stanzas 10-11), 1836.¹⁴⁸

The ‘liberty or death’ slogan of the French revolutionaries became Hungarianized in Vörösmarty’s *Szózat*: ‘Or shall there come, if come there must ... A nation washed in blood’.¹⁴⁹ The fear of *nemzetihalál* in Kölcsey’s work meant he appeals for divine intervention to break the chains of a ‘cursed’ people. Vörösmarty’s work, reflecting the rhetoric of liberal nationalism which would become increasingly radical throughout the 1840s, determines to meet apocalypse stoically.

The trope of *nemzetihalál* significantly stimulated the period of national awakening. Throughout the reform period, such fears informed interpretations of the past. As nationalisms became increasingly radicalised, the spectre of national obscurity even contributed through justification to the revolutionary rhetoric which erupted into the uprisings. Prior to this revolutionary momentum, however, tragedies became incorporated into an understanding of Hungary’s past as fatalistic.

¹⁴⁸ Még jőni kell, még jőni fog/ Egy jobb kor, mely után/ Buzgó imádság epedez/ Százezrek ajakán./ Vagy jőni fog, ha jőni kell,/ A nagyszerű halál,/ Hol a temetkezés fölött/ Egy ország vérben áll. Mihály Vörösmarty, Károly Horváth and Dezső Tóth (eds.), *Vörösmarty Mihály összes művei, Volume II: Kisebb Költemények* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1962), 210. English translation by Theresa Pulszky and Edward Taylor.
<https://www.babelmatrix.org/works/hu/Vörösmarty_Mihály-1800/Szózat/en/3522-Appeal> Accessed 15 June 2018.

¹⁴⁹ Vagy jőni fog, ha jőni kell, A nagyszerű halál, Hol a temetkezés fölött Egy ország vérben áll. Mihály Vörösmarty, *Szózat*, 1836, Stanza 11. English translation by Theresa Pulszky and Edward Taylor, *ibid*.

Conclusion

Political reform and nation-building projects in reform-era Hungary were partially motivated by fears of a Hungarian apocalypse. Historical disasters were understood as part of a cycle of sinful conduct and periods of punishment in the form of military disasters, loss of autonomy, political influence and independence, and a threatened language and culture. Attempts to reorganise power-distribution, to establish cultural institutions and cultivate home-grown artforms were linked with survival of the Hungarian language and culture. Fears of *nemzethalál* drove action.

By the opening of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*, ‘The Hungarian Theatre of Pest’ in 1837, public figures immersing themselves in cultural projects viewed ‘national’ literature and drama as matters of fateful urgency. Open letters, verbal confrontations, and scandals on the stage between the anti-opera (and politically separatist-nationalist) ‘radicals’, pro-drama ‘liberals’ and the pro-opera ‘conservatives’ in the *operaháború* ‘opera war’, demonstrate that Hungarian-language artforms became linked to morality, society and the future of Hungarian identity. The shifting political landscape in relation to understanding Hungary’s history is paramount to contextualising Erkel’s operas from this period beyond a ‘primed’ audience championing *verbunkos* musical elements. Unravelling the relationship between music and nationalism in *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László* requires a consideration of the internal struggles within nationalist ideology. Situating Erkel’s pre-revolution operas amidst historical tropes, political discourse, and artistic polemics in relation to contemporary contexts illuminates how these works respond to fears for the future through understandings of the past.

Chapter 3

The Opera War and The *Pesti Magyar Színház*

Introduction

In his study of the relationships between theatres and national movements, Philip Ther writes: ‘national cultures and opera traditions provided a defence against the outside world and supposed internal enemies’.¹ The Berlin Opera House built in 1745 by Frederick the Great was in large part an endeavour to, in Zoltán Imre’s words, ‘elevate his minor Kingdom to international prominence’, to ward off ‘decay and death’, and to ‘to express, publicize, and visualize power’.² Theatres emerge as potent assertions of identity across European cultural centres, they variously respond to apparently threatened power and/or identities.

National theatre projects in Central and Eastern Europe were characterised by the struggle to assert an identity ‘within the context of and against oppressive imperiums.’³ In Hungary, the cultural and political imperialism of a dominant (Austrian, German-language) culture represented both the ‘outside world’, and an ‘internal enemy’.⁴ Anxieties surrounding the survival of a collective Hungarian identity contended with not only the powerful legal authority from Vienna, but also the large German-speaking population in the emerging cultural capital. Furthermore, several ethnic minority strongholds across Habsburg Hungary—including a surrounding ‘Slavic sea’ which threatened to unite into a pan-Slav superpower—also exacerbated tensions relating to (competing) identities. Internal strife amongst the Hungarian-speaking strata complicated matters. Constructing a theatre to cultivate and promote the Hungarian-language in the cultural capital of Pest-Buda functioned both as a tangible symbol of identity in itself, and a

¹ Philip Ther, translated by Charlotte Hughes-Kreutzmüller, *Centre Stage: Operatic Culture and Nation Building in Nineteenth-Century Central Europe* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2014), 251.

² Zoltán Imre, ‘Staging the Nation: Changing Concepts of a National Theatre in Europe’, *New Theatre Quarterly*, Vol.24, No.1 (2008), 80.

³ Zoltán, *op. cit.*, 77.

⁴ This ‘cultural imperialism’ was both real and imagined. The legacy of Joseph II’s ‘enlightened absolutism’ saw a violent polemic from Hungarian nobles who ardently resisted attempts to ‘Germanise’ the Empire. See Chapter 2.

comparable site of representation to that which the German-speaking population possessed in Pest's German-language theatre. The founding of this institution, however, deepened the pre-existing divisions amongst the Hungarian literate, particularly along the lines of genre.

The previous chapter outlined the context of Pest-Buda in the Hungarian reform period, demonstrating how historical interpretation informed discourse surrounding nation-building projects. The following discussion focuses on polemics leading to and sustaining the *operaháború*, 'opera war', sketching a portrait of the relationships between aesthetics, ideologies, audiences and repertoires on the stage of the *Pesti Magyar Színház* as Erkel set to work on his first opera. I examine why critique in relation to genre, theatrical and operatic repertoires, performance practices and representation of history on the Hungarian-language stage amidst the tensions of the pre-revolutionary decade became so contentious. Genres became politicised through their association with political versions of Hungarian nationalism. Hungarian-language artforms became part of the fight for survival within the empire: discourse linked the *Pesti Magyar Színház* with cultural progression and hence the future of Hungarian identity. This unravels how artforms became perceived as safeguards against the obscurity of 'nation death'.

A Hungarian-Language Theatre

Who will cultivate our theatre if not ourselves? The government? Can we expect such wisdom from them and ask them with a clear mind to intervene? Or will the entire nation be preoccupied by such petty matters, now, when the future is awaiting us so earnestly?

István Széchenyi, *Magyar játékszínről*, 1832⁵

The *Pesti Magyar Színház* was established during a period of intense social, political, and cultural change: an era of uncertainty that bred ideological radicalism. National theatre projects in other Habsburg regions later in the century were usually constructed under less discursively volatile and politically unstable circumstances. By comparison, the obsession with a spectre of ‘nation death’ in the Hungarian reform period significantly drove such nation-building projects. The Czech National Theatre, and the Habsburg-Slavic peoples who imitated the Czech model as the century wore on,⁶ could only gain ground on the other side of the 1848 revolutions. Even in Polish regions, despite an unusually large nobility comparable with Hungary, these case-studies differ considerably. In the Prussian East, theatres maintained their privatised status significantly longer into the nineteenth century,⁷ whereas Pest’s Hungarian-language theatre was already a legally nationalised institution in 1840.

The *Pesti Magyar Színház*, The Hungarian Theatre of Pest, opened on 22 August 1837, funded by counties across Habsburg Hungary, private donors and public collections.⁸

Establishing a Hungarian-language theatre in Pest was fraught with challenges from the outset:

⁵ Játékszíniünket valyon ki fogja elrendelni, ha nem mi? Tán a’ kormány? Lehet e tőle várni ezt, ‘s józanul azt kívánni, hogy illyesekbe is avatkozzék ‘s most? vagy tán az egész Nemzet fog illyféle kicsinységek körül bibelődni, most, midőn olly komolyan vár ránk a’ jövőendő?’ István Széchenyi, *Magyar játékszínről* (Pest: Fűskúti Landerer, 1832), 85.

⁶ See Ther, *op. cit.*, 195-237.

⁷ Mark Tilse, *Transnationalism in the Prussian East: From National Conflict to Synthesis, 1871-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 64.

⁸ Pest County began collecting and managing donations from county residents towards a Hungarian-language institution in 1808. By 1810, all counties and free royal cities across Habsburg Hungary were invited to contribute. Support followed from Kecskemét, Nagykőrös, Gömör, Tolna, Temes, Nógrád, Szatmár, Fejér, Sáros and Bács, and village collections were even gathered for the cause. See Ferenc Kerényi, ‘A Pesti Magyar Színház építése és megszervezése’ in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színház történet I: 1790-1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1990), 221-228. A total of sixteen members sat on the Board of Directors: thirteen members of the Board owned 62 shares of the *Pesti Magyar Színház* (roughly fifteen percent of total shares). Ferenc Kerényi, ‘Az operaháború’ in László F. Földényi (ed.), *Színház tudományi Szemle* 1. (Budapest: Magyar Színházi Intézet, 1978), 121.

financial, logistical, but also relating to social function. The activities of the *Pest vármegye anyanyelvi bizottság*, ‘The Native Language Committee of Pest County’, namely István Széchenyi’s pamphlet *Magyar játékszínről* ‘On Hungarian Theatre’, partially sparked this dialogue.⁹ Simultaneously, the county’s call for theatre proposals meant statesmen, county officials and literary figures from across Habsburg Hungary discussed the details of establishing a Hungarian-language theatre prior to proposals in the Diet.¹⁰ Pamphlets and journal articles deliberated the logistics, location and nature of a hypothetical Hungarian-language theatre. In particular, authors disputed how such an institution would relate to the main competition in the most likely location of Pest, where the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth* enjoyed substantial investment and steady box subscriptions.¹¹

Out of these debates, a consensus emerged that the theatre should be located in Pest, and that it should be an institution exclusively for performance in the Hungarian language. Those who believed catering to a mixed-language population would be possible were outnumbered.¹² By early 1836, plans for the new theatre, drafted as legislation at the district meeting of the lower chamber, were consolidated as a financial plan for construction and approved by mid-February. However, difficulties meeting the financial stipulations of the draft meant a vote in the upper chamber in mid-April failed to ratify the proposal. Finally, the County Theatre Committee proposed a joint-stock company, which the General Assembly accepted in mid-June 1837, stipulating by August that this was a fixed-term situation to be readdressed in 1840.¹³

Once the doors of the *Pesti Magyar Színház* finally opened, artistic polemics once again flared up. Pest County appointed a Board of Theatre Directors responsible primarily for contracting

⁹ Széchenyi, *Magyar*, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ Kerényi, ‘A Pesti Magyar Színház építése és megszervezése’, *op. cit.*, 223.

¹¹ Alexander Schmidt took over the theatre’s management in 1836 and funnelled considerable personal finances into the institution. See Jolán Kádár, *A pesti és budai német színház története 1812-1847* (Budapest: A Budavári Tudományos Társaság, 1923), 64-71.

¹² See Kerényi, ‘A Pesti Magyar Színház építése és megszervezés’, *op. cit.*, 223.

¹³ The joint-stock company comprised 500 shares, which were held by several counties, free royal cities, and private donors (mainly aristocrats, some of whom sat on the Board of Theatre Directors) of which only the capital was guaranteed. Profit was to be funnelled back into the theatre. See Kerényi, ‘A Pesti Magyar Színház építése és megszervezése’, *op. cit.*, 226-230.

personnel and repertoire policy: ratifying purchases of performance materials; commissioning translations of plays and opera libretti; stipulating rehearsal timeframes and allocating budgets for scenery and costume.¹⁴ In this way, the Board assumed substantial control of the repertoire: the most controversial aspect of the new institution even years before the theatre's physical construction.

The backdrop forming what became dubbed the 'opera war' centred on opposing agendas for a repertoire based around opera or spoken drama. Overlapping professions between theatrical-administrative roles, critics, academics, writers, as well as the general culture of publishing opinion pieces meant several high-profile personalities became entangled in heated aesthetical debates in the 'small world' of Hungarian criticism in the reform period.¹⁵ The implications of the 'opera war', however, reached beyond the pages of journals. On-stage performance scandals, verbal confrontations, and tensions between members of staff within the *Pesti Magyar Színház* in the daily workings of the theatre effected rehearsals, performance practice, casts and repertoire. Actors and soloists also periodically had the opportunity to choose benefit pieces,¹⁶ which further affected the theatre's artistic direction according to agenda. Gábor Egressy's choice of József Katona's *Bánk bán* and *primadonna assoluta* Rozália Schodel-Klein's¹⁷ operatic showpieces championed 'radical' theatrical ideals and won adoration from the opera-loving public, respectively.¹⁸

¹⁴ Kerényi, 'A Pesti Magyar Színház építése és megszervezése', *op. cit.*, 226.

¹⁵ In Cushing's words: 'too often personal attacks on the author were preferred to serious consideration of his work, and in the small world of Hungarian writers it was sometimes difficult to disentangle the one from the other' G. F. Cushing, 'The Irreverence of Petőfi', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol.52, No.127 (1974), 172.

¹⁶ It was customary to stipulate in staff contracts an agreed upon number of benefit performances per year, on which occasions a percentage of the income was paid directly to the employee in question. See for example Tibor Tallián, 'Schodel Rozália és a hivatásos magyar operajátszás kezdetei', (Akadémiai doktori értekezés, Budapest, 2011), 56.

¹⁷ Rozália Klein was born in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) in 1811 and lived until 1854. She trained in Kolozsvár, taught by János Schodel. They married in 1826, and together relocated to Pozsony (Bratislava) in 1826. She studied in Vienna, and performed at the *Kärntnertheater*, and *Josephstädter Theater*, before joining the *Magyar Színház* in 1838. During her first departure in 1840, due in large part to the 'opera war', she toured the opera houses of Europe, and returned to Budapest later in the decade, performing the roles of Mária Bátori and Erzsébet Szilágyi in Erkel's operas.

¹⁸ Katona's *Bánk bán*, though not particularly well received upon Egressy's revival, later played an important role in the revolution. This was also the source for Erkel's third and most enduring work. Schodel's operatic roles are discussed below.

Although he was a key figure in the new theatre, Ferenc Erkel did not engage publicly in this discourse. Already acclaimed as a pianist in Pest-Buda, and as a conductor from his season at the Buda Castle Theatre, Erkel was engaged with the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth* when the *Pesti Magyar Színház* opened. Before signing a contract with the new Hungarian-language institution as principal conductor shortly after its inauguration, Erkel stipulated several conditions in his correspondence, including the authority to hire and dismiss orchestral musicians and the right to be consulted in contracting soloists and casting decisions.¹⁹ This demonstrates his artistic ambition—which he quickly realised—to cultivate a highly accomplished culture of opera performance at the *Pesti Magyar Színház*. Not only would Erkel compose eight operas, but he enriched an orchestra, singing cast, and shaped performances of the international contemporary repertoire, nurturing an operatic life of high standard, despite working under extreme conditions. Under Erkel's conductorship, opera performance by all accounts overtook the standard at the rival *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth* which gradually, over roughly a decade, became subordinate to the Hungarian-language stage.²⁰ Challenges ranged from constant financial struggles, to the scandals of the 'opera war'—the repercussions of which included the *primadonna* Erkel envisioned for the title role of his first opera fleeing abroad before the works' première—and even natural disasters. In 1838, shortly following Erkel's debut as principal conductor with a performance of Bellini's *La Straniera* on 25 January, the devastations of the Danube flood meant the theatre was closed between 14 March until the 16 April. This exacerbated existing financial strains, but subsequent further upheaval ensued with the resignation of the Director, József Bajza, who was meanwhile entangled in the 'opera war'.

¹⁹ Erkel was particularly insistent in relation to casting for operas, which were undertaken by himself and the director. In terms of hiring singers generally, he was more of an advisor to the board. See Ferenc Bónis, 'Hogyan lett Erkel Ferenc a Pesti Magyar Színház karmestere?' in Ferenc Bónis (ed.), *Erkel Ferencről és koráról* Magyar zenetörténeti tanulmányok (Budapest: Püski, 1995), 45-54.

²⁰ Alice Freifeld, 'The De-Germinization of the Budapest Stage' in Keith Bullivant, Geoffrey Giles and Walter Pape (eds.), *Germany and Eastern Europe: Cultural Identities and Cultural Differences* Yearbook of European Studies, Volume 13 (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999), 148-173.

Drama versus Opera

The programme inaugurating the *Pesti Magyar Színház* artistically set out a manifesto for the aims of the institution with Vörösmarty's *Árpád ébredése* 'Árpád's awakening'. This piece functioned as the evening's prologue, a 'poetic fantasy', in which the awakening of Árpád, the tribal leader who 'conquered' the Carpathian basin in the tenth century, represents the contemporary ideals of 'waking' the 'slumbering Hungarian nation'.²¹ *Árpád ébredése* utilises early medieval Hungarian history in the familiar vein of justifying the Hungarian claim to independence and autonomy. The work also hinges on the allegory of the theatre as 'the school and church of life': in order to educate, the theatre had to 'preach' to a wide and varied audience.²² As Zoltán Imre puts it, the awakening of the founding figure of Hungary to inaugurate the theatre paralleled the ideals of the 'national awakening': 'his theatrical awakening could also be interpreted as an awakening of the nation by the means of theatre.'²³ Vörösmarty's work thereby aligns 'national awakening' with the cultivation of a native drama.

In the second scene Árpád learns Hungary's fate since his death: the now lost Magyar Kingdom and the successive occupations. The awakening of the founder of the Hungarian state is presented as an interplay between the former powerful and independent Hungary and the national awakening of the contemporary community:

Árpád: I expect to hear the most terrifying [news]: you are the last remnant of my nation.

Poet: It is worse that you think: we became deceitful.

Árpád: ...Becoming deceitful is worse than death. ...I await the explanation which should tell me if I should pity the nation, or deny that is comes from my blood... no, I do not recognise my people.²⁴

²¹ Zoltán Imre, 'Building a(s) Theatre: the *Pesti Magyar Színház* in 1837' in Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (eds.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries* Volume II: The Making and Remaking of Literary Institutions (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2004), 152.

²² Ferenc Kerényi, 'Színházügy és kulturális érdekegyesítés' in György Székely (ed.) *Magyar Színház történet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 260.

²³ Imre, 'Building a(s) Theatre: the *Pesti Magyar Színház* in 1837', *op. cit.*, 152.

²⁴ Árpád: A legszörnyebbet várom hallani: Te nemzetemből írmagúl maradtál. Költő: Több, mint gyanítod: mink elaljasodtunk. Árpád: Oh végtelenség, mért nem rejtész el! Igen fiú! te eltaláltad a szót: Elaljasodni több, mint a halál. S ha volna szó, mely szellemet megöl. Ez gyilkosabban, mint az ég haragja, Megsemmisítné létem elmeit. De szólj, nyugodtan végig hallgatom A gyászregét, hogy tudjam, szánnom-e, Vagy megtagadni kelljen véretem. ... Nem, ezt a

Vörösmarty's use of the Árpád era and 'national awakening' tropes draws on Hungary's glorious, heroic past to legitimate the historically-ascertained 'right' to an independent political destiny.²⁵ However, Árpád's lament of the current state of oppression expresses shame: he would rather the Hungarians had become extinct than to have lost their independence. The role of the theatre as a tool through which to assert identity is established in this work through likening the awakening of the nation through drama to a revival of former glory. Nevertheless, a symptomatically fatalistic trope underlies this reference to former independence.

This programmatic manifesto, however, would shift to a decidedly opera-centred programme by its re-inauguration as the 'National Theatre' in 1840. The ideal of this institution functioning as a means to educate broad audiences comprising all social strata did not succeed in dictating the repertoire of the institution. As Krisztina Lajosi puts it, in Hungary: 'the popularity of opera had political consequences: it turned middle-class audiences into political crowds.'²⁶ Nevertheless, the debates which finally gave way to the dominance of opera over drama in the repertoire of the *Nemzeti Színház*, centred around drama theory, demonstrates how critics conceived interpreting the national past on the contemporary stage. This discourse contextualises Erkel's representation of the past in his operas. During a period in which there was scant theorising about what might constitute an original Hungarian-language opera, examining how writers and critics framed the role and representations of Hungary's past are crucial ideological contexts.

népet én nem ismerem. Mihály Vörösmarty *Árpád ébredése* scene ix, in Pál Gyulai (ed.), *Vörösmarty Mihály Munkái* IV. Kötet: Drámai költemények. 2. (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1903), 231-232.

²⁵ Imre, 'Building a(s) Theatre: the *Pesti Magyar Színház* in 1837', *op. cit.*, 152.

²⁶ Krisztina Lajosi, *Staging the Nation: Opera and Nationalism in 19th-Century Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 2.

The expanding intelligentsia class and the drive for political reform meant a larger percentage of society engaged with shaping the future socially, politically, and culturally than previously. Diversity of opinion in political, cultural and artistic matters is by no means exceptional in the context of national movements, in which polemics constantly feature at the centre of how identities form and shift.²⁷ However, these circumstances differentiate the Hungarian Theatre project in Pest-Buda from other similar undertakings across the Empire. The power of the Hungarian Diet extended only as far as Vienna allowed, yet its reach was significantly further than power hierarchies in other regions of the Empire. Establishing cultural institutions are at once demonstrative of the centuries-long entrenched privileged status the large Hungarian upper strata enjoyed in the context of the Empire,²⁸ and simultaneously efforts to mediate an inferiority complex.

Critics debated whether drama or opera should dominate the new Hungarian-language stage, often through journals aligned with a political ideology. Discourse relating to the repertoire thereby linked contentious issues surrounding national art with a political stance. The Board of Theatre Directors, their official roles in the Hungarian Diet notwithstanding, were also occasionally compromised by factors such as a mania for theatre, a demand for the entertaining operatic repertoires found in the German City Theatre of Pest, or a romantic involvement with the *primadonna* in the case of Pál Nyári.²⁹ Aesthetical divisions amongst the pro-and-anti drama and opera personnel within the *Pesti Magyar Színház*, despite initially much cross-over between both cast and genre, eventually erupted into on-stage scandals.

Despite the initial emphasis on spoken drama in the Hungarian language—the overarching goal of establishing the institution in the first instance—opera ultimately emerged

²⁷ Pieter M. Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848-1914* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), especially 29-68. See Chapter 1 for a brief overview of the musicological literature which examine relationships between identity and critique.

²⁸ See Chapter 2.

²⁹ See Tibor Tallián, *Schödel Rozália és a hívatásos magyar operajátszás kezdetei* (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2015), 413, further discussed below.

triumphant from the ‘opera war’. The première of Erkel’s first opera, *Bátori Mária* on the 8 August 1840, re-inaugurated the theatre in its second incarnation as the *Nemzeti Színház*, the ‘National Theatre’, now legally funded by the state.³⁰ This landmark in the history of the institution, and in Hungarian-language opera, also marked the shift in the theatre’s artistic direction. The drama advocates, passionate as their efforts were to nurture enthusiastic audiences of spoken Hungarian theatre, were outnumbered by the large middle-class population of pre-unified Pest-Buda accustomed to high standards of opera performances staged at the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth* and the Vienna theatres.

Naturally, the opera war did not emerge from a vacuum, but the new institution exacerbated existing tensions in literary criticism. Attempts to create original works in the Hungarian language emerged in the reform period, growing from Ferenc Kazinczy’s drive to reform, cultivate and ultimately increase the use of the Hungarian language (see Chapter 2). Simultaneously, literary criticism became a country-wide phenomenon, and a network for debate through which ideas surrounding the progression and function of literature and theatre, but also political and societal progression, circulated.

The figures at the forefront of written debates—writers, poets and critics—usually also performed roles in cultural institutions such as the Academy of Sciences (1825), the Kisfaludy Literary Society (1831), and edited or contributed to journals, alongside official political or administrative positions. By the opening of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*, a large portion of the directorship and theatrical personnel were already engaged with the polemics which characterised the first decade of the Hungarian-language theatre. Aesthetic critique and *ad hominem* attack amongst literary personalities intertwined. Disparaging reviews from established literary authorities could even end one’s career, as in the case of Dániel Berzsenyi, whose vocation as a

³⁰ Tibor Tallián, ‘Opernorchester in Ungarn im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert’ in Niels Martin Jensen and Franco Piperno (eds.), *The Opera Orchestra in the 18th- and 19th-Century Europe Volume I: The Orchestra in Society Musical Life in Europe 1600-1900 Circulation, Institutions, Representations* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2008), 183.

published poet was effectively thwarted with Ferenc Kölcsey's criticism of his verses.³¹ In a broader context, tensions between competing goals and nationalisms within multi-ethnic Habsburg Hungary fuelled fears that the Hungarian identity could fall into obscurity. Understanding discourse between competing concepts of cultural progressions demonstrates how frustrations and anxieties surrounding 'correct' cultural progression inflected polemics as the reform era progressed.

The Board of Theatre Directors officially separated the drama and opera divisions a few weeks after the inauguration performance of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*. This decision further exacerbated tensions between drama and opera advocates. Pro-theatre devotees viewed opera as potentially damaging to Hungarian literature and drama. The 'liberals' and 'radicals' were motivated by the goals of cultivating an institution and repertoire which would improve language facility and reach a high standard of original theatrical works. How these aspirations should be approached, however, meant splinter groups quickly formed. The 'liberals' were theoretically open to opera under suitable circumstances, whereas the group branching off as the 'radicals' were ardently anti-opera. József Bajza, in his capacity as editor of the journal *Athenaeum* and the first director of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*, became the figure head of the 'liberal' camp. Together with his colleagues, co-editors Mihály Vörösmarty and Ferenc Toldy (since Hungarianizing his name from Schedel), the *Athenaeum* functioned as the liberals' mouthpiece. In theatre historian Ferenc Kerényi's words, their ideology was 'embedded in the worldview of the union of interests':³² they sought a literary culture which would benefit society and aid Hungary's cultural progression.

³¹ See Ferenc Kölcsey 'Berzsenyi Dániel versei' (Pest: Trattner János Tamás, 1816), reproduced in Ferenc Kölcsey with commentary by Józsefné Szauder and József Szauder (eds.), *Kölcsey Ferenc összes művei* I. (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1960), 36.

³² Ferenc Kerényi, 'Az operaháború' in László F. Földényi (ed.), *Színházstudományi Szemle* 1. (Budapest: Magyar Színházi Intézet, 1978) 132-133.

The anti-opera ‘radicals’ viewed theatre as an opportunity for political propaganda.³³ Represented by the actors Gábor Kazinczy (cousin of Ferenc Kazinczy), István Dobrossy, Gábor Egressy (brother of Béni Egressy, the librettist of Erkel’s first three operas), and dramatists Ede Szigligeti, Lajos Kuthy, and Imre Vahot, the radicals championed the concept of *mozgalomliteratúra*, ‘movement literature’, theatre capable of mobilising ‘the masses’.³⁴ The radicals viewed opera as an aristocratic genre, and therefore a corruptive force detrimental to drama. Egressy conceived of opera as appealing to one’s sensuality, and that funnelling resources into opera meant sacrificing the goals of national art.³⁵ He attacked the directorship, then under Gedeon Radnay, for prioritising opera based on financial factors, and asked:

How did it come to be that opera should be supported because of its large audiences? Is it so that anything can be worthy to be supported as long as there is a big audience?³⁶

The radical faction also condemned musical-theatrical hybrid performances generally—fairy-tale plays, *singspiele* and parodies—based on their apparently low literary value and lack of moral instruction.³⁷ Dobrossy criticised performances of István Balázs’s *Lúdas Matyi*, a comic *singspiel* based on the familiar folktale of a wily young serf who out-foxes a cruel land-owner, as detrimental in social terms. Despite presenting the hardships of the lower classes, the frivolity of the genre deprives the work of a moral effect: the audience is not invited to reflect, but to ‘laugh

³³ Krisztina Lajosi, ‘Opera and Nineteenth-century Nation-Building: the (re)Sounding Voice of the Nation’ (PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2008), 163.

³⁴ Ferenc Kerényi, ‘A Pesti Magyar Színháztól a Nemzeti Színházig (1837-1840)’ in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színháztörténet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1990), 261.

³⁵ Here Egressy refers to plans to establish a separate opera division, which in his opinion will mean sacrificing the potential of drama for societal progression. ‘S ha már az opera együtpártolását annyira sürgeti Radnay úr, kár volt egy gyakorlati tervet ehhez nem készítenie, melyben megnyugtatót vala a nemzetet, hogy e vészkes egyesülés által nem lesznek a nemzeti törvényes célok kockáztatva, vagy éppen feláldozva.’ Gábor Egressy, ‘Végszavam a dráma ellenségeihez’, Anna Szalai (ed.), *Tollbarok. Irodalmi és színházi viták 1830-1847* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1981), 494.

³⁶ ‘Mikor szűnünk meg már valahára azon egyetlen nyomorú argumentumon nyargalni, hogy az operát nagy közönsége miatt kell pártolni? Pártolni méltó-e mindaz, minek nagy közönsége van?’ Gábor Egressy, ‘Végszavam a dráma ellenségeihez’, Szalai, *ibid.*

³⁷ Ferenc Kerényi, ‘Az operaháború’, *op. cit.*, 118-119.

and go home, [because] the whole thing was just a joke'.³⁸ Egressy's article of November 1840, 'Final words to the enemies of drama', summarises the radicals stance. He writes 'I attribute the ability of nationalization and language cultivation to acting alone in the arts'.³⁹

Gábor Egressy viewed opera as imperfect because in attempting to imitate life, a melody will only ever be a static substitute for the natural expressiveness which comes with drama. Therein concluding that opera is not only a 'bastard artform', which is unable to overcome the idealization of art, but nothing less than the 'lie of the theatre', because opera presents reality as it is not.⁴⁰ In line with radical ideals however, Egressy takes these arguments further than Bajza was willing to, and states the genre is damaging to Hungary's future. He concludes: 'opera must retreat from whence it descended: the concert hall, or must constitute a form of public entertainment that is deeply separated from drama'.⁴¹ Imre Vahot, editor of the *Pesti Divatlap*, 'fashion Magazine of Pest'—the artistically-oriented equivalent of the political journal *Pesti Hírlap*⁴²—further attacked opera on the grounds of realism. In Vahot's opinion, the success of *opéra comique* encouraged audiences prioritising frivolous entertainment, which was damaging

³⁸ 'Azt akará megmutatni, hogy mint egykor egy libapásztor fölkel Döbrögi ellen s megverte a nagyságoskát, több ember úgy támadhat fel a kegyetlen urak ellen s úgy bosszúlhatja meg a sanyargatást (...) De ezen erkölcsi hatástól megfosztá magát az által, hogy Ludas Matyit bohózatnak dolgozta fel, mert ez csak annyit látszik mondani: nevesetek egyet és menjetez haza, az egész dolog csak tréfa volt.' *Társalkodó*, February 1841. Quoted in Ferenc Kerényi, 'A Pesti Magyar Színházról a Nemzeti Színház (1837-1840)' in György Székely, *Magyar Színház történet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 280.

³⁹ 'a nemzetiség-terjesztés, beszédészépítés képességeit egyedül a színészetnek tulajdonítom a művészetek között', Gábor Egressy, 'Végszavam a dráma ellenségeihez', Gábor Egressy, selected and edited by Eszter György and Ferenc Kerényi (eds.) *Egressy Gábor válogatott cikkei 1838-1848* Színház történeti könyvtár 11 (Budapest: Magyar Színházi Intézet: 1980), 24-26.

⁴⁰ 'Színművészetben már megvan a zenei elemnek természetileg szükséges mértéke, s ez: beszédünk hanglejtése. Igazzal mondhatni, hogy drámai szavalás az eszme és érzelm természetesen melódiája, mely benső állapotunkat visszhangozza. De e melódiá egyszer mind oly sajátos, oly eredeti, oly *kizárólag* hű és magyarázó, melyet még eddig a mesterség hiában törekedett utánózni, s földnek egy hangászati lángelméje sem érhetett még utol. Nem nevetséges bohóság-e mármint, az istennek tökéletesen bevégzett művét, az emberi beszéd módot, nemcsak utánózni vagy surrogálni, hanem még javítani, szépitni erőlködvén, azt elrontani, nem emberivé mesterkélni! Az érzelmek természetes kifejezése módját természetlennel, *értelhetlennel* cserélni föl, s mégis azt akarni, hogy ezen valami *emberileg érdekeljen*, azaz: hogy e nem emberi beszédet általában értsük, s hogy e nem emberi érzelmkifejezések megindítsanak! Azért ő fattyú kinövése a *szépnek*, képtelen túlsága az idealizálás elvének művészetben; egy természetlen valami, melynek a valóságban életalapja nincs; tehát végre: színművészeti hazugság; mert az opera éneklő életet tesz föl, ami nincs' Gábor Egressy, 'Végszavam a dráma ellenségeihez', Szalai, *op. cit.*, 494-495.

⁴¹ 'Annyi bizonyos, hogy a dráma birodalmának végre is meg kell tisztulni minden oly elemrészről mi oda természet és jogszerűleg nem tartozik, mi ott felesleges; következésképp vagy vissza kellend az operának szerényen vonulnia oda, honnan kiszármazott, a hangversenytermekbe, vagy a drámától egy végképp elkülönített osztályát teendő a népmulatságoknak.' Gábor Egressy, 'Végszavam a dráma ellenségeihez', Szalai, *op. cit.*, 496.

⁴² Established in 1841 *Pesti Hírlap*, was the first scientific political journal, and the most prominent publication providing commentary for political developments in the 1840s. See Chapter 2.

enough in itself. However, ‘forcing national heroes to sing’ would disgrace the Theatre and the nation. Vahot writes in his pamphlet ‘Appeal: One more word on the Hungarian Theatre of Pest’:

If we really want comedy instead of drama reflecting reality, we should fool around with made-up characters, especially those of the kind of *Fra Diavolo*, *Zampa*, *Zsobry* – not with historical and especially not with national heroes. No opera nation commits such a musical crime against its prominent figures, for example even Mayerbeer [sic] respects his nation more than to feature one of his own prominent figures instead of the Swedish King. My God! If one day they would let Lajos Nagy, Máté Csák, or even János Hunyadi sing, and in so be humiliated, then the national theatre, which dishonours its nation, would deserve to immediately collapse.⁴³

The *Honművész*,⁴⁴ edited by Gábor Mátray Róthkrepf⁴⁵—the first director of the opera section of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*—enthusiastically supported establishing a Hungarian-language theatre capable of staging opera. He suggested ways to tackle both the financial insecurity and create competitively high opera performances and current repertoire (in relation to the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*) and to address the goals of the institution. This would include recruiting singers whose mother tongue was Hungarian and who were highly skilled. Schodel was the obvious suggestion, and throughout her decade on the Hungarian-language stage Mátray was her unfailing supporter.⁴⁶ Roughly a month later, the Board of Theatre directors appointed Mátray as music director. He attempted to secure revenue by encouraging wealthy patrons to rent boxes for complete seasons, but even those who did financially support the *Pesti Magyar Színház* often

⁴³ ‘Ha ezt a’ jó fejedelem előre tuda, mindjárt születése után elmetszette volna nyelvet, hogy inkább néma legyen, mint valaha a Magyar színpadon kiénekeljék. Tréfán kívül és belül, ha már csakugyan comédiázni akarunk, a valódi élet drámája helyett – tehát költött személyekkel, ‘s leginkább *Fra Diavolo*, *Zampa*, *Zsobry*-féle haramiákkal bolondozzunk, ne pedig ismert történeti s főleg nemzeti hősökkel. Ily ki én kliési [sic] ki muzsikálási vétket egy operás nemzet sem követ el jeles embereivel, például Mayerbeer [sic] is sokkal jobban tiszteli nemzetét, hogysem a svéd király helyett, honosai valamelyik jelesét tenné kottába. Istenemre! Ha valaha még Nagy Lajost, Csák Mátét, vagy éppen Hunyadi Jánost engednék a Magyar operába kornyikálni, meggyalázní; megérdemelné a nemzetét becstelenítő nemzeti színház, hogy azonnal összeroskadjon. Nem is vesszük észbe, mily büntetőleg képezi az opera korának s embereinek legélesebb szatíráját!’ Imre Vahott, ‘Még egy szózat a pesti Magyar Színház ügyében’ (Pest: Esztergomi k. Beimel József, 1840), reproduced in Gábor Szigethy (ed.) *Vahot Imre válogatott színházi írásai 1840-1848* Színháztörténeti könyvtár 12 (Budapest: Magyar Színházi Intézet, 1981), 30.

⁴⁴ 1833-1841.

⁴⁵ 1797-1875. Mátray was a composer, music historian, pedagogue, writer and critic, generally regarded as a founder of Hungarian music history.

⁴⁶ Reviews praising Schodel’s performances are found regularly in the *Honművész* during her employment at the *Pesti Magyar Színház* and her guest appearances at the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*. See also Tallián’s discussion of Schodel’s reception in the Hungarian and German-language press in Tibor Tallián, *Schodel, op. cit.*, 373-440.

left their boxes empty in favour of frequenting the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*.⁴⁷ The fact that the new theatre could not yet compete with the latter drove Mátray's determination to raise the standard of opera performance which only exacerbated tensions between the artistic and theatrical directors. The clash between Bajza and Mátray eventually climaxed in articles surrounding the on-stage 'war' between Schodel and Szerdahelyi.⁴⁸

Though the Bajza circle were situated somewhat in the centre of the politically charged debates by comparison with the 'radicals', this did not facilitate peace with his opera-loving contemporaries. The conservative János Munkácsy was a Viennese informant unbeknownst to his contemporaries. However, that his journal *Hírnök* was supported by Vienna made fellow critics mistrustful of his agenda.⁴⁹ In his 1838 article 'A Few Words About Theatre Management and Actors', published in the political journal *Századunk* ('Our Century'), attacked what he viewed as appeals to patriotism above artistic integrity. Directing his criticism at Bajza's management of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*, Munkácsy wrote that patriotism is not a justifiable means through which to secure ticket sales in Pest, especially when the German-language stage was catering more closely to the needs of the public.⁵⁰ He explained satirically, quoting an imaginary caricature of a director who addresses the empty theatre:

⁴⁷ Ferenc Kerényi, 'A Pesti Magyar Színháztól a Nemzeti Színházig (1837-1840)' in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar színház történet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 264.

⁴⁸ See Péter Várnai, 'Egy magyar muzsikusz a reformkorban: Mátray Gábor élete és munkássága a szabadságharcig' in Bence Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha (eds.), *Erkel Ferenc és Bartók Béla emlékére Zene tudományi Tanulmányok II* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1954), 259-261. Further discussed below. József Szerdahelyi (1804-1851), was an actor, singer (baritone), composer (writing the stage music for *Láda Matyi*), translator, musician and stage director, settling in Pest, first at the German City Theatre before the *Pesti Magyar* (and from 1840, *Nemzeti Színház*), where he was involved with practically every aspect of musical-theatrical production until his death. He was most well-known by the public for his comic roles.

⁴⁹ See Krisztina Lajosi, 'Opera and Nineteenth-century Nation-Building', *op. cit.*, 196.

⁵⁰ 'Menthető még e hazafiság követelése oly közönségnél, mely művészi követelést nem ismer; de nem így áll a dolog Pesten. Itt a közönség nemcsak művészi követeléssel bír, hanem itt a magyar színészet, a két fővárosban, konkurrenciában áll két színészettel, mely a közönség kíváncsihoz simul, s melynek mind a kettőnek igen ügyes praktikai tapintata van, a magyar színészet fölibe kerülni, vagy azt sakkban tartani, s magát, a hazafiságot is, minden boszorkányság nélkül, kísértetbe hozni; mert teszem: ma adnak a pesti német színpadon, egy már tán százszor adott, de mindig szép operát, a magyar színházban pedig egy sánta-béna színjátékot; holnap a német színházban egy csupa étellel tele paródia kerül színpadra, a magyarban ismét színjáték; holnapután a németben megint egy műeleménnyel tele opera, a magyarban pedig újból ismét színjáték.' János Munkácsy, 'Egypár szó a színészetről és színigazgatásról' in Szalai, *op. cit.*, 350.

“Gentlemen and ladies! I did everything in my power, but the Theatre was becoming more empty every day; Oh, patriotism, I appeal to your pocket! Come and advocate this theatre because otherwise the nation will be lost!” ...and if the audiences’ hearts melt, and they contribute a forint, after serious consideration he will see that he has thrown away his money to bad patriotism, because the condition of art is this: [it needs to] deserve what it demands, not demand what it is not worthy for.⁵¹

Munkácsy accused Bajza of a critical dictatorship, alongside his ‘two companions’⁵²

(Vörösmarty and Toldy), to the detriment of actually working with the actors to develop their craftsmanship.⁵³ In his rebuttal of Munkácsy’s attack entitled ‘The 26 lies of Munkácsy’ published in October 1838, Bajza accused Munkácsy of basing his critiques on rumours he heard ‘in the streets and in the cafes’, and maintained that his opponent was not qualified to discuss matters of theatrical directorship.⁵⁴ Munkácsy, claimed Bajza, only makes friends with subscribers to the journal he edits (the *Rajzolatok a társas élet és divatvilágból*, ‘images from social life and the world of fashion’), and who champion his theatrical works (*Garbonciás diák* of 1834, and *Tündér Ilona* of 1838).⁵⁵ Refuting Munkácsy’s claim that he was an ‘enemy of opera’, Bajza wrote:

In actuality, I was the one who has consistently said opera was inevitably a necessary tool to achieve the higher goals of the theatre, but simply that this should not be at the expense of plays, nor at the expense of financial bankruptcy. He who would want the *Magyar Színház* to be an opera house does not understand the whole thing. ... Not only am I not an enemy of opera, but I dare say I did more to establish and promote it than one hundred chatterers who

⁵¹ ‘Mert mi történik közönségesen nálunk most? ...eláll egy igazgató, miután látja, hogy a színház naponként üresedik, s főlemeli szavát a közönséghez “Uraim és asszonyaim! én mindent elkövettem, de naponként üresedik a színház; oh, hazafiság, a te zsebeidre apellálok! jövel, és pártold e színházat, mert bizony elvész a nemzet! – s ha ily szívrepesztő felszólításokra megindul a közönség szíve, s odaad egy forintot, komolyabb megfontolás után úgy látja, hogy bizony nagyon rossz hazafiságra dobta ki forintját; mert a művészetnek szoros föltétele: megérdemelni mit követel, s nem követelni, mire érdemtelen’, Munkácsy János, ‘Egypár szó a színészetről és színigazgatásról’ in Szalai, *op. cit.*, 349.

⁵² (‘két társa’) János Munkácsy, ‘Egypár szó a színészetről és színigazgatásról’ in Szalai, *op. cit.*, 351.

⁵³ ‘Nem lehet ugyan a pesti színésznek, ha művészetéhez csak egyszikrányi hajlandósága van is, nem tanulni, mert mire a kritika nem oktatja, van módja azt a két német színpadon gyakorlatból látni, hallani és gyakorlatilag sajátjává tenni.’ János Munkácsy, ‘Egypár szó a színészetről és színigazgatásról’, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ ‘Tudja ez a bölcs úr, mit teszen egy színháznál oly mindenes igazgatónak lenni, mint én voltam? De hiszen nem első eset, hogy ő oly dologról tart beszédeket, melyekről még csak fogalma sincs. ...Hogy nem az én igazgatásom alatt voltak a színháznál *legnagyobb* rendetlenségek, erre bátran fel merem híni bizonyosságul az igazgató választmányt és magokat a színészeket, kik a dolgokat kissé jobban tudhatják, mint az utcákon és kávéházakban faktumokat szedegető urak.’ József Bajza, ‘Munkácsy 26 hazusága’, Szalai, *op. cit.*, 356.

⁵⁵ ‘De Munkácsynak ezek mindig beláthatatlan dolgok voltak, mert ő a maga fejével barátságot, ellenségeskedést és ügyet sohasem tudott tisztán megkülönböztetni. Ki tőle nézetekben, elvekben (ha volnának valamiben elvei) különbözik, az neki mindjárt ellenség; neki az is ellenség, ki *Rajzolatai*-nak nem előfizetője, jó barát csak az, ki a *Garbonciás diák*-ot, *Tündér Iloná*-t és a *Rajzolatok*-at csodálja.’ József Bajza, ‘Munkácsy 26 Hazusága’, Szalai, *op. cit.*, 357.

proclaim themselves friends of opera, but who do nothing to benefit it, only heckle [during performances], clap and shout vivat whether it is warranted or not, and write meaningless praises.⁵⁶

József Bajza resigned as theatrical director at the beginning of July 1838, as a direct result of spoken theatre becoming subordinate to opera. He wrote retrospectively in his ‘Appeal Concerning the Hungarian Theatre of Pest’ in September of 1839:

What national goal do we hope to achieve through Normas, Beatrices, L’elisirs—excellent works in themselves? Cultivation of nationalism, or of language? I think not because these operas are foreign products, alien subjects and worlds, alien art and character, alien sounds and feelings, Italian or French or German, but by no means Hungarian. ...no one is more delighted with skilful opera performances than myself, but when art comes into conflict with nationality, I will not sacrifice nationality. I don’t need art at the expense of nationality. Let us first become a nation. ...Though art is a worthy pursuit in itself, when this would hinder our nationality, we should not help, but hinder its harmful influence.⁵⁷

As Tibor Tallián notes, however, the timeliness of his ‘Appeal for the Case of the Hungarian Theatre in Pest’, was directly linked to the parliamentary discussions regarding the Theatre scheduled for July 1839, and Bajza’s desire to influence public opinion.⁵⁸ This led to Bajza’s lengthy discourse with statesman and member of the Board of Directors, Pál Nyári concerning the financial burden of opera on the financial health of the theatre, including

⁵⁶ ‘Sőt, én voltam az, ki mindig mondtam, hogy opera kell, hogy az elkerülhetetlenül szükséges eszköz a színház által elérni szándékolt felsőbb célokra, csak hogy ne a színdarabok rovására és finánciális tekintetben úgy szerkesztette, hogy kárt ne tegyen a pénztárnak. Ki a magyar színházat egészen operaházzá akarná tenni, az nem érti ezen egész tárgyat. ...Én nemcsak ellensége nem vagyok az operának, sőt merem mondani, többet fáradtam annak megalapításában és előmozdításán, mint száz fecsegő, ki magát opera barátjának hirdeti, és annak hasznára egyebet nem tesz, mint hogy kurjongat, tapsol és éljenez, akár van helye, akár nincs, vagy sületlen dicséreteket írkal, mint Munkácsy.’ József Bajza, ‘Munkácsy 26 hazusága’, Szalai, *op. cit.*, 358-359.

⁵⁷ ‘Mert vajon, mi országos célt érünk mi el ezen, bár a magok nemében jeles *Normá*-kkal, *Beatrice*-kkel, *Bájital*-okkal stb.? Nyelvet terjesztünk-e vagy nemzetiséget? Én azt hiszem, egyiket sem. Nemzetiséget nem, mert ezen operák mind idegen termék, idegen tárgy és világ, idegen szín és karakter, idegen hang és érzés, olasz vagy francia, vagy német, de semmi esetre nem magyar... Senki nálam nagyobb tisztelője nem lehet a művészetnek, tűnjék az fel bárhol, szobrászi vagy képi, zene- vagy költői nemből: senki nálam jobban nem gyönyörködhetik egy jeles és jól adott operában, de hol a művészet nemzetiséggel jó ütközésbe, ott mindig e másodiknak fogom adni az elsőséget, s nekem, megvallom, nemzetiség árán művészet nem kell. Mi legyünk előbb nemzet, aztán gondolkodjunk művészetéről s művészi ízlésünk nemesítéséről. Nemzetiségünket ügyekezünk idegen befolyás nélkül saját magából kifejteni, úgy lesz az majd valódi, hasonló a franciához, angolhoz és spanyolhoz, hol az idegen is elváltoztatja karakterét és a nemzetihez simul, és különböző a némettől, mely világ majma. Nekünk mindent alá kell rendelnünk ezen fő eszmének: *nemzetiség*, s mindent s így a művészetet is ennek gyarapítására használunk. Legyen bár a művészet magában és magáért is becses, ha az még most nemzetiségünket gátolná, nem segíni, hanem inkább káros befolyását akadályoznunk kellene.’ József Bajza, ‘Szózat a pesti magyar színház ügyében’, Szalai, *op. cit.*, 418.

⁵⁸ Tibor Tallián, *Schödel, op. cit.*, 102-103.

references to the strain of maintaining an expensive *primadonna* (Schodel, with whom Nyári was romantically involved). Nyári argued that opera had ensured the survival of the theatre in the crucial initial years of its opening. However, in Bajza's view the crime of opera was not only its costly production, which he could forgive, if it had not so far failed to promote the linguistic Hungarianization of the Pest audiences.⁵⁹

Unlike contexts where an established corpus of plays and surrounding criticism determines what was perceived as political and by who,⁶⁰ when the *Pesti Magyar Színház* opened, allegorical representations of historical figures in contexts of contemporary socio-political tensions were only becoming established. The influence from contemporary literary models significantly impacted theorising with respect to Hungarian-language drama.

The liberals and radicals were concerned with 'the moral effect of the theatre', developing national consciousness, cultivating the Hungarian language, and spreading national culture 'to all social strata' (as demonstrated in the example of Vörösmarty's *Árpád ébredése*).⁶¹ The 'Athenaum' Triad' and the radicals were influenced by the classicism associated with Lessing and Goethe; German romanticism, namely A. W. Schlegel and Tieck, and classical as well as contemporary French dramatic repertoires, namely Victor Hugo in relation to the latter.⁶² The radicals were ardently pro-Shakespeare, and also adopted the 'organicism' ideals developed by

⁵⁹ He writes that opera is a universal language, and as such it is unable to cultivate the Hungarian language. See József Bajza, 'Szózat a pesti magyar színház ügyében' in Szalai *op. cit.*, 418. Tallián discusses Bajza's argument, that opera is a universal language, and as such unable to cultivate the Hungarian language: 'Érvelésükből kihangzott a féltékenység és frusztráció: az operának nem az volt a főbűne, hogy sokba került, hanem, hogy vonzotta a közönséget. Ha kisebb mértékben is, mint hívei hirdették, de jóval nagyobb mértékben, mint ellenfelei állították – mindenesetre nagyobb mértékben, mint a dráma. Készséggel akceptáljuk Bajza és köre érveit: az opera, ahogyan az 1830-as évek végének Magyar Színházában (és még sokáig később) művelték, nyelvileg nem mozdította elő a pesti közönség magyarosodását.' Tibor Tallián, 'Schodel Rozália és a hivatásos Magyar operajátszás kezdetei' (Akadémiai doktori értekezés, Budapest, 2011), 103.

⁶⁰ For example, scholars such as McGeary have been able to patently clarify contemporary understandings. As he puts it: 'We need not be paralyzed trying to ascertain whether an Italian opera was political or topical and whether modern political interpretations are plausible and historical. There is a wide range of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century plays and allegorical narratives in partisan periodicals that were recognized in their time as topical and political, from which we can derive criteria for assessing whether an opera was intended as, has the features of, or was received as political.' Thomas McGeary, *The Politics of Opera in Handel's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 25.

⁶¹ Krisztina Lajosi, *Staging the Nation: Opera and Nationalism in 19th-Century Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 38.

⁶² Ferenc Kerényi, 'Az operaháború', *op. cit.*, 135.

figures such as Schlegel, Lessing and Tieck (who identified the organicism ideals in Shakespeare's works).⁶³ They asserted that Hungarian drama should be boldly original.⁶⁴ Shakespeare's works were both widely performed, and influential models. This repertoire had been performed in Hungarian translations since the eighteenth century,⁶⁵ and were adopted enthusiastically by the liberals and radicals in the reform period. Prominent literary figures translated these works including Vörösmarty, Petőfi and János Arany,⁶⁶ and this repertoire informed theorising how historical figures and events should be presented on the stage. Gábor Egressy championed works such as *Coriolanus* (1605-1608) (the title-role of which became one of his most celebrated roles), which foreground politics, specifically, 'aristocratic arrogance, anti-popularism, the relationship between the great individual and the populous'.⁶⁷

Imre Henszlmann, an academic of several hats including literary criticism, championed Shakespeare's works and German models over French. Citing Hugo and Scribe amongst his examples, Henszlmann complained that stereotypes and trends were so entrenched in French literature, that there was a lack of authenticity, and therein, scant opportunity for originality.⁶⁸ József Eötvös, writer and champion of social equality in the upper chamber of the Diet, fundamentally disagreed. He wrote in 1837 that Hugo used art to promote public interests of his

⁶³ See Lajosi, *Staging the Nation*, *op. cit.*, 38-39.

⁶⁴ See Miklós Dolinszky, 'Irodalmi előzmények', in Gupcsó, Ágnes (ed.), *Székért dobott a nemzet szívébe: Erkel Ferenc három operája* Bátor Mária – Hunyadi László – Bánk bán. *Szövegkönyvek, tanulmányok* (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2011), 143-144.

⁶⁵ Shakespeare's works were frequently adapted to Hungarian historical settings prior to the reform era. See Robert K. Sarlos, 'Hungary' in John Gassner and Edward Quinn (eds.), *The Reader's Encyclopaedia of World Drama* (Devon: Dover, 2002), 439.

⁶⁶ See Alice Freifeld, *Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary, 1848-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 33.

⁶⁷ 'Arisztokrata gőg, népellenség, a nagy egyéniség és a tömeg viszonya – a reformkor közéletének és közéleti művészetének ismétlődő témái ezek'. Júlia Paraizs, "'Táblabírói jellemű leczkék" Egressy Gábor és Kossuth Lajos vitája az 1842-es Coriolanus-bemutató tükrében', *Irodalomtörténeti közlemények*, Vol.119, No.1 (2015), 109-110. Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* was first performed at the *Nemzeti Színház* on 25 January, 1842 (the fifth Shakespeare work in the repertoire at this point), a benefit piece for Gábor Egressy. It was initially performed in a translation from the German by Egressy and Dobrossy, later a translation from the English by Vörösmarty followed.

⁶⁸ Imre Henszlmann, 'Drámai jellemek', *Regélő*, 1842, 76-80, 'Az újabb francia színiköltészet és annak káros befolyása a miénkre' *Regélő* 1842, 247-246, reproduced in Szalai, *op. cit.*, 589-590. See also Tamás Bécsy, 'Az európai romantikus dráma – és színházfelfogás hatása a magyar fejlődésre' in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színház történet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 248.

own people, just as Shakespeare had in Britain.⁶⁹ Sándor Vachott (brother of Imre Vahot), engaged in Pest-Buda's literary life, involved in the Academy of Sciences and the Kisfauldy Society (and future secretary to Lajos Kossuth's revolutionary government), argued that obsession with dramatic effect on the stage placed Hungarian literature in jeopardy. Citing Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* (performed in Hungarian as *Böls Náthán*) published in 1779, Vachott writes that a lack of lively affect should not determine the quality of the work.⁷⁰ He writes that 'the stage must always be a tool, but the goal lies in the play itself',⁷¹ concluding:

Dramatists in our time focus on the stage and not on craftsmanship. As long as this is the case and as long as they view the stage as the place of judgement, their works could only lay claim to be on stage, not to possess inner value.⁷²

The relationship between earthly trespasses and society were central to understandings of tragedy in Hungary.⁷³ Critics frequently related the roles of tragedy, national fate and historical heroes in discourse surrounding the morally instructive function of the theatre in the opening years of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*. Such interpretations were broadly symptomatic of the period, in alignment with nineteenth century poetics: 'heroes do not act independently, but on the orders of higher powers and pre-destined fates.'⁷⁴ The 'national apocalyptic tradition' in Hungarian literature incorporated this heroism principle into specific trespasses in which historical sins relate to injustices of fate.⁷⁵ Historical figures became incorporated into cyclic representations of

⁶⁹ József Eötvös, 'Hugo Victor mint drámai költő' in Márta Mezei (ed.), *Eötvös József kultúra és nevelés* Eötvös József Művei (Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1976), 42.

⁷⁰ Szalai, *op. cit.*, 589-590.

⁷¹ 'Színpadnak mindenkor csak eszközül kell tekintetnie – a cél magában a színműben rejtezik.' Sándor Vachott, 'A színi hatás mint drámai becsmérték', Szalai, *op. cit.*, 234.

⁷² 'Drámaírók korunkban nagyobbára színpadnak s nem a literatúrának dolgoznak. Míg ez tart s ítélőszékül tekintendik s színpadot, műveik csak *színi* lehetnek becsesek, nem benső értékre is egyszersmind.' Sándor Vachott, 'A színi hatás mint drámai becsmérték', *Athenaeum*, 1838, Szalai, *op. cit.*, 234.

⁷³ Bécsy, *op. cit.*, 244.

⁷⁴ 'az eposzban a XIX. századi poétikák szerint a hősök nem önállóan cselekszenek, hanem felsőbb hatalmak megbízásából és egy eleve elrendelt sorsot betöltendő.' Péter Dávidházi, 'Kétségben apokalipszis és feltámadás között (A nemzethalál vörösmartys látomása Toldy irodalomtörténetében', *Alföld*, Vol.53, No.1 (2002), 50.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

‘sinful’ history. The shift from ‘individual guilt’ to ‘collective guilt’ meant the ‘narrowing of a one-time universal apocalypse’ (Christian eschatology), to ‘a fear of Hungarian nation-death’.⁷⁶

Toldy offers the examples of Rákóczi, Árpád, the Hunyadis, and Zrínyi:⁷⁷ figures whose deeds centred around founding or defending the nation, and yet whose lives became defeat narratives. In 1836, Vörösmarty’s *Szózat* urges that if an apocalypse belies the Hungarians, they must meet it stoically.⁷⁸ In political rhetoric, Kossuth published political calls to arms through language littered with references to ‘eternal law’,⁷⁹ the Hungarian ‘curse’,⁸⁰ and the ‘Day of Judgement’.⁸¹ The sinful conduct of historical figures was understood as reverberating throughout the centuries, leading to a contemporary politically oppressed context vulnerable to ‘nation death’, and had repercussions in drama. The inheritance of divine wrath and punishment were incorporated into newer ideological currents which related individuals to society, and in turn, to collective fate. Ferenc Kölcsey understood a cyclic ‘socio-historical’ (*társadalmi-történelmi*) interpretation as rooted in the Hungarian people: he viewed ‘fate’ and society as indivisible.⁸²

Characteristically for the liberal literary faction, concerned with a piece’s universality,⁸³ Vörösmarty condemned the protagonist of László Teleki’s *Kegyenc* (1841), a play based on Petronius Maximus. He contended that the protagonists’ actions could not be forgiven under the

⁷⁶ ‘Amint a középkori lélek az egyéni büntudatot kollektív büntudattá, az egyéni halált közösségi halállá, egyetemes és egyszeri pusztulássá szélesítette, úgy a magyar lélek a kollektív büntudatot magyar büntudattá avatja s az egyetemes halál veszedelmét magyar nemzethalál-félelemmé szűkíti.’ József Isák, *Nemzethalál-félelem a régi magyar költészetben* Erdélyi tudományos füzetek 204 (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 1947), 9.

⁷⁷ Ferenc Toldy, ‘Végszó az eposzi s drámai korról és drámai literatúránkról’, reproduced in Szalai, *op. cit.*, 341.

⁷⁸ See Chapter 2 for an outline of the *nemzethalál* tradition in reform-era Hungary.

⁷⁹ ‘Az örökkévaló isten nem egyes csodákban, hanem általános törvényekben nyilatkozik. Isten örök törvénye, hogy a ki magát elhagyja, azaz istentől is elhagyatik. Örök törvény, hogy a ki magán segít, azt az isten is megsegíti. Isten törvénye, hogy a hitszegés végeredményben maga magát bünteti meg. Isten törvénye, hogy a ki a hitszegésnek, az igazságtalanságnak szolgál, az igazságnak diadalát készíti elő akaratlanul.’ Lajos Kossuth, *Kossuth Hírlapja*, 19 September 1848, 313.

⁸⁰ ‘A magyarnak tehát most csak két teendője van. Egyik: felállani tömegben a haza földét megszállott ellenség agyonnyomására. – A másik: “emlékezni.” Ha a magyar a kettőt nem teszi ...akkor a magyar olly istentől elátkozott nép, mellytől a levegő meg fogja tagadni éltető erejét, mellynek kezei alatt a tevény buza föld sivatag homokká fog változni, mellynek közelítésekor kiaszik a szomszéd enyhítő forrás, ki hontalanul bujdosandik a földhátán, ki hiában kéri az irgalomtól az alamizsnának száraz kenyerét, ki alamizsna helyett arcúl csapand az idegen faj, melly őt saját hazájában vándor koldussá teendí, kit mint a gazdátlan ebet, büntetlenül verend agyon bármelly gazember; olyanná lesz, mint a belpoklos, kit minden ember kerül, mint az indus pária, kire az ebeket uszítják.’ *ibid.*

⁸¹ ‘gyűljön össze az egész magyar nép, mint összegyűlend ítélet napjakor a feltámadott emberiség’ *ibid.*

⁸² Tamás Bécsy, ‘Az európai romantikus dráma- és színházfelfogás hatása a magyar fejlődésre’, in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színház-történet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 245.

⁸³ Dolinszky, ‘Irodalmi előzmények’, *op. cit.*, 144-145.

laws common to mankind.⁸⁴ Grappling with external forces whilst maintaining virtuous traits was critical to reconciling the individual with society.⁸⁵ If a ‘bad’ character does not possess basic redeeming qualities, then, in Vörösmarty’s view, ‘we feel no pity’, but further, we ‘become afraid of the triumph of a sinful power’.⁸⁶ If a character who retains redeeming qualities commits sins, it is not frightful in the way it is for an inherently bad character in a powerful position. In Teleki’s depiction, Petronius Maximus is vengeful, and therein his impulsive actions stem from sin, not from a virtuous passion, such as love or justice.⁸⁷ In Vörösmarty’s view, a historical figure can only be reconciled with society if his hubris stems from virtue.

Literary influences were linked to morality in these polemics. Regarding appropriate influences on which to model Hungarian literature meant the merits of German or French models became linked the state of literary culture to societal progression and political ideology. These ideas form crucial backdrops to understanding Erkel’s use of Hungarian history in *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László*. These theoretical contexts facilitate interpreting what otherwise appear to be paradoxical uses of history or curiosities as works deeply entrenched in contemporary self-identities mediated through the past and concerned with the future. The crossover between artistic matters and politics was rooted in anxieties for the future of art, language and culture. For pro-theatre camps, nurturing the international operatic genre and repertoire would have grave repercussions for national art, and nurturing original drama would be a guard against national obscurity. In this context, it is clear why the liberals and radicals felt so threatened by Erkel and Schodel’s successes in operatic performances at the *Pesti Magyar Színház*: an institution conceived for cultivating Hungarian-language drama.

Though the liberals and radicals railed against opera as an elitist genre, as opposed to their goals of uniting and educating a stratified society, it was ultimately Erkel’s operas which

⁸⁴ Mihály Vörösmarty ‘Teleki László kegyencéről’ in Pál Gyulai (ed.), *Vörösmarty Mihály munkái* VI. Kötet: Dramaturgiai lapok (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1904), 76.

⁸⁵ Bécsy, *op. cit.*, 255.

⁸⁶ Bécsy, *op. cit.*, 256.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

proved widespread, enduring works drawn from Hungarian history whilst appealing to large (socially) diverse audiences. The following section outlines the repertoire and representation of the audience in Pest-Buda, demonstrating the demand for drama and opera, and illuminating the repertoires with which Erkel was familiar with as he broached composing his own operas.

Pest-Buda Audiences and Repertoires

In nineteenth-century multi-lingual Pest-Buda, musical-theatrical institutions were defined largely by language, although the repertoire of the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth* was less linguistically rigid than its newer Hungarian counterpart. German-language theatre enjoyed a continuous tradition in Pest since 1774,⁸⁸ based originally at the ‘Rondella’ theatre located on the Danube. The German theatre was taken over temporarily by the Hungarian travelling troupe, when the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*, Pest City German Theatre, opened in 1812.⁸⁹ The ‘German’ theatre staged plays—sometimes even performed in Hungarian—*singspiele*, and a frequent and varied opera repertoire, including French Grand opera and *Opéra comique*, in the reform period.⁹⁰ Rossini was the most frequently performed Italian composer at the German-language institution: between 1820 and 1840 the most frequently performed Rossini pieces were staged upwards of ninety times.⁹¹ Donizetti and Bellini⁹² were also relatively frequently staged. Of Mozart’s stage works, *Don Juan* and *Zauberflöte* were performed more than 100 and 90 times

⁸⁸ In the final decade of the eighteenth century, Salieri, Paisiello, Dittersdorf and Mozart operas were the most frequently performed repertoire in Pest. See Pándi Marianne, *Hangászati mulatságok: A 19. század magyar zenei élete a kritikák tükrében* (Budapest: Mágus Kiadó, 2001), 11.

⁸⁹ Mihály Cenner, ‘Erkel Ferenc a Pesti Városi (Német) Színházban’, in Ferenc Bónis (ed.), *Erkel Ferencről és koráról* (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 1995), 39.

⁹⁰ Cenner, *op. cit.*, 39–41. From Auber, the following works were staged by the mid 1840s (number of performances are stated in brackets): *Gustave III* (42), *La fiancée* (17), *Le serment* (8), *Fra Diavolo* (47), *La maçon* (20) and *La muette di Portici* (57). Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots* (27), and *Robert le diable* (59), Boieldieu’s *Jean de Paris* (114), *La dame blanche* (55) were staged alongside Dalayrac’s *Les deux mots* (33), Méhul’s *Joseph* (72), Halévy’s *La juive* (41), *Guido et Ginevra* (16), Hérold’s *Zampa* (53), and Adam’s *Le Postillon de Lonjumeau* (15). Barna, ‘Erkel Ferenc első operái’, *op. cit.*, 188.

⁹¹ The most frequently performed Rossini operas were *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (staged 96 times), *Otello* (81), *La cenerentola* (47), and *Tancredi*, (89). Barna, *op. cit.*, 187.

⁹² *L’elisir d’amore* was performed 48 times, and *Belisario* 28 times between 1838 and 1846, amongst single-digit runs of *Anna Bolena* in the 1830s, *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 1840, and *Il furioso all’isola di San Domingo*, performed five times between 1836 and 1844. *Beatrice di Tenda* was staged a dozen times between 1822 and 1838. Between the early 1830s and mid 1840s, *La Straniera*, *I Capuleti e I Montecchi*, *La Sonnambula*, *Norma* and *I Puritani* were performed 23, 56, 49, 91, and 26 times respectively. Barna, *ibid.*

respectively in the first half of the nineteenth century. *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Spohr's *Faust*, and Weber's *Der Freischütz*, *Oberon* and *Preciosa* were also relatively successful pieces in the repertoire of the *Königliche Städtische Theater* in the reform period.⁹³

In 1787, the *Budai Várszínház*, Buda Castle Theatre, was constructed from a Carmelite Church upon the request of Joseph II. With a capacity of 1200, intended for entertaining officials relocated from Pozsony (Bratislava) to Buda,⁹⁴ the theatre also catered to the large middle-class population of the twin cities alongside the aristocracy. The Hungarian troupe first set up at the *Várszínház* in Buda in 1833. Quickly realising financial stability involved successfully competing with the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*, the season of 1834 set out with the goal of performing an updated and musically-orientated repertoire. However, practical limitations including scant available musical forces meant the *Várszínház* largely continued the practices of the travelling troupe.⁹⁵ The repertoire comprised a variety of translated foreign plays as well as Hungarian-language works, adapted and translated Viennese *singspiele* and emulations by local composers performed with musical inserts including opera arias, other sung pieces such as laments and ballads, and *verbunkos* interludes or dances.⁹⁶ The practice of translating Viennese *singspiele* was established already in Pest-Buda in the late eighteenth century, namely by László Kelemen's travelling theatre troupe company, based in the twin cities between 1790 and 1796.⁹⁷ Italian, French and German operas were also performed in Hungarian translations, altered to fit the abilities of the cast and with recitative usually substituted for spoken dialogue.⁹⁸ In general, musicians frequently worked between the Pest-Buda theatres as required, and stationed military bands were often also hired for particular performances. Once the *Pesti Magyar Színház* opened,

⁹³ Barna, *op. cit.*, 188.

⁹⁴ Edit Mályuszné Császár, 'A Német színészet hazánkban' in György Székely (ed.) *Magyar színháztörténet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1990), 36.

⁹⁵ Gurmai, *op. cit.*, 96.

⁹⁶ Ferenc Kerényi, 'Magyar színészet Pest-Budán (1790-1796)' in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar színháztörténet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 76.

⁹⁷ Kerényi, *op. cit.*, 76.

⁹⁸ See Gurmai, *op. cit.*, 89-100.

military bands, when available and when finances allowed, were frequently hired to perform operatic *banda* scenes.⁹⁹

The Hungarian troupe's performance initiating their semi-permanent rental of the *Várszínház* on 23 March 1834, provides an impression of the nature of the mixed programs in the ensuing years. The evening included overtures by Hungarian composers József Heinisch and György Arnold, followed by sung pieces from Mercadante's *Elisa e Claudio* (1821) (*Eliza és Claudio*),¹⁰⁰ Rossini's *Tancredi* (1813) (*Tankréd*), a play by Károly Kisfaludi (*Keményi Simon* (1820)) and the Arnold-Heinisch collaboration, *Mátyás király választása*, 'The Election of King Matthias' (1829).¹⁰¹ The first opera season, however, was only attempted in 1835. In April, the troupe staged Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in a Hungarian translation under Erkel's baton: his conducting debut in Pest-Buda. In November, they performed Weber's *Der Freischütz* in a translation by József Szerdahelyi (future theatrical director of the *Nemzeti Színház*) who performed the role of Caspar (Gáspár), alongside acclaimed actor-singers who formed the core of the theatrical staff at the opening of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*. József Erkel, Ferenc Erkel's younger brother, performed the role of Ottokar (Ottokár), Róza Déryné Széppataki,¹⁰² Hungary's first widely-acknowledged *primadonna*, starred as Agathe (Agátha), Márton Lendvay (who later starred as Árpád in the premiere of *Árpád ébredése* on the opening night of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*) performed the role of Max, alongside Béni Egressy as Kilian (Kilián). By the end of the year, as Erkel prepared for his new post as second conductor at the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*, he had also led performances of Rossini's *Tancredi*, Cherubini's *Les deux journées* (*Párisi*

⁹⁹ Gurmai, *op. cit.*, 96, see also Tallián, *Schödel, op. cit.*, 71. Erkel also used on-stage *banda* in his pre-revolution operas (discussed in the following chapters).

¹⁰⁰ Hungarian versions of opera titles are presented in brackets when first mentioned. Subsequently, I use the original title, though performances of foreign-language operas and other musical and dramatic pieces were staged in Hungarian translations at the *Várszínház* and the *Pesti Magyar Színház*.

¹⁰¹ Gurmai, *op. cit.*, 94.

¹⁰² 1793-1872, born Rozália Schenbach in Jászberény in 1793 and living until 1872, she later became known as Róza Déryné Széppataki. Déryné found acclaim as both a dramatic actress and opera singer, performing with travelling theatre troupes in theatres across former greater Hungary. She was particularly noted for her roles in Rossini operas and as the title role in Bellini's *Norma*. Péter Várnai, *Operalexikon* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1975), 87.

vízholdó), Auber's *Fra Diavolo*, Boïeldieu's *Jean de Paris* (*Párizsi János*), Hérolds *Zampa*, Weber's *Preciosa*, Mercadante's *Elisa e Claudio* and József Ruzitska's *Béla futása* at the *Várszínház*.¹⁰³

The relationship between audience demographic and genre in Hungarian-language performance is demonstrated already in the discrepancy between the *Várszínház* directors, András Fáy and Gábor Döbrentei. The latter aspired to nurture audiences comprised of aristocrats and the German-speaking population of Buda and Pest by means of programs consisting of songs and dances. Fáy, by contrast, sought revenue through staging original Hungarian-language prose drama.¹⁰⁴ The sales for Rossini's *Tancredi* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and two original pieces by Hungarian authors (plays by Kisfaludi and Munkácsy) competed in popularity. What is clear is that the cheaper ground floor tickets—soldiers, students and the intelligentsia class—proved popular for the local pieces, and these affordable ticket sales dipped for *Tancredi*.¹⁰⁵ Audience patterns which demonstrate the interest from lower strata in the local lighter genres and generally large sales for operas across the board would continue with the opening of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*.

Dérnyé's departure from Buda in November, and the logistical difficulties the audience had to endure in reaching the theatre during the winter months, made the financial stability of the theatre trying, and the troupe essentially disbanded in April 1837.¹⁰⁶ Erkel accepted a post as second conductor at the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*. This important though brief role provided the opportunity to conduct a substantial and contemporary operatic repertoire with highly trained singers.¹⁰⁷ During Erkel's 'German' seasons the repertoire at the institution was

¹⁰³ See Németh, *op. cit.*, 56-60.

¹⁰⁴ Ferenc Kerényi, 'Az operaháború', *op. cit.*, 112.

¹⁰⁵ Kerényi, *op. cit.*, 113.

¹⁰⁶ See Ferenc Kerényi, 'A Pesti Magyar Színház építése és megszervezése', *op. cit.*, 230.

¹⁰⁷ In April 1836 he conducted Marianna Ernst from the Hofopertheater, and in May, and Henriette Carl (1802-1890) was the 'star' guest at the German Theatre between 1835-1850, with performances in *Norma*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and *Tancredi*. Cenner, *op. cit.*, 43. See also Várnai, *op. cit.*, 61.

dominated by Italian composers. Rossini,¹⁰⁸ Bellini¹⁰⁹ as well as Auber¹¹⁰ were the most frequently performed composers, alongside a variety of contemporary composers and older pieces.¹¹¹

Although conductors were not specified on the playbills at this time, Amadé Németh estimates that of the two hundred and ten opera performances during Erkel's employment, Erkel conducted between half and two-thirds (the remainder by first conductor, Johann Grill).¹¹²

In the opening years of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*, the program consisted of both inherited pieces from the travelling troupe performed at the *Várszínház* and attempts to update the repertoire and conquer new operatic sub-genres. The first opera performances, conducted by Heinisch in the months before Erkel's contract, were *Il barbiere di Siviglia* on the 29 August, Dalayrac's *Deux mots* (*Két szó*) on the 10 September, Hérold's *Zampa* on the 30 September, and two Bellini *tragedia lirica* premièred: *Norma* (1831) on 28 October (starring Déryné in the title-role), repeated two days later (starring Schodel), and *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (1830) featuring both leading ladies as the star-crossed couple. Excerpts of *La straniera* were performed on the 21 December, and the full work on the 6 January 1838.¹¹³

Alongside Erkel's post at the *Pesti Magyar Színház* came his authority to shape performance practice. During the opening season of 1837, orchestral forces were still modest, though improved from the conditions of the *Várszínház*, and Erkel quickly hired a succession of

¹⁰⁸ Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* eleven times, *Guillaume Tell* (*Tell Vilmos*) nine times, five performances each of *Otello* (*Othello*), *Tancredi*, and *Semiramide* (*Szemiramisz*), and one performance of *La Cenerentola* (*Hamupipóke*) and *Le siège de Corinthe* (*Korinthosz ostroma*).

¹⁰⁹ 23 performances of *Norma*, twelve of *La sonnambula* (*Az alvajáró*), nine of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (*Montecchi és Capuletti*), seven of *I puritani* (*A puritánok*), four of *La straniera* (*Az ismeretlen nő*), and two *Il pirata* (*A kalóz*).

¹¹⁰ 23 performances of Auber's *Gustave III* (*Bál éj*), eight of *La muette de Portici* (*A portici néma*), four of *Fra Diavolo*, *La fiancée* (*A menyasszony*), *Lestocq, ou L'intrigue et l'amour* (*A lestock*) twice, and *La Neige, ou Le nouvel Éginhard* (*A hó*) twice.

¹¹¹ Donizetti's *Il furioso all'isola di San Domingo* (*A St. Domingói őrült*) was performed once, as was Paër's *Camilla*, and Spontini's *La vestale* (*Veszta szűz*). Carlo Coccia's *Cateina di Guise* (*Catharina di Guise*) was performed twice, Chélaré's *Macbeth* three times, Halévy's *La Juive* (*Zsidónő*) fourteen times, Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* (*Ördög Róbert*) six times, Hérold's *Zampa* six times, Boieldieu's *Jean de Paris* four times, and *La dame blanche* (*A fehér nő*) twice, Adam's *Le Postillon de Lonjumeau* (*A lonjumeau postakocsis*) four times, Méhul's *Le Trésor suppose, ou le danger d'écouter aux portes* (*Kincs kereső*) once, Grétry's *Raoul barbe-bleu* (*A kékszakállú herceg*) once, Gornis Gasparo once, and Cherubini's *Lodoïska* once. Mozart *Don Giovanni* (*Don Juan*) was performed seven times, Beethoven's *Fidelio* twice, Weber's *Der Freischütz* (*Bűvös vadász*) seven times, and *Preciosa* once, Spohr's *Faust* once, Wenzel Müller's *Die Schwestern von Prag* (*Prágai nővérek*) once and *Das neue Sonntagskind* (*Új szombatgyermek*) once. Németh, *op. cit.*, 62-63.

¹¹² Németh, *op. cit.*, 64.

¹¹³ Németh, *op. cit.*, 65.

musicians to expand and improve the orchestra to the capabilities of contemporary operatic repertoires.¹¹⁴ In the following year, further Bellini *tragedia lirici* premiered: *Beatrice di Tenda* (1833) (as the Pest-Buda première ahead of the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*) as well as Spontini's *La Vestale* (1807), and two comedies: Auber's *Fra Diavolo* (1830) and Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* (*Szerelmi bájtal*) (1832). Ruzitska's *Béla futása*, (1822, first performed in Buda and Pest in 1826) was staged, alongside Weber's *Der Freischütz*, and another revival of Hérold's *opéras comiques*: *Marie* (1826). In total, between the end of August 1837 and the end of 1838, there were eighty opera performances.¹¹⁵

In 1839, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787), and an adapted version of Hennenberg's Viennese singspiel *Die Zaubertrommel* (*Csörgősipka*) were introduced to the repertoire. The first Hungarian comic opera, *Csel*, 'Ruse' by András Bartay, premiered at the end of April, initially attracting large audiences (a general trend for local comic musical-theatrical hybrid pieces), though did not prove a lasting success (the work is lost, though a *verbunkos* number and *Adagio* survive through Erkel's published piano variations).¹¹⁶ A handful of Hungarian-language premières of works by foreign composers also featured in 1839. A four-act version of Mercadante's *Il giuramento* (*Eskü*) (1837), first performed on the 12 January, orchestrated from a vocal reduction score by Erkel and concertmaster Kirchlehner¹¹⁷ featured on the programme, alongside Auber's *Gustave III* (*Bál éj*), and Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Auber's piece, in a translation by Szerdahelyi, was a particular success, as was *Fidelio* for musical as well as extra-musical reasons. As Németh notes, the latter was the first major 'test' of the institution, in which the German press and audiences from the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth* would place the young institution

¹¹⁴ In the opening year of the *Magyar Színház*, the instrumentalists employed were listed as follows: four each of first and second violins, two violas, four cello and contrabass (two each, or doubled), three flutes, two clarinets, one oboe, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets and one percussion. The orchestra expanded modestly but steadily in the following years, to 46 total instrumentalists by 1867. Tallián, 'Opernorchester', *op. cit.*, 180-181; 193.

¹¹⁵ Németh, *op. cit.*, 66.

¹¹⁶ See Katalin Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-műhely. Közös munka Erkel Ferenc színpadi műveiben (1840-1857)' (Doctoral Dissertation, Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem, 2012), 23-28.

¹¹⁷ See Martin Elek, 'Mercadante *Il giuramento* című operája a Nemzeti Színházban. Betekintés az intézmény 19. századi előadói gyakorlatába' (MA Thesis, Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem, 2019), 18.

under scrutiny.¹¹⁸ Three Donizetti works starring Schodel brought success by contrast with Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. *Gemma di Vergy* (1834) again superseded the *Königliche Städtische Theater* as the Pest-Buda première, alongside two further Donizetti staging's: one tragedy, *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833), and an earlier *buffa*: *Il borgomastro di Saardam* (*A saardami polgármester*) (1827).¹¹⁹ The Donizetti tragedies, as Tallián puts it, were the two 'monsters' through which Schodel wanted to prove herself as a powerful tragic heroine,¹²⁰ and likely influenced Erkel's first opera (see Chapter 4). In total, of the ninety opera performances at the *Pesti Magyar Színház* in 1839, a similar distribution of the repertoire amongst Italian, French, German and local composers continued. There were sixty performances of Italian works, twenty-three French, nine German, and two Hungarian.

At this point in the Theatre's history, material factors largely dictated the operatic repertoire: the materials for the operas performed until the beginning of 1838 were inherited from Miklós Udvarhelyi's¹²¹ collection and from those in Schodel's possession. When Heinisch passed away on the 7 November 1840, the theatre inherited his collection of scores and performance materials.¹²² Otherwise, scores were often ordered from the agent Franz Holding in Vienna, which were then translated from German into Hungarian (regardless of the work's original language). The archival material also shows cases where conducting scores, piano scores, libretti and later also staging manuals were ordered directly from Ricordi in Milan.¹²³ Contemporary operas also sometimes came to the theatre by way of singers acting as 'agents'. Schodel brought from Vienna five Donizetti operas in early 1839: *Otto Mesi in due ore, ossia Gli esiliati in Siberia* (*Nyolc hónap két órában, avagy a sziibériai menekültek*) (1827), *Il borgomastro di Saardam*,

¹¹⁸ Németh, *op. cit.*, 66.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ Tallián, *Schodel*, *op. cit.*, 380.

¹²¹ Udvarhelyi (1792-1864) was an actor (as a singer, a bass) who had toured Hungary and spent time at the Kolozsvár Theatre before joining the *Nemzeti Színház*.

¹²² Németh, *op. cit.*, 65.

¹²³ Tibor Tallián, 'Opemorchester', *op. cit.*, 205.

Gianni di Calais (*Calais-i János*) (1828), *Marino Faliero* (1835), and *Roberto Devereux* (*Devereux Róbert*) (1837).¹²⁴

In 1839, the second full year of the *Magyar Színház*, ticket sales illuminate ‘where the opera and drama parties are located in the auditorium.’¹²⁵ Drama, whether Shakespeare, pieces from German classicism, internationally popular contemporary French pieces, or original Hungarian-language works do not match the operatic successes frequented by the aristocracy, county and public officials, and their spouses. However, the new aspect of audience competition is the sustained presence of a civic audience, the *petit bourgeoisie* (*kispolgárság*) and students. Statistically, it is clear the latter group generally favoured fairy tale plays (*tündérbobózat*) over other musical genres, but that for spoken theatre (whether foreign translations or Hungarian-language works) the gallery was always fuller than at any other time. For example, Tern-Gaál’s fairytale play *A peleskei nótárius*, ‘The Notary of Peleske’ was sold out in October of 1838, whereas Lajos Juthy’s tragic play *Fejér és Fekete*, ‘White and Black’ barely filled a quarter of the available capacity. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* filled less than a third, and Dumas’s tragic play *Caligula* (1838) sold well by comparison with drama audiences, but still less than half of the theatre’s capacity. The expensive seats for the aristocratic audiences demonstrate consistently their enthusiasm for opera, and drama was therefore always low overall by comparison. Donizetti’s *L’elisir d’amore*, and Mercadante’s *Il giuramento* filled more than two-thirds of the theatre by contrast.¹²⁶

The première of Bartay’s comic opera *Csel* sold just over 1600 of a capacity of 2304, more than 300 more than Beethoven’s *Fidelio* at the end of the year.¹²⁷ *Il giuramento* in early January 1839 show over 800 sales of the ground floor tickets of a capacity of 900, costing one forint per ticket. The 200 available cheaper seats, costing 0.30 forints, were nearly sold out. The second most expensive seats, aside from boxes, for 0.40 forints, on the second floor, sold 220

¹²⁴ Tibor Tallán, *Schodel*, *op. cit.*, 89.

¹²⁵ Ferenc Kerényi, ‘Az operaháború’, *op. cit.*, 132.

¹²⁶ Ferenc Kerényi, ‘A Pesti Magyar Színháztól a Nemzeti Színházig (1837-1840)’ in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar színház történet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 281.

¹²⁷ Kerényi, ‘A Pesti Magyar Színháztól a Nemzeti Színházig (1837-1840)’, *op. cit.*, 282.

out of a capacity of just over 320, and 455 out of a capacity of 700 for the cheapest (gallery, mostly standing) tickets.¹²⁸ The boxes were almost full. József Katona's original play *Bánk bán*, centred on power struggles and corruption at the medieval Hungarian court, staged as a 'benefit performance' for the leader of the radical actors, Gábor Egressy, shows a different representation of audience distribution. The boxes, ground floor and second floor filled a third or less (by comparison, the Mercadante piece approached full capacity). The gallery, however, was still nearly half full.¹²⁹

In the 1840s, a new genre began to win successes on the stage of the *Nemzeti Színház*: the *népszínmű*, 'folk play'. Ede Szigligeti is particularly associated with the successes of this genre and collaborated with Erkel on several works.¹³⁰ These pieces were influenced by *volksstück* and *vaudeville* theatre, and portrayed scenes from everyday life through dialect and folk-like popular songs (which Erkel rather orchestrated and set than composed).¹³¹ Though some drama-advocates viewed the *népszínmű* as detrimental to the Hungarian stage, primarily because of its borrowing of Viennese models transplanted into Hungarian scenarios,¹³² the radicals who aligned with this genre championed the societal representations: of villagers, townsmen, and the use of 'folk' songs and dialect, and the opportunity for propaganda.¹³³ Opera emerged triumphant from the opera war, in the sense that that by 1840 the majority of the repertoire was opera performances (even though the institution was established for the cultivation of Hungarian-language drama). However, in the 1840s, and especially approaching and during the revolutionary year of 1848, the programme reflected a potently nationalistic programme (outlined in Chapter 5). Erkel's first opera, *Bátori Mária* was composed amidst a repertoire

¹²⁸ The exception being the 20 tickets set aside for soldiers, who paid only 0.10 forints. Record sales book of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*. National Széchényi Library, Music Collection. (No call number).

¹²⁹ Kerényi, 'A Pesti Magyar Színháztól a Nemzeti Színházig (1837-1840)', *op. cit.*, 278.

¹³⁰ Collaborations included the following *népszínmű*: *A kalandor* (1844), *Két pisztoly* (1844), *Debreceni rüppők* (1845), *A rab* (1845), *A zsidó* (1845), *Egy székrény rejtelve* (1846), and *Salvator Rosa* (1855).

¹³¹ Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-műhely', *op. cit.*, 89-143.

¹³² Szacsvai Kim, *op. cit.*, 90.

¹³³ Ferenc Kerényi, 'A Nemzeti Színház a polgári forradalom előestéjén (1840-1848)' in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színházstörténet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 310.

dominated by foreign operatic works (performed in Hungarian-language translations), whereas his subsequent work, *Hunyadi László*, reflects an increasingly nationalistic programme.

By the 1840s, opera enthusiasts enjoyed regular and frequently updated repertoire at the *Nemzeti Színház*. The liberals had suffered something of a defeat with Bajza's resignation and ensuing legal suits (discussed below). Nevertheless, as indicated above, translations of Shakespeare, other foreign pieces and local plays were regularly performed, if not always to lively audiences. The rise of the *népszínmű* in the years approaching the revolution reflect the growing radical nationalist republican movement led by 'poet of the people' Sándor Petőfi.¹³⁴ The genre which had not yet kept pace with other cultural advancements in the reform period, was tragic, historical or even decidedly successful, operatic works in Hungarian. The literary culture which sought to glorify, lament and speculate the future through Hungary's past functioned parallel to nation-building projects, including realising the National Theatre project. Fighting the spectre of national apocalypse meant monumentalising the past through a medium which could be conducive to society. Until 1840, an attempt to create an operatic work to these ends was still outstanding.

¹³⁴ For example, see Sándor Petőfi, with commentary from Zoltánné Ésik and Béláné Czúth (eds.), *Petőfiről, Petőfitől: a költő születésének 150. évfordulóján* (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1973), 334.

From Page to Stage

If such dishonourable parodying should continue, I will be the first to withdraw my support from our theatre but further, will advocate for others to follow suit. I will regret to have ever supported the theatre with any small donation ...because I don't want to be a supporter of an institution that disseminates such rudeness and indignity, and I don't wish such a thing to exist in my nation so that other countries could pour scorn and shame on it.

Gábor Mátray, *Honművész*, 6 January 1839.¹³⁵

Advocacy? Who are you to withdraw your support and to make such threats? ...So our entire institution is nothing to you save for this (admittedly significant) member?

József Bajza, *Athenaum*, 17 January 1839.¹³⁶

In preparing the programme for the *Magyar Színház*, the Board of Directors necessarily prioritized material factors in selection criteria. The Board agreed almost from the outset that to facilitate the successful staging of operatic repertoire needed singers of competitively high calibre to contend with the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*. However, to secure such artists meant offering salaries competitive to what such singers could earn abroad. The most desirable candidate for a resident *primadonna* for the *Pesti Magyar Színház* a native Hungarian-speaking soprano with international successes already under her belt, was Rozália Schodel-Klein: twenty-six years old upon her first (guest) appearances at the *Pesti Magyar Színház* in 1837.

¹³⁵ 'Bizonyos, hogy illy parodiázás következménye a' sértés: már pedig, hogy a' sértett fél 's ennek pártja nem marad barátja olly intézetnek, hol nyilvános pelengérré tétetik, hogy e' szerint (a' nélkül is intézetünk számos ellenségei mellett) visszavonják magukat annak látogatásától, kétséget sem szenved. ...Ha igen, és ha illy becstelen parodiázások tovább is folytatnak, ugy én leszek első, ki nem csak pártolásomat színházunktól megvonom, hanem a' visszavonulásra másokat is ösztönözöndek; sőt örökké sajnálni fogom, hogy valaha legkisebb adakozással is járultam e színház felsegítésére, vagy hogy azon pénzmennyiséget átaladtam, melyet ugyan azon célra több buzgó hazafiaktól összeszerezni szerencsém volt; mert olly intézetnek, melly durvaságok, nemtelenségek terjesztőjévé akar válni, pártolója lenni nem kívánok, 's nem ohajtom, hogy honomban illyes létezvén, arra a' külföld szégyent 's gyalázatot hirdessen.' Gábor Mátray, 'A' parodiázás budapesti magyar szinpadunkon', *Honművész*, 6 January, 1839, 15.

¹³⁶ 'Nem fog-e valaki ezek közül legalább is megbotráncozva így szólani: „Pártolás? Kicsoda ön, mi féle kis király, hogy pártolását akarja megvonni, hogy illyennel jónak véli fenyegetőzhetni? 'S másokat is le akar beszélni a' magyar színház” pártolásáról? Ennek vagy lesz kitűnő foganatja, vagy nem; ha lesz, milly kárhozatos; ha nem, milly nevetséges. 'S miért akarja ön a' magyar színházat megdönteni, vagy ellenkező esetben magát multság tárgyaul kitenni? *Mivel egy dalszínész nő mozgásait egy dalszínész utánozta!* Tehát ön előtt az egész magyar színház semmi 's csak egy (noha megvalljuk jeles) énekesné minden; ha a' kettő ütközésbe jó, amannak, a' nemzeti, olly rég ohajtott 's nehezen létesült, intézetnek veszni kell? Magyarázza meg ön nekünk, milly neme az a' hazafiságnak, midőn valaki egy egész számos *tagokból 's nézőkből* vegyes intézetet egy megbántott énekesnő haragjának 's egy kis öszszeütközésnek minden tétovázás nélkül feláldozni kész? Sőt nem is szükség, hogy ütközésbe jöjenek.' József Bajza, 'Krónikánk, Schodelné, 's a' *Honművész*, *Athenaum*, 17 January 1839, 79.

Plans to separate the operatic and theatrical divisions meant it was necessary to define genre and casting roles. This disturbed the long-established practices and job security of previous members of the theatre troupe, who now comprised a large percentage of the *Pesti Magyar Színház* performing staff. The Board of Directors stipulated that it was necessary to distinguish between members of the theatre who were ‘song-actors’ and those who were specifically opera singers. In several cases, this out-right downgraded the ‘song-actor’, many of whom had sang operas in the opening years, but who nevertheless did not have the training or technique necessary for the contemporary operatic repertoire.¹³⁷

The struggle to cultivate contemporary opera performance at a competitively high level of European opera houses was symbolically represented by the shift from Déryné to Schodel. The former represented the repertoire of *singspiel* and *opéra comique* inherited from the practices of the theatre troupe, and which had sustained the Hungarian-language programme of the *Várszínház* in Buda. Déryné was the first native Hungarian-speaking actress-singer of acclaim, but she was not trained to conquer the vocal demands of a *primadonna* with which the opera-loving audiences expected from the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*, and from the *Kärntnertortheater* in Vienna, frequented by the wealthy Hungarian aristocracy who resided partially in Pest-Buda.¹³⁸ Déryné’s valedictory performance on the 31 October 1838 was as Romeo alongside Schodel as Juliet in Bellini’s *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (1830).¹³⁹ The theatre embarked on a new era of opera performance. Although relations between the leading ladies were cordial, the tensions between spoken theatre delivered by ‘actor-singers’ and the specialised skillsets of opera singers on the stage of the *Magyar Színház* was not otherwise smooth within the daily operations of the theatre.

Practically with the ink still wet on the pages contracting Schodel for the following January (1838) came the first outcries from her disgruntled colleagues. The *primadonna* proved

¹³⁷ Tallián, *Schodel, op. cit.*, 94.

¹³⁸ Tallián, *Schodel, op. cit.*, 49.

¹³⁹ Tallián, *Schodel, op. cit.*, 409.

wildly popular with the conservative (aristocratic, opera-loving) public and her popularity secured crucial financial resources through ticket sales.¹⁴⁰ However, her wages also outweighed the rest of the staff combined¹⁴¹ and she quickly became the object of resentment, and later ridicule, from her colleagues. In his *Szózat*, ‘appeal’, published in the wake of the 1838 season, Bajza criticised this financial disparity, declaring that the other eminent forerunners of Hungarian art should receive appropriately worthy salaries.¹⁴² The preferential treatment Schodel enjoyed also extended beyond the financial: she was a powerful contender in the politics of the theatre, and the only member of the institution not officially considered a county employee.¹⁴³ Financial decisions related to repertoire were complicated by several factors in the early years of the theatre. Between 1838 and 1840, János Schodel, the husband of Rozália, became the principal opera director and singing master of the theatre. Furthermore, at some point in 1840, Rozália and a politician who also sat on the Board of Directors, Pál Nyári, became romantically involved. As the decision to approve new repertoire needed ratification from the council, it was an open secret that bias on the Board of Directors meant the roles Schodel wanted to perform may have been more likely to become realised.¹⁴⁴ The hierarchy of the new theatrical institution was, in the eyes of the liberal and particularly radical, camps, compromised by the preferential treatment of Schodel above her colleagues. This set the backdrop for an ensuing series of scandals on the stage.

During rehearsals for *La Straniera*, with which Erkel made his conducting debut at the *Pesti Magyar Színház* on the 25 January 1838, the director, József Szerdahelyi, and the cast openly

¹⁴⁰ Tallián’s study examines the reception of Schodel’s performances. For example, the audience frequently, nosily, demanded her to repeat arias. Tallián, *Schodel*, *op. cit.*, 411.

¹⁴¹ Schodel received a 6000-forint sum for a 10-month contract in 1838, with a further 200 forints for dresses, a previously unheard-of salary for singers in Hungary. See Tallián, *Schodel*, *op. cit.*, 94.

¹⁴² ‘Neki magának nagyobb hónapdíja van, mind Lendvayné, Laborfalvi Róza, Megyeri, Szentpétery, Fánscy, Lendvay, Egressy Gábornak együtt, kik jelenleg a magyar színészetnek legméltóbb képviselői.’ József Bajza, ‘Szózat a pesti magyar színház ügyében’ (Buda: A Magyar Királyi Egyetem, 1839), reproduced in Szalai, *op. cit.*, 401-442 (here: 416), see also Tallián, *Schodel*, *op. cit.*, 94.

¹⁴³ See Ferenc Kerényi, ‘Az operaháború’, *op. cit.*, 121.

¹⁴⁴ Tallián, *Schodel*, *op. cit.*, 25.

displayed their distain towards Schodel.¹⁴⁵ Returning to the stage in *Beatrice di Tenda* on the 28 May 1838, the anti-Schodel faction had pre-arranged to hiss during the *primadonna*'s performance.¹⁴⁶ On the 30 May, the *Athenæum* accused Schodel of undermining the *seconda donna*, Mária Felbér, in a performance of *Norma*, and again in the Theatre's première of *Der Freischütz*.¹⁴⁷ Matters were exacerbated when János Schodel, now operatic director and song master, locked horns with Gábor Egressy. Schodel apparently made disparaging comments about Egressy's performance in July, who responded the following morning. When (János) Schodel initiated rehearsal, Egressy, with fellow actors gathered around, gave a loud, disruptive, speech.¹⁴⁸ The relations between Schodel and Egressy escalated into a series of verbal attacks in the daily life of the Theatre, resulting in Rozália petitioning to the council to be relieved of her duties at the institution which they denied, as she had not fulfilled the stipulated 10 months of her contract (though she temporarily left regardless).¹⁴⁹

On the evening of September 27 1838, in response to tensions stemming from both financial matters and discourse surrounding genres, an onion wreath was thrown onto the stage during Schodel's call to the curtain, ridiculing her successes.¹⁵⁰ On the 2 October when *Beatrice di Tenda* was staged, Schodel gave a patriotic speech to the audience praising the nation. As Tallián writes, this was a reaction to the 'onion-wreath incident' a few days earlier, and a gesture of placation. When she placed the wreath on the prompt hole, 'the altar of the nation', she clarified, it was not meant as an insult.¹⁵¹

These scandals continued with the Szerdahelyi-parody affair. Szerdahelyi apparently parodied Schodel on the stage of the *Nemzeti Színház*, mocking her idiosyncrasies: the compulsive rhythmic movements she reportedly made whilst singing. In a performance of István Balog's

¹⁴⁵ Tallián, *Schodel, op. cit.*, 94.

¹⁴⁶ Tallián, *Schodel, op. cit.*, 95.

¹⁴⁷ Tallián, *Schodel, op. cit.*, 97.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Tallián, *Schodel, op. cit.*, 98.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

Lúdas Matyi on 27 December, 1838, repeated two days later, Szerdahelyi mimicked these distinctive gestures, according to spectators such as Mátray, in an attempt to humiliate the controversial *primadonna*.¹⁵² Szerdahelyi ardently denied these claims in the *Athenaum*, claiming such gestures were universal, and stating that he took influence from the leading ladies (and sometime guest performers at the *Pesti Magyar Színház*) Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient and Heinefetter.¹⁵³ Munkácsy, the conservative critic engaged in the debate with Bajza, also strongly condemned the parodies in an article published shortly following the incidents. If the parodies were truly done with maliciousness, Munkácsy proclaimed, then he was ashamed to have contributed financially towards the institution which, he contended, brought shame on the country.¹⁵⁴

On 5 December, during a performance of *Lucrezia Borgia*, the anti-opera faction of the audience whistled while Schodel's co-star Ignác Bognár was on stage (during this period, whistling during performances was a sign of disrespect towards the performer).¹⁵⁵ As Schodel was protected by the Board of Directors, this was an indirect insult to the *primadonna*. As a

¹⁵² Tallián, *Schodel*, *op. cit.*, 99-100, see also Marianne, *Hangászati*, *op. cit.*, 27. Lúdas Matyi, 'Matthias, the goose-boy', is a popular character in Hungarian folk tales, based on a young boy traditionally depicted as out-smarting his arrogant landowner. István Balog (1790-1873), actor, theatre director, playwright and translator, and later treasurer of the *Nemzeti Színház*, completed his setting of this tale, performed in 1838. 'Lúdas Matyi' in Gyula Ortutay (ed.), *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977), see also 'Balog István' in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994).

¹⁵³ 'Válasz a' Honművész szerkeztetijének. — Ez évi Honművész' 2-dik számában a' szerkeztet ur ellenem olly haraggal szólal fel, 's oily vádakkal kisebbít, melyeket felelet nélkül hagynom uem lehet. — Miután a' paródiáról 's annak szabadságairól, határaitól egy hosszas értekezést tartana, mely—mellesleg szólva—nagyobb részint alaptalan, azt állítja, hogy én Schodelné asszonyt dec. 27. és 30. *Lúdas Matyi* című bohózatban, azon testmozgások, és állások gúnyos utánzásával, melyek a' művésznő sajátja i, neveltségessé tenni törekvém. — 'S minél fogva meri ezt Mátray ur állítani? Talán azért, mivel Romeo' dalát, mely az eredetiben így áll: „Bosszút áll fegyverével Romeo!” az említett bohózatban így használtam: *Bosszút áll fűty kísérel ma Matykol!* Miután Romeo' dalának nem Schodelné asszony, hanem Bellini és Romani szerzői, Mátray ur maga kénytelen lesz—akarja nem akarja—elismerni, hogy itt Schodelné asszony nem tétethetett neveltségessé. — De ő azt mondja, hogy én Schodelné asszonyt azon *testmozgások és állások' gúnyos utánzásával, melyek neki sajátjai, törekvém neveltségessé tenni*. Lehet-e ennél csodálatosabb állítás? Én Schodelné asszonynak azon állását, és testmozgásait, melyekkel Romeo' említett dalát adja, jóknak tartom, és hasonlóknak azon testmozgásokhoz, melyekkel ugyan ezen dalt Schröder-Devrienttől és Heinefettertől énekelteni hallottam, 's ennél fogva, mivel jóknak tartom, nem volt volna okom miattuk Schodelné asszonyt neveltségessé tenni, de ha csakugyan neveltségessé tettem, vagy akartam volna is tenni, Schodelné asszonyra csak akkor érhetné azt Mátray ur, ha ő, vagy akárki más, meg bírná mutatni, hogy a' Romeo' dalánál használt testmozgások Schodelné asszonynak találmányai, vagy legalább kizárólag tulajdonai, de ezt Mátray ur háromszor hosszabb értekezéssel sem fogja megmutatni, mint ezen paródiáról irt értekezése.' József Szerdahelyi, 'Magyar játékszíni krónika', *Athenaum*, 20 January, 1839, 95-96.

¹⁵⁴ János Munkácsy, 'Harc és háború!' reproduced in Szalai, *op. cit.*, 378-379.

¹⁵⁵ See Lajosi, *Staging*, *op. cit.*, 70.

supportive gesture toward her colleague, when Schodel was called to the curtain at the conclusion of the first act, she appeared with Bognár in tow to share in her applause, and awarded him with her own wreath before the audience. When the disruptive faction of the audience began to heckle, Schodel responded with exclaiming ‘Kígyók között énekelni nem lehet!’, ‘I cannot sing among snakes!’¹⁵⁶ Tallián interprets Schodel’s role as blurring boundaries between operatic role and persecuted public figure. He writes:

The singer who stands in front of the audience and confronts it ... not only became one with her costume, with the Lucrezia of the next act [the character of Lucrezia’s in the following act], who protests Prince Alfonso to save her son Gennaro (Bognár). ... We see her transcendence, the act of dramatic character and individual becoming one – overreaching the boundaries of the opera. This Lucrezia did not tolerate humiliation either. ... According to the onion wreaths and snake episodes, Scodel had plenty of the sass, the stage and spiritual presence, the emphatic presence that is indispensable for the type of theatrical play that involves both the stage and the audience.¹⁵⁷

In other words, Tallián reads Schodel’s ‘snake’ comment as her being at one with her character in preparation for the next act: she remained in character and acted as Lucrezia.

Meanwhile, a series of legal battles were brewing. Shortly following Bajza’s resignation, a new debate arose surrounding directorship. Between the end of April 1839 and the beginning of 1841, the editing board of the *Athenaum* were legally obliged to adjourn their literary-theatrical

¹⁵⁶ Tallián, *Schodel, op. cit.*, 108.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Amikor a botrányról készült gúnyvers következetesen Borgiának titulálja, bizonyos értelemben nem téved. Az énekesnő, aki a közönséggel szemben áll és szembeszáll, maga is két fiú anyja, nemcsak jelmezében, de egész bensőjében azonosult már a következő felvonás Lucreziájával, aki fia, Gennaro (Bognár) megmentésére kiáll Alfonso herceggel szemben. A fasczináló jelenetben nem a színházi botrányt kell látnunk, hanem az átlényegülést, a drámai karakternek és az egyéniség az opera keretein túlsapó azonosulását. Ez a Lucrezia sem tűrte, hogy megalázzák. 1840. december 5-ének a Nemzeti Színház színpadán és nézőterén kibontakozott járulékos drámája emlékezetesen illusztrálja, mennyire nyitott volt még a színház a 19. század harmadik évtizedének végén is. A nézőtér és a színpad együtt-játékára olykor nagyobb hangsúly esett, mint a darabra. A hagymakoszorú- és a kígyó-epizódok szerint Schodelnéban bőséggel megvolt a közönség és színpad részvételével zajló színjátékhoz elengedhetetlen chuzpe, a színpadi és lelki presence, a nyomatékos jelenlét. Váratlan helyzetekre olyan jelképes érvényű aktusokkal és szavakkal reagált, amelyek azonnal idézhető szöveggé állandósultak – idézte is őket barát és ellenség bőséggel hosszú éveken át. Sajnálatos, hogy a pesti színpadi- és zenekritika akkori embrionális állapotában alig-alig jegyzett föl jeleneteket magukból az alakításokból, melyek pedig kétségkívül a rögtönzésekhez hasonlóan maradandó nyomot hagytak a nézők emlékezetében. Az egyetlen kivétel, Schedel Ferenc, aki látott, hallott és élményeit le is tudta írni, csak Schodelné szereplésének legelső heteiben forgatta kritikusi tollát.’ Tallián, *Schodel, op. cit.*, 109.

critique.¹⁵⁸ During the struggle for the successive director, the unsigned article published on 24 January 1839 stating that Nyári's appointment would mean an exodus of the best actors led to Pest County suspending the journal.¹⁵⁹ Kossuth's rare weigh-in on artistic matters warned that warring factions must unite in the goal of furthering the national cause exemplifies the vehemence these polemics reached in the early years.¹⁶⁰

The archival documents of the Board of Directors show Miklós Udvarhelyi's application for directorship on 26 August was counterclaimed by Erkel two days later.¹⁶¹ Surprisingly, Erkel seemingly sides with the radicals here: the Gábor Egressy camp who thought opera had no place on the stage of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*. Tallián suggests Béni Egressy, with whom Erkel had a cordial friendship which would prove fruitful throughout the following decades, may have had an agreement through which the radicals would tolerate opera. In any case, Erkel's authority over the orchestra and to a respectable extent, the vocal cast, too, essentially protected the privileged position opera gained at the institution, and also demonstrates the authority Erkel attained in the early years of the theatre.¹⁶² Eventually Szerdahelyi became an interim director, and a succession

¹⁵⁸ See Júlia Paraizs "‘Táblabírói jellemű leczkék’ Egressy Gábor és Kossuth Lajos vitája az 1842-es Coriolanus-bemutató tükrében", *Irodalomtörténeti közlemények*, Vol.119, No.1 (2015), 117.

¹⁵⁹ 'Változásuki a pesti magyar színháznál. Hiteles forrásból értésünkre esett, hogy gróf Ráday Gedeon is e' napokban lemondott a' pesti magyar színház igazgatásáról, a' mit méltán lehet sajnálni mind azoknak, kik a' színház' ügyét szívökön viselik, mert gróf Rádayban a' színházi igazgatóság egy buzgó, értelmes és a' maga bánásmódjában igen humanus tagot veszít el. Mióta a' pesti színház megnyitott (16 hónap alatt) ez már a' negyedik lemondott igazgató (Bajza, Ilkey, Szentkirályi). Micsoda káros befolyásúnak kell lenni, ezen gyakori változásnak, képzelhetik azok, kik csak valamenyire is ismeretesek a' színházi szövevényes viszonyokkal. Valljon mi lehetett oka olly férfiu' lemondásának, mint gróf Ráday? – Az igazgatást most Nyáry Pál úr, Pest megye' tiszteletbeli fő jegyzője, viszi 's a' hír szerint, mellynek igazsága felől azonban nem kezeskedünk, teljes hatalommal. – A' derék Megyeri, mint halljuk, e' napokban el fogja hagyni színházunkat, mások is, mint Szerdahelyi, Telepy, Éder Lúiz, László és Szilágyi elkészülnek. Kikkel fogja ezeket az igazgatóság kipótlni? Mert a' magyar színészekben nincs nagy válogatás! Vagy talán nem való a' hír? Bár ne volna!' *Athenaum* 24 January 1839, 110-112.

¹⁶⁰ 'Nekünk ugy látszik, az országos választmányi biztosság lesz a' tulajdonképi igazgató. – Tehát collegialis igazgatás; mellynek czélszerűtlenségére nem egy okot lehetne felhozni. Meglehet, csatlakozunk, de mi ugy hisszük: ki kellene tűzni az irányt, és szabályokat határozni általában, mik szerint az igazgató hivataloskodjék, 's például félvétenként mind az irány mind a' szabályok tekintetében tőle szorosán számot venni, 's minden lépésére nézve felelőssé tenni; de számadás és felelőség mellett, a' gyakorlati működésre szabad kezét engedni, 's minden collegialis avatkozás alól fölmenteni. Végezetül még megjegyezzük: miképen, ha a' fentebbi utmutatás azon szavai, mellyek a' színészeket polgári állásukhoz képesti törvényhatóság alá tartozandónak vallják; ha a színész között törvényhatósági tekintetben különbséget tenni, közfalat vonni akarnak, ugy tömérdek gyakorlati nehézségekre adtak okot 's alkalmat.' *Pesti Hírlap*, 13 January 1841, 25-26. In March 1841, Kossuth urged the administration and actors to compromise with each other for common goals and unity. See Júlia Paraizs "‘Táblabírói jellemű leczkék’ Egressy Gábor és Kossuth Lajos vitája az 1842-es Coriolanus-bemutató tükrében", *Irodalomtörténeti közlemények*, Vol.119, No.1 (2015), 127.

¹⁶¹ Tallián, *Schodel, op. cit.*, 61.

¹⁶² Tallián, *Schodel, op. cit.*, 62.

of nearly a dozen directors would pass through the theatre in the following decade, contributing to the characteristically unstable upheaval of the theatre staff.¹⁶³

Conclusion

The opening of the *Pesti Magyar Színház* provided a tangible symbol of cultural assertion comparable to the city's German-language theatre which, as Friefeld puts it, had acted as a 'goad' to the Hungarian-speaking populous.¹⁶⁴ However, as the 'opera war' demonstrates, this project was not pacifying in itself, exemplified by the tensions between pro-drama and pro-opera ideologues. These discourses reveal the politicization of genres as mediums through which to nurture Hungarian-language culture, and reveals important context through which to read Erkel's operas of this period. The anxieties which stimulated both the national theatre project and the defensiveness surrounding genre which translated into attempts to humiliate the theatre's *primadonna* in the early years of the institution are vital to understanding Erkel's *Bátori Mária*. *Hunyadi László* which followed in 1844 reflects a (revolutionary) shift in the repertoire; Erkel's second was apparently 'Hungarian' and nationalistic enough to claim the position of the first widely acclaimed Hungarian-language opera.

Cultivating opera performance versus spoken Hungarian-language theatre lay at the crux of the opera war, which further involved personal, financial, and political factors. How these debates negotiated anxieties surrounding Hungarian-language artforms and identity has so far been overlooked. These debates illustrate how critics consistently considered national artforms as vital to the future: as resisting foreign influence; as creating a distinct culture; as protection against obscurity of collective identity; as elevating the 'peripheral' culture to a pan-European standard; as proving capable of cultural sophistication. These aspects enrich understandings of

¹⁶³ See Tallián, *Schodel*, *op. cit.*, 53.

¹⁶⁴ Alice Friefeld, 'The De-Germinization of the Budapest Stage' in Keith Bullivant, Geoffrey Giles and Walter Pape (eds.), *Germany and Eastern Europe: Cultural Identities and Cultural Differences* Yearbook of European Studies, Volume 13 (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999), 148.

why an alignment with one artistic mode of cultural cultivation over another was such a divisive element.

Situating Erkel's pre-revolution operas in these contexts facilitates new understandings of the relationships between historical interpretation, contemporary anxieties, and international influences. The following case studies attempt to unravel how Erkel's early operas relay historical tropes through musical means. This involves examining influences from operatic models and devices familiar to the Pest-Buda audiences as well as 'local' traditions in relation to political-historical interplays. Through situating specific local aspects of *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László* in broader understandings of history, the following chapters shed some much-needed light on adherences to and divergencies from broad European tropes in Hungarian contexts.

Chapter 4

Sinful Past, Punished Present, Uncertain Future: *Bátori Mária* (1840)¹

Introduction

The initial silence with which the liberal and radical journals met Erkel's first opera amidst the 'opera war' is largely explained by the pro-drama stance of these publications. From these perspectives, opera was even construed as a threat to Hungarian identity. Created amidst a context where a significant portion of discourse was dominated by the liberals and radicals based in Pest-Buda and often also at the *Pesti Magyar Színház*, *Bátori Mária* adheres partially to liberal aesthetics. Simultaneously, the obsession with legacy in the form of linguistic and cultural survival dominated political life as well as journals concerned with artistic matters and historical interpretation. Examining the relationships between these various polemics and Erkel's first opera complicates the traditional understandings of 'national' opera through the framework of how 'national' and 'universal' musical distinctions negotiate the protagonists.² Situating the use of the Hungarian medieval era in terms of historical interpretation in the reform period, as well as shifting uses of the past in opera generally, illuminates how *Bátori Mária* relates to contexts both local and more broadly considered.

Erkel's first opera depicts intrigue, corrupt power, inter-generational conflict, ignorance, and revenge as part of a continuous historical cycle of sin and punishment, despite moments which anticipate rupture. Portraying the tenor-protagonist in relation to contemporary understandings of Hungarian heroism, the Prince is simultaneously aligned with understandings of classical (flawed) heroes. This creates a marked contrast with the aging and changeable King, whose stagnant power is reflected by musical fixity. The title-role partially adheres, narratively and musically, to the tragic heroine genus familiar to Pest-Buda audiences from the works of

¹ In the Hungarian language, family names precede first names. I use 'Bátori Mária' when referring to the opera, and for the title-role, 'Mária Bátori'.

² I outline this traditional dichotomy for framing 'national' opera in Chapter 1.

Donizetti and Bellini, but her ‘sin’ of endogamy situates her trespass amidst contemporary understandings of the past. Exploring how narrative devices such as musical foreshadowing and off-stage choir relate to contemporary historical interpretation, the following discussion argues that attempts to disrupt a cyclic history is depicted as futile. *Bátori Mária* reflects the reform-era trend of representing contemporary suffering as resulting from national ‘sins’ originating in, and remaining un-atoned for, since the medieval age.

Synopsis

In 1840, Dugonics’s *Bátori Mária*,³ an adaptation of Julius Fredrich von Soden’s *Ignaz de Castro* (1784), was in its fourth decade of existence. Dugonics’s play belonged to earlier initiatives seeking to improve Hungarian literary culture (the *nyelvújítás*: see Chapter 2), executed through the broader European phenomenon of the historical novel and play. Soden’s drama is based on the historical figure of Inês de Castro (1325-1355), the mistress of Peter I of Portugal.⁴ Dugonics faithfully transplanted historical figures from the Hungarian medieval period in adherence to the Portuguese-derived source in all but two respects. The murderers are held accountable for their actions, and the conclusion now reveals Mária Bátori as a member of the royal family in a manner akin to the literary trend in which posthumous revelation of a protagonist’s identity concludes the plot.⁵ In the context of the late eighteenth-century, this alteration served as a lesson in tolerance and against absolutism amidst Josephinism. Dugonics drew lessons from the conclusion, through the King and Prince’s peaceful resolution of their

³ Completed in 1793, initially staged in 1794, and first published in a collection in 1795. Dugonics András, *Bátori Mária: szomorú történet öt szakaszokban* (Pest: Landerer, 1795).

⁴ When Pedro I (1320-1367, ruling from 1367 until his death) was widowed in 1345, he shortly after began a relationship with Inês de Castro. His father, Alfonso IV, whilst still King, ordered Inês’s murder in 1355. As a member of the house of Galicia, Alfonso apparently saw his heir’s power threatened by the rival family. Pedro, once King, executed her murderers and commanded his subjects to recognise her posthumously as Queen. Peter Francis Kenny, *Monarchs* (Bloomington: Zlibris, 2016).

⁵ This vogue is also reflected in several early nineteenth-century operas. To cite prominent examples: Bellini-Romani’s *La Straniera* (1829) based on Charles-Victor Prévot’s *L’Étrangère*, Donizetti-Romani’s *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833) from Victor Hugo’s play of the same title, and Scribe’s libretto for *La Juive* (1835) composed by Halévy.

conflict with the aid István's mother as an intermediary.⁶ This is indebted to the morally instructive and sentimental dramatic repertoires comprising largely translations of German plays familiar to the Pest-Buda theatre-going public of Dugonics's generation.⁷

There is practically no reference in the libretto to the title-roles' origin.⁸ In Dugonics's play Mária is a descendent of Queen Buzilla (Kálmán's wife who hails from Sicilian ancestry), who was sent to be brought up by the Bátori family in Transylvania.⁹ In Egressy's libretto, Mária's nationality is not questioned, her 'crime' is her non-royal bloodline, referenced several times in the libretto.¹⁰ In Dugonics's play, the revelation of her royal lineage following her death is the catalyst to the resolution, whereas Mária's descent in Egressy's text is the nexus of the conflict which remains unresolved. Egressy's alterations to the plot were both practical and artistic. In the first instance, this involved a reduction of characters, scenes and simplification of the play appropriate for an opera libretto. The new finale, however, fundamentally altered the narrative. The curtain now drops before the protagonists can resolve or learn from tragedy: an open-ended conclusion which both reflects recent (international) operatic trends and specific historical representation in the Hungarian reform period.

The plot of Erkel's *Bátori Mária* centres on a conflict between King Kálmán of Hungary and his heir István (succeeding as István II), and intrigue at the Royal Court. The opera opens with the chorus awaiting Prince István's return to Buda castle, having successfully defended Hungarian territories from foreign invasions in Dalmatia (No.1 chorus). King Kálmán awaits his son, eager to crown him the new King. István enters, announced musically by a triumphant

⁶ András Dugonics, Introduction by Gusztáv Heinrich, *Bátori Mária. Szomorú történet öt szakaszokban* (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1887), act V, scene vii.

⁷ See Krisztina Lajosi, *Staging the Nation: Opera and Nationalism in 19th-Century Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 52.

⁸ The single reference in Erkel's opera to the title-role's origin is in the chorus's anticipation of István and Mária's marriage: Hős vőlegény viszi menyasszonyát karán, kit rejtve felnevelt számára a magány (The triumphant groom takes his bride by the arm – who was brought up for him in deep solitude). Act I, No.7 scene ix (finale), alluding to Dugonics's text in which Mária was raised in secret in Transylvania.

⁹ Miklós Dolinszky, 'Irodalmi előzmények' in Ágnes Gupcsó (ed.), "Szikrát a dobott a nemzet szívébe" Erkel Ferenc három operája. *Bátori Mária – Hunyadi László – Bánk bán*. Szövegkönyvek – tanulmányok (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2011), 141-142.

¹⁰ For example: miként pusztul e hon ...víz vegyüljön Árpád vérével. (See how our country will be ruined ...when Árpád's blood is diluted with water) Árvai and Szepelik, Act I, No.10, scene iv.

Hungarian march (*marcia ongarese trionfale*, No.2). His *sortita* laments the constant turmoil at Hungary's borders, but places his faith in a hopeful future in the *cabaletta* (No.2 *aria con coro*). The King congratulates his son on fulfilling his 'patriotic duties',¹¹ and delivers the news of István's wife's death. The King insists that the young prince must now remarry a suitably advantageous match and produce heirs. The prince protests: he has married once out of duty, and he reveals his love for a noble woman named Mária Batori. A quartet with chorus establishes the Prince's outrage, the King's humiliation, the councillors' indignation at the Prince challenging his father, and the chorus's fear that discord will have implications for the country and the people (No.3 *quartetto con coro*). The King curses his son: 'Degenerate child! My curse will follow your footsteps! A curse will be your father's blessing!'¹² to which István responds: 'Fear you?! My wrath will sweep you like a midnight storm and I will obliterate your snake-tongued councillors, the feeble pillars of your aged throne! ... You should fear for yourself when the warrior becomes furious!'¹³ The Prince, with his entourage in tow, leaves for Leányvár, his castle on the outskirts of Esztergom, where Mária Batori and their two sons live. Szepelik, one of the King's two closest advisors, instructs a confidant to follow the party and report back with developments.¹⁴

The scene changes to the court of Leányvár, where Mária enters the stage with her two children, 'pale and upset'.¹⁵ Mária's *sortita* laments her anguished state, reminiscing about happier times, imploring the spring to bloom as a 'remedy for her injured heart'.¹⁶ In her *romanza* Mária likens her stormy turmoil as she fears for István on the battlefield to the country's troubles.¹⁷ The

¹¹ Kálmán: Híven betöltéd honfi tisztedet. Act I, No.2, scene iv.

¹² Kálmán: Elfajult gyermek! átkom kövesse minden léptedet! Átok legyen atyai áldásom! Reszkess! Act I, No.3, scene iv.

¹³ István: Reszkess?! Mihelyt akarom, mint éji vihar lesodor haragom, és viperanyelvű tanácsnokaid, agg trónusod ingatag oszlopaikat, mint farkas a kölyköt, a földre csapom, és nyelvök kiszakasztva, ebeknek adom! Reszkess, ha a harci haragra hevül! Megrázom a trónt, s az a porba ledül; és míg rajta parancsra feszül ki karod, lelked, nyöszörögve román, kiadod! Act I, No.3, scene iv.

¹⁴ Szepelik: Menj, a nép tömegébe vegyülve kémleld, mit követend a herceg, siess és hozz hírt vissza Budára, érted? Act I, No.3, scene v.

¹⁵ *Ő sápadtan*, Act I, No.4, scene vi.

¹⁶ Mária: Szelíd tavasz! Nyílt kebledről akarok én balzsamot szívni szűm sebére. Ó, ha az ihletre még egyszer megújulna, mint virágaid! Ó, mosolyg le rám, teremő tavasz! Act I, No.4, scene vi.

¹⁷ Mária: Vihar dühöng a hon szívéen, borús szelíd ege, véres zászlót tűzött fölé a harcok istene. A hős súlyos fegyvert ragad, ég lelke a honért, csatára kél, szerezni hírt, fejére zöld babért. A hon maradt hölgy s két fiú a hőssel érzene, örömkönyűk tűzszemükben gyémántként fénylenek. Act I, No.4, scene vi.

banda suddenly sounds: the chorus announce the prince's arrival, and Mária's *sortita* concludes with a joyful *cabaletta* at the prospect of his return. István and his warriors enter.

István and Mária sing a love duet (No.6), and István declares he will make Mária his wife immediately. Mária anxiously responds: 'I shiver at your words! It is impossible!',¹⁸ and expresses her fears that the King would punish them, declaring 'I shall never be your wife.'¹⁹ The Prince insists that she has nothing to fear, and she finally consents to the union. Act I concludes with Mária's ladies and István's entourage celebrating their marriage, conflating Mária's love of God, country and husband as proof of her worthiness: 'The lady who makes him happy is as faithful as any royal beauty, she loves her God, her country and her loved one with equal passion.'²⁰ They enter the castle's chapel and a solo organ passage (*andante religioso*) signals their marriage. Szepelik's spy exits to report to the court at Buda of these developments. Amidst the joyous chorus, Mária expresses her fears: 'I sadly suspect what the future holds: heaven will take revenge for all ignored orders'.²¹

The second act opens as Mária's ladies attempt to soothe the anxious Mária. She sings a two-part aria (No.8) expressing her fears of Royal wrath: 'a revenging King is ready to ruin me!'²² She finally resolves to trust in God's will (*cabaletta*) 'The innocent ...calmly faces the trial.'²³ István and Mária's brother, Miklós, enter to inform her that they are leaving for a hunting trip. Despite Mária's anxieties that in their absence she will be left in danger ('our farewell is so grave, I feel as though I see you for the last time in this life'),²⁴ they insist she has nothing to fear. The hunting horns sound, and they exit to join the hunting party.

¹⁸ Mária: Hah! mily borzadás futja végig szavaidra testemet! Ez nem lehet. Act I, No.6, scene viii.

¹⁹ Mária: Nem, nem, nőd sohasem leszek. Act I, No.6, scene viii.

²⁰ Hölgyek (Ladies): És a hölgy ki boldogítja őt, szép, hű királyi nő, Istent, honát és kedvesét lángolva kedvelő. Act I, No.7 finale.

²¹ Mária: Ó, búsan sejtem a jövőnek titkait: az ég bosszulja meg sértett parancsait. Act I, No.7, finale.

²² Mária: egy bosszútól dühödt király

²³ Mária: Az ártatlan, kinek szívét semmi vétek be nem szennyezi, az ártatlan nyugodtan megy a bírák elé. Act II, No.8, scene i.

²⁴ Mária: oly fájdalmas az elválás, mintha utószor látnálak ez életben. Act I, No.9, scene ii.

The scene changes to Buda castle, where the King asks his court for council (No.10, *terzetto con coro*). The royal advisors, Árvai and Szepelik, address the King, insisting that the root of the country's discord is exclusively Mária: 'she was a Siren, she was a Delilah, who enticed Prince István to sin.'²⁵ When they propose she should be killed, the King is horrified: 'should she die for doing what we all do, love?',²⁶ and he condemns the murder of an innocent. The councillors goad the King by referring to István and Mária's children as illegitimate and as threats to the dynasty: 'The bastards will usurp the throne of Árpád'.²⁷ The King laments the 'wretched lives' of Kings, revealing his weak resolve. The royal spy enters and announces that István and Mária have married. The King, now enraged, calls for Mária's death, but again quickly wavers. The councillors continue to torment him with the idea that the throne will be usurped by non-royal blood, and the King finally resolves to order her execution: '(firmly) No! Kálmán is not to be cursed by any descendants! ...She must die today!'²⁸

The following scenes unfold amidst the hunting camp in the forest. The party (men's chorus) sing a hunting chorus (No.11), followed by a song praising the life of the hunter as they set down their weapons (No.12). The Prince begins to feel a foreboding that the festivities cannot dispel. Miklós seeks to cheer his master in the form of a drinking song (No.13), as István begins to understand the vulnerable position in which he has left his new wife. Miklós and the chorus' ode to wine and women is suddenly interjected by István hallucinating Mária, blood-stained and dead: a premonition of the final moments of the opera. István leaves for Leányvár.

Meanwhile the King and councillors have brought an executioner to Mária's home. However, upon meeting his new daughter-in-law and unnerved by her calm and dignified presence, the King again abandons his agenda: 'such valiant rhetoric comes only from those

²⁵ Árvai and Szepelik: E buja leány mindennek a rugója; ő volt a Syren, ő a Delila, ki bűnre vitte István herceget, Act II, No.10, scene iii.

²⁶ Kálmán: azért szenvedjen e szegény halált, hogy, mint akárki, úgy ő is, szeret? Act II, No.10, scene iii.

²⁷ Árvai and Szepelik: E korszoké lesz Árpád trónusa. Act II, No.10, scene iii.

²⁸ Kálmán: (*szipárdan*) Nem! Kálmánra ne szórjon átkokat a maradék! Most készüljetez útra, halni fog ma még! Act II, No.10, scene iv.

whose heart is calm, and whose soul is chaste'.²⁹ Nevertheless, intrigue prevails: the King finally takes leave, declaring he will not partake in such a murder ('Go ahead, you descendants of tigers! Shed blood as you please, May the wrath of God be upon you, I do not take part in such murder!'),³⁰ yet abandoning Mária's fate to the councillors who have ulterior motives. Mária reveals how she has previously rejected Szepelik romantically, and Árvai is seeking power after 'falling from grace'.³¹ They declare: 'You are in our hands now, and Woe betide you! Heavens will not save you!'³² The executioner enters Mária's chamber following the King's resolve as she is thanking God in prayer and stabs her fatally. The stage directions stipulate that 'the three murderers grab the children and exit into the adjacent room'³³ which leaves a further thread unresolved: the audience does not learn if István's heirs survive. István returns to their home in the heroine's final moments, musically signalled by the hunters' chorus drinking song from off-stage. István and Miklós enter to find Mária dying, and the opera culminates in their call for revenge, they exclaim: 'Revenge on the Murderer!'³⁴ and the curtain falls.

Kálmán I, King of Hungary³⁵ and his successor, István II³⁶ were the eighth and ninth generation of the Árpád dynasty.³⁷ The house of Árpád established a unification of the tribes inhabiting the Carpathian basin at the turn of the ninth century.³⁸ From the nineteenth-century

²⁹ Kálmán Király: Ily merészséggel csak az beszél, aki nyugodt, s szíve, lelke tiszta, Act II, No.14, scene vii.

³⁰ Kálmán Király: Menjetek hát, tigrisek szülőtti, ontsatok vért, látom, szomjakot van. Szálljon rátok a nagy ég haragja, nem veszek én részt e gyilkolásban! Act II, No.14, scene vii.

³¹ Mária: El, latrok előlem, el, aljas órok, rút ajkatokon a hon üdve forog, és rólok gyűlölet fenemérge csorog. (*a Királyhoz, Szepelikre mutat*) Ennek szerelem dühe marja szívét, (*Árvait érti*) vesztett kegyelem tüzelé föl ezét. (You speak for the benefit of the country but the venom of hatred creeps from your lips. (*to the King, pointing at Szepelik*) This one is miserably lovesick, (*pointing at Árvai*) while the other one is fired by having fallen from grace). Act II, No.14, scene vii.

³² Árvai and Szepelik: Kezünkben vagy most, jaj neked! Az ég sem ment ki tégedet! Act II, No.14, scene vii.

³³ (*összeomlik, a három gyilkos megrettenve a két gyermekkel az oldalszobába menekszik*) Act II, No.14, *scena ultima*.

³⁴ István: Bosszú a gyilkos fejére! Act II, No.14, scene viii.

³⁵ 1070-1116. Kálmán reigned from 1095 until his death.

³⁶ 1101-1131. István succeeded Kálmán as King in 1116 and reigned until his death.

³⁷ Árpád history and the first Christian King, István I, were the dominant topics in eighteenth-century Hungarian literary works drawing on communal history, before late medieval history of the Hunyadi's in the first half of the nineteenth century. Krisztina Lajosi, '19th Century Opera and Representations of the Past in the Public Sphere' in Lotte Jenson and Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Free Access to the Past: Romanticism, Cultural Heritage and the Nation* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 241, see also Chapters 3 and 5.

³⁸ Cameron Sutt, *Slavery in Árpád-era Hungary in a Comparative Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 35-36.

perspective in Hungary, this dynasty was significant in nationalist rhetoric primarily in relation to ‘legitimizing’ the Hungarian claim to a united and independent state in the context of a multi-ethnic territory ruled from a central imperial capital. The early medieval ‘conquest’ was utilised akin to transnational trends of substantiating one’s origins and endurance on the world’s stage.³⁹ The first to establish a settled Magyar people in Europe, from nineteenth-century nationalist perspectives, the Árpád dynasty ‘proved’ the validity of the right to an autonomous, self-ruled state in this region.⁴⁰ Acclaimed for adopting systems with which to structure society and permanent settlements, Árpád’s offspring succeeded him until 1290 (with the death of the heirless Ladislaus IV), when the Hungarian lands came under foreign monarchs until 1490. As the reform era developed, narratives projecting contemporary discontent recount the turbulent passage from the Árpád era to eventual subordination within the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires. As outlined in Chapter 2, works such as Kölcsey’s *Himnusz* lament the—now extinct—Árpád dynasty’s historical sin for bringing God’s wrath on the Hungarians. In drama, examples such as Vörösmarty’s *Árpád ébredése* (1837) similarly identify the death of the legendary leader as a calamity which reverberated until the (contemporary) present (see Chapter 3).

Dugonics’s play adheres to the kinds of historical lessons which champion ‘the virtues of clemency’ common in the eighteenth century, particularly in relation to German-language dramatic repertoire which dominated the repertoire in early nineteenth-century Hungary.⁴¹ Opera

³⁹ See for example, Adam Kozuchowski’s study of German and Polish uses of ‘conquest histories’: ‘Contesting Conquests: Nineteenth-century German and Polish Historiography of the Expansion of the Holy Roman Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Union’, *History of European Ideas*, Vol.41, No.3 (2015), 404-418. For a discussion of Dugonics’s literary works on ‘conquest’ themes, see Ferenc Kerényi ‘Egy sikeres eredetmítosz a 18-19. század fordulóján. Dugonics András hat művéről’ in Márton Szilágyi és Tamás Scheibner (eds.), *Kerényi Ferenc: Színek, terek, emberek. Irodalom és színház a 18-19. században* (Budapest: Ráció Kiadó, 2010), 23-42.

⁴⁰ See János M. Bak, ‘From the Anonymous “Gesta” to the “Flight of Zalan” Vörösmarty’ in János M. Bak, Patrick J. Geary and Gábor Klaniczay (eds.), *Manufacturing a Past for the Present: Forgery and Authenticity in Medievalist Texts and Objects in 19th-Century Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 96-106. As noted by Zoltán Imre the ‘founding figure’ is often a crucial element in theories of national movements (developed by scholars such as Hobsbawm), and the first modern ‘Hungarian epics’ were derived from Árpád history. Zoltán Imre, ‘Building a(s) Theatre: the *Pesti Magyar Színház* in 1837’ in Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (eds.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctions and Disjunctions in the 19th and 20th Centuries* Volume II: *The Making and Remaking of Literary Institutions* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2004), 152.

⁴¹ Krisztina Lajosi, *Staging the Nation: Opera and Nationalism in 19th-Century Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 38. See also Chapter 1.

in the late eighteenth century similarly encompassed such moralistic messages, evoking ‘the consequences to the state of a ruler’s illicit love, the danger of letting power fall into the hands of evil councillors.’⁴² In Erkel’s opera, Miklós Dolinszky frames the textual and musical distinctions between the King and court by contrast to István and Mária in terms of ‘humanity’ versus court intrigue.⁴³ This can also be outlined in terms of liberal political ideology by contrast with the status quo of the Empire. The protagonists are associated with stagnant power and a valiant but flawed hero—in both classical-dramatic and specifically historically-derived definitions—who embodies ignorance as he sparks a chain of events which have long-term (national) consequences.

István’s flaws, defying his father because of his love for a non-royal woman and his recklessness in leaving Mária alone, are borne from passion (in opposition to the oppressive forces represented by the King and Royal court) and impulsiveness. The King, by contrast, orders the death of Mária, against his conscience, in the ‘calculated’ manner the liberals condemned.⁴⁴ Prince István represents youthful recklessness, stubbornness, and the possibility for power rupture from the traditional authority of the King. Military attempts throughout Hungary’s history had failed to disrupt a series of opposition to oppressive rulers, which informed understandings of contemporary Hungarians as ‘cursed’ and ‘punished’. István’s military heroism aligns him with the feats of the celebrated figures such as Árpád, the Hunyadis and Rákóczi. However, the cyclic understandings of failed revolts and uprisings also link István’s heroism to tragedy and failure. He represents a desire for historical rupture, but does not succeed in disrupting the series of heroic yet failed feats of the Hungarian *bőskor*.

Contextualising *Bátori Mária* amongst other so-called ‘national’ operas demonstrates how the comparatively early initiative of Erkel’s first opera differed from such examples in significant

⁴² McGeary, Thomas, *The Politics of Opera in Handel’s Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 43.

⁴³ Miklós Dolinszky, ‘Irodalmi előzmények’, *op. cit.*, 145.

⁴⁴ ‘A reformkor nem a hideg, józanul, kiszámított terv szerint cselekvő embert tekintette magasabb rendű embernek, hanem éppen ellenkezőleg, a szenvedélyest.’ Bécsy, *op. cit.*, 255. See Chapter 3.

ways. Most overtly in Erkel's opera, the historical function is symptomatically ambiguous. A decidedly potent (nationalistic) message, contrastingly, often underlies operas which drew on histories of other Habsburg minorities, such as the Czechs and the Croats.⁴⁵ In place of the kinds of warring peoples or oppressive versus oppressed communities common in 'national' opera and 'mainstream' traditions, the political element in the libretto of *Bátori Mária* is instead indebted to tropes relating to interpretation and literary representation of history in reform-era Hungary.

Presenting lost glorious pasts in 'peripheral' operatic traditions can anticipate a hopeful future (such as Smetana's *Libuše*) or celebrate historical feats over contemporary oppressors (such as Zajc's *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski*). The private drama in *Bátori Mária* is not reflected in warring peoples. Rather, the Hungarian people's prosperity depends solely on the ruler: they do not have a 'political voice' of their own, as in operas representing opposing peoples in the French Grand repertoire,⁴⁶ or choral bodies which represent 'the nation' (as in Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* and Mussorgsky's historical operas, see Chapter 1). Erkel's opera is characterised rather by internal strife and the political ideology of the protagonists.

In the French-language repertoire, the relationships between the legacy of revolution, historiography, and presenting popular uprisings on the stage could embody a wide array of possibilities for the future: historical rupture meant the future could be re-created by the will of the people.⁴⁷ In Hungary, the glory of the past was largely framed in terms of lament rather than celebration. This shifted towards the revolution, when 'lost virtues' became instructive. In 1840, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, the cyclic repetition of historical cataclysms was largely presented in political discourse, poetry, and the historical novel as a chain of tragedies which resulted in contemporary political oppression, and which determined the future.

⁴⁵ This is outlined in Chapter 1.

⁴⁶ James Parakilas, 'Political Representation and the Chorus in Nineteenth-Century Opera', *19th-Century Music*, Vol.16, No.2 (1992), 189.

⁴⁷ Sarah Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 143.

Bátori Mária is similarly open ended and porous in political and social relationships between the past, present and future to many examples from the French Grand repertoire. Situating such equivocality in relation to French-language examples sheds light on how *Bátori Mária* utilises ambiguity derived from conflict. Leading French historians presented the revolution as creating a rupture with the past which made the future open to new ‘progressive’ possibilities.⁴⁸ Erkel’s work diverges from historiographical concepts such as Michelet’s influential theses which understand the past as variously instructive (as ‘ever-repeated victory over the world of determinism’, see Chapter 1).⁴⁹ Koselleck argued that this rupture meant it was no longer possible to use the past allegorically. As Lynn Hunt describes it, the past ‘no longer illuminated the present by providing exemplars for present behaviour.’⁵⁰ Sarah Hibberd contends that the works of composers such as Auber, Halévy, and Meyerbeer embodied these capacities for exhilaration with regard to the future, whereas in the Hungarian reform period uncertainty beheld threats. The July monarchy bred a range of historical interpretation in which ‘cathartic, reassuring or inspirational’ content which underlay uncertainty.⁵¹ In Hungary, a transhistorical understanding of cyclic history links the past with the present and future in a fatalistic cycle in which Hungarians are in a constant existential struggle.⁵²

Repertoire and Reception

The re-inauguration of Pest’s Hungarian-language Theatre as the *Nemzeti Színház*, ‘National Theatre’ was marked by the première of Erkel’s first opera. This occasion characteristically involved delays, complications, and financial struggles amidst the autocratic

⁴⁸ Jules Michelet, translated by Flora Kimmich, Lionel Gossman and Edward K. Kaplan, foreword by Lionel Gossman, *Jules Michelet on History* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2013) 9.

⁴⁹ From Michelet’s preface to ‘History of France’, quoted in Jules Michelet, translated by Flora Kimmich, Lionel Gossman and Edward K. Kaplan, foreword by Lionel Gossman, *Jules Michelet on History* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2013), 7. See Chapter 1.

⁵⁰ Lynn Hunt, ‘Globalisation and Time’ in Chris Lorenz and Berber Bevernage (eds.), *Breaking up Time. Negotiating the Borders between Present, Past and Future* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 209.

⁵¹ Hibberd, *op. cit.*, 12.

⁵² David Lederer, ‘*Honfibi*: Nationhood, Manhood, and the Culture of Self-Sacrifice in Hungary’ in Jeffrey R. Watt (ed.) *From Sin to Insanity: Suicide in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 132-133.

labyrinth between the Hungarian Diet, Pest County and the Board of Theatre Directors. Finding an appropriate prose drama for the occasion proved fruitless, despite new dramatic works in preparation, and the directorship eventually opted for Erkel's opera.⁵³

Bátori Mária was announced as a *Új hősi nemzeti szomorú opera*, 'New heroic national tragic opera'.⁵⁴ A number opera drawing on Hungarian history which utilises established operatic models and musical devices, employs recitative instead of spoken dialogue, and which is steeped in understandings of history in contemporary literary works, *Bátori Mária* is the first Hungarian-language composition of its kind. The *Nemzeti Színház* staged *Bátori Mária* thirty-three times between the première on 8 August 1840 and 28 April 1860,⁵⁵ and excerpts were performed on five further occasions between 1843 and 1890.⁵⁶

Even though by 1840 Hungarian nationalism in Pest-Buda had been politically organised for over a decade, polarised factions in artistic matters meant opera was not integral to a considerable portion of individuals engaged in these polemics. In the late 1830s and early 1840s discourse centred on literary theory, especially drama, whilst Hungarian musical aesthetics featured only scantily. When Erkel wrote his first operas, there were not yet established concepts relating to Hungarian-language opera: 'practice was far ahead of theory'.⁵⁷ A handful of stage

⁵³ See Katalin Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-műhely. Közös munka Erkel Ferenc színpadi műveiben (1840-1857)' (Doctoral Dissertation, Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem, 2012), 44.

⁵⁴ See the playbill from the première, below. National Széchényi Library, Theatre History Collection.

⁵⁵ Twice in 1840 (8 and 31 August); nine times in 1841 (29 and 30 January, 27 February, 16 April, 4 May, 5 June, 9 November [the latter date was the première of the overture], 16 November, 1 December); three times in 1842 (1 March, 20 April, 17 December); three times in 1843 (22 June, 15 and 20 of December). In 1844 *Bátori Mária* was performed only once, for parliament, 20 May; 11 February of 1845; twice on 12 and 19 December 1846; 7 January 1847; 26 August 1848; 25 June and 3, 5, and 10 of July in 1852; 1 February, 9 March, 24 June and 6 November of 1858; 2 April 1859 and 28 April 1860. Playbills from the *Nemzeti Színház*, Theatre History Collection, National Széchényi Library.

⁵⁶ In 1843, the second act was performed on 22 June and what appears to be the No.10 trio on 22 August; excerpts were performed on 15 August and 16 March in 1850 and 1856 respectively, and the overture and Nos.1-3 were performed in 1890 for Erkel's 80th birthday celebrations. See Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-műhely', *op. cit.*, 52.

⁵⁷ 'A magyar zenekritika és zenetudomány nem haladt együtt a gyakorlattal, a fejlődéssel. ... A magyar opera történetében így módon a gyakorlat messze megelőzte az elméletet.' István Barna, 'Erkel Ferenc első operái az egykorú sajtó tükrében' in Bence Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha (eds.), *Zenetudományi Tanulmányok II: Erkel Ferenc és Béla Bartók emlékére* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1954), 197. The birth of the *Zenészet* *Lapok*, 'Musical Pages', Hungary's first musical journal established by Mihály Mosonyi in 1860 marked the beginning of a commitment to theorising opera in the Hungarian-language press. Though Erkel and Mosonyi were initially on cordial terms, Mosonyi notoriously hurled attacks in the *Zenészet* *Lapok* at Erkel's opera *Bánk bán*, (largely for Erkel's reluctance to engage with Wagnerianism) which premiered in the same year as Mosonyi's opera *Szép Ilonka* (1861). Mosonyi's opera was withdrawn from the *Nemzeti Színház* after a handful of performances, which Mosonyi read as a hostile gesture on Erkel's part. However, Németh calls this attack 'unprecedented' because the failure of *Szép Ilonka*, by a survey of contemporary press accounts, was not Erkel's opposition, but the failure

works drawing on *verbunkos* elements, notably Ruzitska's *Béla futása*, attained modest success, performed semi-regularly in Pest-Buda (see Chapter 3). As Krisztina Lajosi discusses, though influential critics such as Mátray discussed Erkel's use of *verbunkos* in his first opera in terms such as evoking the 'Hungarian spirit', 'what the "Hungarian spirit" actually was' or 'how it could contribute to the making of Hungarian opera, had not yet been explicitly worked out'.⁵⁸ At the outset of 1840, distinct ideas for how to create the genre of Hungarian opera did not exist. This differentiates Erkel's pre-revolution works from other cases where musical criticism had firmed up various standpoints pertaining to 'national' opera.

In the period in which Smetana emerged as the most prominent representative of Czech music through his operas drawing on Czech historical themes (as well as through programmatic orchestral music), Franz Brendel aided this public positioning in both Czech and German-language press. In a Brendelian understanding, 'a nationalist artist must be progressive and vice versa', contributing to Smetana's role as a 'Czech artist-prophet' in relation to his political alignment with the 'young Czech' party, and his compositional direction and association with the *Neudeutsche Schule*.⁵⁹ In *Libuše*, Smetana drew from texts such as the *Zelenohorský*, 'Green mountain', manuscript in a manner akin to Wagner's use of the *Volsungasaga* and the *Nibelungenlied* to 'glorify a mythic past and anticipate a utopian future' negotiated through depicting past Czech self-determination.⁶⁰ Historiographical concepts in relation to the future of the Czechs infiltrated Smetana's presentation of the past in relation to contemporary discourse surrounding the future. The relationship between aesthetic discourse and the national theatre project in Hungary partially explains the contrasting version of the future presented on the stage. Relating cultural progress to historical opera in the case of the Czech theatre further illuminates the divergencies between these national theatre projects.

of the opera itself. Amadé Németh, *Az Erkelek a magyar zenében: Az Erkel család szerepe a magyar zenei művelődésben* (Békéscsaba: Békés Megyei Tanács, 1987), 74.

⁵⁸ Krisztina Lajosi, *Staging the Nation: Opera and Nationalism in 19th-Century Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 88.

⁵⁹ Kelly St. Pierre, *Bedřich Smetana. Myth, Music and Propaganda* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2017), 29.

⁶⁰ St. Pierre, *op. cit.*, 66.

The much-anticipated première of *Libuše* inaugurating the *Národní Divadlo v Praze*, the ‘National Theatre in Prague’, became an opportunity for pro-Smetana, ‘Young Czech’ critics such as Otakar Hostinský (1847-1910) to ‘speak of the Czech’s promising future in the realm of opera’.⁶¹ The ominously open-ended conclusion of *Bátori Mária* is steeped in the uncertainties of the Hungarian reform period. Hostinský’s glowing review tying Smetana’s opera to the future of the genre contrasts decidedly with the stony silence which initially met Erkel’s first opera in Pest-Buda’s Hungarian-language press. When the context had shifted dramatically following the creation of Austria-Hungary, Erkel’s final opera, *István Király* (1886) concludes with a similar scene to the finale of *Libuše*. In the final scene, the mythical leader of the Czechs (the title-role) presents a series of *tableaux* of historical national victories. In *István Király*, the first Christian King of Hungary similarly anticipates a glorious independent future through a series of visions. The antecedent of this finale from Smetana’s opera is conspicuous, and in both works, the historical series of *tableaux* end prior to the imposition of Habsburg rule over these respective peoples. Both works envisage a future not dictated by the Empire. *István Király* embodies a break with the past: the manner of historical determinism underlying *Libuše*—and understandings of history in the contexts of Czech nationalism—at the opening of the *Národní divadlo*. In Hungary in 1840 by contrast, depicting a future which might overcome the trauma of the past was not yet viable.

The case of Smetana’s *Libuše* demonstrates how existing concepts of a national opera could inform reception. The reviews of *Bátori Mária* did not have a theoretical framework through which to analyse the first attempt at a Hungarian opera. However, contemporary reactions to Erkel’s attempt to establish the genre provide insights into how critics conceived this prospect. Naturally, these critiques are filtered through the various aesthetic stances of the writer and publication.

⁶¹ Eva Brenda, ‘Representations of Antonín Dvořák: A Study of his Music through the Lens of Late Nineteenth-Century Czech Criticism’ (DPhil Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2014), 226.

The internationally representative, if not consistently current, repertoire of the Pest-Buda theatres (outlined in the previous chapter) illustrates the operatic trends with which both Erkel and the twin-city audiences were familiar with in 1840. Erkel approached the task of composing his first opera with both the current resident *primadonna*, Rozália Schodel Klein, and the operas she starred in under his own baton, in mind. However, though the role of Mária Bátori was intended for Schodel, she had meanwhile secured performances in Vienna and Brno. Tallián reads this as an act of hostility towards the theatre and the maestro, despite the previously cordial relations between Erkel and Schodel amidst the ‘opera war’. Erkel ‘did not delay the similarly unfriendly countermeasure’ by premièring the work without her.⁶² The young Mária Felbér, familiar to regular attendees at the theatre as *seconda donna* alongside Schodel over roughly eighty evenings between 1838 and 1840,⁶³ performed the title role for the first two performances following a hasty preparation period. After the initial two generally successful performances in August of 1840, a series of guest singers subsequently performed the title role in the performances which followed.⁶⁴ Schodel finally starred as Mária Bátori for the first time on 15 December 1843.

Two factors largely dictated the immediate press reception. Firstly, a considerable portion of the Hungarian-language journals concerned with artistic matters were decidedly to the left of the political spectrum, of variously ‘pro-theatre’ and ‘anti-opera’ persuasion. The fact that specifically literary critique dominated discussions of ‘national art’ meant influential voices such as the ‘*Athenaum* triad’ were generally less concerned with dedicating pages to musical and operatic performances in general, even the first Hungarian-language opera. Simultaneously, musical learning and the standard of Hungarian-language musical criticism meant writers

⁶² ‘Megbocsáthatatlanul viselkedett Schodelné 1840 nyarán, amennyiben önérdékét előbbre helyezte az első magyar operatragédia bemutatásánál. ... Erkel nem késlekedett a hasonlóképp barátságtalan ellenakcióval: a Bátori Máriát annak ellenére előadatta 1840. augusztus 8-án, hogy a primadonna, akinek a szerepet tudottan komponálta, nem állt rendelkezésre.’ Tibor Tallián, ‘Schodel Rozália és a hivatásos magyar operajátszás kezdetei’, (Akadémiai doktori értekezés, Budapest, 2011), 62-63.

⁶³ Tallián, *op. cit.*, 42.

⁶⁴ *Bátori Mária* was next staged in the following January (1841). For a discussion of the singers who performed this role, see Tibor Tallián, ‘Előadástörténet’, in Gupcsó (ed.), *op. cit.*, 85-134.

generally lacked comparable linguistic tools which the critics writing for German-language papers possessed. The *nyelvújítás* of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, though refining language in many respects relating to economics, sciences, and literature, nevertheless did not significantly affect musical terminology and phrasing. Simultaneously, the contemporary circumstances for musical education in Hungary—namely the lack of a conservatoire until 1875—contributed to the comparatively poorer quality of musical professional scholarship and critique.⁶⁵

Though limited, reviews reveals not only insights into how critics thought a Hungarian-language opera might be productive to nationalist goals, but also adds nuance to how the political and artistic discourse unfolded in the early years of the *Nemzeti Színház*. Genres and repertoires became politicised through their alignment with the distinct factions of Hungarian nationalism. The role of opera in these discourses was opposed on grounds of class. Nevertheless, Erkel's second opera became directly involved with revolutionary rhetoric when it was adopted as part of the politically-oriented programme amidst the revolution (see Chapter 5). I suggest that Erkel's use of history in his first opera, though through a genre associated most potently with conservative, aristocratic social strata, actually relates most potently to liberal discourse concerned with spoken drama.

German-language Pest-Buda newspapers praised the creation of a 'national opera' and Erkel's able command of existing operatic forms. The German-language reviews and the *Honművés* review generally praise the use of *verbunkos* elements in the context of an operatic structure. The liberals, conversely, found the use of 'Hungarian' musical elements disruptive to the otherwise at least partially commendable piece, even though Bajza contended that a Hungarian-language opera should be based on 'national music' (discussed below). The anti-opera

⁶⁵ See Miklós Dolinszky's preface in Miklós Dolinszky and Katalin Szacsvai Kim (eds.), *Bátori Mária: Opera Két Felvonásban I-II Erkel Ferenc Operák 1*, Volume I (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2002), xii.

radicals, who felt that Hungarian art should be boldly original, found Erkel's use of 'Hungarian style' superficial.⁶⁶

Initially, aside from the (unsigned, but almost certainly Mátray's) review in the *Honművész* on the 13 August, the Hungarian language press barely comment on the première beyond simply announcing the performance, and stating the libretto was provided by Béni Egressy.⁶⁷ The *Athenaeum* duly notes the significance of the change from 'Magyar' to 'Nemzeti' *Színház* as the occasion of the performance, but with no further discussion of Erkel's opera.⁶⁸ In his review of the première, Mátray writes that the work 'follows the spirit and manners of recent novel operas (Mayerbeer [sic.], Halévy, Weber, etc).'⁶⁹ He specifically comments on the use of a style 'most common for German romanticists' (of which he disapproved), but he thought Erkel used Hungarian musical elements within operatic frameworks in a clever manner.⁷⁰ Presumably, the unspecific wording of the 'style' of 'German romanticists' refers to the set pieces which betray debt to Weber's operas (further discussed below). Simultaneously he writes that the piece would have benefitted from limiting the use of such 'Hungarian' elements.⁷¹

In the German-language press, *Der Spiegel* and *Pesther Tageblatt* published comparatively extensive reviews in August (1840), which are generally positive and forthcoming with constructive criticism. These longer reviews also offer insights into audience reactions. The *Pesther Tageblatt* wrote 'the curtain fell and the composer, librettist, and Miss [Mária] Felbér were called to the stage amidst rapturous applause'.⁷² Similarly, in anticipation of the second performance following a delay due to illness,⁷³ *Der Spiegel* again writes 'It is hoped that the

⁶⁶ See Dolinszky's discussion in Dolinszky, 'Irodalmi előzmények', *op. cit.*, 143-144.

⁶⁷ See Barna, *op. cit.*, 175.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ 'e' munka az újabb regényes operák (Mayerbeer, Halevy, Weber 's a t. szerint) szellemét és modorját követi minden körülményeiben,' *Honművész*, 13 August 1840, 529.

⁷⁰ See Miklós Dolinszky, 'Irodalmi előzmények', *op. cit.*, 144.

⁷¹ 'A' sztyl 'a' szokott német romantikaihoz szít leginkább. A' szerző azonban igen ügyesen szótt közbe magyar melodiákat is, de melyek itt ott elmaradhattak volna, vagy legalább kevesebbé valának ismétlendők.' *ibid.*

⁷² 'Der Vorhang fiel und dr Componist und Dichter, so wie Mlle Felbér...wurden unter stürmischen Applaus hervorgerufen.' *Pesther Tageblatt*, 12 August, 1840. Reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 184.

⁷³ 'A Bátor Mária második előadását kétszer elhalasztották. Augusztus 11-én a címszerepet beugróként vállaló Felbér Mária „gyengélkedése (hihetőleg a reá nézve igen fárasztó Bátor Mária szerepének következtében)” és az Istvánt alakító

repetition of Erkel's excellent new opera, *Bátori Mária*, which has received a solid acclaim, will now take place'.⁷⁴

The 12 August *Pesther Tageblatt* review in particular praises the originality of the melodies, choral setting (No.1 coro), instrumentation, and the skilful and dramatic use of 'ungarischen National-Musik'.⁷⁵ The review criticises Erkel's instrumentation in the Act I finale, though acknowledges this may be more a matter of instrumentalists competence,⁷⁶ and the ensuing wedding chorus in which he finds the writing unimaginative, and ineffective use of religious versus theatrical style.⁷⁷ The reviewer criticises the *banda* in the No.5 chorus which (presumably) unbeknownst to him, was a forced situation at the première, by which time the orchestration and the choral arrangement were not yet complete, and subsequently performed by the *banda* alone.⁷⁸

A general over-use of cello entrances, of horns, and 'ineffective recitative and accompaniment

Erkel József „véletlen elrekedése” miatt maradt el, augusztus 14-én a Király, vagyis Konti Károly „rögtöni megbetegülésére” hivatkozva mondták le. A főszerepeket vivő énekesek vélhetően valós gyengélkedését akár a túl intenzív próbafolyamat is okozhatta, de az augusztus 31-ig nyúló haladék jól jöhetett az egész produkciónak.’ Szacsvai Kim, ‘Az Erkel-műhely’, *op. cit.*, 50.

⁷⁴ ‘Man hofft, dass nun die Wiederholung von Erkels trefflicher, mit so allgemeinen Beifalle aufgenommenem neuen Oper: *Bátori Mária* im Nationaltheater stattfindes werde.’ *Der Spiegel*, 29 August, 1840. Reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 178.

⁷⁵ ‘Wenden wir uns nun zur Musik: - zuvörderst empfangen der Componist unsern Glückwunsch und Dank für sein *sehr* schätzenswerthes Werk “*Erkel* entwickelt in seiner Arbeit einen Melodienreichtum, der wirklich auffallend ist; darunter sehr viel Originale, selbst das Viele, was in das Genre der ungarischen National-Musik schlägt, ist auf eine äusserst gewandte Art für dramatische Music behandelt und verarbeitet worden. Nach einem Präludium von wenig Tacten erhebt sich der Vorhang, und ein melodioser Chor, dessen Vocal-Stimmführung interessant und die Instrumentierung sehr wirksam ist, eröffnet den Reigen.’ *Pesther Tageblatt*, 12 August, 1840. Reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 183.

⁷⁶ ‘Die obligaten Läufe in den Blasinstrumenten erzielen allein schon eine treffliche Wirkung, sind aber bei der leider immer noch bestehenden Unvollkommenheit der Holz Blasinstrumente auf die Spitze gestellt, und ich wette, sie werden öfter missrathen als gelingen, ohne dass man dem Bläser Schuld geben kann.’ *Pesther Tageblatt*, 12 August, 1840. Reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 184.

⁷⁷ ‘Hier hätte der Componist mehr thun können. Der Chor lässt kalt. Bei der ersten Vorstellung war keine Spur von Nüancirung zu finden. Wenn man mit der Composition von Chören dieser Art eine erhebliche Wirkung machen will, so müssen sie entweder ganz im Kirchen- oder ganz im Theaterstyl gehalten sein. Zu erstem Genre rechne ich den zu Anfang des dritten Actes der Oper: ‘Guido und Gunevra’, zu letztem aber den zu Anfang des dritten Actes der Oper: ‘Die stumme von Portici’, dieser gehört zu keinem von Beiden. Die Trauung ist vollroten, und das ganze Personal, das hohe Brautpaar an der Spitze, beigt sich aus der Kirche auf den Burghof zurück. Chor und Tanz, voller Melodien und Effecte in der Instrumentierung (ich verweise nur auf das erste Trio mit dem Flötensolo und den pizzikirenden Violinen), bechliesst dem Act. Hauptsächlich hervorzuheben ist die Bearbeitung eines Sogenannten Friss Magyar, für Tanz und Chor, wo auch das Orchester brilliant bedacht ist;—nur war das Tempo zu schnell.’ *Pesther Tageblatt*, 12 August, 1840. Reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 184.

⁷⁸ Research into military bands in the Pest-Buda theatres is still largely uncharted. Currently, doctoral research is underway on this topic at the Liszt Academy which will be valuable contributions to understandings of these modes of operatic production in the twin-cities. From existing research, it seems that standard practice was for the conductor of the military band to arrange the *banda* part from a piano score, which was likely the process for Erkel's opera. See Szacsvai Kim, *op. cit.*, 50. A complete set of *Banda* parts for *Bátori Mária* are preserved in the music collection of the National Széchényi Library, and the critical edition team reproduced the parts in Appendix IV of volume II of Miklós Dolinsky and Katalin Szacsvai Kim (eds.), *Bátori Mária: Opera Két Felvonásban* (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2002), 697-736.

not always appropriate for a tragic opera', are also mentioned.⁷⁹ With regard to the former, this presumably refers to the King's drawn-out instrumental introductions, and the stylised fanfare announcing the Prince's arrivals and in relation to the extended hunting scene. As discussed below, these musical associations were employed to create a distinct contrasts between royal authority and what Miklós Dolinszky calls the 'purity and humanity' with which István (and Mária) are depicted.⁸⁰ The reference to 'ineffective recitative and accompaniment' likely refers principally to the King's music, who has a comparatively large amount of recitative, and who is usually accompanied by the manner of formulaic musical devices found across Italian-language operas of the period. This is in part likely due to Erkel's relative inexperience writing for the stage (though he had orchestrated a piano reduction of Mercadante's *Il giuramento*, see Chapter 3), as well as time constraints. However, it is also possibly part of the overall two-dimensional depiction of a jaded, aging ruler, who's convictions are quickly changeable: a purposefully indistinct character by contrast with the distinct musical personalities of István and Mária.

The criticism of act II followed the next day (13 August, 1840). Here the reviewer calls attention to the apparition scene (No.13), 'excellently woven into the drinking song, creating a striking effect'.⁸¹ He discusses some of the remainder of the work as superfluous: the *preghiera* (*scena ultima*, No.14) he views as weak, and suggests the final revenge chorus could be omitted.⁸²

⁷⁹ 'Sollen wir bei unserer Ausführlichkeit nicht von ihm scheiden, ohne ihm noch einige gut gemeinte heisame Rathschläge mit auf den Weg zu geben, so bestunden ste darin, dass wir ihn vor einer affectirten Instrumentation warnen, die sich z. B. durch den zu haufigen Gebrauch des Violoncells kundgibt. Der Bau der Recitative und die Art und Weise, wie sie accompagniert werden, ist einer tragischen Oper nicht immer angemessen, der Gebrauch der Blech Instrumente zu häufig, daher keine recht kervehetende Wirkung, wie sie bei *unvermutheten* Einsätzen gar nicht ausbleiben könnte.' *Pesther Tageblatt*, 13 August, 1840. Reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 186.

⁸⁰ Miklós Dolinszky, 'Irodalmi előzmények', *op. cit.*, 145.

⁸¹ 'Ein kräftiger Chor in zwei Versen eröffnet diese Scene, obgleich sie sehr imponierend schliesst, doch zu lang und abspannend war. An den Chor schliesst sich das Trinklied, das zun dem Originellsten gezählt werden darf, was in neuerer Zeit geschrieben ist: die, das Trinklied unterbrechende Vision des Herzogs, der im Geiste die Ermordung seiner Gemahlin sieht, ist vortrefflich mit in das Trinklied eingewebt, und von schlagendem Effect.' *Pesther Tageblatt*, 13 August, 1840. Reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 185.

⁸² 'Die jetzt stattfindende Verwandlung ist durchaus überflüssi. Batori Mária kivaumt, ihre Kinder an der Hand führend und macht ihrem gepressten Herzen in einem Gebete Luft. Diese Preghiera ist eine der schwächeren Numern der Oper und nebstbei achwer zu singen. Als sie geendet ist, nahen rücklings die Mörder, und Batori Mária fällt abs ein lanfersehntes Opfer. Der Herzog kömmt zurück, sieht seine Gattin todt am Boden biegen, vergiesst Thränen des Schmerzes und schwört endlich blutige Rache Bieser ganze Schluss, vom letaten Recitativ angefangen, könnte ebenfalls gestrichen werden.' *Pesther Tageblatt*, 13 August, 1840. Reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 185.

Mátray also criticised the final scene, which in his opinion, ‘has no effect on the ear’.⁸³ Reviewing the second performance (31 August 1840), Mátray complements the new ending in which Erkel shortened the ‘revenge’ aria⁸⁴ (this refers to the abridged version of the finale subsequently performed).

Following their initial almost unanimous silence, the Hungarian-language press began to publish reviews of *Bátori Mária* from performances in early 1841 onwards. For the ‘radicals’, *Bátori Mária* became an opportunity to criticise opera generally, and Erkel’s use of ‘Hungarian’ musical elements specifically, though for different reasons than the liberals. Gábor Egressy, despite expressing admiration for Erkel’s work, nevertheless re-states his position that drama is the only fitting medium for cultivating Hungarian art, and of promulgating moral instruction.⁸⁵ Imre Vahot, writing for the *Regélő Pesti Divatlap* in 1842, criticises Erkel’s use of Hungarian elements within an ‘alien’ (foreign) framework.⁸⁶ The radicals thought that Hungarian artforms should be original and independent, as opposed to modelled on classical or other existing repertoires.⁸⁷ In accordance with common radical viewpoints,⁸⁸ Vahot was critical of what he viewed as Erkel’s superficial use of Hungarian elements. He wrote that the light playfulness of Italian melodic language does not suffice to present the depth or dignity of Hungarian heroes. His review even questions Erkel’s ‘Hungarian-ness’ in suggesting his unfamiliarity with Hungarian culture and mores:

⁸³ ‘az utósó kar „ez ártatlan angyal vére“ valamint különös maga nemében, ugy fülre nem hatott.’ *Honművész*, 13 August 1840, 530.

⁸⁴ ‘Kevésbé valánk a’ 2-ik felvonással elégedve. ...E’ jelenet végrészei kitűnő hanyagság közt enyésztek el. Maria megöletése után kedvező változtatást vettünk észre.’ *Honművész*, 6 September, 1840, 585.

⁸⁵ “‘Bátori Mária’-ban pedig tisztelője vagyok az operán kívül gondolt nemzeti eredeti zenének, mint jeles műszerzeménynek, mely azon hiedelmet ébreszté bennünk, hogy az elhanyagolt magyar zenészet Erkel úrban megtalálta régen várt mestereinek egyikét. Azonban minden félreértés elhárítása végett szerencsém van itt újra s mindenkorra kimondani, mit tartok az operáról drámai becs tekintetében.’ Gábor Egressy, ‘Végszavam a dráma ellenségeihez’, Anna Szalai (ed.), *Tollbarok. Irodalmi és színházi viták 1830-1847* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi könyvkiadó, 1981), 494.

⁸⁶ ‘Bátori Mariában itt ott kirí a’ Nemz. character; de a magasabb magyar zene’ megalapításához, az még koránsem elég, ha egy nagy, idegen elveken épült egészhez, népi nótáink’ szelleméhez képest, néhány töredékes zengzettel járulunk.’ *Regélő Pesti Divatlap*, 28 April, 1842, reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 182.

⁸⁷ See Dolinszky, ‘Irodalmi előzmények’, *op. cit.*, 144-145.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

It will not hurt Mr. Erkel to learn the true Hungarian race's nature, customs, morals, and the music of the *csárdás* – as the true reflection of its soul – more thoroughly.⁸⁹

As Krisztina Lajosi illuminates, the liberals—theoretically open to the idea of opera as a medium through which to serve nationalist goals (see Chapter 3 in relation to Bajza's writings)—approached the possibility of Hungarian-language opera through their aesthetical views in relation to spoken drama.⁹⁰ Bajza wrote that a national opera 'should be based on national music, and its text should help cultivate the national language' (discussed in his 1839 article 'Szózat').⁹¹ Attempting 'to secure a theoretical foundation for opera', he:

illustrated the difference between prose theatre and opera using the metaphor of painting: prose theatre is like a carefully drawn picture, because the actor has to present transformations of the human soul through the plot of the story in a sequence of well-conceived scenes, while the opera singer's task is to make one single but intense impression on the stage, comparable to a less precise but vividly sketched picture in which the artist uses harsher brush strokes to express emotion.⁹²

Considering that Bajza's theorising was practically the extent of discussions of Hungarian opera, it is logical that Erkel's presentation of history was indebted to influences from the international repertoire, but also contemporary drama aesthetics in Hungary. Erkel's career was based at the institution around much of this discourse was centred; his colleagues and librettist were important literary journalists, critics, and theorists.

⁸⁹ The *csárdás* is a *verbunkos* dance consisting of contrasting slow and fast sections associated with Hungarian rural communities ('csárda' is old Hungarian for inn). 'Nem fog ártani, ha Erkel ur az igazi magyar fajnak természetét, szokásait, erkölceit, 's csárdás zenéjét, mint lelkülete' hű tolmácsát, közelebből tanulja ismerni'. *Regélő Pesti Divatlap*, 28 April 1842, 267. It is ironic that Vahot would criticise Erkel for this. Erkel grew up on the southern rural plane (the Alföld), and spent periods in Kolozsvár, the historical stronghold of Hungarian musical and cultural traditions, which was for significant periods of history the heart of the independent state of Transylvania whilst other Hungarian regions were carved between Royal (Habsburg) and Ottoman Hungary. Vahot, on the other hand, enjoyed a prestigious education in law and periods abroad, including in Vienna.

⁹⁰ Krisztina Lajosi, *Staging the Nation: Opera and Nationalism in 19th-Century Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 74-75.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² *ibid.*

As discussed in Chapter 3, the liberals argued that drama should encompass universal themes: drama should embody ‘laws common to mankind’,⁹³ indebted to recent trends in German and French literary cultures. The discussion of ‘classicism’ in Erkel’s first opera threw the fundamental difference between the ‘liberals’ and ‘radicals’ concepts of ‘Hungarian’ art into sharp relief. The ‘Hungarian’ musical aspects in the liberal’s view was superfluous to the otherwise pleasing adherence to the generally ‘classical’ orientation of the ‘*Athenaeum* triad’, in this context referring to the enduring influence of Kazinczy who championed creating a Hungarian-language literary tradition on the Greek classics, Shakespeare, and other established models (see the outline of the *nyelvújítás* in Chapter 2). In general, the liberals’ were concerned primarily with a plot’s universality, which informed their reception of Erkel’s *Bátori Mária*.⁹⁴

The liberals advocated for the idea that ‘flaws’ and ‘sins’ can be redeemed—reconciled with society—as long as the trespass was borne from a ‘virtuous’ trait. In *Bátori Mária*, the King relinquishes his responsibility for Mária’s death out of fear and duty, in the knowledge that the councillors will execute her: he knows this is morally wrong and is in a liberal reading, inexcusable. István, though fundamentally flawed, his impulsiveness and seeking revenge stem from love and seeking justice, respectively. The musical distinctions between the King and the Prince are therein also aligned with aesthetic and political ideology: the musically ‘Hungarian’ István is virtuous in a liberal reading despite his trespasses, whereas the nonspecific, ‘universal’ musical depiction of the King is a generic presentation of stagnant, conservative power. According to the liberals’ aesthetics, ‘a historical figure can only be reconciled with society if his hubris stems from virtue’.⁹⁵ István can be reconciled with Hungarian heroes whose failures, such as Rákóczi or László Hunyadi, do not negate their exemplary heroism.⁹⁶ Presenting Hungary’s

⁹³ Mihály Vörösmarty ‘Teleki László kegyenczéről’ in Pál Gyulai (ed.), *Vörösmarty Mihály munkái* VI. Kötet: Dramaturgiai lapok (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1904), 76.

⁹⁴ See Dolinszky, ‘Irodalmi előzmények’, *op. cit.*, 144-145.

⁹⁵ Tamás Bécsy, ‘Az európai romantikus dráma- és színházfelfogás hatása a magyar fejlődésre’, in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színház történet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 255. See Chapter 2.

⁹⁶ David Lederer, ‘*Honfibt: Nationhood, Manhood, and the Culture of Self-Sacrifice in Hungary*’ in Jeffrey R. Watt (ed.) *From Sin to Insanity: Suicide in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 133. See also Chapter 5 in relation to the execution of László Hunyadi.

heroes who ultimately failed to rupture the transhistorical cycle of tragedies reinforces understandings of the past typical of the period: as a response to the spectre of *nemzetihalál*.

In Toldy's review for the *Athenaeum* following the performance in late January (1841), he writes 'the inspiration of the Hungarian folk music is felt, and further, the instrumentation is excellent'.⁹⁷ However, in Toldy's opinion, Erkel's use of Hungarian musical elements is 'more cerebral than felt'.⁹⁸ Presumably, Toldy (and the liberals broadly) would have preferred a opera which both foregrounded universality of the plot and themes and was derived from national music more overtly than Erkel's opera, which is variously indebted to operatic traditions such as the *bel canto* repertoire and Weber's *Der freischütz*. The radicals meanwhile viewed incorporating local musical elements into operatic models offensive.

Though the liberals criticised Erkel's sporadic use of 'Hungarian' musical elements as disruptive to the classical 'universalism' of the work, the use of such 'local' devices was an integral means through which to present classically-aligned dramaturgy of a virtuous, though flawed, Hungarian hero.

⁹⁷ 's rajta a' magyar népzene' ihlete érezhető: mindenek felett pedig jelesül van instrumentalva.' *Athenaeum*, 4 February, 1841. Reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 180.

⁹⁸ 'Úgy látszik ugyan az egészről, hogy Erkel több tudománnyal, mint képzelemmel bír 's muzsikája nagyobb mértékben van gondolva, mint érezve.' *Athenaeum*, 4 February, 1841. Reproduced in Barna, *ibid.*

Magyar nemzeti színház.

Uj hősi nemzeti szomorú opera.
ERKEL JÓ'SEF jutalomjátéka.

Bérlet **MAGYAR NEMZETI SZÍNHÁZ.** szűnés.

Szombaton, Augustus' 8-kán, 1840.

ERKEL JÓZSEF dalszínész javára, először:

BÁTORI MÁRIA.

Nagy hősi nemzeti szomorú opera 2 felvon. Egressy Benjámin-tól. Zenéjét írta ERKEL FERENCZ, ezen nemzeti színház első karmestere.

Az előforduló tánczot 's csoportozatokat betanította, 's rendeli Hasenhut balétmester ur. Az új öltözet-darabok Kostyál Adám ur. p. szabómester utasítása szerint, 's Podhraczky Ferencz ur színházi főruhátárnok ügyelete alatt készültek. A' szükséges új díszítményeket festette Engert ur, színházi díszítő.

Az előadásban gróf Rothkirch 12. számu cs. kir. gyalog ezredének tábori zenész-kara részt fog venni.

Személyek:

Kálmán, Magyarország királya	— — —	Kondi ur.	— — —	István,) gyermekei	— — —	Szilágyi Béla.
István, öje, koronázótűz	— — —	ERKEL JÓ'SEF.	— — —	Sarolta,)	— — —	Szilágyi Lilla.
Arvai,) tanácsosok	— — —	Váray ur.	— — —	Miklós, Mária testvére	— — —	Joob ur.
Szepelik,)	— — —	Szardahelyi ur.	— — —	Szepelik' megbíttje	— — —	Zsivora ur.
Bátori Mária, nemes hölgy	— — —	Féibér Maria k. z.	— — —			

Tanácsosok. Hadi nép. Vadászok. Nemes-hölgyek. Nép mindenrendből. Történethely: Buda, 's Loányvár.

A' t. cz. Közönség' minden karbeli tagjainak' kegyébe magát mély tisztelettel ajánlja

Erkel József, dal-színész.

Kéretnek a' páholyokat, és zártszékeket bérli t. c. uraságok, hogy bérlett páholyaik, és helyeik iránt ma dél-előtti 10 óráig rendelést tenni méltóztatassanak, azontúl másoknak adának ki.

Kezdete 7 órakor, vége 9 után.

MISKOLCZI JULIA k. assz., beteg. — SCHODELné assz., szabadsággal elutazott.

Ezen opera kinyomott könyve, nappal az írószobában, este a' csarnokban 50 kron., váltóban, megvehető.

Holnap, Vasárnapon, Augustus' 9-kén, bér-folyamban, adatik:

KOBOLD.

Tüncmeyes bohózat, dal, táncz és néma ábrázolatokkal 2 felvonásban, hasoncvő ballet' tartalma után írta Told Xaver, fordította Szardahelyi, muzsikáját szerzette Hebenstreit, a' tánczokat, csoportozatokat betanította Hasenhut ur, az új díszítményeket festette Engert ur. gőpelyeket készítette Osterith ur színmester.

Stöckl Ferencz balétmester ur, 's a' bécsi cs. k. karinthiai kapu melletti udvari színház' volt tánczosa, a' KOBOLD szerepében, mint vendég, lesz szerencsés föllépni.

Heute bei **Peter Fischer** auf dem Gerichtenplatz in der Conditorey, so wie in dem Kiosk folgende Geförne:

Vanille.	Schmankerl.	Tuti frucht, Limon.
Marasquino.	Frische Weikl.	Orangen.
Haselnuss.	Frische Marillen.	Melonen.
Chocolat.	Muscet.	

Schnupstafake beßer Qualitát nach neuester Art fabrizirt, sind zu haben in der Rauch- und Schnupstafak- und Cigarren-Fabrik's Niederlage des Christoph Martinyi & Sohn auf dem Sebastiani-Platz in Pesth.

Operatic Models

Erkel titled the acts and individual numbers in the autograph score of *Bátori Mária* (which he used as his conducting score) with Italian headings.⁹⁹ The structure consisting of set-pieces are clearly modelled on the Donizetti-Bellini tragic-historical repertoire which featured centrally in the *Nemzeti Színház* programmes. The first act is book-ended by choruses; the tenor-hero is introduced by a *banda* march¹⁰⁰ preceding his two-movement *sortita* (*andantino, allegro*); conflict is quickly established between the young heir and the King and councillors through a quartet with chorus in the first act (No.3); the soprano title-role is assigned a two-part *sortita* (*romanza* (*andantino*), *cabaletta* (*allegro*)); which segues into a love duet for the soprano and tenor in which they repeat each other's phrases, or harmonise (*allegro, con moto, Alla pollacca* (No.6)). The second act opens with Mária's second aria (*moderato e piacere, moderato* (*cabaletta*)); a trio with chorus between the King and councillors follows (*andante, allegro non tanto ma deciso, andante*). The hunting chorus precedes a drinking song; and a quartet between Mária, the King, and the royal councillors elapses into a *preghiera* for Mária, and the musical narrative comes full circle when motifs foreshadowing the tragedy return in the final moments. Vocals are generally set in a *canto declamato* style.¹⁰¹

The manner with which Erkel utilised a hunting chorus, drinking song and apparition scene all point towards German models, specifically Weber.¹⁰² Erkel employed chromatic harmony at strategic moments, most extensively in the forest apparition scene, demonstrating influences from both the new kinds of harmony approaching the mid-century in tragic Italian-

⁹⁹ Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Autograph score, Acts I-II, National Széchényi Library, Music Collection, Shelf number Ms. Mus.3.

¹⁰⁰ The *banda* parts were performed, when availability and finances allowed, by military bands stationed in or near Pest: an existing practice at the *Pesti Magyar Színház* for performances of works such as Bellini's *Norma*, Donizetti's *Gemma di Vergi*, and Mercadante's *Il giuramento*. Tallián, 'Schodel', *op. cit.*, 71.

¹⁰¹ *Canto declamato* is particularly associated with Bellini's operas, beginning with *La straniera*. Esse defines this method of vocal setting as 'paired relentlessly syllabic text-setting with preference for repeated notes. ...both in passages of free arioso and within lyrical sections of numbers', see Melina Elizabeth Esse, 'Sospirare, Tremare, Piangere: Conventions of the Body in Italian Opera' (DPhil dissertation, University of California, 2004), 122-123.

¹⁰² The repertoire of the *Nemzeti Színház* did not consist of a representative number of recent German operas, although *Der Freischütz* was regularly staged. The situation at the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth* was more extensive in this regard, but still dominated by Italian and French works (see Chapter 3).

language tragic operas at moments of dramatic tension,¹⁰³ as well as German language operas, namely Weber's *Der Freischütz*. The themes of oath, vengeance, oppressive rule, and anti-royal court rhetoric, though steeped in tropes employed in relaying Hungarian medieval history, were also familiar themes from the opera repertoire performed at the *Pesti Magyar Színház*.¹⁰⁴

In depicting Mária, Erkel employed the convention of opening a soprano's *sortita* (No.4) through solo woodwind (flute), and in her *romanza* through harp-like effects in strings, evoking a 'meditative' context:¹⁰⁵ devices familiar from more recent works in the repertoire of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*, such as Alaide's *romanza* in Bellini's *La Straniera* (Act I, scene ii), or in Norma's *Cavatina* in Act I, scene i. The Doppler brothers, virtuoso flutists, likely also influenced Erkel's decision to utilise specifically flute in introducing Mária. Both of her arias (Nos.4 and 8) also include the familiar framing of woman's chorus, Mária's ladies-in-waiting, who lament her solemn state. Such depictions of tragic heroines were a familiar practice already by the Hungarian troupe in the early reform period. Desdemona's aria from Rossini's *Otello* ('Assisa a piè d'un salice', Act III, scene i) was an insert in various plays, including Dugonics's *Bátori Mária* on which Erkel's opera is based,¹⁰⁶ and on which Mária's *romanza* is clearly modelled.

Presenting the male protagonists in *Bátori Mária* hinges on a distinction between the characters associated with the royal court and István and Mária. Miklós Dolinszky frames this distinction dramaturgically, as a 'Hungarian tone' (*magyar hangvétel*) assigned to István and Mária as representing purity and humanity.¹⁰⁷ The King is presented formulaically: the embodiment of

¹⁰³ See for example David Kimbell's discussion of this transition in *Italian Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 440-476.

¹⁰⁴ Németh, *op. cit.*, 67.

¹⁰⁵ Franco Piperno and Antonio Rostagno, 'The Orchestra in Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera Houses' in Niels Martin Jensen and Franco Piperno (eds.), *The Opera Orchestra in the 18th- and 19th-Century Europe Volume I: The Orchestra in Society* Musical Life in Europe 1600-1900 Circulation, Institutions, Representations (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2008), 54-56

¹⁰⁶ Ferenc Kerényi, 'Magyar színeszt Pest-Budán (1790-1796)' in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színház történet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 76.

¹⁰⁷ 'A két véget között elikkad annak felismerése, hogy a magyar hangvétel dramaturgiai szerepet kap, és a konfliktus zenei megjelenítésére tett erőfeszítést tükrözi: Máriához és Istvánhoz csatlakozva rendre a hatalommal-ármannal szembenálló tisztaság és humánus oldalának zenei megjelenítése még akkor is, ha ezzel az énekesjátékok meglehetősen kezdetleges jellemzési módszerének egyenes folytatásaként lepleződik le a végigkomponált opera zenéjének komplex közegében.' Dolinszky, 'Irodalmi előzmények', *op. cit.*, 145.

stagnant power. Erkel's opera also presents the *ancien regime* as corrupt, indebted to eighteenth-century Hungarian-language plays, including Dugonics's *Bátori Mária*, and to broader European trends of the period. The Prince's recklessness establishes the clash from which the plot unfolds, yet he is partially redeemed by his otherwise virtuous character, presented musically as well as textually as a courageous—Hungarian—warrior.

In Dugonics's *Bátori Mária*, King Kálmán undergoes a transformation from a despot to an enlightened ruler in keeping with contemporary trends. By 1840 a male protagonist in historical representation was more commonly faced with challenges relating to oppressive forces or overcoming the tensions between the individual and society (see Chapter 1). Simultaneously, Hungarian critics were more sympathetic to protagonists acting on passion and impulse than the kinds of sober depictions of enlightened rulers.¹⁰⁸ As a general European shift in literature and drama, new understandings of historical heroes was also a reflection of historical tragic operas familiar to the *Nemzeti Színház* audiences. Prince István adheres to the impulsive young hero types indebted to the contemporary operatic repertoire, but also to the liberal's theatrical aesthetics. In keeping with a failure to heed the pleas or warnings of well-intentioned sopranos (Arturo in Bellini's *La Straniera* (1829); Orombello in *Beatrice di Tenda* (1833); Gennaro in Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833)), István's dismissal of Mária's well-founded fears of a vengeful King leave her at the mercy of intrigue. István's recklessness is key to the narrative in *Bátori Mária*. His flaw functions similarly to the liberal's aesthetics, in which a protagonist's hubris enacts a chain of events from which the final tragedy results.

¹⁰⁸ Bécsy, *op. cit.*, 255.

The chorus perform what Gossett calls a ‘kindly role’¹⁰⁹ in *Bátori Mária*: mixed chorus, ‘the people’¹¹⁰ gratefully champion the heroic István (No.1); women’s chorus lament Mária’s sorrow (Nos.4 and 8); mixed chorus celebrate and bless their marriage (No.7);¹¹¹ the Royal Court (men’s chorus) reinforces the King’s resolve to order Mária’s execution (No.10); the hunting party sing of the joyful life of a hunter (Nos.11-13); and finally echo István’s call for revenge (No.14). They are an extension of the protagonists’ clashes, joys, and sufferings, which implicate the Hungarian people in the power struggles: the relationship between the individual historical figures and society. The chorus are only used to progress the narrative for special effect in the second act, by means of presenting the carefree ignorance of István’s recklessness which throws his new-found anxiety into sharp relief. Similarly in the *scena ultima*, the hunter’s song functions as a narrative device relaying both information and the broader historical implications between the plot and the past.

Time constraints, and Erkel’s relative inexperience with operatic composition¹¹² likely contributed to the work’s somewhat mechanical orchestration.¹¹³ Erkel’s heavy schedule meant József Szerdahelyi¹¹⁴ aided with orchestrating sections of the second act: the wind parts from No.8, No.11, No.12, and No.13. Katalin Szacsvai Kim has also traced Szerdahelyi’s hand in

¹⁰⁹ Philip Gossett, ‘Becoming a Citizen: The Chorus in “Risorgimento” Opera’, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol.2, No.1 (1990), 44.

¹¹⁰ Performance directions: ‘people of all ranks, awaiting the triumphant István’ (Nép minden rendből a győző Istvánt várva), Act I, No.1, scene i.

¹¹¹ This choral passage is similar to Erkel’s setting of Kölcsey’s *Himnusz* (1844) textually but also musically: they share the same key, use similar melodic shapes and harmony. These similarities have been noted in Erkel scholarship, see for example Kata Riskó, ‘Erkel Hymnuszának keletkezése és hagyományozódásának története az első világháborúig’ in Magdaléna Tóth (ed.), *A Magyar Himnusz képes albuma* (Budapest: Argumentum-OSZK, 2017), 100.

¹¹² Orchestrating Mercadante’s *Il giuramento* from the vocal reduction score in preparation for performance at the *Pesti Magyar Színház*; see Chapter 3.

¹¹³ This especially concerns distributing chords (frequently tonic or fifth in the celli, bassi, tuba and bassoon, thirds and fifths in trombone, trumpet, clarinet and oboe). In solo arias in particular, vocals are often reinforced by upper woodwind and/or upper strings. Within instrument groups, when the same instruments play simultaneously, the texture is usually enriched by standard means (harmonised thirds, fifths, sixths or play in octaves). Examples of solo aria settings are discussed in the following sections pertaining to musical representation of the protagonists.

¹¹⁴ See Chapter 3 for a sketch of Szerdahelyi’s multi-faceted and significant roles at the *Pesti Magyar Színház*.

orchestral parts of No.10 and the *scena ultima* in its unfinished version (prior to Erkel's completion of Mária's *preghiera* and the remainder of the scene).¹¹⁵

Erkel utilises musical foreshadowing as a narrative device framing the plot. As Scott L. Balthazar discusses, textual 'predictive devices' (such as 'foreshadowing, prophecy, pledges and curses'), can 'encourage the audience to anticipate specific actions and incidents.'¹¹⁶ Musical foreshadowing in linking both power clashes through a horn motif and a descending chromatic figure anticipate tragedy whilst also linking cause and effect throughout the narrative. This device also relates to ideas surrounding determinist history by musically linking the introduction material with the final tragedy which alludes consolation or instruction: a failure to create rupture (further discussed in the following sections).

The initial eight performances of *Bátori Mária* began with a short (26 bar) orchestral introduction, largely comprising horn material (see Example 1) which occurs at several strategic moments in the opera: throughout the power clash following István's *sortita* (No.2); István's visions of his dead wife (No.13, bars 111-117), and Mária's death (*scena ultima*, bars 84-86). The overture, first performed on 9 November 1841, opens almost identically to the original introduction, and subsequently utilises the thematic material of the opera symphonically (performances of the overture last roughly eight and a half minutes). Erkel thereby employs an ominous horn motif, tonally ambiguous oscillating between major and minor thirds (bars 1 and 2-3, respectively) as a sign of unfolding calamity (see Example 1), a device familiar from a range of operas in the repertoires of the Pest-Buda theatres such as Bellini's *I capuleti e i montecchi* (1830), Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* (1831), and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835). Erkel likely took influence particularly from Bellini's *La Straniera* (with which Erkel made his conducting debut at

¹¹⁵ Szerdahelyi possibly also worked on parts of the instrumentation in the No.9 trio. See Katalin Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-műhely', *op. cit.*, 46-48.

¹¹⁶ Scott L. Balthazar, 'Aspects of Form in the Ottocento libretto', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol.7, No.1 (1995), 31.

the *Pesti Magyar Színház* in January 1838), and Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*: both of which were variously embroiled in the 'opera war' (see Chapter 3).

Example 1, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Original Orchestral Introduction, Bars 1-4
Andante

Fagotto 1, 2

Corno 1, 2 in Mib *pp*

Trombone 1, 2, 3 1-2 3 *pp*

Violini I

Violini II *p*

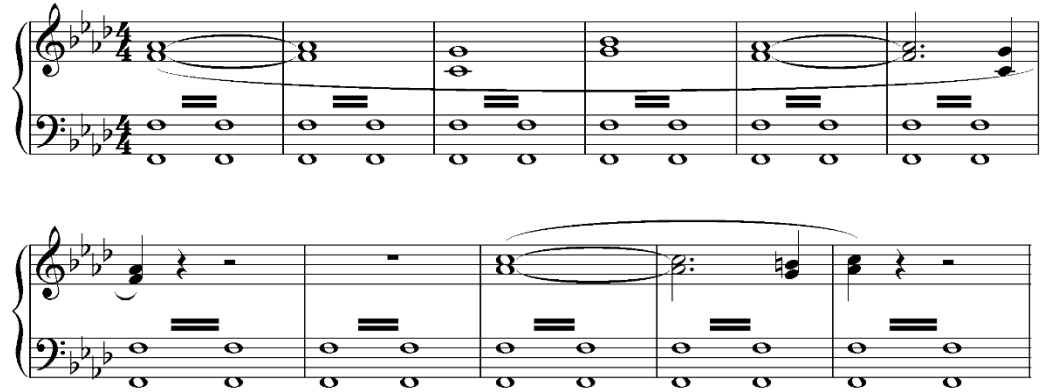
Viole *p*

Violoncelli *p*

Contrabassi *p*

Bellini employed this device in works such as *La Straniera* (which does not have an overture), where the orchestral introductions anticipate conflict and tragedy. Introducing the ensuing confrontation which will escalate into a duel between Arturo and Valdeburgo in scene iv, for example, Bellini used *tremolo* strings and minor thirds in brass over f minor (see Ex.2).

Example 2, Vincenzo Bellini, *La Straniera*, Act I, scene iv, *Recitativo e duetto*, bars 15-25.



Similarly, in Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*, minor thirds in horns (see bars 15-17, Ex.3) musically foretell the tragic plot in the orchestral introduction opening the prologue.

Example 3, Gaetano Donizetti, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Prologo*, bars 13-22.

Maestoso

Musical foreshadowing is further emphasised by a descending chromatic figure, which closes the original orchestral introduction (see Example 4, clarinets, bassoons and cello). This material is similarly utilised at moments of tension in the opera (in the opening power clash between the King and heir (Act I, No.2, final bars (96-100)); in inverted (ascending) form in Mária's refusal to marry István for fears of the King's wrath (Act I, No.6, scene viii bars 18-20, 42-44, 55-57 and 79-81); and in the *scena ultima*, bars 94-97 & 109-110).

Example 4, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Original Orchestral Introduction, Bars 20-24

Andante

Flauto piccolo

Flauto 1, 2

Oboe

Clarinetto 1, 2 in Sib

Fagotto 1, 2 *pp*

pp

Corno 1, 2 in Mib

Trombone 1, 2, 3

Tuba

Violini I

Violini II

Viole

Violoncelli

Contrabassi

Similar figures are found at moments of tension in contemporary works. Bellini employed a comparable effect in *Norma*, as the druid priestess momentarily contemplates murdering her own children:

Example 5, Vincenzo Bellini, *Norma*, Act II, scene i, bars 68-71.

Norma: (*her sons awake*) 'My sons!' (*she embraces them with bitter tears*) 'My sons...'

(fanciulli si svegliano)

(li abbraccia piangendo amaramente)

agitato

figli!... miei figli!...

agitato

Erkel thereby drew on musical depictions of tension, creating anticipation and continuity between the series of calamities throughout the plot. Such effects also signalled to the audience, who were familiar with such devices from the operatic repertoire staged at the *Pesti Magyar Színház*, of the tragedy to come. The means through which Erkel related musical gestures with the series of cataclysms also relates to contemporary understandings of history. Presenting a sinful past in the punished present, contemporary stagnation remained unruptured.

Hungarian Historical Figures

In operas such as Smetana's *Brandenburgers* or *Libuše* internal conflict is a state from which a stronger community emerges, whereas in *Bátori Mária* the conflict is neither resolved nor overcome. The King decides he will not order the murder of an innocent subject yet abandons Mária to the executioner and councillors, knowing he is leaving her to die. István, though eventually recognising his own recklessness, is too late to influence events already underway, and finally swears to fight vengeance with vengeance. Mária's murder does not resolve the conflict through a moral lesson as in Dugonics's play, nor does the protagonist's death trigger István to evolve beyond his flaw which had sparked the initial clash from which the tragedy unravels.

Erkel's first opera diverges from both a secure faith in a hopeful future demonstrated in the arenas of French grand operas and the 'national' operas of other Habsburg peoples. In the French-language repertoire, upheaval exemplified the potential for a drastic break with the past and the possibilities which an undetermined future represented.¹¹⁷ In Erkel's *Bátori Mária*, the uncertainty in contemporary understandings of Hungarian identity is presented as predetermined, cyclic, sinful past remaining unatoned. Lamenting a lost powerful dynasty amidst a volatile political context meant Erkel's opera does not contain the pride in past glory which operas drawing on similar settings such as Smetana's convey.

Historical uprisings throughout Hungarian history in the reform period are sources of lament, of 'proof' of a divine wrath and subsequent punishment. 'Young Hungary', in the following years approaching, and especially during, the revolution began to incorporate anticipatory elements (discussed in relation to *Hunyadi László* in the following chapter). In 1840 however, interpretations of failed uprisings in literary representations of history are presented as decided defeats which had resulted in the contemporary oppressed, stagnant and punished condition. As discussed in Chapter 2, failed attempts to throw off the yoke of various forms of foreign domination affirmed beliefs that the future was doomed to repeat the trespasses of the past, and that this could end in the death of Hungary as a cultural-linguistic concept. Whilst French Grand opera and Erkel's *Bátori Mária* both embody pluralities relating to the future, in the case of the former, uncertainty beheld the potential for overcoming strife: for universal freedom. In the Hungarian reform period, the possibilities were situated between surviving—remaining in punished circumstances—or national apocalypse.

The curtain rises in *Bátori Mária* to a chorus of the Hungarian people awaiting the triumphant return of Prince István to Buda castle (E major). The orchestra halts, emphasising

¹¹⁷ See Hibberd *op. cit.*, 12.

the chorus's *a Capella* praise of the heroic prince, and tie the military success of István to the prosperity of the Hungarian people: 'István, the man of iron strength, heroic son of Kálmán! It is clear that Árpád's blood flows in his veins. Long live the hero, the strong warrior!'.¹¹⁸ King Kálmán arrives, signalled by a *sforzando* perfect cadence in C, occupies his throne and blesses his subjects.¹¹⁹ The chorus in turn bless István, their *béke angyala* 'angel of peace', whose victories mean their 'barren' lands will be restored, widows 'sad eyes' will dry, and 'needy children' will be fed.¹²⁰ The chorus thereby establish that the heir is tied to national prosperity from the opening.

Before the march signalling István's arrival commences following the chorus of the Hungarian people, the two royal councillors, Árvai and Szepelik, exchange mutual distaste at the King's announcement that the heir will shortly be crowned the new King of Hungary. Here, Erkel first depicts the fragility of this joyous spectacle of the Hungarian people celebrating their triumphant Prince-protector. Meanwhile, the chorus continues singing praises and blessings to the royal family in anticipation of István's imminent ascension to the throne. The councillors exchange concludes by conspiring to 'put obstacles in his [Prince István's] way'. *Pianissimo* tremolo strings, pivoting through a diminished seventh chord (bar 32), reflects their ominous threat (see Example 6).

¹¹⁸ Kórus: *István, az ércskarú, Kálmánnak hős fia; megtetszik, hogy Árpád vériből származik!* Act I, No.1, scene i.

¹¹⁹ belép, a trónt elfoglalja. Stage directions, Act I, No.1, scene ii.

¹²⁰ Chorus: A letipratott tar határok nemsoká áldást termenek, és a harci ménék vényomán arany kalászkok lengenek. Az özvegyek kisírt szemén már örömkönyűk ragyognak: lesz mit szelni, lesz mit adni kenyért esdő magzatjoknak. Act I, No.1.

Example 6, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act I, No.1 (scene ii), *In tempo moderato*, 31-34
 Szepelik and Árvai: We shall put obstacles in his way.¹²¹

The musical score is for a scene from *Bátori Mária*. It features two vocal parts, Szepelik and Árvai, and an orchestra. The tempo is marked 'In tempo moderato' and the key signature has one sharp (F#). The vocal parts have lyrics in Hungarian. The orchestral parts include Violini I, Violini II, Viole, Violoncelli, and Contrabassi. The score shows a transition from 'In tempo moderato' to 'Moderato'.

This momentary tension leads immediately into a short *banda* fanfare, abruptly switching back to the key of the King's announcement (C).¹²² The 'triumphant Hungarian march' (No.2) which follows further establishes the threats the councillors pose amidst the rejoicing. Repeated triplet fanfare figures in brass and timpani, functioning both as markers of the Prince's royal birth as well as evoking his authoritative military stature, relate more broadly to European nationalisms in the nineteenth century in which male prowess often aligns with political structures and power.¹²³ Particularly in literature, military feats are tropes found across European nationalisms as relating

¹²¹ Szepelik és Árvai: Majd igyekezzünk követ hengeríteni utába.

¹²² The *banda* is scored for two flugel horns; bass flugel horn; two horns (in C); four trumpets (first in F, second, third and fourth in C); one bassoon; three trombones; tuba and a small drum (*tamburo piccolo*). *Banda* part books. Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*. National Széchényi Library, Music Collection. See also Appendix VI of Miklós Dolinszky and Katalin Szacsvai Kim (eds.), *Bátori Mária: Opera Két Felvonásban I-II* Erkel Ferenc Operák 1 (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2002), Volume II, 697-698.

¹²³ This is opposed to the elements of race (through reproduction) and language (*anyanyelv* 'mother tongue' in Hungarian) Alexander Maxwell, 'Nationalizing Sexuality: Sexual Stereotypes in the Habsburg Empire', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol.14, No.3 (2005), 290.

to masculinity.¹²⁴ In Hungary, ‘physical strength’ and ‘battlefield prowess’ were practically synonymous with the Hungarian ideal of machismo.¹²⁵ The series of dotted rhythms, a musical element which Bellman describes as ‘typical Hungarian’¹²⁶ feature prominently to reference the specifically ‘Hungarian’ identity of the prince (see Example 7).¹²⁷

¹²⁴ For example, see Stefan Berger, ‘Introduction: Narrating the Nation: Historiography and Other Genres’ in Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas and Andrew Mycock (eds.), *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media and the Arts* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books: 2008), 7.

¹²⁵ Alexander Maxwell, ‘The Nation as a “Gentleman’s Agreement”: Masculinity and Nationality in Nineteenth-Century Hungary’, *Men and Masculinities*, Vol.18, No.5 (2015), 546.

¹²⁶ Jonathan Bellman, ‘Toward a Lexicon for the Style hongrois’, *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol.9, No.2 (1991), 219.

¹²⁷ Erkel later used this material (here in piccolo and flute, see Example 7) in his 1861 opera, *Bánk bán*, and in both cases the audience understood this motif as ‘Hungarian’ in the contexts of the works respective conflict. See Dolinszky, ‘Irodalmi előzmények’, *op. cit.*, 143.

Example 7, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act I, No.2, *Marcia ongarese trionfale* (scene iii), 1-4

The musical score is arranged in systems. The first system includes Picc, Fl (a2), Ob, Cl (Do), and Fg. The second system includes Cor (Do), Tr (Fa), Trb, Tb, and Timp. The third system includes Banda, T, B, Szepelik, Árvai, VI I, VI II, Vle, Vlc, and Cb. The vocal parts (T, B, Szepelik, Árvai) have the following lyrics:

T: Itt jön a ki-rály - fi vi - téz ha - dá - val,

B: Itt jön a ki-rály - fi vi - téz ha - dá - val,

Szepelik: Itt jön a bi - tor - ló tom - bo - ló ha - dá - val,

Árvai: Itt jön a bi - tor - ló tom - bo - ló ha - dá - val,

tr tr

1.

3₃

p

p 3

tr tr

meg - ve - ré az el - lent e - rős ka - rá - val,

meg - ve - ré az el - lent e - rős ka - rá - val,

nem hoz-e va-jon kéj - hől - gye-ket ma-gá - val,

nem hoz-e va-jon kéj - hől - gye-ket ma-gá - val,

tr tr

3 3

3

Although the liberals complained about Erkel inserting ‘Hungarian’ (understood synonymously as *verbunkos*) features amongst set-pieces, these musical markers functioned to distinguish István’s Hungarian-ness and masculinity amidst the aged King and chorus. Therefore the role of the march is not only akin to examples such as the march in *Norma*, employed to signal the presence and prestige of characters on stage (‘Dell’aura tua profetica’ Act I, scene i). Military fanfare and visual-audio spectacle conceal the inner conflict of intrigue, danger in the midst of celebration, as in Ex.8:

Example 8, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act I, No.2, *Marcia ongarese trionfale* (scene iii)¹²⁸

Chorus:

Here comes the young Prince with his courageous troops. He defeated the enemy with his strong courage! Long live Prince István! Long live the warriors who protect us!

Árvai and Szepelik:

Here he comes with his raging warriors. Does he not bring with him loose women, does he not bury our country’s worries in fickle pursuits? They would fatten themselves at the expense of the poor. Come, haughty Prince, there are a few here who would pour venom in your cup of joy.

Amidst celebratory spectacle, the councillor’s schemes are musically sublimated into the celebratory chorus in the march as a narrative device.

Aside from the new finale, the other significant revisions Erkel undertook with *Bátori Mária* is the addition of István’s No.2 aria which premièred in the third performance (29 January, 1841, written for the celebrated Joób Zsigmond), and two later additions of a *cabaletta* to the Act I István and Mária duet (No.8), first performed in 1852, and a new duet (No.6) for István and Mária in 1858.¹²⁹ István’s aria enriches his role by introducing important textual and musical elements of his character. István’s *sortita* establishes both his belief that the root of Hungary’s

¹²⁸ Kórus: Itt jön a királyfi vitéz hadával, megveré az ellent erős karával. Éljen István, éljen a királyfi, s kik honért csatáztak, egyig éljenek! Árvai, Szepelik: Itt jön a bitorló tomboló hadával, nem hoz-e vajon kéjhölgyeket magával, kiknek lágy ölében hon gondját temetve édelegne buján. És pazar kezekkel hízlná fel őket a szegények zsírján.

¹²⁹ See Szacsvai Kim, ‘Az Erkel-műhely’, *op. cit.*, 55-58.

suffering is divine punishment, and that, unlike the royal councillors, he does not claim to know ‘whose sin’ has invoked God’s wrath.¹³⁰ In his *cavatina*, *lattám, hazám, szédült határidat*, ‘I have seen, dear homeland, your troubled borders’, István laments the state of his country, emphasising *szegény hazá*, ‘poor country’, repeated at the end of each repetition of the stanza. Laments, a tradition across multiple nationalisms, were also familiar inserts in *singspiele* and plays at *Várszínház* and the *Pesti Magyar Színház* (see Chapter 3).¹³¹ In Hungarian musical traditions lament is connected to the *verbunkos*.¹³² The *verbunkos* hinges on two basic contrasting sections: *lassú*, ‘slow’, and a fast *friss* (which translates literally as ‘fresh’, but in this context connoting a meaning akin to ‘fiery’ in English). *Lassú* is largely associated with a cluster of musical markers employed in *verbunkos ballgató*, ‘to be listened to’ (in other words, differentiating the instrumental *verbunkos* from *verbunkos* dance-music). Musical *Lassú* features include an improvised and ornamented melody which is variously repeated with synchronised or alternatively emphasised beats (*dűvő*), and augmented seconds in the melody (the so-called ‘Gypsy’ scale comprising raised fourths and seventh degrees).¹³³ In István’s aria, musically introduced by augmented seconds in strings and woodwind, the textual preoccupation with a plighted Hungary and his character’s ‘Hungarian-ness’ is relayed through a lament-*lassú*-like melody. Phrases are constructed of standard *verbunkos* rhythmic patterns in which a shorter note becomes stressed in relation to the following (longer) note¹³⁴ (see Example 9 bar 21 *Lát-tam*) and syncopated repetitions (see Example 9, bars 27–28).¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Act I, No.2 (scene iv), bars 8–12, 16–19, 24–31. (Ki vétke az, melyért megátkoza ily súlyosan az Úr, szegény haza? ‘Whose sin was it that brought the wrath of God on our poor country?’).

¹³¹ Ferenc Kerényi, ‘Magyar színészet Pest-Budán (1790–1796)’ in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színháztörténet I: 1790–1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 76.

¹³² Lujza Tari, “Verbunk” – “Verbunkos”. Interaction between Towns and Villages in an Instrumental Music Genre’ in Doris Stockmann and Jens Henrik Koudal (eds.), *Historical Studies on Folk and Traditional Music. ICTM Study Group on Historical Sources of Folk Music: Conference Report*, Copenhagen, 24–28 April, 1995 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1997), 110.

¹³³ See Shay Loya, *Liszt’s Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 9–10.

¹³⁴ David E. Schneider, *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition: Case Studies in the Intersection of Modernity and Nationality* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2006), 20–21.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

Example 9, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act I, No.2, Aria con Coro (scene iv), 21-28.

István: I have seen, dear motherland, your troubled borders, spoiled with unending discord. Whose sin was it that brought the wrath of God on our poor country?

The musical score is for a scene from *Bátori Mária* by Ferenc Erkel. It features a vocal part for István and a choral part for the Coro (Mib and Sib). The score is in 8/8 time and B-flat major. The vocal part for István begins with the lyrics "Lát-tam, ha - zám, - szét-dúlt ha - tá ri - dat, mely tönk - re lőn ö - rök - vi -". The instrumental parts include Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in B-flat, Bassoon, Horns, Violins I and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (p, p pizz.), articulation (pizz.), and phrasing slurs.

Picc

Fl

Ob

Cl (Sib)

Fg

Cor (Mib)

Cor (Sib)

István

Lát-tam, ha - zám, - szét-dúlt ha - tá ri - dat, mely tönk - re lőn ö - rök - vi -

VII

VI I

VI II

Vle

Vlc

Cb

szály mi - att. Ki-vét-ke az, me-lyért meg-át - ko - za ily sú-lyo-san az Úr, sze

cresc.

gény, sze - gény, sze - gény ha - za, sze -

div.

arco

arco

However, the accompaniment is constructed through familiar operatic orchestral gestures: arpeggiated strings with reinforced tonics. Here Erkel also employs textural layering and colouring in the woodwind and horns. Combined clarinet and bassoon dovetail István's phrases, while horns harmonise (for example, bars 22-24, see Example 9). Though such features are found across much of the contemporary Italian-language operatic repertoire, the orchestral colour differentiating such formulaic figures from those assigned to the King seem particularly influenced by Rossini, who frequently employed woodwind (particularly clarinet), to reinforce solo vocals and to accentuate the 'climactic section of the melodic curve'.¹³⁶ These phrases emphasise the emotional text, but also add textural weight to István's phrases on the first beat of the bar, a *verbunkos* element associated with the rhythm of the Hungarian language (mentioned above). The cadenza concluding István's *cavatina*, which lingers on the reach of C5 (bar 30), further contributes to the virile depiction of his character akin to his tenor-hero Italian counterparts. Freya Jarman reads such moments as the tenor's 'money shot': 'the climax of ...sexual power and prowess', through which he conquers vulnerability.¹³⁷

The *tempo di mezzo* interjection of István's *sortita*, in the form of men's chorus, shifts from the sombre to the triumphant, with the proclamation *De egykor eljövend a boldog pillanat, hogy rólunk elvegye a súlyos átkokat*, 'One day the blissful moment comes when the solemn curse is lifted from us' (Act I, No.2, scene iv, bars 34-38). References to a 'solemn curse' reflects the historical theme in literature of a sin-and-punishment understanding of the past. However, in reflecting this historical reference, the musical language immediately switches from lamenting the state of the country (G minor) to an optimistic belief in a 'blissful' future of the nation (E flat major). Liling dotted rhythms marked *allegro* replaces the previous accompaniment of meditative harp-like arpeggio oscillations. István's shift in preoccupation from *segény haza* in the *cavatina* to *Ó, üdvöző*

¹³⁶ William Edward Runyan, 'Orchestration in Five French Grand Operas' (DPhil Dissertation, University of Rochester, 1983), 98.

¹³⁷ Freya Jarman, 'The Castrato, the Tenor and the Question of Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Opera' in Philip Purvis (ed.), *Masculinity in Opera: Gender, History, and the New Musicology* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 61.

idő, jövel! ‘Time of redemption be upon us!’ is again repeated several times to conclude the *cabaletta* (Act I, No.2, scene iv bars 87-96). Modelling István’s *sortita* on a Rossinian *la solita forma* meant Erkel could introduce the impulsive nature of the young heir who defies his father, marries against his permission (Act I finale), and unknowingly leaves Mária vulnerable to danger in the second act in his haste for the thrill of the hunt. Erkel musically establishes this characterisation of István who immediately disregards his well-founded anxiety relating to the future at his men’s reassurance. This foreshadows a similar exchange between Mária and her ladies chorus which demonstrates, in opposition to her tenor counterpart, her unwillingness to bow to their persuasion to abandon her fears (Act II, No.8, scene i). Mária’s *cabaletta*, rather, finds solace in an acceptance of God’s will ‘The innocent, whose heart is not soiled with sin, the innocent calmly faces the trial’.¹³⁸

In contrast to introducing István with references to Hungarian musical traditions, military vigour, and his hubris—recklessness—the King is musically characterised as the embodiment of royal authority. Kálmán is possibly modelled on Filippo in *Beatrice di Tenda* (first performed at the *Pesti Magyar Színház* in the 1838 season ahead of the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*, see Chapter 3): an indecisive, despotic ruler who lapses into privately expressing turmoil despite publicly ordering the death of a woman he respects. Both characters justify their actions by stating it is for the good of the country (Filippo: ‘Two realms cannot be united while she lives’ (Act II, scene I finale), Kálmán: ‘I took an oath to keep the sacrilegious from usurping our laws!’ (Act II, No.10.)). The King is also the character for which Erkel utilised the most formulaic material, his entrances in No.10 and No.13 are marked by the same stately material (see Example 10) which unfolds across a thirty eight bar introduction evocative of a baroque chamber ensemble in which the opening motif (strings, bars 1-2) repeats in imitation before a *ripieno*-esque orchestral statement of the material. The *maestoso* marking and the lack of melodic development further emphasise this sober depiction of the *ancien regime*.

¹³⁸ Mária: Az ártatlan kinek szívét semmi vétek be nem szennyezé, az ártatlan nyugodtan megy a bírák elé. Act II, No.8, scene i.

Example 10, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act II, No.10, scene iii, bars 1-5.

Maestoso

Ob

Cl (Do)

VI I

VI II

VI I

Vlc

Cb

King Kálmán's arias are characterised by stylised accompaniment (such as in Example 11), in the manner of broken chord figures which often similarly accompany a troubled baritone or bass in Italian-language opera such as the likely model of Filippo in *Beatrice di Tenda*.

Example 11, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act II, No.10, scene iii, bars 93-95.

Kálmán: 'Lord God, forgive the sinner for doing what we all do: love!'

Andante

Cor (Fa)

Király

U - ram! bo - csásd meg bú - nét - e sze - gény - nek, a - zért sen

Andante
pizz.

VI I

VI II

Vle

Vlc

Cb

Following István's *sortita*, the King addresses his sons concerns: in his view producing a legitimate heir will overcome Hungary's troubles ('The interest of the country calls for you to choose a wife, who bears the country an heir – and the house of Árpád will live on forever').¹³⁹ The King's response is characteristically accompanied by starker textures than István's lament, where Erkel employs colouring and textual layering. By contrast, the King's accompaniments comprise sparse textures, and often use the generic formula of pizzicato downbeats on the tonic or dominant in lower strings followed by repeated quaver oscillations or arpeggios in upper strings (as in Example 11).

The opening exchange between King and heir descends into confrontation. István's response is accompanied by a motif comprising octave leaps and turn-like semi-quaver figure, which reoccurs throughout the opera (see Example 12). Erkel's use of this reminiscence material is interesting in that it is employed in power struggles at which Mária is at the centre of conflict, and yet it is neither introduced by her, nor does it feature in either of her arias.

¹³⁹ Kálmán: A hon java kívánja, hogy nőt válassz magadnak, kitől az ország örökösét nyerjen, és Árpád háza örökre fennmaradjon. Act I, No.2, scene iv.

Example 12, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Overture, *Allegro*, 151-154

The musical score for Example 12 shows three staves: Piccolo, Flauto, and Violini I. The Piccolo and Flauto parts are marked *pp* and play a melodic line. The Violini I part is also marked *pp* and plays a similar melodic line. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 2/4.

When it does occur as she is on-stage it accompanies István. Thereby, this motif is akin to the manner of reminiscence motif found in Italian-language historical-tragical operas in that it is reoccurring material which though presented in various transpositions, and exceptionally, in inverted form (in No.6). This material is otherwise melodically undeveloped. However, this material differs from such motifs in that it does not have a clear association with a character or theme.¹⁴⁰ The static nature of the motif makes this material simultaneously conspicuous and ambiguous. Though the material is not derived vocally from Mária (as is usually the case in reminiscence motifs)¹⁴¹ this material nevertheless appears in a vocal fashion in ensembles which do not include Mária.

Utilising the material associated with Mária whilst introducing the power struggles, Erkel situates the title-role at the centre of the power clashes between the King, Prince István, and the Royal Councillors. The King fears for his bloodline, and therein, the fate of the Hungarians. István fears foreign invasions and the safety of the people he protects through military means. The Councillors fear the Prince's youth will lead to foolish squandering of country's resources, and that a usurper of non-royal blood will take the throne. Amidst the confrontation, the reminiscence motif is utilised evocative of a substitute soprano voice. When the Prince first opposes the King, the motif dovetails their phrases, creating the musical effect of a third voice

¹⁴⁰ Luca Zoppelli, translated by William Ashbrook, 'Narrative Elements in Donizetti's Operas', *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol.10, No.1 (1993), 26.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

interjecting at the end of their phrases (the semi-quaver turn-like figure) in a manner akin to vocal-ensemble writing (see Example 13). This use evokes a similar effect to dramaturgical situations in tragic opera in scenes of conflict between the tenor and baritone or bass in which the heroine is at the centre, but who rather comments on the situation or pleads for mercy or a resolution but does not engage directly in the conflict (such as the finale of *La Straniera*; the Act I finale of *Anna Bolena* and the Act I finale of *Lucrezia Borgia*).

Example 13, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act I, No.2 (scene iv), *Moderato*, 20-23

István: Father, I cannot do that!

Kálmán: What? Are you opposing me, sweeping aside what is best for the country? How dare you oppose me?¹⁴²

The musical score is arranged in systems. The first system includes the Piccolo, Flauto (pp), Clarinetto (pp), and Fagotto (pp). The second system features István's vocal line with lyrics in Hungarian: "tyám Király azt nem cse lek-szem!". The third system includes Violini I, Violini II (pp), Virole, Violoncelli (pizz.), and Contrabassi. The fourth system continues the instrumental parts, with the Violoncelli and Contrabassi marked "arco". The score is written in G major and 2/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

¹⁴² István: Atyám, azt nem cselekszem! Kálmán: Hogyan, te ellenállsz? és a hon javát feledve mersz itt nemmel felelni?

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system features a vocal line (soprano) and a piano accompaniment (piano and bass). The second system features a vocal line (soprano) and a piano accompaniment (piano and bass). The third system features a vocal line (soprano) and a piano accompaniment (piano and bass). The lyrics are: állsz? és a hon ja - vát fe - led - ve mersz itt nem-mel fe.

As the confrontation unfolds, Szepelik and Árvai scathingly allude to the continuation of the Árpád dynasty in referencing Mária and István's children, which further emphasises the effect of Mária's musical presence as a member of the ensemble (Example 14).

Example 14, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act I, No.2 (scene iv), 76-79

Árvai and Szepelek: Honest men will not obey him!

István: (*in anger*), you really address me so, you snakes!¹⁴³

Picc

Fl

Cl (sib)

Fg

Cor (Mib)

Trb

Tb

István

Szepelek

Árvai

VI I

VI II

Vle

Vlc

Cb

(dühösen)

És ezt

Eb, a - ki öt u - ral - ja,

Eb, a - ki öt u - ral - ja,

¹⁴³ Árvai and Szepelek: Egy Korcs legyen királyod? Eb, aki öt uralja! István: (*dühösen*) És ezt nékem, ti szörnyek?

The musical score is written for a scene from a Hungarian opera. It consists of four systems of music. The first system features a woodwind section with flutes, oboes, and bassoons, and a string section. The second system features a vocal soloist and a string section. The third system features a vocal soloist and a string section. The fourth system features a woodwind section, a string section, and a vocal soloist. The lyrics are in Hungarian and describe a scene where a councillor attempts to convince the King that Mária must be executed.

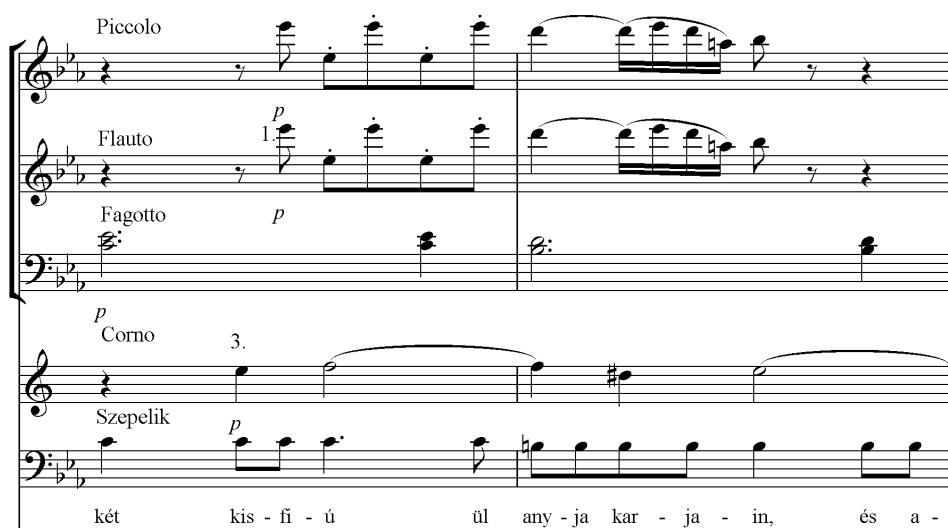
né - - kem, ti ször - nyek? Mi tart, hogy e
a - - ki őt u - ral - ja!
a - - ki őt u - ral ja!

In the councillor's attempts to convince the King that Mária must be executed (No.10), Szepelik reveals the two sons the Prince has already had with his new bride. The descending thirds figure in the bassoons (see Example 20), alongside the oscillating horn figures (which accompany István's visions and Mária's death) betray Szepelik's murderous intent (Example 15).

Example 15, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act II, No.10 (scene iii), *Allegro non tanto ma deciso*, 115-118

Szepelik: Two little boys sit in their mothers arms, calling the Prince their father. Did you really think that the son of Judit would ascend to the throne?¹⁴⁴

Allegro non tanto ma deciso



Piccolo

Flauto *p* 1.

Fagotto *p*

Szepelik *p* 3.

két kis - fi - ú ül any - ja kar - ja - in, és a -

Allegro non tanto ma deciso



Violoni I *p*

Violoni II

Viole div.

Violoncelli pizz.

Contrabassi pizz.

¹⁴⁴ Szepelik: két kisfiú ül anyja karjain, és atyámnak szólítják a herceget. Hiszed talán, hogy a Judit fia ül a királyi székre majd?

tyám - nak szó - lít - ják a her - ce - get. Hi - szed ta

In Mária and István's Act I duet, this motif becomes inverted as István pleads with Mária that they should be married (see Example 16).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ István: Hallgasd meg szavaimat, Mária! Nőmnek kell lenned, mégpedig ma, ezt lángoló szerelmem, ezt biztosságod, ezt mindkettőnk szerelme parancsolja.' Act I, No.6 scene viii.

Example 16, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act I, No.6 (scene viii), bars 42-47.

István: Listen to my words, Mária! You must become my wife.¹⁴⁶

The musical score is for a scene from *Bátori Mária*, Act I, No. 6 (scene viii), bars 42-47. It features a vocal line for István and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "Hall-gasd meg sza-va-i-mat, Má - ri - a! Nőm - nek kell len-ned, még - ped-dig ma, ezt lán-go - ló sze - rel - mem, ezt biz - tos -". The piano accompaniment includes staves for VI I, VI II, Vle, Vlc, and Cb. Dynamics include *fz* (forzando), *p* (piano), and *pp* (pianissimo).

¹⁴⁶ István: Hallgasd meg szavaimat, Mária! Nőmnek kell lenned.

The very ambiguity of this motif, which is instrumentally conspicuous (usually appearing in piccolo and flute and thereby overt in timbre and pitch), is nevertheless semantically associated with ambiguity itself. It is a musical spectre which is differentiated from the horn thirds motif (Example 2) and chromatic descending figure (Example 5) by avoiding a musical resolution. The two motifs introduced in the orchestral introduction (and later the overture) become distinctly associated with tragedy by being heard at moments of danger and reoccurring with the final tragedy of Mária's death. The reminiscence motif by contrast is disruptive in its appearance in scenes of conflict but does not have a circular function which distinguishes the foreshadowing material. It contributes to the curious deviation from the tragic-heroine type of the title-role.

The various uses of this motif aids in the depiction of the historical specificities found in Hungarian nationalisms in *Bátori Mária* by not associating this material explicitly with the soprano-protagonist. The foreshadowing musical material has a determinist function (reinforcing the lack of an educative or consoling resolution and forging musical cyclic connections). The lack of a didactic or consoling resolution means the motif associated with Mária fails (musically) to rupture the course of the power struggles, and cannot prevent their apparently inevitable conclusion. The soprano shares some similarities with heroine-victim operatic counterparts in the *bel canto* repertoire (further explored below). However, her death does not create a rupture as in examples such as *Norma*, where the death of the title-role resolves the tension in the love triangle, and absolves her 'sin' of breaking her priestess vows. In *La Straniera*, Alaide's death resolves both the private and public (political) conflicts. In *Bátori Mária*, the spectre of Mária's death lies at the heart of much of the dramaturgy (Mária's fears of a vengeful King; the conflicting and changing resolve of the King and the insistence of the councillors which dictate several extended ensembles; István's visions of Mária's death, the final murder scene which segues into her death scene). Mária embodies the spectre of death, and therefore is not assigned a reminiscence motif through which she can be recalled by her lover;

István rather is plagued by images of her murdered body. The motif is presented throughout scenes of conflict and as István tries to convince Mária to be married (an act which seals her fate), and anticipates tragedy. Rather than this motif representing Mária's character on stage, it functions as a constant reminder of the tragedy to come.

The confrontation in the No.3 quartet climaxes with István exclaiming that the King should tremble before his wrath as a response to the King's curse. The musical depiction of István's ensuing fury switches between swells in lower strings against tremolo in upper strings, and the following upper woodwind arpeggiated swells against descending chromatic tremolo accented strings. The heirs demand that the King tremble before him is orchestrally reflected as a grave and pivotal moment: diminished seventh chords in tremolo, fortissimo strings underlie arpeggiated flurries of chromaticisms in the woodwind (88-89, see Ex.17).

Example 17, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act I, No.3 *quartetto con coro* bars 87-90
 István: Tremble as this young warrior becomes furious!¹⁴⁷

The musical score is for a quartetto con coro from Act I, No. 3 of *Bátori Mária* by Ferenc Erkel. It covers bars 87-90. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes parts for Piccolo, Flute (Fl), Oboe (Ob), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl (Sib)), Bassoon (Fg), Cornet in B-flat (Cor (Mib)), Cornet in B-flat (Cor (Sib)), Trumpet (Trb), Trombone (Tb), and a vocal soloist (István). The woodwind section (Piccolo, Fl, Ob, Cl, Fg) and the vocal soloist (István) play a tremolo figure starting in bar 87. The brass section (Cor, Trb, Tb) enters in bar 89 with a sustained chord. The vocal soloist has a line of lyrics in Hungarian: 'dom! Resz - kess, ha a harc - fi ha - rag - ra he -'. The score is marked with various dynamics including *ff*, *fz*, *p*, *ffz*, *fff*, and *fff*.

¹⁴⁷ István: Reszkess, ha a harcfi haragra hevül!

Musical score for a scene from *Bátori Mária*. The score is in B-flat major (two flats) and 3/4 time. It features a complex piano introduction with rapid sixteenth-note passages in the upper staves and a more rhythmic bass line. The vocal entry is in the third system, with lyrics in Hungarian. The piano accompaniment includes chords and arpeggiated figures, with "div." markings indicating divisi parts for the strings.

vül! Meg-rá-zom a trónt,s az a por-ba le - dül; és míg

Power-struggles in *Bátori Mária* are presented by creating musically distinct contrasts between the King and Prince. Musically representing István's fury aids the depiction of his fiery character, in adherence to both the tenor-hero types familiar from the Italian-language repertoire

familiar to Pest-Buda audiences, but also to liberal dramatic ('classical') aesthetics. The use of an ambiguous but timbrally conspicuous reminiscence motif amidst power struggles, at times interjecting akin to soprano ensemble writing in similar dramaturgical situations, aids the depiction of a mysterious heroine. Though Mária is capable of the kinds of musical 'excess' of her tragic-heroine counterparts, her vocal language is curiously restrained.

Endogamy and Excess

Don't you see the angel of God
 Hovering above, brandishing a sword?
 Her face is brooding in the sacred fire of wrath,
 Bringing punishment to the country.
 The woman must be the bloodstained sacrifice
 – and peace will dawn in our motherland.

Árvai and Szepelik, Act II, No.10, scene iii
 Ferenc Erkel, libretto by Benjámín Egressy, *Bátori Mária*¹⁴⁸

Operatic tragic heroines are understood as vulnerable victims of circumstances, yet the fact that they can muster such anger, intrigue and wrath in other (male) protagonists exposes the power these characters can simultaneously embody. The divergence from comic operatic genres in historical tragedies in the first half of the nineteenth century meant that even in operas which conclude happily, female roles became characterised by 'fixity and passivity', functioning as 'mere attributes' of the turmoil of their romantic or familial male counterparts.¹⁴⁹ Such roles rather function as a catalyst to a misunderstanding or a tragedy in which she becomes a divisive or motivating object for (male) protagonists; she does not usually dictate the events presented on stage. In these respects, Mária Bátori is closely related to this tragic-heroine type. She violates the social order: she has children out of wedlock, and she marries into royalty despite hailing from

¹⁴⁸ Nem látod-az e Isten angyalát Fent lengni? Éles kard villog kezében. Nézd, arca bús, haragja szent tűzében, Hogy megfenyítse érte e hazát. Ő légyen hát a véres áldozat, És a békenap hazánkra fölvirrad.

¹⁴⁹ Francesca Savoia, 'From Lucia to Violetta: Romantic Heroines of 19th Century Italian Opera', *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, Vol.66, No.3 (1992), 215-216.

the nobility. She is caught between patriarchies when she bows to Prince István's insistence of marriage which the King expressly forbids in the opening clash.

So-called 'mad scene' operas, such as Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* (1830), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835) and Bellini's *Il Pirata* (1827), all conclude with the soprano dead either as a result of an oppressive circumstance or following the soprano's violation of social codes. Bellini's *La Sonambulla* (1831) and *I puritani* (1834) conclude happily when the misunderstanding which has caused madness (*I Puritani*) or the (mis)perception of the soprano having disrupted the social order (*La Sonambulla*) is resolved, and the status quo restored. A soprano's 'violation' is practically always tied to sexuality: whether through seduction, betrayal, or submission.¹⁵⁰ This common theme linked to sexuality and identity meant that deviating from these kinds of policed behaviours became equated with 'bad patriotism'.¹⁵¹ As Emanuele Senici's study demonstrates, a heroine's conduct could be informed by cultural norms in specific geographical locales. In Alpine regions, virginity was perceived as 'valuable family capital, to be guarded closely by fathers and brothers, who were its primary custodians outside the family itself'.¹⁵² Therein a contextual backdrop to the characters Amina and Linda (the title-role in Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix*, 1842) is an understanding that the soprano's virginity was viewed as part of the family estate, and not her own capital.

In Erkel's first opera, Mária's 'deviation' from sexual virtue is linked to the future of the nation throughout the opera. Her noble, but not royal, birth, and her (in actuality, István's) defiance of the King's wishes mean the Royal Councillors are almost obsessively afraid of her usurping the throne through Mária and István's sons. Whilst the idea that the nation's 'survival depended on female sexuality is common in European nationalisms ('women were "biological

¹⁵⁰ Joseph Kerman, 'Verdi and the Undoing of Women', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol.18, No.1 (2006), 22.

¹⁵¹ Maxwell, 'Nationalizing Sexuality: Sexual Stereotypes in the Habsburg Empire', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol.14, No.3 (2005), 268.

¹⁵² Emanuele Senici, *Landscape and Gender in Italian Opera: The Alpine Virgin from Bellini to Puccini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 107.

reproducers of ethnic collectives”)¹⁵³, in reform-era Hungary there was a particular emphasis on endogamy as virtuous. Though ‘national endogamy enjoyed universal respectability [universal here refers to all Hungarian classes]’, this was not equally applied to the sexes, and men could justify their marriage outside their class through a variety of reasons such as ‘nationalising’ foreign women (an assumption which, as Maxwell notes, assumed women can be ‘nationalised’ whereas men cannot).¹⁵⁴ This double standard is naturally typical of the era, in which women must adhere to the norms stipulated by patriarchal family structures.¹⁵⁵ In Hungary, women’s sexuality was in itself acceptable, as long as it was confined within nationality and class.¹⁵⁶ Adhering to these social expectations was sometimes even linked to political reform. Széchenyi’s proposals, which positioned the aristocracy as responsible for national progress, employed matrimonial metaphors. As Marth Lampland has shown, in Széchenyi’s view: ‘inferior classes would pledge their eternal fealty to the aristocracy, who would guide them to happiness.’¹⁵⁷ Mária’s violation of endogamy meant she apparently places the throne in jeopardy, for which István can be excused. Her fate mirrors her Alpine sisters, and like them, her violation is geographically specific.

István is also bound by oppressive patriarchy: it is his violation of his father’s instructions—a patriarchal order in which the heir obeys the King—which leads to the final tragedy. That Mária is the figure who must be punished to expel the social violation, and not István, is characteristic of contemporary tragic operas. She is arguably even a victim of István’s oppression: he insists on their marriage despite her clear opposition. This a divergence from historical tragedies from *i capuleti e i montecchi* to *Anna Bolena* to *Lucia di Lammermoor*. If Mária would have had the freedom to dictate her own actions, the conflict and her death could have been

¹⁵³ Alexander Maxwell, ‘National Endogamy and Double Standards: Sexuality and Nationalism in East-Central Europe during the 19th Century’, *Journal of Social History*, Vol.41, No.2 (2007), 413.

¹⁵⁴ Maxwell, ‘National Endogamy’, *op. cit.*, 413.

¹⁵⁵ Imre, ‘Staging the Nation’, *op. cit.*, 83.

¹⁵⁶ Maxwell, ‘National Endogamy’, *op. cit.*, 413.

¹⁵⁷ Martha Lampland, ‘Family Portraits: Gendered Images of the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Hungary’, *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol.8, No.2 (1994), 295.

avoided. István, in his stubbornness, in a way causes her murder as much as the councillors.

Whereas an Imogene (*Il pirata*) or a Lucia are forced to marry a man they do not love, Mária is curiously forced into the reverse. This is most emphasised in the libretto in Mária's Act II exchange with the King:

King: You lured István while his lawful wife was still alive, and bore him two illegitimate sons. Advancing their legal ascent to the throne, you married my son and heir.¹⁵⁸

Mária: As the languid spume disperses against the cliff, so does your accusation recoil from my clear conscience. I did not lure the prince. Is it a sin that I love him and my heart has found a loving kin? If so, we must accuse mother nature for planting it in all of us. That we married is true. But heaven knows, I was forced into it. As to my children, I never intended to help them to the throne.¹⁵⁹

Considering that the deviation from endogamy in Mária and István's union is established textually throughout the opera, it is significant that Erkel's depiction of the title-role references the kinds of stately operatic gestures usually used to represent royal figures. Announcing her *sortita* through an instrumental segue into her *romanza* (No.4), Erkel used regal musical effects through repeated thickly textured F major chords and timpani percussive rolls (see Example 18).

¹⁵⁸ Kálmán: Elcsábítád Istvánt még nőjeéletében, és két törvénytelen fiat nemzél neki, és hogy azokat törvényesen a trónra ülted, összeesküvél a koronaörökösse. Act II, No.14, scene vii.

¹⁵⁹ Mária: E vád, uram király, mint a kőszirthez csapódott hab, visszapattan tiszta erkölcsiségem előtt. Én nem csábítám el a herceget. Hogy szeretem őt, és szívem nála rokont talált, vétek? Ha igen, úgy a természetet kell vádolnunk, ki azt belénk oltá. Hogy összeesküvénk, ó, az igaz, de ég a tanúm, hogy rá szinte kényszerítve voltam. E két gyermeket pedig trónra ültetni szándékom sem vala. – De kik ezen kétes arcú emberek? Miért jövének ők lakomba? Act II, No.14, scene vii.

Example 18, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act I, No.4 (scene vi), 1-8.

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes the Piccolo (Picc), Flute (Fl), Oboe (Ob), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl (Sib)), Bassoon (Fg), Cor Anglais (Fa), Cor Anglais (Re), Trumpet (Tr (Fa)), Trombone (Trb), Tuba (Tb), and Timpani (Timp). The second system includes Violin I (VI I), Violin II (VI II), Viola (Vle), Violoncello (Vlc), and Double Bass (Cb). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 2/4. The score is marked with *ff* (fortissimo) throughout. The woodwinds and strings play sustained chords and rhythmic patterns. The strings feature sixteenth-note passages marked with a '6' (sexta) in measures 2, 4, 6, and 8. The Timpani part includes trills in measures 2 and 4.

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system consists of four staves: three vocal staves (soprano, alto, and tenor) and one piano accompaniment staff. The second system consists of four staves: two vocal staves (soprano and alto) and two piano accompaniment staves. The third system consists of four staves: two vocal staves (soprano and alto) and two piano accompaniment staves. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *p*, *p a2*, *a2*, *fz*, and *fz*. The tempo is marked *And.te* and the key signature is one flat.

This depiction was likely influenced by works such as Bellini's representation of the title-role in *Beatrice di Tenda*, which Erkel conducted in 1838. Both are introduced by the kinds of bold stately musical 'announcements' which alternate with dotted figures presented in a thinner texture (see Example 19). Associating the title-role in Bellini's opera—the Duchess of Milan—in this stately manner is unexceptional. However, the plot of *Bátori Mária* hinges on the fact that the

title role is a noblewoman, and not of royal blood makes this instrumental representation striking.

Example 19, Vincenzo Bellini, *Beatrice di Tenda*, Act I, scene v, bars 1-16.



In depicting Mária akin to Royal soprano-heroines, Erkel also utilised references to musical markers of bodily suffering (also likely influenced by Bellini’s depiction of Beatrice, which features similar figures (see Example 19)). In the early nineteenth century, the role of musical gesture in operatic plot narration ‘was perceived as possessing a vital role in clarifying the spectator’s grasp of musical essence.’¹⁶⁰ As Melina Esse demonstrates, approaching the middle of the nineteenth century, a shift in depicting suffering heroines meant a ‘detachment from the voice’: ‘stoic suffering’ replaced the overt sighs, sobs and bodily tremors evoked in the voice, and

¹⁶⁰ Susan Rutherford, ‘La cantante delle passioni’: Giuditta Pasta and the Idea of Operatic Performance’, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol.19, No.2 (2007), 133.

was instead more frequently reflected in the orchestra.¹⁶¹ The contrasting lilting acciaccatura figures (see Example 18, bars 5-8) also relay the manner of musical ‘sighs’ found in Bellini and Donizetti historical operas,¹⁶² reflecting the performance directions ‘Mária enters, pale and upset’. In the depiction of Mária, her musical language is largely set in a *canto declamato* style (although there are moments of striking virtuosity, namely in Nos.6 and 8 (*cabaletta*)), but instrumental references to bodily suffering abound. The flute introduction prior to her *romanza* (following the stately material), also includes the manner of ‘sighs’ in the appoggiaturas and oscillating leaps in the flute (see Example 20).

Example 20, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act I, No.4 (scene vi), 18-21.



Erkel utilises ‘musical imitation’ of the ‘sighing, trembling, weeping body’¹⁶³ in this manner at moments of tension and to depict her psychological state. This is particularly employed for moments of anxiety, such as when she implores her husband and brother not to leave her undefended, tremolo strings underlie her stress (see Example 21).

¹⁶¹ Esse, *op. cit.*, 173.

¹⁶² Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 5.

¹⁶³ Esse, *op. cit.*, 9.

Example 21, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act II, No.9 (scene ii), 30-32

Mária: (*aside*) Why am I trembling? My heart is pounding as if death would lurk around, and my whole body is shaking.¹⁶⁴

The musical score is for a scene in Act II, No. 9 of the opera *Bátori Mária* by Ferenc Erkel. It features a vocal line for Mária and a string ensemble consisting of Violini I, Violini II, Violenze, Violoncelli, and Contrabassi. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line begins with the lyrics 'Ah, mért ben - nem e ret - te - gés?' and is accompanied by a string ensemble. The string parts are written for Violini I, Violini II, Violenze, Violoncelli, and Contrabassi. The score shows the first three measures of the piece.

The acciaccatura figures first heard in her Act I *sortita* continues to present an embodied presence of the title role. When the King arrives at Leányvár with an executioner in the second act Act II, No.14 (scene vi), the sighing figures (see Example 18 bars 5-8, in No.14 flutes are unaccompanied) relay her entrance before the King as she walks to meet her fate:¹⁶⁵ a composed, regal entrance.

Despite Mária's similarities to the tragic heroines outlined above, in terms of musical depiction of suffering, and in relation to her death 'demanded' for violating the social order, she diverges from these heroines in a significant manner. She is a passive character who cannot dictate events, yet her mental stability is not pre-conditioned to unravel when oppressive circumstances result in consequences for this violation of the social order. A defining feature of Mária, conversely to the tragic heroines familiar to the Pest-Buda audiences and despite in other ways indebted to them, is her vocal restraint. McClary's enduring reading of operatic 'mad'

¹⁶⁴ Mária: (*félre*) Ah, mért bennem e rettegés? Erősen ver szívem, mintha halálveszély környezne, és testem remeg.

¹⁶⁵ It is interesting to note that this material reoccurs in the première version of the *finale*, where it appears immediately before István's line: 'she is gone, her body is cold': these ghostly musical footsteps were potentially intended to depict the heroine's descent to heaven (bar 87 of the première version of the *finale*). See Miklós Dolinsky and Katalin Szacsvai Kim (eds.), *Bátori Mária: Opera Két Felvonásban* (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2002), Volume II, Appendix III, 646, Bar 87.

women through ‘excess’ and ‘frame’¹⁶⁶ understands deviations from *bel canto* schemata in ‘mad scene’ operas as ‘[the soprano’s] exuberant singing leaves the mundane world of social convention behind as she performs high-wire, non-verbal acrobatics that challenge the very limits of human ability’.¹⁶⁷ Freya Jarman contends that the tenor became ‘dependent on his female counterpart for the very construction of his heroism’, in other words: that the musical depiction of the tenor-hero can only frame a soprano-heroine who embodies musical ‘excess’. Without exhibiting ‘excess’, these ‘tenor-heroes’ are ‘denied much of their power.’¹⁶⁸

Mária is a vocally restrained character. She is capable of ‘excess’, but these are rational responses: fearing for István’s safety as he is away at war (No.4); expressing joy when he safely returns (No.6); when she is fearful of the repercussions following her marriage (No.8); and the declamatory style as she dies (which rather depicts her physical pain than the emotionally-derived vocal acrobatics in the aforementioned instances). Her resolve and joy are real, not imagined. Whereas ‘mad’ heroine-types are in McClary’s readings (musically) pre-conditioned to losing grasp of reality, Mária is invulnerable to mental collapse. Plot developments do not unhinge her. Even when the King unexpectedly arrives at her home—with an executioner in tow—she does not lose her musical composure. Again, tension is relayed orchestrally (rather than vocally), and here reflects the King’s turmoil as much as Mária’s distress.

In the opening of the finale (No.14), the King’s arrival to Leányvár is introduced by his stately music (see Example 10), and Mária’s subsequent entrance is marked by the ‘sighs’ material (introduced in No.4, see Example 18, bars 5-8). Mária’s vocal constraint by contrast even unnerves the King further. Even when faced with (further to the King) the councillors and an executioner, Mária retains her resolve: she sings largely in stepwise motion, aligned rhythmically and harmonically within the confines of operatic ensemble numbers. Mária’s vocal composure

¹⁶⁶ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 80-111.

¹⁶⁷ McClary, *op. cit.*, 92.

¹⁶⁸ Jarman, *op. cit.*, 63.

ultimately causes the King to abandon his plan for execution: ‘such valiant rhetoric comes only from those whose heart is calm and whose soul is chaste’.¹⁶⁹

The assumption that, as Melina Esse puts it, ‘vocal performance has the power to transcend physical degradation and suffering’¹⁷⁰ in studies concerning gender in opera does not allow for the opposite. Mária Bátori, by her musical excess and containment reflecting various emotional states: not simply moments of ‘degradation and suffering’ means her musical personality has a fluidity which depicts a range of human emotions, despite her vocal restraint appearing as less overtly emotive than her ‘mad’ counterparts. Further, she is in control of her ‘excess’: which she chooses to express in the safety of solitude, her ladies, or István. She is not characterised by her excess. Despite her non-royal lineage, which allows the councillors to convince the King to order her execution, her regal musical depictions and vocal composure before the King convinces him she is innocent of the ‘crime’ of endogamy: her (musical) presence convinces him she is worthy of transcending this barrier.

Examining how the King’s musical language is musically manipulated as reflections of the text further illuminates the individuality and emotional-musical fluidity of Mária’s character by contrast. In the trio in which the councillors convince the King Mária must be executed (No.10), the material associated with the King and the motif connected with the title-role overwhelm Kálmán’s attempts to think independently. The councillors’ attempts to bend the King to their will are represented by the foreshadowing motifs, chromaticisms and tremolo strings. The King attempts to assert his own mind, but each time he overturns his conviction with the councillors’ persuasions. His meditative, formulaic, musical accompaniment is in each instance overwhelmed musically and textually by the distinct and strikingly contrasting references to the foreshadowing material, the reminiscence motif, tremolo, contrasting (minor) tonality and

¹⁶⁹ Kálmán: ‘Ily merészséggel csak az beszél, aki nyugodt, s szíve, lelke tiszta.

¹⁷⁰ Esse, *op. cit.*, 7.

tempo which represent the councillors' intrigue (these musical contrasts are outlined in Example 22).

Example 22, Act II, No.10, scene iii-iv, *Scena e Terzetto con Coro*

Bar numbers	Dramatic Situation and Musical features
1-38	Kings' stately orchestral introduction (see Example 10).
39-63	Exchange between the King and Szepelek (recitative), tremolo strings.
64-91	King, Árvai and Szepelek; bars 72-75 descending chromatic figure in tremolo strings and horns (from Example 4: here rhythmically augmented to minims); repeated in horns 86-91.
93-105 (<i>Cavatina</i>)	<i>Andante</i> , modulation to Ab major as King shows compassion for Mária, accompanied by oscillating arpeggiated triplets with reinforced tonic/fifth.
106-170	Councillors: <i>allegro non tanto ma deciso</i> ; c minor; the reminiscence motif accompanies their attempt to convince the King by revealing the existence of István and Mária's children (bars 115-135).
171-228	<i>Andante</i> ; 6/8; Ab major (shift to d minor when councillors interject with 'she must die', bars 178-181); broken chord accompaniment returns as the King wavers.
229-259 (<i>Tempo di mezzo</i>)	Kém, the Royal spy enters and reveals that the prince and Mária have married; the King, councillors and court (male chorus) respond with 'death to her'; the King quickly retracts his words. He resolves to spare her.
259-290	Councillors again seek to convince the King: <i>allegro non tanto ma deciso</i> ; reminiscence material (bars 260-268).
291-337 (<i>Cabaletta</i>)	<i>Andante</i> , Arpeggiated 6/8 accompaniment as the King wavers: King (worried) 'Is it a sin, not to restrain the unleashed rage, and meddle with the doings of God? (pondering) what if the life of thousands depended on the death of one? ... (firmly) No! Kálmán is not to be cursed by any descendants! ... She must die today! ¹⁷¹
338-348 (end)	All: 'The King of Hungary will be the offspring of Árpád again, but only if she dies! ¹⁷² Tremolo strings; c minor.

Like her Italian counterparts, Mária ultimately dies for her violation of the social order: her 'crimes' of having children out of wedlock and marrying into royal blood. Her (musical) composure in the pivotal scene of the audience with the King, who has arrived to inform her she is condemned to death, even partially convinces him to pardon her sins. That she cannot be 'framed' in refusing

¹⁷¹ Kálmán: Vétek, ki nem őrzi vad indulatát, s jussába az Úrnak avatja magát. (*tűnődve*) De hogyha ezrek élete ez egy haláltól függene? Király vagyok, megesküvém törvényeink megtartani; és szentségtörő kezekkel azt engedjem-e bitorlani? (*szíjlárdan*) Nem! Kálmánra ne szórjon átkokat a maradék! Most készüljetez útra, halni fog ma még!

¹⁷² Mind: Árpád vériből lesz a magyar király! Csak úgy, ha meghal ő, haljon tehát!

to display ‘excess’ nevertheless simultaneously means she disturbs the social-patriarchal order, and she dies for this deviation.¹⁷³

Apparition

István’s recklessness is key to the narrative in *Bátori Mária*. His flaw functions similarly to the liberal aesthetics (drawing largely from classical drama), in which a protagonist’s hubris enacts a chain of events from which the final tragedy results. It is only in the penultimate number of the opera that he identifies how his actions might have repercussions, triggered by a series of ghostly visions.

The libretto and musical distinctions between the apparitions and the hunting chorus establish that István alone sees the images of his dead wife. Despite the conspicuous influence the ‘Wolf’s Glen’ scene in the Act II finale of Weber’s *Der Freischütz* (1821), Erkel’s scene in *Bátori Mária* differs both musically and dramaturgically. A state of flux between the hunters and the series of apparitions functions differently to the musical distinction Weber created between the natural and supernatural. In *Der Freischütz* the shifts between c minor and Eb major depict the demonic world of Samiel, whose appearances are marked by diminished seventh chords, in contrast with the humanity embodied in Max, respectively, before modulating through minor keys (c, a and the tonic of f#) as the series of hellish elements appear. The oscillation between major and minor in István’s visions is similarly integral to depicting opposing implications, yet utilised to different effect. The mounting tension in the ‘Wolf’s Glen’ scene builds steadily and finally climaxes in a flurry of diminished seventh chords. Erkel’s framing of contrasting sound worlds function distinctly to each other, and the jovial hunting chorus bookend the scene.

¹⁷³ There is currently precious little literature on the role of female operatic characters in the Hungarian repertoire in relation to feminist readings or the ‘new musicology’ in general. The exception is the soprano-protagonist from Erkel’s third opera, *Bánk bán*, which has received some attention, for example: David E. Schneider, ‘Mad for Her Country: Melinda’s Insanity, the Pusztá, and Nationalist Dramaturgy in Ferenc Erkel’s *Bánk bán* Act 3’, *Studia Musicologica*, Vol.52, No.1-4 (2011), 47-64. It is my hope that utilising some of these frameworks and understandings in relation to Mária might have demonstrated the potential for such readings to enrich our understandings of how Erkel’s operas relate (or differ) from the contemporary repertoires.

In Erkel's opera, a drinking song alternates with the musical tension which depict the apparitions of Mária. The apprehension is in a state of flux: appearing and subsiding several times. Rather than representing opposing forces (natural versus supernatural), the distinction is between blissful ignorance and István's new consciousness of potential danger as the consequences of his recklessness. The use of a simple largely step-wise G major melody as the hunters' drinking song (see Example 23) contrasts starkly with each apparition (the oscillation between the drinking song and István's visions which constitutes the scene is outlined in Example 27).

Example 23, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act II, No.13, 9-16



Distinct from the diatonic accompaniment of the hunters' chorus, the apparitions are characterised by minor tonality (E minor, C minor), through chromaticisms, flute interjections, the use of the horn foreshadowing motif (from Example 1), diminished seventh chords and tremolo timpani (see Example 24).

Example 24, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act II, No.13 (scene v), 89-93.

(Mária appears in the position of her murder) István: (*frightened*) Good Lord!

Hunters: (*they jump to their feet*) What is it?

István: Don't you see the bloodstained shadow of Mária?¹⁷⁴

Picc

Trb

Tb

Timp

István

T

Coro

B

VI I

VI II

Vle

Vlc

Cb

(Mária előttük azon helyzetben, melyben meggyilkolják) (fölríad) Nagy ég! nem Mi az? Mi az?

¹⁷⁴ István: (Mária előttük azon helyzetben, melyben meggyilkolják) (fölríad) Nagy ég! Vadászok: (felugrának) Mi az? István: Nem látjátok Máriám véres árnyékát?

The manner of declamatory vocal style is also similarly utilised to that in the ‘Wolf’s Glen’ scene, in passages such as Max’s ascending ‘hinab! Hinab!’ as he sees apparitions of his dead fiancée (see Example 25).

Example 25, Carl Maria von Weber, *Der Freischütz*, Act II, No.10, bars 142-146.

Max: Agathe! She is taken by the river! Downwards! Downwards!

The musical score for Example 25 consists of two systems. The first system shows Max's vocal line (treble clef, 4/4 time) and the piano accompaniment (grand staff, 4/4 time). The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics 'A - ga - the! Sie springt in den'. The piano accompaniment features a rapid, ascending eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics 'Fluss! Hin - ab! hin - ab! ich'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same pattern, ending with a final chord.

Erkel’s setting of István’s shock and horror at what appears before him creates a similar effect as he shouts for the murderers to stop (‘megállj, megállj!’, see Example 26). Both exclamations are relayed over diminished seventh chords aiding the depiction of these fearful visions. In Erkel’s scene the horn foreshadowing motif (bars 103-109 (from Example 1) further creates tension and musically connects the apparition to the final tragedy.

Example 26, Ferenc Erkel, *Bátori Mária*, Act II, No.13 (scene v), 102-109

István: There, there! Her murderer hovers over her! (*Mária disappears*). Stop, stop! My stormy wrath will dispel you, cursed murderer!¹⁷⁵

Picc
 Fl
 Ob
 Cl (Do)
 Fg
 Cor (Sol)
 Cor (Mib)
 Tr (Re)
 Timp
 István
 VI I
 VI II
 Vle
 Vlc
 Cb

3-4.
p
f
pp
pp
pp
pp
pp

tr
 (Mária eltűnik)
 Ott, ott! fe-le-te gyil-ko-sa! Meg-állj, meg-állj! Ször-nyű ha

¹⁷⁵ István: Ott, ott! felette gyilkosa! (*Mária eltűnik*) Megállj, megállj! – Szörnyű haragom viharja sodorjon le, átkozott gyilkos!

Example 27, Act II, No.13, Bortal

Bars	Musical features	Libretto
1-8	Orchestral introduction, Allegro, G major	
9-48	Melody from Example 23, G major	Miklós: Let's sing about wine and love, the only things that please the heart. Long live wine and women – both chase troubles away. Life is so short, it's as fleeting as the deer we chase, it jumps from the bushes as does the juice from the cup (drains his glass). Cadenza: It was there and now it's gone! ¹⁷⁶
49-64	Melody from Example 23, G major	Hunters: Let's sing about wine and love, the only things that please the heart. Long live wine and women – both chase troubles away. ¹⁷⁷
64-80	Orchestral interlude, G major, diminished seventh chord (bar 76), half cadence (iv-i) in G	
80-91	Diminished seventh chords (bars 89-92), c minor, flute interjections, horn foreshadowing motif (from Example 1), tremolo timpani	István (anxiously): A growing fear brews in my heart (a vision of Mária murdered corpse appears) (frightened): My God! ¹⁷⁸
92-93	C minor, tremolo timpani	Hunters (they jump to their feet): What's wrong? ¹⁷⁹
94-97	Diminished seventh chords (97), tremolo timpani	István: Don't you see the bloodstained shadow of Mária? ¹⁸⁰
98-101	Diminished seventh chords (98-100), tremolo timpani	Hunters: We see nothing! ¹⁸¹
102-121	Horn motif (bars 103-109 and 112-117 (from Example 1)), tremolo timpani, g minor	István: There, there! Her murderer towering above her! (Mária disappears). Hold on, hold on! – My ferocious wrath will dispel you, curdled murderer! (he falls back on a bed of grass) God save me from delusion! ¹⁸²
122-138	B major	Miklós: Your highness, there is nothing there, it is only your imagination. Away with it! Come, sit, and sing with us! Let's sing about wine and lovely girls. ¹⁸³
139-144	G major drinking song (Example 23)	Miklós, Hunters: Let's sing about wine and lovely girls ¹⁸⁴
144-151	Bb minor, tremolo strings	István: Enough! We must return home! My heart is calling! ¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁶ Miklós: Bort, szerelmet énekeljünk, mert csak e' vidítja szívünk. Éljen a bor és a szűz, mind a kettő gondot űz. Életünk rövid folyása úgyis oly hamar tűnik, mint a szarvas, mely előlünk a bokorból felszökik, vagy miként kupám leve (*küssza kupáját*) mely volt s ímhol eltűne!

¹⁷⁷ Vadászok: Bort, szerelmet énekeljünk, mert csak e' vidítja szívünk. Éljen a bor és a szűz, mind a kettő gondot űz.

¹⁷⁸ István: (*sörongva*) A kín itt benne egyre dűl, szívem búzönbe fűl. (*Mária eltűnik azon helyzetben, melyben meggyilkolják*), (*fölríad*) Nagy ég!

¹⁷⁹ Vadászok: (*felugrának*) Mi ez?

¹⁸⁰ István: Nem látjátok Máriám véres árnyékát?

¹⁸¹ Vadászok: Mi semmit sem látunk!

¹⁸² István: Ott, ott! Felette gyilkosa! (*Mária eltűnik*) Megállj! – Szörnyű haragom viharja sodorjon le, átkozott gyilkos! (*gyepágyra hanyatlék*) Isten ments meg a kábulástól!

¹⁸³ Miklós: Hercegem! ott semmi sincs, csak képzelet, el vele! Jöjj, jöjj, danolj velünk, bort s szép leányokat énekeljünk!

¹⁸⁴ Miklós, Vadászok: Bort, szerelmet énekeljünk –

¹⁸⁵ István: Most elég! Megyünk haza! Hív keblem sugallata!

152-159	G major	Hunters: Your highness why is the merriment over? ¹⁸⁶
160-167	D minor, tremolo strings	István: Over it is! Do not question me, just follow with haste! ¹⁸⁷
168-217	G major Melody from Example 23	Miklós: Well, we might as well finish our song and drain our cups (they drink) ¹⁸⁸ Miklós, hunters: Let's sing about wine and love, the only things that please the heart. Long live wine and women – both chase away etc. (they exit singing) ¹⁸⁹

The blood-stained visions of Mária finally awakens István to the repercussions of his actions after ignoring Mária's imploring for nearly two acts. In contrast to Weber's opera, it is only István who sees the apparitions. They are not conjured by supernatural forces—a third party—but derive from a psychological condition which means they constitute reality for István alone. His visions depict an opportunity for a historical figure to rupture the sequence of events, which István seizes when he demands they return to Leányvár.

In understandings of the past in reform-era Hungary, the kinds of apocalyptic imagery of a nation 'washed in blood'¹⁹⁰ depicted a historically sinful community from which present 'punishment' in the form of cultural and political imperialism caused. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, fears that Hungarian identity perches precariously on the cusp of oblivion stimulated political reform, nation-building projects, and convictions to nurture Hungarian-language literature and drama. The flawed hero who otherwise embodies traits considered virtuous in reform-era understandings of historical Hungarian heroes, sparks the discord from which the tragedy unfolds. His virtue as courageous, a passionate, successful warrior and protector of the Hungarians, mirrors representations of Hungarian historical heroes from Árpád to Rákóczi. Though these heroes are depicted as brave defenders of the Hungarians, their sins are nevertheless lamented as bringing God's wrath upon the community. István's heroism is

¹⁸⁶ Vadászok: Hercegünk! Miért, miért? Hát a vígság vég ért?

¹⁸⁷ István: Úgy van, úgy! Ne kérjétek, csak sietve jöjjetek!

¹⁸⁸ Miklós: Jó, ha hogy már menni kell, énekünk danoljuk el, kiűrtve a kupánk! (*isznak*)

¹⁸⁹ Miklós, Vadászok: Bort, szerelmet énekeljünk, mert csak e' vidítja szívünk. Éljen a bor és a szűz, mind a kettő gondot űz stb. (menve danolva mind el)

¹⁹⁰ 'Egy ország vérben áll.' Mihály Vörösmarty, *Szűz* (stanza 11), 1836 (see Chapter 2).

similarly marked partially by his flaws. His conduct is thereby consistently presented in the finale when he swears to avenge Mária's murder. Not only does he realise the repercussions of his flaws too late to cause a rupture in the plot, neither does he learn: there is no resolution or atonement which might embody the hope for a break with a cyclic, sinful past. He is aligned with Hungary's historical heroes who neither disrupt the past to determine the future, nor atone. The hunting chorus is heard a final time in the *scena ultima* where musical rupture further reinforces an inability to disrupt cyclic understandings of the past.

Intrusion

Off-stage music in opera can serve various functions, commonly introducing information which is vital to understanding following events, such as Alaide's off-stage singing of the joys of a simple life in Act I, scene ii of *La straniera*, or as a 'catalyst to action',¹⁹¹ such as the finale of Act I of *Norma*, where the Druids plead for Norma to come to lead them following a sign of divine wrath amidst the dramatic trio between Norma, Adalgisa and Pollione. Musical 'intrusions' can also interrupt the narrative to remind the audience 'of action taking place... beyond the world of the stage', such as the 'gondolier' song opening Act III of Rossini's *Otello* (1816).¹⁹²

The function of the hunting chorus in the *scena ultima* of *Bátori Mária* is similar to the off-stage women's prayer, 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott' in Act V, scene ii in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. Both instances relay information (of the Catholic massacre of Protestants underway and the return of the hunt, respectively), and both utilise a melody established previously as representing a specific group of people. In Erkel's opera the G major melody of the hunters' chorus drinking song is established as a care-free celebration of the pleasures of wine and women. In *Les Huguenots*, the Lutheran chorale 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott' is patently associated throughout the opera with Marcel, a character marked by his Protestant identity, and

¹⁹¹ Smart, *op. cit.*, 90.

¹⁹² *ibid.*

therein the chorale melody is also associated with the Protestant faith. Thereby, in the final act, the off-stage women's chorus represents that they belong to this religious group: it is clear which group is being persecuted.

The massacre in *Les Huguenots* is recounted on-stage but takes place off-stage. The protagonists understand the same fate awaits them if they do not renounce their faith, and they choose to die together. They anticipate their martyrs reward in a united heavenly vision. Singing the chorale as they anticipate a divine reunion in death, Marcel, Raoul and Valentine become musically united with the off-stage slaughtered martyrs. The chorale material signifies a clear, triumphant meaning.

In *Bátori Mária*, as Mária is fatally injured, hearing the hunting chorus from off-stage provides the information that István has returned to Leányvár. Mária, dying alone, cruelly hears the blissfully ignorant hunters' song as it is too late to be saved: she can neither choose to meet or escape her fate, nor become united—physically or musically—with them. The off-stage melody in Erkel's opera creates a final emphasis on Mária's foresight which throughout the opera led to her futile attempts to create a rupture (through convincing István of the danger she faces) in the unfolding tragedy. The final intrusion of the hunters' drinking song as Mária is dying only exemplifies the ignorance and inability to break the cycle of tragedy rather than a break with the past which might disrupt a cyclic understanding of history. Further, the musical interruption constituting the fatal appearance of the murderers interrupts Mária's *preghiera* in which she ties her fate to Hungary (see Example 28).

Example 28, Act II, No.14, *Scena ultima*

Bars	Musical features	Libretto
19-50	Mária's <i>preghiera</i> . Andante, Eb major, Gb major	Mária: Merciful father! Eternal blessings on you for saving your daughter from the claws of death. Be my shelter, God! Look after me and my poor country! ¹⁹³
51	Allegro, diminished seventh chords, tremolo strings	(<i>Árvai, Szepelik and the executioner enter before she can finish her prayer; the executioner stabs her, the others help him</i>). Mária (<i>collapses, struggles to her feet</i>): Murderers! I am lost! My István, our last kiss was our final kiss (<i>she collapses; scared, the murderers grab the children and take shelter in the adjacent room</i>) ¹⁹⁴
56-71	Sustained blocks of D tremolo strings against oscillating a/Bb in horn, bar 57: hunters' chorus (G major melody from hunting chorus) heard from off-stage	Miklós, Hunters (from off stage): Let's sing about wine and love, etc. ¹⁹⁵ Mária: Poor me, poor me! ¹⁹⁶
72	István and hunters enter	István: Good heavens! Hunters: What is it? Miklós: My sister is slain! István: She is slain? Poor me! Hunters: Dreadful! ¹⁹⁷
75-86	Tremolo timpani; horn motif from Example 1 (heard twice)	
87	<i>Lento</i> , love duet theme (G major)	
94	Chromatic motif (from Example 4)	
98		István (recitative): she's dead but I swear your murderers will die with you! ¹⁹⁸
103	Tremolo timpani	Hunters: (with their swords unsheathed) Revenge on the murderer! ¹⁹⁹
107	<i>Presto</i> , chromaticisms, tremolo timpani	
113-119	Perfect cadences in c minor (key of the orchestral introduction/overture)	

¹⁹³ Mária: Irgalomnak atyja! légy örökre áldott, halál karából megmentéd leányod. Légy ezentúl is nékem oltalmazó Istenem, oltalmaz engem és szegény hazámat!

¹⁹⁴ (Árvai, Szepelik, Bakó *a végszavaknál bejönnek, mielőtt Mária elvégezné imáját, a bakó ledöfi a másik kettő segítségével*). Mária: ((*leomlik, erőlködik fölkelni*)) Jaj nékem, gyilkosok! Ó, István, a csók végső vala. (*összeomlik, a három gyilkos megrettenve a két gyermekkel az oldalszobába menekszik*)

¹⁹⁵ Miklós, Vadászok (*kívül*): Bort, szerelmet énekeljünk *sth.*

¹⁹⁶ Mária: Jaj nékem, jaj nékem!

¹⁹⁷ István: Nagy ég! Vadászok: Mi ez? Miklós: Húgom megölve! István: Megölve? Jaj nékem. Vadászok: Irtóztató!

¹⁹⁸ István: Meghalt tehát! de a Mindenhatóra, meghal mindegyik, ki gyilkolásodban résztveve!

¹⁹⁹ Vadászok: (*kívont karddal*) Bosszú a gyilkos fejére!

In *Lucrezia Borgia*, the intrusion of a mysterious unseen chorus in the *brindisi* in Act II ('Il segreto per esser felici') functions inversely to the off-stage hunters' chorus in Mária's death scene. The carefree celebration in Donizetti's opera establishes the ignorance of Lucrezia's ill intentions which will result in Gennaro's death. Mária by contrast, is acutely attuned to the danger of the royal court from the opening. When she is already mortally wounded, the drinking song from off-stage emphasises her isolation. In this manner, Mária's scene is similar in effect to the finale of *Anna Bolena*, where the title-role, condemned to death, hears wedding bells and festive celebrations depicting the King and Giovanna's wedding as Anna faces the block. The jovial off-stage sounds embody lost happiness and a world she no longer belongs to. These scenes break the 'fourth wall' by narrating events through the title-role's experience of death.²⁰⁰ As Luca Zoppelli puts it, in such moments 'character and spectator share the same vision; they share a moment of reality, of "direct discourse" in the midst of the "indirect discourse" of operatic language.'²⁰¹ However, the sound world and associated blissful ignorance of the G major hunting chorus fail to musically rupture the tremolo strings and oscillating chromatic solo horn (see Example 29), as in *Anna Bolena*, where the celebratory sounds from off-stage momentarily halt the narrative. Mária's death music and the intrusion coexist, and the audience momentarily hears events relayed from Mária's perspective alone.

²⁰⁰ Zoppelli, *op. cit.*, 24.

²⁰¹ *ibid.*

Example 29, Ferenc Erkel, Bátori Mária, Act II, No.14 (scene viii), Lento, 54-58

Árvai, Szepelik, Executioner: *(they enter at her last words, before she could finish her prayer; the executioner stabs her, the others help him)*²⁰²

Mária: *(she collapses, struggles to get on her feet)*

You murderers, I am done with! My István, our kiss was the last one.

*(she collapses; scared, the three murderers grab the children and take shelter in the adjacent room)*²⁰³

Hunters: *(from offstage)* Let's sing about wine and love, etc.²⁰⁴

Lento Allegro

Corno Solo

Trombone *pp*

Tuba

Timpani

Mária *pp*

ván, a csók vég-ső va - la.

Miklós

Coro Bort, sze-rel - met é - ne - kel-jünk,

Coro Bort, sze-rel - met é - ne - kel-jünk,

Violini I **Lento Allegro** Bort, sze-rel - met é - ne - kel-jünk,

Violini II *pp*

Viole *pp*

Violoncelli *pp*

Contrabassi *pp*

pp

²⁰² Árvai, Szepelik, Bakó: *(a végszavaknál bejönnek, mielőtt Mária elvégezné imáját, a bakó ledöfi a másik kettő segítségével)*

²⁰³ Mária: *(leomlik, erőlködik fölkelni)* Jaj nékem, gyilkosok! Ó, István, a csók végső vala. *(összeomlik, a három gyilkos megrettenve a két gyermekkel az oldalszobába menekszik)*

²⁰⁴ Vadászok: *(kívül)* Bort, szerelmet énekeljünk stb.

The première version demonstrates Erkel's initial representation emphasized the theme of revenge considerably by contrast with the abridged ending (as discussed in relation to reception, Erkel withdrew the original version following the première). The original text is littered with grisly references to István's vengeful plans (István: I would rather go blind than see this horror! Where is the murderer? After him, slay him to pieces, feed his rabid corpse to the dogs!).²⁰⁵ Erkel set this exchange as a *coro furioso* of some 40 bars (with repeat marks meaning it was double length in performance)²⁰⁶ characterised by tremolo semiquaver strings and orchestra interjections at the end of each vocal phrase. This depiction anticipates the manner of musical references of revolutionary rhetoric found in his second opera, *Hunyadi László*. In 1840, in the context of contemporary understandings of tragedy, presenting such a vengeful conception of the otherwise flawed-yet-virtuous hero was not favourably received (evidenced by the *Honművész* review and the critics for the German press). Nevertheless, even in the abridged version, when István proclaims in the final moments *Bosszú a gyilkos fejére!*, 'revenge on the murderer!', it is clear that the depiction of history as a sinful cycle remained unbroken.

Conclusion

Bátori Mária deviates from the manner of national glorification found amongst the first waves of small-language operas which draw on historical themes in the nineteenth century. The struggle between royal authority and a flawed hero is broadly aligned with contemporary liberal dramatic aesthetics. Depicting the title role akin in significant ways to tragic operatic heroines as the catalyst to this clash meant Erkel could draw influence from historical tragedies comprising a large percentage of the operatic repertoire on the stage of Pest's Hungarian-language theatre. However, presenting specifically Hungarian historical figures meant the lack of plot resolution

²⁰⁵ István: Vakuljatok meg, szemek, hogy ezt ne lássátok! Hol a gyilkos? Utána, aprítsátok ízekre, hányjátok a kutyáknak veszett testét! Act II, No.14, *finale*, Première version.

²⁰⁶ Between bars 165 and 172, and bars 173 and 180 in the première version of the finale.

related to broader implications in the reform-era. Erkel's musical depiction of the relationships between recklessness, ignorance, regal authority, and intrigue link contemporary discourse to understandings of the past. Creating distinctions between oppressive power and Hungarian ideals of historical heroes reflected an inability to break with the past.

Though *Bátori Mária* is similarly open ended and porous in political and social relationships between the past, present and future to many examples from the French Grand repertoire, Erkel's work diverges from historiographical concepts such as Michelet's influential theses speculating the merits of rupture. The narrative is a series of fresh calamities: István's lament for the troubled country informing the people that military struggles are ongoing; the King's shock and rage when he learns of István's mistress; Mária's anxieties; the court's insistence that Mária must die; the King's turmoil; István's visions of his 'blood-stained' wife; the confrontation between the King and Mária, and finally, Mária's murder. These moments do not disrupt the past but relay a series of constant turmoil which characterised understandings of Hungary's history. The final 'intrusion' of the hunters' drinking song as Mária dies only exemplifies the inability to break a perpetual cycle. Erkel's first opera reflects the uncertainties of the future through a lament of past trespasses and lost glory, and the tragic repercussions which resulted in a contemporary oppressed, threatened, condition.

Chapter 5

‘This is the Swan Song of the Censor!’:

Defeat, Sacrifice and Revolution in *Hunyadi László* (1844)

Introduction

Hunyadi László has historically enjoyed substantial popularity in Hungary, becoming a mainstay in the repertoires of theatrical institutions across Hungarian-speaking regions of the Habsburg Empire.¹ Between the 1844 première and the relocation of the theatre’s opera division in 1884,² the *Nemzeti Színház* staged *Hunyadi László* 250 times, making Erkel’s second opera the most frequently performed piece in the repertoire throughout the theatre’s existence.³ Following the quashing of the revolution, *Hunyadi László* even increased in popularity, and new interpretations of the historical narrative and musical depiction evolved in the counter-revolution and beyond.⁴ Premiered four years prior to 1848, in a climate in which ideologies were increasingly polarised and radical, *Hunyadi László* expressed nationalist aspiration and revolutionary fervour on account of the political anti-Habsburg message; musical markers associated with historical revolutionary revolt; a close configuration with historical interpretation in the reform period relating to historical defeat and universal liberty; and the depiction of a catalyst to the mobilisation of the revolution: the ‘corrupt’ Hungarian aristocracy. *Hunyadi László* inspired, or at least championed, revolutionary fervour approaching the 1848 uprising to such

¹ Tibor Tallián, ‘Keletkezés, sujet, fogadtatás’ in Ágnes Gupcsó (ed.), *Székért dobott a nemzet szívébe: Erkel Ferenc három operája* Bátori Mária – Hunyadi László – Bánk bán. *Szövegkönyvek, tanulmányok* (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2011), 238-240. See also Dezső Legány, *Erkel Ferenc művei és korabeli történetük* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1975), 37-39.

² Replaced by the *Magyar Király Operaház*, the Royal Hungarian Opera, renamed as the *Magyar Állami Operaház*, the Hungarian State Opera in 1945.

³ Tallián, ‘Keletkezés’, *op. cit.*, 258.

⁴ Dezső Legány, ‘Erkel Hunyadi Lászlója: Erkel Ferenc születésének 160. évfordulója alkalmából’, *Magyar zene*, Vol.11, No.1-4, 97-108.

degree that audiences interrupted theatrical performances demanding patriotic music including pieces from *Hunyadi László*.⁵

Situating *Hunyadi László* in relation to operatic depictions of sacrifice and execution, divergencies and adherences further demonstrates how musical narrative relates to rhetoric surrounding the representation of historical figures on stage. The opera's *marche funèbre* and ensuing execution scene emphasise abuse of power through depicting mourning and victimhood in the march. Simultaneously, willingly facing death is a display of exemplary martyrdom. The chorus anticipates the revolutionary 'storm' whilst László is tied to historical revolutionary heroes musically through evoking the *Rákóczi induló*. Erzsébet's commanding figure and the musical depiction of divine anger as she narrates her son's execution means the potential for a future restoration nevertheless underlies the hero's fate.

The following discussion explores how pre-1848 revolutionary rhetoric relates to the function of defeat narratives, situating *Hunyadi László* amidst this discourse. Scholars have interpreted the role of historical defeats in nationalisms as mediators of anxieties.⁶ Such chronicles perform dual functions: demonstrating collective endurance, whilst providing direction, even driving contemporary 'collective action'.⁷ I argue throughout this dissertation that history functions as a mediator of existential fears in Hungarian nationalism. Gerő contends that 'the nation' in these contexts constitute a 'secular deity',⁸ in which nationalism functions as a civic religion, a 'nation-religion' with 'its own ritual, cult and offices' demanding "human sacrifice" which anoints the Sacred Cause with blood.⁹ Demonstrating the relationships between Erkel's representation of the László Hunyadi narrative and discourse in Hungary approaching 1848 contextualises the tropes of victimhood, defeat, sacrifice, and resurrection.

⁵ Krisztina Lajosi, '19th Century Opera and Representations of the Past in the Public Sphere' in Lotte Jenson and Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Free Access to the Past: Romanticism, Cultural Heritage and the Nation* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 243.

⁶ See Mock's survey of defeat narratives in Steven J. Mock, *Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 31-49.

⁷ John Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict* (London: SAGE, 2005), 37.

⁸ András Gerő, translated by Mario D. Fenyo, *Imagined History: Chapters from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-century Hungarian Symbolic Politics* (Boulder: Centre for Hungarian Studies, 2006), 4.

⁹ Gerő, *op. cit.*, 123.

The Hunyadi Chronicles and Hungarian History

In 1456, Ulrich II of Celje (Slovenia), the cousin of the King's mother and an influential Royal advisor, died under unclear circumstances at the Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade) fortress where János Hunyadi had recently defended Hungarian territory from an Ottoman advance.¹⁰ King Ladislas V, Duke of Austria and King of Hungary, Croatia and Bohemia, initially pardoned the implicated László Hunyadi, eldest son of the now deceased János, even honouring the excused with a royal appointment. However, upon arriving at the Royal castle in Buda, László was immediately arrested and subsequently executed by beheading in March 1457 in Buda's *Szent György tér* (Saint George's Square).

In the Hungarian reform period, the social status of János Hunyadi became significant in chronicling the Hunyadis, representing a rejection of aristocratic rights which had historically tied Hungarian loyalties to the Habsburgs (see Chapter 2). János earned his wealth, title and infamy as a lesser noble: through military and strategic measures which protected the Hungarians from Ottoman expansion as opposed to status through birth right. Rhetoric in the reform period which now included voices from the new intelligentsia strata, rigorously challenged the aristocracy's power within Hungary's feudal system.¹¹ As Krisztina Lajosi puts it: 'Hunyadis were representative of the nation and not appointees of the Habsburgs'.¹² From anti-feudal perspectives, and especially with regards to the radicals who drew their 'daily bread' from the French revolution, János Hunyadi was celebrated as a 'fighter of independence and freedom': a protector of the Hungarians' rights and independence from foreign threats in the form of Ottoman invasions.¹³

¹⁰ Pál Engel, translated by Tamás Pálosfalvi and Andrew Ayton (ed.), *The Realm of St Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895-1526* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 297.

¹¹ In the reform period in Hungary, the lower nobility largely comprised the new 'liberal' movement. See Chapter 3.

¹² Krisztina Lajosi, '19th Century', *op. cit.*, 242.

¹³ Camil Mureșanu, translated by Laura Treptow, *John Hunyadi: Defender of Christendom* (Iasi: The Centre for Romanian Studies, 2001), 18.

The legacies of the Hunyadi family are conjoined with the defence of Christendom. Since the conversion from paganism under István I in the tenth century, Catholicism became an identity marker differentiating Hungarian religious identity from both the Eastern Orthodox Slavic peoples and Muslim invaders.¹⁴ János Hunyadi, the General of Hungary, earned the sobriquet *Athleta Christi*, ‘Champion of Christ’, for his defence of Christian Europe. The success with which he defended Catholic territories against Ottoman invasions in the fifteenth century were frequently understood in nineteenth-century Hungarian contexts as sacred missions ordained by God. His campaigns were ‘legitimised’ by God’s ambassador on earth, Pope Calixtus III, who supported this defence of Christian Europe financially.¹⁵ As András Gerő argues, Hungarian identities became so entrenched with Christianity that defence of ‘uniquely’ Magyar language and culture was a holy mission: a defence of Christianity itself.¹⁶

János Hunyadi successfully thwarted the expansion of the Empire further into Europe in the Siege of Nándorfehérvár in 1456, in which his counterattack led to Mehmed II’s temporary retreat (János died of natural causes shortly after). János Hunyadi’s spouse, noblewoman Erzsébet Szilágyi, became a *mater dolorosa* in László Hunyadi narratives,¹⁷ and Erzsébet is characterised in Erkel’s opera akin to the historical role the Virgin Mary in Hungarian identities.¹⁸

The historical figure of Erzsébet Szilágyi proved a powerful character when she rallied the support of Hungarian aristocratic families to the cause of Mátyás’s claim to the throne after he

¹⁴ Prince Géza and his son, who became the first King of Hungary (István I), sought to establish relations with the Holy Roman Empire, see Engel, *op. cit.*, 25-48. Historians such as R. W. J. Evans have examined the role of Catholicism in national movements in the reform period, and how competing loyalties and identities complicated discourse, especially as in the aftermath of reformations and counterreformations. By the reform period, Hungary’s Christian population were divided by Catholics, Calvinists and other denominations, and intermarriage laws meant there were still legal repercussions. Nevertheless, Evans has argued that religion exerted comparatively limited influence as public life became secularised. See R J W Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs: Central Europe, c. 1683-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 148-169.

¹⁵ Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453-1505* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 108. See Chapters 3 and 5 for further context.

¹⁶ Gerő, *op. cit.*, 7.

¹⁷ See Tallián, ‘Keletkezés’, *op. cit.*, 243.

¹⁸ ‘Saint Stephen “put his country at Mary’s disposal; thus it is Mary’s country and Mary is the protector of the Hungarians”. See Éva V. Huseby-Darvas, “‘Feminism, the Murderer of Mothers’: The Rise and Fall of Neo-Nationalist Reconstruction of Gender in Hungary’ in (ed.) Brackette Williams, *Women Out of Place: The Gender of Agency and the Race of Nationality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 168.

was taken into custody of Ladislaus V following László Hunyadi's execution.¹⁹ Both contemporary and subsequent artists and writers interpreted Ladislaus V's unexpected death in 1458 as a divine punishment for the execution of László Hunyadi, and as the ensuing peak of the Hungarian golden age in the rein of Mátyás as divine justice.²⁰ In Erkel's opera, *Erzsébet* has a central (arguably the leading) role in which her protests against injustice portray her as a commanding force in the dramaturgy. In *Hunyadi László* *Erzsébet* reflects both the historical figure, and Catholic symbolism integral to Hungarian identity in her association with *regnum Marianum*, 'the kingdom and protectorate of the Virgin Mother',²¹ alongside concepts of womanhood and motherhood in reform-era Hungary.

The younger Hunyadi son became King Matthias, or Mátyás, I of Hungary and Croatia from 1458 until his death in 1490. Under his reign, the 'Hungarian Golden Age', Mátyás cultivated a court of humanist writers and painters equivalent with the Italian renaissance.²² He also reclaimed the legacy of János Hunyadi, referring to himself as 'the only defender of Christendom'.²³ Mátyás was the last King of Hungary before the defeat of the Hungarian Royal army under his successor Louis II, who died in the battle of Mohács²⁴ leaving no heir. Hungarian territories came under control of the Ottomans in Southern Hungary and Habsburg control under Ferdinand Habsburg in the North. Historical figures emblematic of a series of historical victories and defeats, the Hunyadi chronicles embody both the peak of the golden age, as well as the beginning of events eventually leading to the collapse of an autonomous, powerful European kingdom, dictating the political position of Hungary until 1867.

During the nineteenth century the Hunyadi chronicles became prominent themes in historiographical accounts of Hungarian history, in drama, other literary mediums, and in

¹⁹ See Engel, *op. cit.*, 297.

²⁰ Rózsa Feyer-Tóth and (ed.) T. Klaniczay (eds.), *Art and Humanism in the Age of Matthias Corvinus* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 9.

²¹ See Huseby-Darvas Williams, *op. cit.*, 168.

²² Engel, *op. cit.*, 299.

²³ Engel, *op. cit.*, 303.

²⁴ See Chapter 2.

historical painting,²⁵ continually evolving as the century progressed. These metamorphoses demonstrate manipulations of the underlying theme(s) fundamentally through emphasis on different characters. Eighteenth-century plays emphasise concerns with power structures: opposing absolutism. As Krisztina Lajosi demonstrates, in the years approaching the revolution the emphasis on the unjust betrayal of László Hunyadi was in vogue which later developed into emphasis on the ‘remorse and horror of the traitor king’ in the immediate post-revolution period.²⁶

Synopsis

Egressy’s libretto for Erkel’s opera derives from a play by the lawyer, politician and man of letters, Lőrinc Tóth. His acclaimed *A két László*, ‘The Two Lászlós’, of 1839, won a prize from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.²⁷ In alignment with this source, Erkel’s *Hunyadi László* centres on the events culminating in the title roles’ demise, which in 1840s Pest-Buda became a vessel for emphasis on historical abuses of foreign power, justifying through history contemporary opposition to the Empire. Erkel’s opera also engages with discourse surrounding the feudal system: demonising (aristocratic) unelected power as corrupt offers explanations for national decline. Fears deriving from the spectre of *nemzethalál* and uncertainty amidst public discourse are depicted in Erkel’s opera through contrasting representations of László as a martyr and relating history to contemporary ideas of victimhood. Simultaneously, musical markers linking revolutionary rhetoric surrounding communal legacy to sacrifice characterise the title-role.

²⁵ For example: Viktor Madarász’s, *Hunyadi László siratása*, ‘Lamentation of László Hunyadi’ (1859); Béla Vízkelety, V. *László eskütétele*, ‘Ladislaus V’s Oath’ (1861); Gyula Benczúr’s *Hunyadi László búcsúja*, ‘László Hunyadi’s Farewell’ (1866), and Bertalan Székely’s *V László és Cillei Ulrik*, ‘King Ladislaus V and Ulrik Cillei’ (1870).

²⁶ Prominent pre-revolution examples include Sándor Kisfauldy, *Hunyadi János* (1814) and Vörösmarty’s *Czillei és a Hunyadiak* (1844). During the revolution, works such as Petőfi *A király esküje* (1848)), ‘The King’s Oath’ is the central theme, and in the aftermath of the revolution, plays such as János Arany’s ‘V László’ (1853)) focus on the King’s remorse: ‘the treacherous king became a symbol of Austrian repression after 1848’ Krisztina Lajosi, ‘19th Century National Opera and Representations of the Past in the Public Sphere’ in Lotte Eliskov Jenson, Joseph Theodoer Eerssen and Marita Mathijsen (eds.), *Free Access to the Past: Romanticism, Cultural Heritage and the Nation* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 241.

²⁷ Ujfalussy József, ‘A ‘Hunyadi László’ és irodalmi előzményei’ in Bence Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha (eds.), *Zenetudományi Tanulmányok II: Erkel Ferenc és Béla Bartók emlékére* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1954), 219.

Act I, subtitled *Cillei halála*, ‘The Death of Cillei’, is set at Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade) in 1456. The young Mátyás (a breeches role) greets the gathered friends of the Hunyadis (men’s chorus) who László has summoned. They reference the ‘glorious name’ of János Hunyadi, championing his victories over the ‘heavy yoke’ of the Turks; the setting reminds the audience of his celebrated feat at Belgrade²⁸ which halted the Ottoman expansion further into Hungary for seventy years.²⁹ The faithfulness to specific places in *Hunyadi László* is akin to the French grand operatic repertoire, such as *Les Huguenots*, the settings of which were familiar to the Parisian audiences.³⁰ As outlined in Chapter 1, historical realism was ‘a precondition for the success of a production’ in the Parisian theatres.³¹ Hugo summarised this in his ‘seminal’ preface to *Cromwell* (1827): ‘The place where this or that catastrophe occurred becomes a terrible and inseparable witness of the tragedy; and the absence of this type of silent character detracts from the completeness of the drama in the grandest scenes of history’.³² The Hunyadi men swear to protect Hungary in the name of Hunyadi, whose nation is now ‘orphaned’ since János’s death.³³ Mátyás swears to follow his father’s precedent once he comes of age and protect Hungary.³⁴ László arrives from a parliamentary session at Futak (in today’s Northern Serbia), and informs

²⁸ Ősz atyádnak oly dicső volt végtusája, hol tizedszer karja által mentve lón kedves hazája, és lehullt görbedt nyakunkról a török nehéz igája. ...a bekormozott falak s e boltok roppant ívei dicső nevérol szólnak, arról locsog az ősz Duna, arról morognak a szelek, sőt a vidék tollasai az agg dicsőrol zengenek. (Act I, No. 1, scene i), Your father fought bravely to the last, saving his beloved country for the tenth time, ridding out stooped back of the Turk’s heavy yoke. ...these sooty walls reverberate his glorious name... and the bords of the forest sing, all saluting the old hero’s name.

²⁹ See Bryan Cartledge, *The Will to Survive: A History of Hungary* (London: Timewell Press, 2006), 60.

³⁰ Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 102.

³¹ Simon Williams, ‘The Spectacle of the Past in Grand Opera’ in David Charlton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 59.

³² Williams, *op. cit.*, 59.

³³ ‘Tell us why you sent for us? Have the badly beaten, defeated hordes of heathen set forth again to take revenge on our orphan nation? They strive to wipe us out, now that János is dead, and with him collapsed the fortress of our land. If so? Let the bald enemy strike and meet the Hungarian’s sabre. We buried the old Hunyadi but our faithful bosoms protect our weary nation.’ Szólj, miért hívál? Talán ocsúdva már a tönkrevert pogány jó, hogy bosszút vegyen e gyámtalan hazán? S hogy semmivé tegyen, hisz János meghala, és benne összedült honunknak védőfala. Ha úgy? jöhet bátran a tar, mert fent karddal várja a magyar, mert bár kimúlt az ősz Hunyad, hő kebleink tartándanak roncsolt hazánkknak védőfalat. (Act I, No. 1, scene i).

³⁴ De hogya fölvirágozand a most csak gyöngé sarjadék, ó, akkor végrehajthatom, mi most szívemben lánggal ég. S ha majd megizmosul e kar, s forgatni bírja pallosát, helytáll a hős megtorlani, ki sérti a törvényt s hazát. Once the weak offspring grows into full bloom, though, I will carry out then what burns my heart now with passion! Once this arm gains manly power and wields the sword with craft, your hero is there to avenge whoever breaches law and land. Act I, No.2, scene i).

the men why he has gathered them: Ulrik Cillei has usurped the role of Governor previously held by János Hunyadi (No.3). Cillei, who is en route to Nándorfehérvár accompanying the King, has meanwhile agreed to send the heads of the Hunyadi sons to the Serbian Despot, Đurađ Branković, but László has intercepted the letter. The Hunyadi's swear to avenge Cillei's intrigue.

The setting changes to the castle gates on the Danube, and the King's arrival is announced by a march (No.4). László greets the King on bended knee, offering the castle keys as a sign of devotion. The King assures László of his faith that the young Hunyadi is best placed to protect the fortress, and László responds graciously, 'I swear on my father's name ...that this country won by blood is my dearest treasure, for which I am ready to sacrifice my life'.³⁵ As the King, Cillei and the Hunyadi's proceed into the castle, there is a short standoff between the Hunyadi men, who refuse to allow the German mercenaries in the King's employ to enter the castle, concluding with the mercenaries' threat: 'Perish with your castle, stubborn Hungarian troops! You wait and see, Cillei will pay you back dearly'.³⁶ Curiously, Erkel does not create the expected manner of musical effect in this scenario: musical markers of nationality (or 'foreignness') do not characterise the split chorus. Nevertheless, dramaturgically, this exchange establishes the hostility between 'Hungarians' and 'foreigners', and emphasises the Hunyadi men's fierce loyalty.

The King, fearful of the Hunyadis, requests council from Cillei, who seizes the opportunity to ensure the assassination of the eldest Hunyadi son to secure his own elevation: 'You must concede me your power, and their blood will wash off your disgrace... [aside:] one step closer to the throne I shall be!'³⁷ László sings a meditative romance pining for his fiancé, Mária Gara (No.7), the daughter of the Hungarian Palatine. He is interrupted by his faithful friend Rozgonyi, who has received Cillei's order, and arrived to inform László of these developments. The

³⁵ atyámra esküszöm nagy ünnepélyesen, hogy kincsem, mindenem e vérszerezte hon, s ha szükség, életemet érte áldozom. Act I, No.4, scene iv.

³⁶ Vessz hát váraddal itt, nyakas magyar sereg, várj csak, mert Cillei ezért jól megfizet. Act I, No.5, scene v.

³⁷ Hatalmad szükség kezembe adnod, s akkor vérök mosandja rút meggyaláztatásodat. ... A trónhoz egy fokkal most már közel leszek. Act I, No.6, scene iv.

Hunyadi men are informed, just as Cillei enters under the pretence of inviting the Hunyadis to a feast. The confrontation escalates: the performance directions read ‘Cillei charges at László, who halts the blow with his arm’.³⁸ The Hunyadi men storm the chamber and kill Cillei: he curses the Hungarians as he dies.³⁹ László’s ‘sin’ becomes a communal sin, and consequently, also a Hungarian ‘curse’: a trope infiltrating historiographical thinking in the reform period (see Chapter 2). The King hears the commotion and, realising his vulnerable position (‘I am standing amidst ferocious tigers’), pardons the Hunyadi’s. The fêted chorus *meghalt a cselszövő*, ‘the schemer is dead’, closes the act. The King simultaneously reveals his hatred of the Hungarians as the Hunyadis celebrate:

Act I, No.8, scene xii, *finale con stretto*:

László, Chorus:

The traitor is dead at last,
and no discord anymore,
long live King László,
long live our land and home!⁴⁰

King:

You savage dissenters for death,
You will also pay with death,
and feel upon your necks
the weight of the headsman’s axe.⁴¹

László, Chorus:

The bloodthirsty beast is dead,
Our fatherland is saved!
The monster is dead,
Our fatherland is saved! Long live King László!⁴²

The King becomes an allegory for a weak, corruptible, foreign ruler, easily manipulated by Cillei and later, Gara. This interpretation became allegorical, through personation, of the

³⁸ kardot von, nekivág, mit László karjával feltart, Act I, No.8, scene x.

³⁹ Átok read, magyar! Act I, No.8, scene xi.

⁴⁰ Meghalt a cselszövő, eltűnt a rút viszály, éljen soká a hon, éljen László király!

⁴¹ Vad pártütő csoport, halálért lesz halál, nyakadra tettedért hóhér pallosa száll!

⁴² Meghalt a vérszopó, megmentve a haza, meghalt a szörnyeteg, megmentve a haza. Éljen László király

dynamic between Emperor Ferdinand V and his chancellor Klemens von Metternich. *Meghalt a cselszövő* developed into a theme song of the revolution when Metternich resigned during the European uprisings. The word *cselszövő*, ‘schemer’ was replaced with ‘Metternich’. According to the *Pesti Divatlap*: ‘many were shouting the hated name of Metternich in reference to the song’s text.’⁴³

The second act, set at the Hunyadi castle in Temesvár (today’s Timișoara, Western Romania) centres on the King’s oath to the recently widowed Erzsébet Szilagyi. The ladies chorus inform the audience that the King is approaching their castle (No.9). Erzsébet’s sorrowful *cavatina* quickly descends into a vision of her eldest son on the gallows (which musically reoccurs in the *scena ultima*); she faints. The King’s arrival (No.10) is again marked by the March material utilised in his previous entrance (No.4). He is greeted by the grieving Erzsébet, begging for her son’s lives to be spared, to which the King concedes.⁴⁴ Mária Gara (László’s fiancée) and her father are present. Upon noticing the King’s lust for his daughter, Gara seizes an opportunity to manipulate the King to his own ends, as Cillei before him. In Gara’s aria, the audience learns of his intentions towards László, despite agreeing to his match with Mária: ‘I promised you her hand, only to gain your confidence and seek the fathom of your wicked heart, only to grab your throat upon your first sincere word, and give you over to the hangman for your treachery.’⁴⁵ A love duet for László and Mária ensues (No.14), depicting an idyllic partnership and conveying their blissful ignorance to intrigue.

⁴³ ‘Elég az hozzá, a zenekar Rákóczyindulója után nem sokára francia dalt, a marseillet játszá mi a legkitörőbb harsány tetszéssel fogadtatott, úgy szinte a többi darab is különösen a Hunyadi László operának Bognár, Füredy és Wolf kardalnokok által rendkívüli lelkesedéssel elénekelt első felvonásbeli hatalmas, buzdító finaléja, mely így kezdődik: „Meghalt a cselszövő!” — Már ekkor megérkezvén a bécsi forradalom, s az austriai ministerium bukásának hire, — a dal szövegére vonatkozólag többen Metternich gyűlölt nevét kiáltozák.’ *Pesti Divatlap*, 19th March 1848, 362.

⁴⁴ Bár gondtalan ésszel vérbűnt követének, és e vér rokonom volt, akit megölének, hős apjok erényét nézvén a király, e sunda merényért bosszút sohasem áll! Act II, No.10, scene iii.

⁴⁵ Odaigérem ugyan, de csak azért, hogy bizalmasd kicsaljam, és belássak gaz, álnok szűd legmélyebb rejtekébe, hogy a legelső nyílt szavadnál torkon ragadjalak, és mint pártütőt bakónak adjalak. Although they recklessly perpetrated a blood feud, and it was my next of kin whom they murdered, honouring the merit of their heroic father, the king will never take revenge for their insidious deed! Act II, No.13, scene v.

In the Act II finale, set before the church at Temesvár Castle, the King swears a sacred oath not to avenge Cillei's murder, and simultaneously secures László's journey to Buda: 'My royal oath is taken by the altar, and right away we set off for Buda'.⁴⁶ The solemnity of the scene is aided by the stage directions pertaining to the conclusion of the scene: 'they all freeze in a pious gesture while the curtain rolls down; bells ringing from the church, people bow in awe'.⁴⁷ The narrative function of this *grandiose* scene is to place emphasis on the King's royal oath. As Monarchs were believed to be ordained by God, revoking his oath became a grave sin on the part of the foreign ruler. Eighteenth-century dramatists utilised this element of the plot accordingly, a trend continued into the reform period, including Tóth drama.⁴⁸ Additionally, the King's oath, which presents him as adored by the Hungarians, is likely to have contributed to the leniency of the censor.⁴⁹

In the third act, Palatine Gara manipulates the King, convincing him that László is treasonous. The King finally revokes his oath and orders László's death. Subtitled, *Ármány*, 'intrigue', the penultimate act is set in Buda in 1457, originally opening with a duet between Gara and László, in which the former assures the latter of his (insincere) fatherly love, and convinces László to remain in Buda despite the latter's suspicion that danger lurks. The King's aria follows, expressing his fearful disposition, and in the *cabaletta* finally finding consolation in his hope of winning Mária's love (No.17). Gara enters: he convinces the King that László is plotting against the throne, and uses the prospect of the King's marriage to Mária to ascertain the execution order (No.18). The scene changes to the palace gardens.

The wedding guests (chorus) sing of the joys of joining the Hunyadis and the Garas in matrimony. From the 1850s onwards, the *magyar tánc*, 'Hungarian dance', usually performed as a

⁴⁶ De most templomba, királyi eskümet oltár előtt letenni, és legott Budára jöttek. Act II, No.15, scene vii.

⁴⁷ (ájtatos állásban maradnak mindnyájan, míg a kárpit legördül; a templomból többféle csengetés hallik, arra az egész nép meghajtja magát) Act II, No.15, scene vii.

⁴⁸ See József Ujfalussy, 'A 'Hunyadi László' és irodalmi előzményei' in Bence Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha (eds.), *Zenetudományi Tanulmányok II: Erkel Ferenc és Béla Bartók emlékére* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1954), 221.

⁴⁹ See Tallián, 'Keletkezés', *op. cit.*, 241.

ballet, follows. Though this inclusion became standard practice during Erkel's lifetime, his authorship of the piece is unknown as Katalin Szacsvai Kim has demonstrated from a study of the surviving sources.⁵⁰ As Erkel conducted his own operas at the *Nemzeti Színház* until his retirement, it is clear Erkel approved of the insert. Pest-Buda audiences expected such pieces in the context of increasing demands for nationalistic display (this shift in the repertoire is outlined below). The bride and groom arrive, and from 1847 onwards Mária sings a decorative *cabaletta* (No.19) which Erkel composed for the rising star of the *Nemzeti Színház*, Kornélia Hollósy. This piece also includes a prominent flute role as an opportunity for the virtuoso Ferenc Doppler to display his skill.⁵¹ In the final moments, Gara and armed guards storm the celebrations and arrest László and the Hunyadi men.

The *Entr'acte*, becoming known as László's *battyúdal*, 'swansong' opens the final act. László is imprisoned in Buda. He still has faith in the King and believes a fair trial awaits him: 'Without a fair trial, they won't take me to the gallows. I must see the king, and the glorious light of truth will wane the shameful deed, and shed light on my innocence.'⁵² This element of László's character—unwavering faith in the King's oath—has often been interpreted as his *hubris*, a necessary flaw which secures the hero's honour.⁵³ Mária, having bribed the guards, appears, urging László to flee with her to the safety of Temesvár. László holds fast in his faith in justice: 'A sinner escapes his prison, but my heart has nothing to hide, and I face the law with the greatest of calm.'⁵⁴ Gara and the guards storm the cell and Mária pleads with her father; he banishes her to his palace, and László again assures her the law will prevail.⁵⁵ Mária is forcibly

⁵⁰ Katalin Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-műhely. Közös munka Erkel Ferenc színpadi műveiben (1840-1857)' (Doctoral Dissertation, Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem, 2012), 62; 79.

⁵¹ Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-műhely', *op. cit.*, 69.

⁵² Kihallgatás nélkül, nem, nem viendenek vérpadra. Fel, fel a törvény elébe, és ott az igazság dicső fénye elsápasztja a gonoszettet, és világot hoz ártatlanságomra. Act IV, No.20, scene i.

⁵³ See Ujfalussy, *op. cit.*, 223.

⁵⁴ az bűnös, ki börtönéből szökve távozik: szívem tiszta, nyugton megyek a törvények elébe. Act IV, No.21, scene ii.

⁵⁵ (raises her) Don't you kneel for this heathen, and wipe off your tears! The sacred word of the law will clear me. (felemeli) Fel e pogány elől, töröld le könnyedet! A törvény szent szava kimentend engemet. Act IV, No.21, scene ii.

removed singing the fateful words: ‘you will be mine beyond the grave’.⁵⁶ The finale opens with a *marcia funebre* (No.22). The *scena ultima* opens as Erzsébet rushes to the gallows as László is being led to the scaffold in the King’s gift of a velvet robe. In Tóth’s drama, the execution is relayed to Erzsébet,⁵⁷ but the Egressy-Erkel depiction rather reflects the historically commanding figure: Erzsébet conversely narrates the execution to the audience. The royal guards constrain Erzsébet as she attempts to remove her son from the gallows by force. Thunder and lightning begin to rumble and strike, reflected musically and textually: ‘Storm, strike! Wind, howl! let your thunder shake the earth! let the whole world know that the son of Hunyadi dies innocent. Even nature is ashamed, covering this deed with a shroud, and heavens took pity on him, shedding tears of sorrow!’⁵⁸ She kneels and sings a *preghiera*; László kneels on the block. The executioner miscalculates the initial blows and the gathered people shout for mercy, but Gara orders a final strike. László dies and Erzsébet collapses.

The final scene uses spectacle to depict the themes of the opera: contemporary strife was a result of a slumbering nation who is historically a victim of internal corruption and oppressive foreign powers. After the executioner’s three failed attempts to execute the young Hunyadi, at the command of Gara, the fourth—unconstitutional—strike is successful. By medieval law, three failed strikes release the accused from his fate.⁵⁹ The intervention of Gara, a Hungarian aristocrat whose power is given by the foreign King, representing the ‘backwards’ order of feudalism tying the Hungarian aristocracy to the Empire which was perceived as stunting Hungary’s modernisation⁶⁰ (see Chapter 2), commands the executioner to strike again. Gara thereby obstructs the divine power (depicted musically by the storm) of the unsuccessful strikes which

⁵⁶ Mária: God be with you, my brave warrior! you will be mine beyond the grave. Isten veled hát, hős bajnokom! enyim leenedsz túl a síron. László: menyasszonyom! enyim leenedsz túl a síron. God be with you, my dear bride! you will be mine beyond the grave. Act IV, No.21, scene ii.

⁵⁷ See Ujfalussy, *op. cit.*, 225 for a discussion of Tóth’s literary narrative device in this scene.

⁵⁸ Ó, mennydörögj, ordíts, te fergeg! dörgésed a földet hogy rázza meg! És tudja meg szerte a nagyvilág: ártatlanul ölik Hunyad fiát. Lám, a természet is szégyenében gyászkárpitot von e tett fölébe. És megszánta őt legott a menny maga, búvában mint zuhog könnyzápora. Act IV, No.22, scene v.

⁵⁹ Krisztina Lajosi, ‘Opera and Nineteenth-Century Nation-Building: The (Re)Sounding Voice of the Nation’ (PhD Dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2008), 236.

⁶⁰ Failed crops, unemployment and inflation in the 1840s exacerbated these perceptions. See Cartledge, *op. cit.*, 190.

had constitutionally granted László's freedom. Revolutionary action in the nineteenth-century Hungarian context becomes justified by presenting Hungary as historical victim and connecting past defeat of an exemplary historical hero to contemporary revolutionary sacrifice as a medium through which to fight oppression. The heroic depiction of László Hunyadi became an instructive example as liberal nationalism meanwhile gained considerable political momentum in the Diet, personified in Lajos Kossuth. 'Young Hungary', simultaneously, became increasingly radical and emboldened.

Hunyadi László was first performed on 27 January 1844. Erkel composed the basic layer of *Hunyadi László* alone: there is no evidence in the primary sources that other hands beyond copyists aided his composition.⁶¹ In the initial years of performances, Erkel did not make any revisions to the work, save for the overture. First performed on 29 October 1845, the overture quickly became a standalone piece, and the most frequently performed orchestral work by a Hungarian composer in nineteenth-century Hungary.⁶² In the late 1840s and during the 1850s, Erkel composed inserts for individual performers: a cabaletta for Mária (No. 19) was added in 1847, an entirely new aria for Erzsébet in 1850 for guest performances of Anne de la Grange—which she sang in Hungarian⁶³—and a new insert enriching László's No. 7 aria for Ferenc Stéger in 1859.⁶⁴

Repertoire and Reception

The contemporary impact of Erkel's *Hunyadi László* was marked by comparison to the stony silence with which the majority of the Hungarian-language press met the initial

⁶¹ Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-műhely', *op. cit.*, 61.

⁶² Tallián, 'Keletkezés', *op. cit.*, 258. The overture is widely regarded as the first important symphonic work by a Hungarian composer. For a discussion of the musical themes of the opera see my preface to Erkel Ferenc, *Hunyadi László Nyitány-Ouverture*, 1845. Munich: Musikproduktion Höflich, 2019.

⁶³ Tallián, 'Keletkezés', *op. cit.*, 248.

⁶⁴ Szacsvai Kim, 'Az Erkel-műhely', *op. cit.*, 62.

performances of *Bátori Mária*. The reception of Erkel's second opera was shaped against the backdrop of an increasingly nationalistic repertoire, both musical and dramatic.

The years between the premières of Erkel's first and second operas were incredibly challenging at the *Nemzeti Színház*. Expanding the operatic repertoire was both ambitious in terms of securing appropriate casts, and risky, since introducing works into the repertoire could become a financial gamble, as with the decided failure of Étienne Méhul's *Joseph* (1807) in 1843.⁶⁵ Three grand operas debuted on the Hungarian-language stage between *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László*: *La muette di Portici* (*A portici néma*) on 14 August 1841, *La Juive* (*A zsidónő*) on 6 August 1842, and *Robert le Diable* (*Ördög Róbert*) on 18 February 1843. As Tallián notes, the lack of a constant *primadonna* during this period likely contributed to the decision to stage this particular repertoire which have prominent tenor roles.⁶⁶ These works were testing in terms of the demands on the performers, who were often received as sub-standard, though *La Juive* was successful thanks in part to József Wurda's acclaimed interpretation of Eléazar.⁶⁷ Despite reservations concerning delivery, the novelty of this repertoire did elicit interest from the audiences.⁶⁸ The distribution of Italian, French, German and Hungarian works otherwise remained proportionately similar to the early 1840s.⁶⁹ The two Donizetti premières at the *Nemzeti Színház* in 1841, *Belisario* of 1836 (*Belizár*) and *Roberto Devereux* (*Devereux Róbert*) of 1838, did not find their usual success, likely due to the lack of suitable cast.⁷⁰

By 1843, following the uncertain period under interim directors, Endre Bartay (1799–1854) became director, exerting positive influences on both the financial security and the variety in the repertoire both pertaining to drama and musical-theatrical and operatic performance.

⁶⁵ István Barna, 'Erkel Ferenc első operái az egykorú sajtó tükrében' in Bence Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha (eds.), *Zenatudományi Tanulmányok II: Erkel Ferenc és Béla Bartók emlékére* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1954), 200.

⁶⁶ Tibor Tallián, 'Schodel Rozália és a hivatásos magyar operajátszás kezdetei', (Akadémiai doktori értekezés, Budapest, 2011), 303.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Amadé Németh, *Az Erkelek a magyar zenében: Az Erkel család szerepe a magyar zenei művelődésben* (Békéscsaba: Békés Megyei Tanács, 1987), 67.

⁶⁹ Németh, *Az Erkelek*, *op. cit.*, 67. See Chapter 3 for a sketch of the repertoire of the *Pesti Magyar Színház*.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

From the mid-1840s the portion of the repertoire comprising Italian operas featured less than twice as often as French works, as opposed to the opening years, where Italian operas dominated the operatic repertoire at the *Pesti Magyar Színház*.⁷¹ Aside from an almost complete representation of Donizetti's operas, Verdi's operas began to be introduced: *Nabucco* on the 2 January 1847 (roughly 6 months after the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth* première), *Ernani* on 3 February 1847 (roughly 7 months following the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*), and the Pest-Buda debut of *Macbeth* took place at the *Nemzeti Színház* on 26 February 1848.⁷² Simultaneously, performance standards at the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth* in this period declined, and existing financial strains exacerbated by the Danube flood of 1838 continued to jeopardize the German theatre's survival. The German theatre performed a tired repertoire centred on familiar Italian pieces, and the comparably varied programme at the *Nemzeti Színház* drew in the surplus audience.⁷³

Between the première of *Bátori Mária* in 1840 and the 1848 revolution, the daily programme of the *Nemzeti Színház* shifted markedly from a young theatre seeking to establish repertoires of classical and contemporary dramatic and operatic works performed in the Hungarian language, to reflecting the passions which erupted into the uprisings. Akin to examples of theatre programmes during revolutions,⁷⁴ the stage of the *Nemzeti Színház* echoed contemporary revolutionary fervour. Gossett has described a similar relationship between context and demand for individual (operatic) numbers in relation to choruses from Bellini and Verdi: 'reprises were often politically motivated', 'certain pieces were repeated 'for reasons that had nothing to do with the music.'⁷⁵ Numbers from *Hunyadi László* including the Act I chorus 'Meghalt a cselszövő',

⁷¹ In 1843, there were 46 Italian, 27 French, 7 German and 3 original Hungarian works staged. See Németh, *Az Erkelek*, *op. cit.*, 68.

⁷² Ferenc Kerényi, 'A Nemzeti', *op. cit.*, 322.

⁷³ Barna, *op. cit.*, 200.

⁷⁴ For example, see James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: a Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), Chapter 6, 'Entertainment and the Revolution', 99-115.

⁷⁵ The latter quotation marks here refer to Gossett's citation of a critic writing for the Milanese journal *Italia musicale* in the pre-1848 period. Philip Gossett, 'Becoming a Citizen: The Chorus in "Risorgimento" Opera', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol.2, No.1 (1990), 56.

‘The schemer is dead’ were adopted in the same way as other pieces with nationalistic associations, such as the *Rákóczi-induló*, ‘Rákóczi March’, *Rákóczi dal*, ‘Rákóczi song’, the *Marseille*⁷⁶ and Erkel’s setting of Kölcsey’s *Himnusz*.⁷⁷ Hungarian folksongs were sung, as well as choral settings of poems, and Hungarian dance pieces.⁷⁸ Egressy’s settings of Vörösmarty’s songs were also performed, such as *Szózat*,⁷⁹ and *Fóti dal* (‘song from Fót’).⁸⁰ These pieces were frequently sung before an evening’s performance, functioning as unofficial national anthems. An excerpt from Vörösmarty’s poem indicate the themes these pieces expressed:

Drowning sorrow in wine,
As a child finds peace in sleep,
Is the state of Hungarians,
And has been for centuries.
If there was ever
A time to awake:
Hungary must do so now,
Or ever shall she sleep.⁸¹

In steadfastness, sons,
Remain true;
If we are to overcome,
The dreadful dark shadows,
If we should spring up,
Bloom in our freedom,
We must not remain
In our unviability.⁸²

Our blood, our sweat,
Our death,
Whatever is required
We must sacrifice,
We must proclaim in silence
as ardently as in a storm:

⁷⁶ As Bónis discusses, the Marseillaise was known since the 1790s in Hungary, and became a symbol of double significance, evoking both the French Revolution so championed by the young liberals, and a revolutionary impulse of the gathering Hungarian revolutionary movement: ‘Ez a zenedarab kétféle “rebellis” hagyományt egyesít: a francia forradalmi hangot meg a magyar nemzeteit’. Ferenc Bónis, ‘Történelmi jelképek a magyar zenében a nemzeti romantika korától - Kodályig’ in Ferenc Bónis (ed.), *Kodály emlékkönyv* Magyar zenetörténet tanulmányok (Budapest: Püski, 1997), 21.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the relationship between Kölcsey’s *Himnusz* and Vörösmarty’s *Szózat* and Hungarian nationalism.

⁷⁸ Ferenc Kerényi, ‘Színjátszás a polgári forradalomban és a szabadságharc idején (1848-1849)’ in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színháztörténet 1. 1790-1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 358.

⁷⁹ See Gyula B. Bérczessi, *Tollal-lanttal-fegyverrel: Egressy Béni élete és munkássága* (Budapest: szerzői magánkiadás, 1986), 131. Chapter 2 discusses the use of history in *Szózat*.

⁸⁰ Fót is a city in the county of Pest.

⁸¹ Borban a bú, mint a gyermek / Aluszik. / Magyar ember már busúlt sok / Századig. / Ideje hogy ébredessen / Valaha: / Most kell neki felvirulni / Vagy soha. Stanza 6.

⁸² Hű egyesség tartsa össze / Fiait, / hogy leküzdje éjszak rémes / Árnyait: / Künn hatalmas, benn virágzó / És szabad, / Bizton álljon sérthetetlen / Jog alatt. Stanza 16.

“Our Holy Country:
We paid with all we possessed.”⁸³

Fóti dal, Mihály Vörösmarty, 5 October 1842.⁸⁴

Performances of the international operatic repertoire could also become opportunities for musical-theatrical nationalist display. In Rosina’s lesson scene in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, soprano Kornélia Hollósy sang words from Petőfi.⁸⁵ József Katona’s patriotic, anti-oppression play *Bánk bán* was performed with increasing frequency, including on the eve of the revolution in March 1848.⁸⁶ The rise of the *népszínmű* repertoire, characterised by presenting the plight of the serf classes (see Chapter 3), increased in attendance from the mid-1840s. The première of Ede Szigligeti’s *Szökött katona* (‘The Runaway Soldier’) in the autumn of 1843, which marked the birth of the *népszínmű* repertoire, is credited in part to the garnering interest from new audiences who formerly frequented the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*. As Ferenc Kerényi shows in his study of ticket sales and audience distribution in the pre-revolution period, audiences grew with each performance of *Szökött katona*.⁸⁷

The contemporary reception of Erkel’s *Hunyadi László* in the press is decidedly more extensive than with *Bátori Mária*. The audiences’ enthusiasm is corroborated in several accounts.⁸⁸

The reviews frequently cite the historical theme⁸⁹ and the ‘Hungarian style’ of the music⁹⁰

⁸³ S vér, veríték vagy halál az, /Mit kíván, /Áldozatként rakjuk azt le /Zsámolyán, /Hogy mondhassuk csend s viharban: /“Szent hazánk: /Megfizettük mind, mivel csak /Tartozánk.”, stanza 17.

⁸⁴ Mihály Vörösmarty, Károly Horváth and Dezső Tóth (eds.), *Vörösmarty Mihály összes művei: II: Kisebb költemények* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1960). Accessed 14 July 2018 via the National Széchényi Library: <<http://mek.oszk.hu/01100/01122/html/vers0304.htm>>

⁸⁵ Ferenc Kerényi, ‘A Nemzeti Színház a polgári forradalom előestéjén (1840-1848)’ in Székely (ed.), *op. cit.*, 322. Hollósy became a new *primadonna* of the Hungarian-language stage, acclaimed for her interpretation of Mária Gara in *Hunyadi László*, see Tallián, ‘Keletkezés’, *op. cit.*, 247.

⁸⁶ See László Orosz’s foreword to József Katona, *Bánk bán* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2003), 10.

⁸⁷ Ferenc Kerényi, ‘A Nemzeti’, *op. cit.*, 314.

⁸⁸ For example, the critic for the *Ungar* regarding the première wrote: ‘Ich habe in meinem Leben schon einigen ersten Darstellungen von Opern beigewohnt, Abenden, wo die Kompositoren selbst ihre Werke zuerst in die Welt einführen: ich habe bei solchen Gelegenheiten *Spohr*, *Marschner*, *Richard Wagner* am Pulte sitzen gesehen, Einige noch ungerechnet, deren Werke zwar mit Sang und Klang über die Bretter geschritten, deren Namen aber dennoch tonlos verschollen – nie aber ist mir ein so betäubender, nicht endenwollender Beifallsturm vorgekommen, als womit Hr. *Erkel* heute bei seinem Eintritte in das Orchester empfangen wurde.’ *Ungar*, 29 January 1844, reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 205-206.

⁸⁹ See Barna, *op. cit.*, 208.

⁹⁰ ‘Ugyanezt ritka ügyességgel és megfontolással tette a jelen szerzeményben is: az az, bár milly egyszerű s nemzeti tárgyat választva munkájaul, csak úgy használta abban a nemzeti zene hangjait, mint jó szakács a fűszert, mint jó festész a maga s illő helyén alkalmazott és hatást gerjesztő árnyéklatot.’ *Nemzeti Újság*, reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 202. ‘Nemzeties

amongst the merits of the work. Critics comment on the psychological development of the characters, intertwined in discussions of how history is employed and the use of ‘Hungarian’ musical style. The critic for the *Honderű* praised Erkel for both imbuing the work with ‘the Hungarian spirit’, and simultaneously, elevating Hungarian music to a European ‘civilized’ level, writing that Erkel ‘has made the first step on solid foundations on which to build the Hungarian Hall of Fame!’⁹¹ and praised the ‘purity’ of the ‘national’ melodies.⁹² The conservative fashion magazine-turned-forerunning-literary-journal, the *Életképek*,⁹³ found the musical depiction praiseworthy in its coherence and success in creating psychological and dramatic effect: ‘fluttering with fire which unites with solemn dignity.’⁹⁴ Erkel’s musical illustration of Erzsébet Szilágyi was generally praised, although the radicals characteristically criticised Schodel’s interpretation (who premièred this role and performed it for several years).⁹⁵ The *Honderű* again relays Erzsébet’s depiction in psychological terms: ‘[the *cantabile*, No.11] leads into a vision, gradually unfolding with intensifying dreadfulness, whose psychological depth is greatly

szempontból végre, – mely mint magyar zenénél itt különös figyelmet érdemel – oly sikerült szüleménynek vallhatni jelen dalművet, hogy azt bátran sorozhatjuk legjelesb hazai zene-kincseinkhez. Azon anda búskomolyság, azon, hogy ugy mondjam, örömgyszós kedélymélység, mely a magyar zenének kiválólag sajátja, háromszinű fonalkint húzódik keresztül az egész művön.’ *Életképek*, 27 January, 1844, 197.

⁹¹ ‘Ugy van. E. F. tette az első talpkövet ama szilárd alapzatba, melyre épülend egykor a magyar zenedicsőség’ vallhallálja!’ *Honderű*, 17 February 1844, 205.

⁹² ‘Nincs egy szám, egy helyzet, sőt mondhatni nincs egy recitativ, egyetlenegy hang sem, melyet nem fuvalna át a valódi költészet’ melege, és – mi az operának egyik főérdeme – oly át meg át magyaros a szellem, mely annak lényegébe fonódik, hogy alig van szám, melyben – kivált ha azt részletesben bonczolni akarjuk (mire azonban többszöri hallás kívántatik) – a nemzeti dallamok’ hol tiszta, hol fátyolozott, de mindig nemes és többnyire eredeti szózataira ne ismerjünk.’ *Honderű*, 24 February 1844, 238.

⁹³ The *Életképek* (‘Images of Life’) was first established as the *Magyar Életképek* (‘Images of Hungarian Life’) in 1834 and became simply the *Életképek* in 1844 when the focus shifted from fashion to literature. Practically every leading Hungarian journalist, literary critic, and writer contributed in the five years of the journals existence, including many of the individuals introduced in Chapter 3 such as Bajza, Toldy, Eötvös and Petőfi. See Albert Tezla, *Hungarian Authors: a Bibliographical Handbook* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 709.

⁹⁴ ‘E’ műben szellem, erő és szendély váltig ölelkeznek; lyrai ömlengés drámai hatályhoz, ábrándos kép nyugodt csendhez, csapongó tűz ünnepélyes méltósághoz csatlakozik.’ *Életképek*, 27 January, 1844, 197.

⁹⁵ ‘De mi volt főleg oka annak, hogy Schodelné kevés sikerrel énekelt? Igazán én szántam ezt a szép hangot oly erőtetésben hallani, minőt szerepe megkívánt; és jövődöre nem fogom csudálni, ha kedv nélkül lép föl e’ szerepben, mert az épen háládatlan. – Molnár Leopoldina éneke aránylag legjobb vala.’ *Regélő Pesti Divatlap*, reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 204, ‘A’ második szakaszban Hunyady özvegyének aggálya ‘s reménydus lelkessége szívből fakadt ‘s szívhez térő, az anya ‘s két fia hármasdala elbájol... Az előadást tekintve, leginkább Schodelné asszonynak (Hunyady özvegye) kell köszönni a hatás sikerét, ki művészileg drámai előadásával, ‘s az egésznek, hogy ugy mondjam, egyöntetű felfogásával díszít ada a műnek, valamint a’ mű alkalmat nyújtott hangja hatalmának művészi díszét nagyszerűleg kifejezhetni.’ *Életképek*, 27 January, 1844, 197-198. ‘Schodelnének oly felségesen éneklí, hogy alig tudnánk nevezni a most élők közt egy második művésznőt, ki e remek dalt annyi bensőség, annyi sajátsággal előadni bírná. A hangmű’ elrendezésére nézve azon észrevételünk van, mikép (noha lélektani valósága így is tökéletesen helyt áll) e kedves cavatinát megelőző visio’ nagyszerűsége aligha nem gátolja egy kissé a szelid dallam hatását.’ *Honderű*, February 24 1844, 243.

dramatic.’⁹⁶ The *Életképek* characterised the *scena ultima* in similar terms: ‘the crown of the opera is the mother’s despair, harrowing pain ... that moves the earth and sky, the storm of the heart and soul ... [is] boneshaking dramaturgy.’⁹⁷ The funeral march and *scena ultima* are praised as ‘a valuable piece in the wasteland (*parlag*) of Hungarian music’.⁹⁸

Criticisms of Adolf Pecz in the title role relate to ideas regarding the depiction of national heroes. According to the (liberal-radical, pro-drama) *Pesti Divatlap* he ‘did not reflect the spiritual position of the young hero enough’.⁹⁹ This is hardly surprising considering the pro-drama nature of the journal. Imre Vahot, one of the ‘radicals’, who believed ‘making our national heroes sing on the stage’ was sacrilege (see Chapter 3), edited the paper in question. The hasty conditions under which the première of *Hunyadi László* was rehearsed, reminiscent of the circumstances surrounding *Bátori Mária* when the *primadonna* on which the title role was modelled was missing, undoubtedly also effected the reception of the title-role in *Hunyadi László*. Pecz was a guest singer at the *Nemzeti Színház* in the first three months of 1844, and was invited to sing the role of László when Zsigmond Joób suddenly left the theatre for guest performances in Vienna.

Exacerbating the already demanding circumstances was Pecz’s scant knowledge of Hungarian.¹⁰⁰

The Act I *finale* was widely praised for its ‘animating national essence’¹⁰¹ and this number became a frequently performed stand-alone piece (‘meghalt a cselszövő’: discussed above). The

⁹⁶ ‘11. szám. Erzsébet jó s egy (6/8 ütetű Es-moll andante) anda színezetű, nemzeti szózatú cantabilében fejezi ki fia fölötti aggodalmát s királyabani reményeit, mely később egy fokozatos határu s iszonyúságában mindig növekedő látmánynak ad helyet, mellynek lélektani mélysége nagyszerűen drámai. Erzsébet’ félelmei önmagukat felcsigázván, ájulva roskad hölgyei’ karjaiba a gyászoló anya. Erzsébet magához jó, önbiztatásai meg övéi által megvigasztaltatva, fokokint lecsöndesül, s reményeit, vigasztát, megnyugvását fejezi ki ama gyönyörű (4/4 ütetű, nyugodt tempójú Es-dur) egészen nemzeti cavatinájában’ *Honderű*, 24 February 1844, 242-243.

⁹⁷ ‘Koronája e’ műnek az anyai keserv és kétségbeesés, ezen önmagát marcangoló fájdalom, ezen földet ‘s eget mozditó kin-tengerének zuhanya, a’ lélek és szív, szeretet és gyötrem, remény és rettegés e’ hajmeresztő viharzata, ezen szívzaggató és velőt rázó drámaiság.’ *Életképek*, 27 January, 1844, 197.

⁹⁸ ‘A’ gyászinduló becses darab a’ magyar zenészet e’ parlag nemében.’ *Életképek*, 27 January, 1844, 197.

⁹⁹ ‘Tekintve az előadást, az meglehetősen nehezen ment. Pecz ur a’ czimszerepet vivé, Schodelné Szilágyi Erzsébet’ képében énekelt; Udvarhelyi Garát adá, és nem tudá; Füredi’ szép hangjának talán magosan is járó énekkel kelle küzdeni. Az előadás olly valami erőtetett vala, mint a’ zene maga; Havi és Pecz egyformán rosszul, ügyetlenül forognak a’ színpadon; énekők, első olly gyöngye, ugy kell reá vigyázni, mérsékelni, hogy minden magosb cottánál csőtörtököt ne mondjon, Pecz uré pedig ollyan hang, mintha orrból énekeltenék, legalább semi esetre sem tiszta mellhang.’ *Regélő Pesti Divatlap*, 4 February 1844, 158. See also the review of the *Világ*: ‘hős ifjunak lelki helyzetét nem eléggé híven tükrözi.’ *Világ*, 31 January 1844, reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 202.

¹⁰⁰ Tallián, *Schodel*, *op. cit.*, 300.

¹⁰¹ ‘Részletekre térve, különösen kiemelendő a’ megnyitó férfikat, mellynek természetes jellemzetessége, s’ az első szakaszt bezáró kar, mellynek lelkesítő nemzeti lényege főérdeme.’ *Életképek*, 27 January, 1844, 197. Even the radicals

temple scene in Act II was also generally deemed effective.¹⁰² The ‘swan song’ (the *Entr’acte* of Act IV) was initially met with scepticism, thought it had been published earlier (prior to the opera’s premiere) with modest success.¹⁰³ During the revolution, however, it became part of the ‘revolutionary programme’. The *Életképek* viewed the piece as frivolous and unfit for the gravity of the hero in his moment of peril:

This piece of music paints the psychological state of the ill-fated [hero], the suspicion of the fate waiting for him; the grave, mournful speculation is replaced by the heroic, majestic and incorruptible courage which assures his ascendance to heaven. Only thus could László Hunyady [sic] die: through heroically determined force. Therefore, the end of this piece [the *hattyúdál*, ‘swan song’] is too cheerful, it is almost reminiscent of dance music.¹⁰⁴

As outlined in Chapter 3, anti-opera drama advocates condemned presenting Hungarian historical figures on the stage because it would denigrate their stature as national heroes. Imre Vahot even identified János Hunyadi in his outrage that a composer would ‘make him sing on the stage’ (see Chapter 3). The critic writing for the *Életképek*, though without rejecting presenting Hungarian historical heroes, nevertheless thought the title role should be depicted musically with the upmost solemnity, as in the stately funeral march.

The German-language press characteristically received *Hunyadi László* with more attention to composition than the Hungarian-language press, who focused on the dramatic and psychological depiction of Hungary’s historical heroes. The German papers nevertheless also generally agreed

acknowledged the effectiveness of the piece in reviewing a performance on 19 October: ‘Ismét nagy közönség előtt adatott, s a köztetszés kitörése az első felvonásnak legmagyarosabb szellemű befejezésekor még mindig a legmagasabb fokon áll. Lám, mit nem tesz a magyar elem és melódia’ (‘[The work] was once again given for a large audience, and the rapture of praise at the first act’s most Hungarian ending was still of the highest level. Well, see what the Hungarian element and melody can achieve’. *Pesti Divatlap*, 27 October 1844, 62.

¹⁰² ‘A’ templomi jelenet zenéje harangkiséréttel igen hatásos.’ *Életképek*, 27 January, 1844, 197.

¹⁰³ Erkel Ferencz [sic], *Hattyúdál a Hunyadiából* (Pest: Wagner József, 1843). See also Mona Ilona’s study cataloguing works and editions published in Hungary: *Magyar zeneműkiadók és tevékenységük, 1774-1867* (Budapest: MTA Zenetudomány intézet, 1989), 67; 72.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Csak Hunyady László hattyudalára van még egy észrevételem, melynek vége nem igen kielégítő. E’ zenedarab a’ szerencsétlennék lelki állapotját festi, azon sejtést, milly sorsnak menend eléje; a’ komoly-gyászos töprengést hősiek magasztaltság ‘s a’ megtörhetlen bátorság éhez szárnyalása váltja fel; csak így halhatott Hunyady László: hősieg elszántan, erőtudattal. ‘S így véve, eme darab vége kissé nagyon is vigszerű, mely szinte tánczra emlékeztet.’ *Életképek*, 27 January, 1844, 197-198.

that Erkel's work was original, 'genuinely national'.¹⁰⁵ *Der Spiegel* praises also the Act I *finale*, and the Act II church scene, though viewing the choral writing as 'too timid in approach to originality'.¹⁰⁶ Again, the *scena ultima* is praised amongst the work's highlights.¹⁰⁷ Interestingly *Der Spiegel* critic found a lack of melody, viewing the themes as mechanically applied, though praising the instrumentation.¹⁰⁸ *Der Ungar* viewed the Act I finale as beautiful,¹⁰⁹ but found the *scena ultima* 'poorly arranged', and claimed the wild enthusiasm of the audience for this number was due largely to the libretto: 'there is far too much overt romanticism that nothing is left over for the sensitive application of art.'¹¹⁰ *Der Spiegel* disagreed, finding the *scena ultima* 'shattering' (*erschütternde*).¹¹¹ The reviewer for the *Pesther Tageblatt* found the choirs well-crafted and solo arias effective, but the oath scene 'did not seem grandiose enough'¹¹² (Act II, No.11).

References to the psychological and 'heroic' depiction of the title-role and Erzsébet Szilágyi's grand aria in the final scene littering the Hungarian-language press are generally absent from the German papers. The effectiveness for the Hungarian papers was the dramatic impact, of effective implementation of Hungarian musical markers, political implications, and the depiction of the historical hero.

¹⁰⁵ 'Diese Hauptidee, durch frappante Episoden gehoben, diente dem ausgezeichneten Kompositeur als Folie zu einem originellen, echt nationalen Tongemälde, desgleichen die vaterländische Tonmuse noch keines produzierte' *Spiegel*, 31 January 1844, 71, reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 205.

¹⁰⁶ 'Mögen rigorose Kontrapunktisten das stereotype Applizieren eines Originalthemas in fast jedem Effektausdrucke nicht ganz adequate finden' *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ 'das erschütternde Finale des vierten Aktes, bildeten die Glanzpunkte und mehrere dieser Nummern mussten wiederholt werden.' *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ 'Der hie und da auffallende Mangel an Melodie wird vom gediegenen Saze, von der trefflichen Instrumentirung und von einem wohlthuenden, ans Herz gehenden elegischen Typus, welcher alle Nummern durchflutet, und von den meisterhaften Ensembles überdeckt.' *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ 'das sehr schöne Finale des ersten Aktes' *Ungar*, 29 January 1844, reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 206.

¹¹⁰ 'Es liegt viel zu viel blutige Neuromantik darin, dass etwas auch für den wohltheund sanften Eindruck der Kunst übrig bleiben sollte.' *ibid.*

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² 'Die Eidesleistung im 2. Akte dünkt uns nicht grandiose genug, und dürfte auch in dramatischer Beziehung nicht sehr rühmenswerth sein.' *Pesther Tageblatt*, 30 January 1844, reproduced in Barna, *op. cit.*, 207.

EREDETI ÚJ OPERA
Erkel F. javára.

PECZ UR

VENDÉG

NEMZETI

SZÍNHÁZ



Pest, Szombaton, Január 27-én, 1844



ERKEL FERENCZ javára.

ELŐSZÓR:

Hunyadi László.

Eredeti nagy opera 4 felv. Irta Egressy B. zenéjét a JUTALMAZANDÓ. Az új öltözetek Podhráczky F. főruhátárnok felügyelése alatt készültek.

Első szakasz **CILLEI HALÁLA.** Személyei:

V. László, király	— — — — —	Havi	Hunyadi László	testvérek	PECZ
Cillei Ulrich, kormányzó	— — — — —	Füredi	Hunyadi Mátyás	— — — — —	Eder Luiza.
			Rozgonyi, királyi hadnagy	— — — — —	Egressy Benj

Főurak, Király kísérete, Zsoldosok Nép. Történi: Nándoron, 1456.

Második szakasz **KIRALYI ESKÜ** Személyei:

V. László, magyar király	— — — — —	Havi	Eressbet, Hunyadi János özvegye	— — — — —	Schodelné
Gara, nádor,	— — — — —	Udvarhelyi M.	László fia	— — — — —	PECZ
Mária, leánya	— — — — —	Molnár Leopoldina	Egy hölgy	— — — — —	Eder Luiza.
				— — — — —	Hubenai Jánosné

Nemesek, Hölgyek, Kíséret. Történi: Tem svárt, 1456.

Harmadik szakasz **ÁRMÁNY** Személyei:

V. László magyar király	— — — — —	Havi	Hunyadi László	— — — — —	PECZ
Gara, nádor,	— — — — —	Udvarhelyi M.	Hunyadi Mátyás	— — — — —	Eder Luiza.
Mária, leánya	— — — — —	Molnár Leopoldina	Pásztor, Katonák, Történthely: Buda, 1457.	— — — — —	

Negyedik szakasz **VERPAD** Személyei:

Gara, nádor	— — — — —	Udvarhelyi M.	Eressbet, Hunyadi János özvegye	— — — — —	Schodelné.
Mária, leánya	— — — — —	Molnár Leopoldina	Hunyadi László, fia	— — — — —	PECZ

Kíséret, Nép, örök, Bakó, Történi: Budán.

PECZ ur a po soryi színháztól, mint vendég a czimszerepben lesz szerencsés föllépni.

A nagy érdemű közönség kegyeibe mély tisztelettel ajánlja magát **ERKEL FERENCZ.**
Kértemek a páholy és zártszékek bérletét, az országok, hogy bérlet helyek megtartása iránt reggeli 10 óráig rendelkezni méltóztatásnak — azonnali masoknak adtak ki. Szabad jegyek nem használhatók.

A színház jutva leend. Kezdete 7-ediél órákor, vége 9-után.

Ezen opera szövege kinyomtatva kapható Kolosy Gergely pénzeszedőnélegy p. huszasért

Lauz Konti K. rendező.

Kiadta Saigligeti, titkok

Playbill for the premiere of *Hunyadi László*.
Theatre History Collection, National Széchényi Library.

Operatic Models

Kornél Ábrányi, Erkel's first biographer and his friend and colleague at the Music Academy, propagated a myth surrounding the conception of *Hunyadi László*. According to Ábrányi, Erkel and his librettist Béni Egressy spontaneously met in Kígyó Street in Pest as the latter was taking the libretto of *Hunyadi László* to the director of the *Nemzeti Színház*, András Bartay. Erkel apparently seized the text and completed the work in a matter of months.¹¹³ Newspaper reports of Erkel's progress on a second opera on the László Hunyadi narrative from as early as October 1840 contradict this statement.¹¹⁴ The portion of the conception-myth which has proved more complex for musicologists, however, is Ábrányi's claim that Erkel sought to build upon his ideal of Hungarian opera in *Bátori Mária* by modelling a French Grand-style opera.¹¹⁵

It is likely that Halévy's *La Juive* exerted some influence on the structure and the pacing of the narrative, and also on the two tenor model for the title role and King Ladislaus V.¹¹⁶ Erkel studied *La Juive* in the summer of 1842 in preparation for the *Nemzeti Színház* première and was already familiar with the work since at least 1836 when it was staged during his employment at the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*. As Tibor Tallián notes, the four numbers with French titles in the autograph score correspond to scenes in *La Juive*: The *Air de Gara* (No.13) in Erkel's work and Eléazar's grand aria and air 'Rachel, quand du Seigneur' (Act IV, No.22); both conclude the central acts with grand finales including a *Morceau d'ensemble*: the temple scene marked *Andante religioso* in *Hunyadi László*, and 'Vous qui du Dieu vivant outragez la puissance' in Act III (No.18)

¹¹³ See Kornél Ábrányi, *Erkel Ferenc élete és működése (kulturtörténelmi korrajz)* (Budapest: Buschmann F. Könyvnyomdája, 1895), 31.

¹¹⁴ 'Szorgalmas Egressy Benjaminunk ismét egy új nemzeti opera textusán, mellynek czime „Hunyady László” dolgozik. (Zenéjét Erkel ur fogja készíteni.) Igen ohajtható volna, hogy Egr. ur szép tehetségeit ne csak ismeretes előmunkálatok utánzására fordítaná, hanem szorgalmasan forgatná a' magyar történetek évkönyveit, s azokból kevésbé ismert tárgyakat is szemelne-ki eredeti operáinak számára.' *Honművész*, 22 October 1840, 688.

¹¹⁵ See Ábrányi, *op. cit.*, 31.

¹¹⁶ See Tibor Tallián's discussion: Tibor Tallián, 'Erkel, Az operarendező. zenei mise en scène a Hunyadi Lászlóban' in Olga Somorjai (ed.) *„...De még szebb a színház” Írások Belitska-Scholtz Hedvig emlékére* (Budapest: Argumentum, 2010), 103-104.

of Halévy's work. Erkel marked László's 'swan song' 'entre act' [sic] in the autograph score,¹¹⁷ which corresponds with the opening to Act II of *La Juive* (No.8). A *marche funèbre* in both works precede the finale. In terms of other French Grand models, the tragedy unfolding around a hero whose life is threatened, heightened dramatically by two women, is a familiar scenario in works such as *Robert le diable* (Robert and Isabelle and Alice) and *Les Huguenots* (Raoul and Queen Marguerite and Valentine).¹¹⁸

The main argument against these models in Erkel's conception of *Hunyadi László* is that the drama unfolds almost exclusively in relation to the protagonists and their personal turmoil.¹¹⁹ Whereas a prime feature of French Grand Opera is the duel-narrative approach situating private drama amidst a backdrop of conflict between peoples,¹²⁰ in *Hunyadi László* the historical events largely focus on the private sphere: the thwarted engagement between László and Mária; the King's self-doubt and inner turmoil; the schemes of Cillei and subsequently Palatine Gara, and the psychological development of Erzsébet's character. The function of the chorus is initially similar to works such as *Les Huguenots*, in that it depicts tensions between communities, but later becomes largely an extension of the protagonists, musically and dramaturgically.

In this regard, *Hunyadi László* is closer to the Donizetti's historical operas which were frequently staged at the *Nemzeti Színház*. *Anna Bolena* (1830) was purchased (and chosen by Schodel as her benefit piece), but the staging did not come to fruition,¹²¹ and *Marino Faliero* (1835), first staged at the Hungarian-language theatre on 7 April 1840,¹²² are two likely models. Both title-roles are depicted sympathetically, as victims of oppressive circumstances (patriarchal and political, respectively) who are each betrayed simultaneously by their spouse and confidant.

¹¹⁷ Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Autograph score, Act III, National Széchényi Library, Music Collection, Call number Ms. Mus.4./3

¹¹⁸ Tallián, 'Erkel, Az operarendező', *op. cit.*, 103-104.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ For example, discussed Simon Williams, 'The Spectacle of the Past in Grand Opera' in David Charlton (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 70. This is particularly true for the works Ábrányi singled out as apparently models for Erkel's *Hunyadi László* (*La Muette de Portici*, *Guillaume Tell*, and *Les Huguenots*).

¹²¹ Tallián *Schodel*, *op. cit.*, 89; 469.

¹²² Németh, *op. cit.*, 30.

Their executions in the final moments of each opera are thereby construed as not only unjust, but as tragic: evoking the audience's sympathy through an emotional and psychological involvement with the protagonist.

On the level of individual numbers, in *Hunyadi László* several arias are conspicuously Italianate in structure and musical language. The opera opens with a two-part *cavatina* for the breeches role of Mátyás. László's meditative aria contemplating his fiancée in Act I (No.7) is a one-movement *andante* in D major, and largely characterised by the manner of oscillating arpeggiated accompaniment found in operatic depictions of arias recounting love. László and Mária's two-part duet in A major (*Allegro non tanto, allegro moderato (cabaletta)*, No.14) is modelled on love duets found in examples such as Bellini's *I Puritani* (Act I, scene iii) or Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Act I, scene ii) in which the voices generally imitate each others' phrases or sing in thirds, sixths or octaves. Erzsébet's extensive *sortita* is modelled on a Rossinian *la solita forma* (*andantino, molto allegro ed agitato, doppio meno* (as the *tempo di mezzo*), *allegro moderato (cabaletta)* (No.9). The King's reflective two-part aria (*andantino* (a minor), *cabaletta* (A major) (No.17) facilitated depicting both the troubled King but also his fearful and weak nature as he puts his hopes in Mária after one fleeting meeting, by way of comfort, instead of addressing the discord in his kingdom in the *cabaletta*. Gara's *air* (No.18) is a one-movement *allegro moderato*. Despite its title, it is a *pezzetti chiusi* in Bb major expressing joy in his successful manipulation of the King: depicting his character as a 2-dimensional villain without the psychological complexity akin to what Erkel attempts in representing the King. Gara's music is nevertheless littered with *bokázó* cadences (literally 'ankle-ing', supposedly from the tradition of 'ankle-clicking' in the recruiting dance tradition from which the *verbunkos* derives, but akin to the English word 'capering'), found commonly in contemporary *verbunkos* pieces, in which a rhythmic dotted figure melodically oscillates akin to a turn.¹²³ As Krisztina Lajosi discusses, referencing *verbunkos* traditions in

¹²³ See Shay Loya's definition in his *Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 16.

depicting Gara is a ‘double symbol’, in that it references both the character’s nationality and social class, and ‘his passionate desire to govern the country’.¹²⁴ This also heightens the distinction between the easily manipulated King’s weak, indistinct, musical personality which depends on the characters with whom he shares the stage, and the commandeering depiction of Gara who is patently ‘Hungarian’ and aristocratic.

The *scena ultima* makes use of several conventions: a storm, a funeral march, and a *preghiera*. The final section of Erzsébet’s aria, and the final scene of the opera, however deviates from a cabaletta, returning to the *agitato* in which her visions first unfolded in her Act II *sortita*. In this way, Erkel intensified the drama, denying the release or resolution a *cabaletta* fulfils.

Erzsébet’s lead role in the spectacle of the execution bears similarities with scenes such as the finale of Bellini’s *Il pirata* (1827) or Donizetti’s *Marino Faliero* (1835). However, unlike Imogene, who mentally cracks under the emotional strain of Gualtiero’s execution in *Il pirata*, or Elena, who confesses, screams and collapses as her husband faces the axe in *Marino Faliero*, Erzsébet commands the *scena ultima*. Structurally, she is assigned a formally clear aria, and dramaturgically, she demands her son’s release several times. Her visions in her Act II *sortita* unfold to reveal her prescient sense of apparent danger as opposed to Imogene’s fragility throughout the second act of *Il pirata*, where she emotionally unravels several times in the final scene (Act II, scene iii, further discussed below). Musical markers of madness in Erzsébet’s aria are contained in a manner which reveals her, rather, as a character able not only to withstand her nightmare unfolding before her with her sanity intact, but who indignantly attempts to derail the execution until the final blow of the axe: this, despite her panic.

The musical depiction of László’s character deviates from both the *sortitas* of *bel canto* heroes familiar on the stage of the *Nemzeti Színház* despite in some ways bending to the conventional meditative and love arias (No.7 and No.14, mentioned above), and the airs of

¹²⁴ Krisztina Lajosi, ‘Nineteenth-Century National Opera and Representations of the Past in the Public Sphere’ in Lotte Jensen, Joep Leerssen and Marita Mathijssen (eds.), *Free Access to the Past: Romanticism, Cultural Heritage and the Nation* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 243-244.

French Grand heroes. László is also the only character assigned a reoccurring motif, which further distinguishes him from the other protagonists in the opera. Simultaneously, strategic reoccurrence of material tied to the fate of the hero foreshadows the finale. Unlike Erkel's use of musical foreshadowing in *Bátori Mária*, in which the title-role is even characterised by her fears, in his second opera, Erkel used reoccurrence of funeral march material to 'foreshadow future developments in the narratives of their operas that no fictional agent could know.'¹²⁵

Tallián suggests that László's lack of a *sortita* proper is a response to the pro-drama radicals' outrage at the idea of Hungarian heroes singing arias.¹²⁶ However, it is possible that Erkel depicted László rather through stately as well as historical-revolutionary associations rather than through vocal conventions in order to differentiate him from his Italian or French-language counterparts, and further, to reflect contemporary understandings of heroism in reform-era Hungary. Erkel's depiction of László is understood in Erkel scholarship as a two-dimensional hero,¹²⁷ and his depiction of this role was received by pro-theatre critics as portrayed without the fitting gravity the historical figure should command (outlined above in relation to contemporary reception). However, I contend that this deviation from emotive display anticipated from the audiences' familiarities with contemporary operatic heroes rather epitomises László's exemplary historical conduct and strength of character in line with contemporary understandings of Hungarian heroism.

¹²⁵ Nina Penner, 'Opera Singing and Fictional Truth', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.71, No.1 (2013), 84.

¹²⁶ Tallián, 'Keletkezés', *op. cit.*, 240. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the artistic polemics surrounding representing Hungarian history on stage.

¹²⁷ See Tallián, 'Keletkezés', *op. cit.*, 256.

Historical Heroes and Revolution

To arms, if you are men! And women, dig a vast grave between Veszprém and Fejérvár, in which you will bury the Hungarian name, the Hungarian honour, the Hungarian nation – or our enemies.

Lajos Kossuth, 1848¹²⁸

Prior to organised political forms of nationalism in Hungary, two broad tropes emerged in literature and discourse in relation to historical heroes and defeat narratives, which Vermes terms ‘agony’ alongside ‘inflated self-esteem’.¹²⁹ Even prior to the *nyelvújítás*, sacrifice was a theme tied to the (universal) defence of Christendom in Hungarian literature.¹³⁰ By the reform period, historical chronicles ‘implied that transcending the dark periods had constituted heroic feats in their own right.’¹³¹ In revolutionary rhetoric in pre-1848 Hungary, however, the ‘great and heroic’ deeds of individual heroes become part of a popular understanding of the nation, in which Hungarian liberty relates to world freedom.

In the reform period the belief that communal fate of the Hungarians was tied up with the fate of mankind on a grander scale emerged in liberal-radical discourse. In Gerő’s words: ‘The cause of national freedom reached biblical proportions’.¹³² Historical epics, notably János Arany’s¹³³ *Toldi* of 1846,¹³⁴ encompass these understandings, evident already in Vörösmarty’s *Zalán futása* (1825, see Chapter 2), linking historical endurance to ‘universal significance – the struggle of peoples around the world against tyranny and despotism’.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, historical defeat and sacrifice emphasised the fundamental desire to challenge the structure facilitating

¹²⁸ ‘Fegyverre tehát, a ki férfiúl! Az asszonyok pedig Veszprém és Fejérvár között ássanak egy irtózatossírt, melybe vagy a magyar nevet, magyar becsületet, a magyar nemzetet — vagy ellenségeinket eltemessük.’ Lajos Kossuth, *Kossuth Hírlapja*, 19 September 1848, 313.

¹²⁹ Gábor Vermes, *Hungarian Culture and Politics in the Habsburg Monarchy 1711-1848* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), 170.

¹³⁰ This phenomenon is more fully outlined in Chapter 2.

¹³¹ Gerő, *op. cit.*, 124.

¹³² Gerő, *op. cit.*, 39.

¹³³ János Arany (1817-1882) was a widely-read poet in the nineteenth-century, particularly in the post-revolution decades. He is particularly known for his ballads.

¹³⁴ János Arany, *Toldi. Költői elbeszélés* (Budapest: Ráth Mór, 1846).

¹³⁵ János Arany, translated and introduced by Anton N. Nyerges, *Epics of the Hungarian Plain from János Arany* (Cleveland: Classical Printing, 1976), Introduction.

oppression, while simultaneously finding pride in withstanding subjugation as ‘captives’ in the reform period.

Approaching the 1848 revolution, these dimensions of historical interpretation also meant writers shifted how they represented historical heroes. The Schillerian interpretation of the tragic hero as a symbol of freedom and self-determination¹³⁶ which had been influential in literary circles in Hungary,¹³⁷ now had an alternative understanding as related to both the individual and wider society. The failures of the individual hero have societal implications: with his fall comes a communal threat.¹³⁸ Chapter 2 introduced tropes in historical interpretation in reform-era literature in which the trespasses of historical figures relate to contemporary stagnation, and the spectre of a future national apocalypse. In radical-revolutionary understandings, the fear of *nemzethalál* became justification for revolution, and further, became part of the discourse which glorified self-sacrifice for Hungary and for liberty. The concept that each individual’s actions embody a potential to harm society in these contexts became a dynamic in revolutionary discourse, in which fate lies in each individual’s conduct: a popular ideal of society.¹³⁹ Accordingly, in the 1840s, positive heroes feature in historical plays and novels less frequently than earlier in the reform period, ‘reflecting the crisis of the liberal interest unifying approach within the historical framework.’¹⁴⁰ In other words, appeals to popular mobilisation emerged against the tradition of glorifying the feats of specific historical heroes.

‘Young Hungary’s’ self-proclaimed inspiration from the French Revolution, in which Hungarian liberty from Vienna was linked to the freedom of mankind was transformed into Magyarized slogans, exemplified by Petőfi’s *Nemzeti dal*, ‘National song’. For the ‘radicals’, dying

¹³⁶ See Sabine Roehr, ‘Freedom and Autonomy in Schiller’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol.64, No.1 (2003) 119-134.

¹³⁷ Ferenc Kerényi, ‘Színháztörténet a polgári forradalomban és a szabadságharc idején’ in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színháztörténet 1. 1790-1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 254.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*

¹³⁹ ‘Ezeknél azonban fontosabb, hogy a reformkori Magyarországon az univerzum a társadalommal, a néppel együtt értett társadalommal volt azonos; innen is a magyar irodalom népiesség iránti vonzódása.’ Ferenc Kerényi, ‘Színháztörténet’, *op. cit.*, 255.

¹⁴⁰ Ferenc Kerényi, ‘A Pesti Magyar Színház építése és megszervezése’ in György Székely (ed.), *Magyar Színháztörténet 1. 1790-1873* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 301.

in the revolution even became desirable. The *Café Pilvax*, the chosen meeting place of Petőfi and the revolutionary ‘circle of ten’ was described by Albert Nyári in 1847 as ‘the temple of freedom, where inspired youth came to sacrifice to the god of freedom.’¹⁴¹ Sacrifice for the ‘religion’ of nationalism was a means to secure the legacy of the nation through posterity: literally dying for the nation’s survival, whilst at the same time securing symbolic immortality through an enduring legacy. The shift from chronicling the deeds of individual historical figures to such figures embodying a future in the hands of the populous, is exemplified by Petőfi’s words which signalled the 1848 revolution.

On 15 March 1848, Petőfi read his *Nemzeti dal* to the revolutionary crowd. This poem was prepared as a preface to his speech in which he declared the ‘12 demands’ outlining political reforms subsequently taken to Vienna and briefly instated as ‘the April laws’ (see Chapter 2).

On your feet now, Hungary calls you!
 Now is the moment, nothing stalls you,
 Shall we be slaves¹⁴² or men set free
 That is the question, answer me!
 By all the gods of Hungary
 We hereby swear
 That we the yoke of slavery
 No more shall wear.
 Magyars, once more our name and story
 Shall match our ancestor’s in glory
 The centuries of shame and hurt
 Can now be washed away like dirt.
 By all the gods of Hungary
 We hereby swear,
 That the yoke of slavery
 No more shall wear.
 And wheresoever we may perish
 Grandchildren those graves will cherish
 Singing our praises in their prayers
 To thank us that our names are theirs.
 By all the gods of Hungary
 We hereby swear,
 That we the yoke of slavery
 No more shall wear.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ László Demre, *The Radical Left in the Hungarian Revolution of 1848* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 15.

¹⁴² The word *rabok* is often translated in *Nemzeti dal* as ‘slaves’, however, it should be noted that a more faithful interpretation is akin to the English words ‘prisoners’ or ‘captives’.

¹⁴³ Talpra magyar, hí a hazal! Itt az idő, most vagy soha! Rabok legyünk vagy szabadok? Ez a kérdés, válasszatok! –/ A magyarok istenére/ Esküszünk, Esküszünk, hogy rabok tovább/ Nem leszünk! A magyar név megint szép lesz,/ Méltó régi nagy híréhez;/ Mit rákentek a századok,/ Lemossuk a gyalázatot! A magyarok istenére/ Esküszünk,/ Esküszünk, hogy rabok tovább/ Nem leszünk! Hol sírjaink domborulnak,/ Unokáink leborulnak,/ És áldó imádság

The cantor-like repetitions of 'A magyarok istenére, /Esküszünk, /Esküszünk, /hogy rabok tovább Nem leszünk!' ('By all the gods of Hungary, /We hereby swear/ That we the yoke of slavery, /No more shall wear!') depicts fate as a collective, using verbs conjugated as plural pronouns: *esküszünk*, 'we swear'; *nem leszünk*, 'we will not be'. The phenomena of 'integrating the self into the collective narrative', employed by pre-revolution French intellectuals and reverberating throughout East-Central Europe was, as Svetlana Slapšak puts it, 'a quick and clever way of convincing the public of the existence of a community'.¹⁴⁵ In *Nemzeti dal*, the phrases 'And wheresoever we may perish, Grandchildren those graves will cherish, Singing our praises in their prayers, To thank us that our names are theirs', of the final stanza potently relates revolution to sacrifice of individuals for the collective. The revolutionary martyrs would apparently live eternally in the continuation of the 'nation-religion'.¹⁴⁶

Erkel's *Hunyadi László*, despite a narrative centred on the tragic demise of one man, the curious deviations from operatic models on the one hand, and the use of specific musical markers on the other, links the title role to the revolutionary deeds of the past: a trans-historical depiction of defeat in which the hero's 'exemplary conduct' is instructive to the collective. The

mellett/ Mondják el szent neveinket./ A magyarok istenére/ Esküszünk,/ Esküszünk, hogy rabok tovább/ Nem leszünk!

¹⁴⁴ Sándor Petőfi, *Petőfi Sándor összes költeményei* 1-2 (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1959). Here I use the decidedly literal translation by George Szirtes, as opposed to the various artistic versions, in an effort to more clearly represent the themes of this work, accessed 3 October, 2017 via < <https://hungarytoday.hu/march-15th-sandor-petofis-nemzeti-dal-national-song-hungarys-famous-poem-62245/> > Erkel and several of his contemporaries set this poem to music, see Ilona Mona, *Magyar zeneműkiadók és tevékenységük, 1774-1867* (Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi intézet, 1989), 76, 116, 314, 322, 357, 363.

¹⁴⁵ Svetlana Slapšak, 'The Cultural Legacy of Empires in Europe' in Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (eds.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries* Volume I (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2004), 309. See also Dávidházi's study which examines the use of plurality in Ferenc Toldy's study of literary history: Péter Dávidházi, 'Kétségben apokalipszis és feltámadás között (A nemzethalál vörösmartys látomása Toldy irodalomtörténetében)', *Alföld*, Vol.53, No.1 (2002), 43.

¹⁴⁶ Petőfi's untimely death fighting amongst the revolutionary army propelled his status to that of a national martyr, reaching cult status in the following decades. In the pre-revolution context many radicals hailed Petőfi as 'saviour of the people'. The mythology and martyrology which surrounded his death took on new roles in the post-revolution climate. Alice Freifeld, *Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary, 1848-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 310.

chorus in the first act reinforces revolutionary musical markers. The final spectacle of László's execution, depicted rather as a crucifixion, further linked heroes from the past to contemporary revolutionary rhetoric through an unbending adherence to freedom and death rather than escaping and living as a captive. His entrances are marked by a flugal horn call associated with the *Rákóczi induló*, a stately procession-like instrumental introduction instead of a *sortita*; an *entr'acte* musically recounting his life, and a funeral march before his execution. In this way, László is connected to revolutionary heroes who followed his exemplary conduct after him, linking a specific historical hero to Hungarian heroism and to the deeds of Hungary as a historical nation.

As Ferenc Bónis has demonstrated, the motif Erkel associates with László (see Example 1, bars 1-2 and 10-11, flicorni) is evocative of the *Rákóczi induló*,¹⁴⁷ a piece performed frequently during the 1848 revolution. The *Rákóczi induló* is most strongly associated with the early eighteenth-century anti-Habsburg uprising led by Prince Ferenc Rákóczi II (1676-1735), who led an ultimately unsuccessful peasant revolt lasting between 1703-1711 against the Habsburgs (opposing first Leopold, and subsequently Joseph I who took the throne in 1705).¹⁴⁸ This is further emphasised by the frequent use of piccolo trumpet to announce László through the chromatic triplet motif, mimicking a *tárogató*, or 'Turkish pipe', an archaic reed instrument historically linked with the Siege of Vienna of 1529 (when the Ottoman army reached furthest into Europe). The *tárogató* has a distinct 'garish' sound, which made it suitable for military encampments. It became known as 'Rákóczi's instrument'.¹⁴⁹ Assigning this motif largely to brass

¹⁴⁷ See Bónis's analysis in Ferenc Bónis, 'Történelmi jelképek a magyar zenében a nemzeti romantika korától – Kodályig' in Ferenc Bónis (ed.), *Kodály emlékkönyv*, Magyar zenetörténeti tanulmányok (Budapest: Püski, 1997) 13. The Rákóczi induló became famous in Europe when Berlioz used it in part I of his *La damnation de Faust* (1846) to depict a passing troupe of Hungarian cavalry.

¹⁴⁸ See Paula Sutter Fichtner, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1490-1848: Attributes of Empire* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 54-55.

¹⁴⁹ See László Marosi, 'A History of Hungarian Military Music from 1741-1945' (DPhil Dissertation, Florida State University, 2002), 27. Much information about the origins and history of the *Tárogató* remains unknown. In the second half of the nineteenth century, an instrument maker Vencel József Schunda created what is now known as the 'modern' version of the instrument. *Tárogató* exhibition, Museum of Music History in the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest.

instruments and evoking the revolutionary, anti-Habsburg *Rákóczi* theme creates a distinct ‘Hungarianised fanfare’ to emphasise both László’s historical significance, and the pride in identifying the contemporary community with heroes from history.

Example 1, Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act I, No.3, scene ii, Bars 1-11.

Allegro non tanto

Cl (Sib)

Fg

Cor (Mib)

Flicorno (Do)

1.

3

3

VI I

pizz.

arco

tr

VI II

pizz.

arco

Vle

pizz.

arco

Vlc

pizz.

arco

Cb

pizz.

arco

Cl (Sib)

Fg

Cor (Mib)

Flicorno (Do)

VI I

VI II

Vle

Vlc

Cb

László's orchestral introduction is hence an amalgam of a 'Hungarianized' fanfare that is both stately and comprised of musical symbols evoking shared history and rebellion against oppressors. This is further illuminated when compared with the King's orchestral introductions.

The King's arrivals are unsurprisingly announced by marches. However, these entrances utilise *verbunkos* elements. As Krisztina Lajosi suggests, this stylistic turn:

might be interpreted as a symbolic musical representation of the king's hypocrisy. He seems to be in tune with the Hungarians when he promises not to revenge Czillei's death, but he never takes his oath seriously.¹⁵⁰

The stylised use of *verbunkos* marches for the King by contrast to the specific historical-revolutionary association assigned to László upon his entrances on the stage might further be read as pitting a generic oppressor with a weak sense of self (evidenced by the manner in which his advisors manipulate him) against a distinctive hero with a strong musical—Hungarian—identity. Further, László's introductory music, in place of a *sortita*, is stately: slow, in g minor, and with fanfare-like use of brass. By contrast with the King's jovial musical announcements in E major, László is distinguished by a regal depiction against the obligatory musical announcement of the insincere King.

The other underlying musical manner through which Erkel depicts revolutionary rhetoric is by characterising the Hunyadi men's chorus with storm material. As Gossett notes, despite the more substantial and dramatically impactful role of the chorus in the nineteenth century, it is still frequently the protagonists on whom the tragedy centres and through whom it unfolds.¹⁵¹ This is true not only in works which employ the chorus as 'picturesque' backdrops familiar from *opéras comiques*,¹⁵² but also in politically charged works which involve choruses of warring peoples, such as Rossini's *La donna del lago* (1819) and *Guillaume Tell* (1829), Bellini's *Norma* (1831), Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* (1836), and Verdi's *Nabucco* (1842). These developments, nonetheless, mean the chorus became involved in the narrative. As Parakilas puts it, 'they intrude into the music in places where choruses scarcely intruded before.'¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Krisztina Lajosi, 'Opera', *op. cit.*, 184.

¹⁵¹ Philip Gossett, 'Becoming a Citizen: The Chorus in "Risorgimento" Opera', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol.2, No.1 (1990), 53.

¹⁵² James Parakilas, 'Political Representation and the Chorus in Nineteenth-Century Opera', *19th-Century Music*, Vol.16, No.2 (1992), 188.

¹⁵³ Parakilas, *op. cit.*, 195.

Erkel's use of the chorus in *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László* relates to these broad shifts. In his first opera, the chorus aid in setting the scenes: the opening chorus establishes the prosperity of the Hungarian people as tied to István's military success; they joyfully celebrate Mária and István's wedding (which throws Mária's contrasting anxiety into sharp relief); the women's chorus establish Mária's *romanza* and the men's hunting chorus depicts the blissfully ignorant backdrop prior to István's visions. The instances where the chorus function as part of the action itself is the oscillation between the hunter's chorus and István's visions, and the musical intrusion of the hunting chorus which dramatically frames Mária's death. In these instances, however, the chorus still represents an extension of the protagonists: namely, they represent the hero's hubris rather than any political or dramaturgical personality of their own.

In *Hunyadi László*, the chorus similarly aid in the depiction of events or moods otherwise governed by the protagonists: the women's chorus opening Act II preparing Erzsébet's *sortita*; expressing joy in the *morceau d'ensemble* (the King's oath scene closing Act II); the celebratory wedding chorus in the Act III finale expressing joy at László and Mária's imminent union; and subsequently horror at László's arrest (No.19); and finally they play a marginal role in the *scena ultima* vocally (though contributing visually to the scene's spectacle), asking for mercy, subsequently singing 'Alas, Good God!' at the final strike of the axe.

In Act I, however, the men's chorus express a measure of independence, representing the Hungarians' interests and devotion to the Hunyadi family in the opening scene, and creating contrast between the King's (foreign) mercenaries as opposed to the respect and loyalty motivating the Hunyadi men's defence of the young László (Act I, No.5). Not only do the Hunyadi men physically partake in the plot, in killing Cillei, but they also musically anticipate rebellious action against corrupt power. Following the revelation that Cillei has been made Palatine, and subsequently learning of his plot to assassinate the Hunyadi sons, the chorus becomes dramaturgically commanding through a musical tempest. They become what Parakilas

calls a ‘sounding image of solidarity between the individual who stands for a group and the group that stands with the individual.’¹⁵⁴

Storms in opera prior to *Hunyadi László* are usually intertwined with some form of ‘divine wrath’, preparing for a *deus ex machina*.¹⁵⁵ Programmatic orchestral works such as Haydn’s *Seasons* (1800) and Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ Symphony (1808) and the ‘cult of nature’ in early romanticism also connect musical tempest themes with divine power. As Richard Will puts it: ‘storms provide the means for God not only to water the earth and rid the air of vapours but also to frighten sinners.’¹⁵⁶ In Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell* a storm is also a cleansing element, from which the protagonist emerges victorious against the Austrian oppressor (Gesler). Despite the diverging dramaturgical functions, Erkel’s storm material betrays influence from Rossini’s orchestral storm sequence in its chromaticisms, scalar flurries in the strings, percussive tremolo, and sustained brass.¹⁵⁷ In *Hunyadi László*, prior to the execution scene (where the storm features prominently both textually and musically), the Act I men’s chorus channel revolutionary impulses through tempest material. Dramaturgically, the storm in the execution scene in *Hunyadi László* is more aligned with tragic works such as the finale of Bellini’s *Il pirata*, where the storm functions primarily as a reflection of inner turmoil as Imogene mourns and hallucinates visions of her dead husband. Though in the *scena ultima* of *Hunyadi László* there are significant similarities with the *Il pirata* (this was probably a model, further discussed below), the use of storm in the opening act deviates from the dramaturgical function of such influences. The storm opening *Il pirata* establishes both the setting of the Sicilian shores and the emotional turmoil of Gualtiero. In Verdi’s *Nabucco* a storm aids in depicting both the biblical narrative and the military invasion which opens the opera, and later, divine wrath (Nabucco’s ‘Non son più re, son dio’, Act II,

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Prominent examples include such as in the examples of Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779), Mozart’s *Idomeneo* (1780), and Spontini’s *La Vestale* (1805). More recent examples are further discussed below.

¹⁵⁶ Richard Will, ‘Time, Morality, and Humanity in Beethoven’s “Pastoral Symphony”’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol.50, No.2 (1997), 271-329.

¹⁵⁷ Gioachino Rossini, *Guillaume Tell*, Act IV, scene ii, No.21. See also the detailed analysis of Rossini’s orchestration in *Guillaume Tell* in William Edward Runyan, ‘Orchestration in Five French Grand Operas’ (DPhil Dissertation, The University of Rochester, 1983), 85-159.

scene ii). However, the function is transformed in the hands of the Hunyadi men—the representatives of the Hungarians—depicting judgement as in the hands of ‘the people’. What Rodney Stenning Edgecombe terms the ‘storm-of-judgement motif’¹⁵⁸ becomes the ‘chorus-of-judgement’, when they serve civilian justice in murdering Cillei. Utilising an operatic idiom found across repertoires also aids in linking revolutionary rhetoric to universal significance in the manner of how storms were used to depict divine wrath generally.

The tempest material is first introduced in the response from the Hunyadi men to László’s announcement that Cillei has been made palatine to the King (Example 2).

¹⁵⁸ Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, ‘Conventions of Prayer in Some 19th-Century Operas’, *The Musical Times*, Vol.146, No.1893 (2005), 49.

Chorus: Impossible! We cannot bear such thought! Cillei was sent upon us as God's worst punishment, governor he is not for any one of us, this murderer of all things good, nurturing sin in his bosom, whose dark soul had been possessed by the devil before he was born. Noble redeemer of our nation, our dear father Hunyadi, how often he was exposed to the treachery of this rogue.¹⁵⁹

Allegro ferocio in tempo

Picc *ff*

Fl *ff*

Ob *ff*

Cl (Sib) *ff*

Fg *ff*

Cor (Do) *ff*

Cor (Fa) *ff*

Tr (Do) *ff*

Trb *ff*

Tb *ff*

Timp *ff*

T *ff*

Coro *ff*

B *ff*

VI I *ff*

VI II *ff*

Vlc *ff*

Vlc *ff*

Cb *ff*

el. I: Cil-le-it, kit os - to-rul kül-dött re - ánk az ég u - ra, hely-tar-tó-nak nem os - me-ri kö-zülünk e - gyik is so - ha ki min-den jó-nak

el. II: Cil-le-it, kit os - to-rul kül-dött re - ánk az ég u - ra, hely-tar-tó-nak nem os - me-ri kö-zülünk e - gyik is so - ha ki min-den jó-nak

¹⁵⁹ Kórus: E Cilleit, kit ostorul küldött reánk az ég ura, helytartónak nem ösmeri közülünk egyik is soha, ki minden jónak gyilkosa, bűn fészkel undok kebliben, kinek lelkét az ördögök már bírták anyja méhében. Honunk megváltó bajnoka, atyánk, az érdemes Hunyad, hány ízben volt kitétetett ez undok rút ármányinak. Szólj, még mi hír?

The wave-like rise and fall of the choral lines (enforced by lower woodwind), and the ascending flurries in the strings partially erupt when the chorus express their injustice. These effects re-ignite more fully in the chromatic ‘swells’ in strings which give way to the woodwind oscillations as the scene unfolds, now intertwined with fragments of the *Rákóczi*-László motif (see Example 3, bars 93 and 94, upper woodwind). The chorus unites as a gathering force, expressing indignation musically depicted in the form of an erupting tempest.

Example 3, Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act I, scene ix, No.8, Bars 88-99.

Chorus: A thousand deaths and curses upon Cillei! We won't bear him for even a moment where here we have sacrificed! No mercy! To hell with him! He was demanding blood: now let him drown in it!¹⁶⁰

Allegro feroce

Flauto piccolo
ff

Flauto 1, 2
ff

Oboe 1, 2
ff

Clarinetto 1, 2 in Si b
ff

Fagotto 1, 2
ff

Corno (Do)
ff

Corno (Fa)
ff

Tromba 1, 2 in Do
ff

Tromba 3, 4 in Do
ff

Trombone 1, 2, 3
ff

Tuba
ff

Timpani
ff

Allegro feroce

Coro

T
El - tür - jük - é, el tür - jük - é, hogy egy - pil-la-na - tig búz - hit - se vész - tel - jes le - he - le - te ez ál - do - zat - vér - rel szen - telt he - lyet? Nincs ir - ga - lom! Po - kol - ra most ve -

B
El - tür - jük - é, el tür - jük - é, hogy egy - pil-la-na - tig búz - hit - se vész - tel - jes le - he - le - te ez ál - do - zat - vér - rel szen - telt he - lyet? Nincs ir - ga - lom! Po - kol - ra most ve -

Violini I
ff

Violini II
ff

Viola
pp

Violoncelli
pp

Contrabbassi
ff

¹⁶⁰ Kórus: Eltűnjük-é, hogy egy pillanatig bűzhítse véstelmes lehelete ez áldozatvérrel szentelt helyet? Nincs irgalom! Pokolra most vele! Vért szomjazott, tehát ő füljön bele!

Flauto 1, 2

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinetto 1, 2 in Si b

Fagotto 1, 2

Corno (Do)

Corno (Fa)

Tromba 1, 2 in Do

Tromba 3, 4 in Do

Tuba

Timpani

T

Violinni I

Violinni II

Viole

Violoncelli

Contrabassi

le! Vért szom-ja zott, te -hát ő fül - jon be - le!

B

le! Vért szom-ja zott, te -hát ő fül - jon be - le!

The use of the chorus in Act I musically ties the fate of the hero to the Hungarians. As Parakilas has argued, roles of the chorus representing a people can encompass ‘a political destiny

of its own, not just a stake in the destiny of the ruler'.¹⁶¹ The unlawful execution of László represents a broader injustice of corrupt, manipulated foreign power and internal (aristocratic) intrigue relating to Hungary historically and contemporaneously. In *Hunyadi László* a trans-historical depiction of rebellious protest against corrupt power is tied musically to an operatic device associated with divinity. Justifying revolutionary activity in the 1840s however, necessitated depicting Hungary as historical victim.

Victimhood

Victimhood based on historical defeat and contemporary subjugation in the Empire arguably developed into the primary trend in artistic expressions of suffering following the failed revolution and the enforced restrictions on civil liberties that ensued. This was evoked in works by artists such as Bálint Kiss¹⁶² as well as in Erkel's 1861 opera *Bánk Bán*.¹⁶³ The comparison of Hungarians in Habsburg Hungary to 'captives' (*rabok*) in *Nemzeti dal* proved powerful revolutionary propaganda, and prevailed post-revolution. Novelist and literary critic Pál Gyulai, writing on renewed censorship enforcement (briefly abolished following the initial success of the revolution), even declared 'the nation suffers proudly in her chains. She does not crawl in the dust'.¹⁶⁴ In the reform period the theme of *rabok* functioned as a metaphor through which to justify opposition to the Empire, and to emphasise victimhood. The preoccupation with victimhood underlying *Hunyadi László* and other artistic endeavours prior to 1848 were

¹⁶¹ James Parakilas, 'Political Representation and the Chorus in Nineteenth-Century Opera', *19th-Century Music*, Vol.16, No.2 (1992), 189.

¹⁶² (1802-1868). Kiss's work became popular prior to the revolution, in particular his *Jablonezai Pethes János búcsúja leányától*, 'János Jablonczai Pethes's Farewell to his Daughter' of 1846. Held in the Hungarian National Gallery, see <<https://mng.hu/collection?kereses=Kiss>>. He was dismissed from curating following his revolutionary activity, but continued to create scenes from national history.

¹⁶³ See Alice Friefeld's work examining the legacy of defeat of the Hungarian revolution of 1848-9, analysing the seemingly paradoxical phenomenon of the continuing celebration of this defeat in twentieth-century Hungarian culture. Alice Friefeld, 'The Cult of March 15: Sustaining the Hungarian Myth of the Revolution 1848-1999' in Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield (eds.), *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2001), 255-285, and Chapter 6 which discusses *Bánk bán* in these contexts.

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Peter I. Hidas, *The Metamorphosis of a Social Class in Hungary during the Reign of Young Franz Joseph* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 27.

nevertheless presented as part of a package which acknowledged the potential for creating a community without such suffering, whereas in the aftermath victimhood equated with despair.

The dramatic opening scenes in Act I, *Cillei halála* 'The Death of Cillei', result in a subsequent loss of momentum in the following two acts, but critics generally deemed this necessary in securing the audience's sympathy toward the title-role.¹⁶⁵ This also allowed Erkel musically to suggest the spectre of his tragic fate from the opening in using material from the final *marche funèbre* in the death of Cillei, linking the opening—though justified—trespass with the hero's tragic fate. The sombre instrumental introduction characterising the title role also foreshadows the procession of the funeral march, functioning as both a forewarning and connecting the hero to prestige: a figure commanding commemorative respect. Further, the reoccurring *Rákóczi*-like fanfare announcing László's entrances is also often combined with the funeral march allusions (see Examples 4, 5 and 6) in which this motif appears in an inverted version in upper woodwind and precedes, or is preceded by, the funeral march material.

Erkel first utilises the march material when Rozgonyi, the messenger charged with delivering a message from Đurađ Branković to Ulrik Cillei, instead warns László of their plot to assassinate the Hunyadi sons. The chorus sing *Ó, ég! Rettentő!*, 'Heavens! It is horrendous!' under material from the *marche funèbre* (see Example 4), and a temporary shift to the march key (eb minor).

¹⁶⁵ See Tallián in Gupcsó (ed.), *op. cit.*, 229.

Example 4, Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act I, scene ix, No.8, Bars 79-80

(**László:** My friends! Listen and abhor! Cillei persuaded the king to order that my family and all my friends are wiped out from the face of the Earth. We are invited to the king tonight, where we are to be slain in the midst of a joyous feast, raising a cup to cheer.)

Chorus: 'Heavens! It is horrendous!'¹⁶⁶

The musical score is for a full orchestra and voices. The instruments shown are Flute (Fl), Clarinet (Cl), Trumpet (Trb), Trombone (Tb), Tenor (T), Bass (B), Violin I (Vl I), Violin II (Vl II), Viola (Vle), Violoncello (Vlc), and Contrabass (Cb). The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The music features a dramatic orchestral introduction with woodwinds and strings playing a somber melody. The vocal parts enter with the lyrics 'Ó, ég! ret - ten - tő!'.

¹⁶⁶ László: Barátim! halljátok és szörnyedjete! Cillei rábírta a királyt, hogy családom és minden barátai a föld színéről eltöröltessenek. Meg leszünk híva ma este a királyhoz, hol zajgó öröm között, csillogó pohárt ürítve fogunk kardélre hányatni. Kórus: Ó, ég! Rettentő!,

Following this revelation, Cillei enters, inviting László to a royal celebration in honour of the Hunyadi defence of Nándorfehérvár. László replies with ‘Festivities you say? A funeral rather! Where dogs will growl and chew at our bones’ accompanied again by material from the later funeral procession (see Example 5).

Example 5, Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act I, No.8, scene x, Bars 126-133.

László: Is that so? Festivities you say? A funeral it is, Cillei! A burial, where dogs will growl and chew our bones. I will not go.¹⁶⁷

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system includes parts for Trb (Trumpet B), Tb (Trumpet B), and László. The Trb and Tb parts are in 13/4 time and feature a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic. The László part is in 4/4 time and includes the following lyrics: pély - re? te - met - ség - re hísz, Cil - le - i, te - met - ség - re, hol

The second system continues the Trb and Tb parts, which are in 13/4 time. The László part continues with the following lyrics: e - bek fog - ják mo - rog - ni csont - ja - ink fö - lött a - ha - lot - ti

¹⁶⁷ László: Úgy! ünnepélyre? Temetségre hísz, Cillei, temetségre, hol ebek fogják morogni csontjaink fölött a halotti dalt. Én nem megyek.

Picc
 Fl
 Cl (sib)
 Trb
 Tb
 László

8
 dált.

Én nem me - gyek.

This material again functions as word painting when the Hunyadi men kill Cillei in defence of their lord (see Example 6), now with a timpani roll which will also announce his execution in the *scena ultima*.

Example 6, Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act I, No.8, scene XII, Bars 206-208.

Chorus: We killed Cillei!¹⁶⁸

Picc

Fl

Ob

Cl (Sib)

Cor (Do)

Cor (Fa)

Trb

Tb

Timp

KIRÁLY

T

Coro

B

pp

pp

pp

pp

pp

tr

pp

vér!

Meg - öl - tük Cil - le - it!

Meg - öl - tük Cil - le - it!

Beyond wordpainting ('a funeral it is, Cillei!'), such moments are disruptive devices, anticipating the tragedy of the fourth act. The continuing occurrence of these references creates emphasis on the looming calamity as a determined fate, and the hero as a victim of historical intrigue.

¹⁶⁸ Kórus: Megöltük Cilleit!

Aside from the procession-like introduction in place of a *sortita*, the *battyúdal entr'acte* is the other unorthodox medium through which Erkel depicts the title-role. Stephen Meyer, in his study of prison scenes in rescue operas—where incarceration is always resolved happily with a reunion—notes that the prison was where ‘the hero or heroine’s deepest fears and desires were most fully explored.’¹⁶⁹ László’s incarceration shares some features of rescue opera prison scenes in that it functions as an orchestral introduction opening an act, begins in a minor key (a), and is narratively essentially a result of a lustful, oppressive force separating a couple from (re)union (Ladislaus V and Gara, respectively).¹⁷⁰ László’s prison aria conforms to earlier models in his contemplation alluding to the terror of confinement (‘I am confined among horrid walls!’). Erkel utilises some musical references to the lament tradition: *verbunkos lassú* features such as *bokázó* figures.¹⁷¹ However, the lack of plot resolution in *Hunyadi László*, and a lack of the kinds of musical markers of ‘terror’ common in these scenes¹⁷² depicts the defining trait of László: remaining steadfast in his courage. His faith in the King’s justice, his unbreakable valour (‘I bear with restraint the fear of death’) and his pity for Mária (as opposed to the ‘nostalgia or longing’: ‘Oh Mária, my beautiful bride! Your heart is breaking under the immense pain!’)¹⁷³ deviate from the two-mood model of rescue opera prison arias.

The orchestral introduction accordingly does not evoke musical markers of terror, but rather recounts his life through musical means. Rather than introducing the terror of the prison, Erkel uses the *entr'acte* to fashion a musical chronicle of the title-role’s life. The orchestra ‘re-lives’ through a musical mosaic of the themes accompanying these memories as they previously occurred. Example 7 below outlines the use of previous material in the *entr'acte*:

¹⁶⁹ Stephen Meyer, ‘Terror and Transcendence in the Operatic Prison, 1790-1815’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol.55, No.3 (2002), 478-479.

¹⁷⁰ Meyer, *op. cit.*, 485-493.

¹⁷¹ The lament and *verbunkos lassú* are connected in Hungarian traditions, discussed in relation to István’s *sortita* in *Bátori Mária* (see Chapter 4). *Bokázó* figures are briefly defined in reference to Gara’s *air*.

¹⁷² ‘the prison soundscape ... features more widely disseminated musical indicators of terror, such as diminished chords, tremolando, dotted rhythms, and sudden shifts in texture and dynamics. ... The sense of darkness and depth ... is often conveyed by chromatically descending bass lines, and composers frequently employ echo effects and grand pauses in order to depict the vast empty spaces of the prison. Meyer, *op. cit.*, 493.

¹⁷³ Ó, Máriám! szép menyasszonyom! Eltépi szűd a nagy fájdalom!

Example 7: Structure and themes in *Hunyadi László*, Act III, No.20, scene i

Bars 1-8	<i>Andante sostenuto</i>	A minor
Bars 9-41	(repeat of opening in major mode)	D major, G major
Bars 42-92	<i>Rákóczi</i> theme (<i>Allegro; tristamente e ritenuto; a tempo</i>)	D major, B major, d minor
Bars 92-117	<i>püi mosso</i> , Love duet No.14 László and Mária	A major

Erkel does not assign László a formal extended aria, confining his aria to a single section *andantino*. The anticipated musical shift occurs rather with the physical appearance of Mária. In earlier models of prison arias, the prisoners lament their incarceration and their hope of freedom is often their solace. László, conversely, is offered freedom when Mária urges him to flee with him, but refuses on moral grounds. Sinners escape, he contends, and he would prefer to face death rather than compromise ('A sinner escapes his prison, but my heart has nothing to hide, and I face the law with the greatest of calm').¹⁷⁴ The relationships between law, justice, unlawful imprisonment, and steadfast belief in righteousness—even to the point of sacrificing oneself—culminate in this scene. This manner of opposing injustice and oppression through personal sacrifice also betrays the legacy of German historical plays championed by the liberals and radicals in Hungary (for example, Goethe's *Egmont*, see Chapter 1). Prison aria models facilitated the Egressy-Erkel representation of the title-role as heroically courageous and unbending in his belief in the King which is simultaneously his *hubris* and exemplary historical conduct. The divergence from preceeding examples exhibits a hero who does not need to find solace in love nor hope: his consolation derives from his resoluteness.

The musical divergencies from the rescue opera prison aria are also reflected narratively. Imprisonment in rescue operas is 'variably a grim passage to a better future, in which the tensions between the prisoner and the external world are reconciled or overcome'.¹⁷⁵ László's unjust incarceration is not overcome in *Hunyadi László*. The tragic fate awaiting him: the struggle between the 'external world' and individual stife remain in tension. This reflects the recent reform-era

¹⁷⁴ László: az bűnös, ki börtönéből szökve távozik: szívem tiszta, nyugton megyek a törvények elébe. Act III, No.20, scene ii.

¹⁷⁵ Meyer, *op. cit.*, 479.

literary representations of historical heroes tied to the people at large. László's fate, in the context of revolutionary rhetoric, is tied to the people's freedom.

Despite initial reservations regarding László's *hattyúdál*, this piece ultimately proved engaging in the revolution. When Erkel conducted László's 'swan song' upon the news of the Vienna uprising in March 1848 (following Metternich's resignation on 13 March), audience members heckled 'this is the swan song of the censors!'¹⁷⁶

Sacrifice

If Rome and Athens had failed to produce martyrs willing to die for a more glorious future, they [Rome and Athens] would not be tombs of tyrants, nor the altars of freedom of the people. ... Our souls are uniting in the light of a better world and smile at the free home, for which my death has broken its chains.

Lőrinc Tóth, *Hunyadi László*.¹⁷⁷

Defeat narratives are a feature of modern national identities.¹⁷⁸ A community's survival despite historical defeat implies the strength of an identity that sustained itself amidst existential threats. Simultaneously, the exemplary conduct of historical figures can function as inspirational models during periods of stagnation: states which apparently stem from forgetting the 'old virtues' that these figures embody.¹⁷⁹ As outlined in Chapter 2, in the context of early nineteenth-century Hungary, heroes from past golden ages can inspire the present community to revive the 'lost virtues'. Examples range from the virgin redeemer in the figure of Joan of Arc, to the military hero in Taras Bulba found in Russian and Ukrainian nationalisms.¹⁸⁰ Sacrifice is a *leitmotif*

¹⁷⁶ 'Az Erkel Ferencz által vezérelt zenekar Hunyadi László Hattyudalát is eljátszá, - s ekkor többen kiáltozák: "Ez most a censorok hattyudala!"' *Pesti Divatlap*, 19th March 1848, 361-362.

¹⁷⁷ Ha Róma s Áthán nem lát vértanúkat, kik halni készek egy dicsőbb jövőért, nem lesz tyramok sírja, s népszabadság oltára. ... Lelkeink egy jobb világ sugárin egyesülnek s mosolygva néznek a szabad hazára, mellynek halálom törte lánczait. László Hunyadi to Cilley Ulrik, Lőrinc Tóth, *Hunyadi László. Történeti drama* (Pest: Eggenberger József és fia, 1846), Act III, Scene ii, 162. English translation my own.

¹⁷⁸ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10.

¹⁷⁹ Smith, *Myths*, *op. cit.*, 67.

¹⁸⁰ See for example, Susan Dunn, 'Michelet and Lamartine: Making and Unmaking the Nationalist Myth of Jeanne d'Arc', *Romantic Review*, Vol.80, No.3 (1989), 404-418, and Edyta M. Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 257-259.

in these contexts, and such narratives often liken historical trauma to a ‘crucifixion’, and subsequent revival as ‘national resurrection’. Following the tripartite partition of former Polish territory, for example, an idealised vision of Poland emerged in the early nineteenth century, a ‘pure’ nation sacrificed by necessity to achieve ‘universal freedom’ upon future resurrection is demonstrated in artforms such as the poetry of Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855).¹⁸¹ In French historiography, Michelet viewed the historian’s duty to build on the past as ‘an act of piety towards those past generations on whose sufferings and sacrifices the present had been built’.¹⁸² This was steeped in his ideas about history as *resurrection*:

[historiography] denied death by a virtual resurrection of the past, one in which the historian fused his identity with that of his countrymen, both living and dead.¹⁸³

Each generations’ death, in Michelet’s view, was spiritually resurrected in the form of a ‘grand progressive movement’ toward universal liberty.¹⁸⁴ As outlined in Chapter 2, in Hungary understanding the past as a cycle was largely interpreted as an unbreakable relationship between the failures of the past in relation to contemporary discontent. However, when revolutionary ideas began to gain momentum with the March Youth in the 1840s, they adopted the mantra of ‘liberty or death’, encompassing contemporary understandings of Hungary’s past into an ideal of dying for freedom for Hungary and all mankind.¹⁸⁵

In opera, execution scenes are often directly related to religious sacrifice, necessary for the communal ‘health’, or preservation of accepted values and norms. In Spontini’s *La vestale* (1807), the deviation from religious rite for earthly love means the community prepares for a sacrifice to regain the social order (alongside the broader evolution of the genre to focus on a

¹⁸¹ Alan Davies, *The Crucified Nation: A Motif in Modern Nationalism* (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), 13.

¹⁸² Jules Michelet, translated by Flora Kimmich, Lionel Gossman and Edward K. Kaplan, foreword by Lionel Gossman, *Jules Michelet on History* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2013) 9.

¹⁸³ See Thomas N. Baker, ‘National History in the Age of Michelet, Macaulay, and Bancroft’ in Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza (eds.), *A Companion to Western Historical Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 192.

¹⁸⁴ Michelet, *Jules Michelet*, op. cit., 9.

¹⁸⁵ Gerő, *op. cit.*, 124. See Chapter 2.

single couple and the increasing importance of the chorus in dramaturgy).¹⁸⁶ Similarly, in Bellini's *Norma* (1831), the violation of sacred oaths meant the heroine must sacrifice herself to restore the social directive. Her community sees her deviation as such a profound sin that she even considers infanticide to maintain the concealment of her transgression (in Act II, scene i). Her final self-sacrifice is a rectification of sin which brought divine anger against the collective. Pollione is so moved by her brave selflessness that he joins her in sacrifice, admiringly. In Halévy's *La Juive* (1835), sacrificing her life to retain her (believed) identity and prove loyalty to her father is the only way Rachel can oppose an unjust and prejudicial system, and the resulting lessons in tolerance come at the price of personal anguish for the oppressors and victims alike.¹⁸⁷

Whilst emphasising injustice, abuse of (foreign) power, and victimhood is presented instrumentally (through the funeral march), László's execution is depicted dramatically and musically through Erzsébet. Erzsébet's anxiety from her first entrance, pre-empting and prematurely mourning her son drive her to beg mercy from the King (Act II, scene iii, No.11) and pray for divine intervention (Act IV, scene v, No.22). The interplay between earthly and divine establishes Erzsébet's double image as both a mortal, suffering, mother, a victim of injustice, and *mater dolorosa*: protector of the Hungarians, demanding divine justice. Erzsébet's role as *mater dolorosa* in the passion-like execution sacralises the hero's sacrifice. Furthermore, this depiction connects the past, present and future of Hungary through divine fury at earthly injustice on the one hand, and historical-national sin to Christendom and universal redemption on the other.

The anticipation created by the previous musical suggestions of the *marche funèbre*—depicting László through procession and revolutionary musical markers upon his entrances and the final

¹⁸⁶ See Patrick Barbier's discussion in *La vie quotidienne à l'Opéra au temps de Rossini et de Balzac* (Paris : Hechette, 1987), 94.

¹⁸⁷ Erkel likely conducted these works already before 1837, at the *Königliche Städtische Theater in Pesth*, where during this period *La vestale* was performed once, *Norma* 23 times, and *La Juive* 14 times. As second conductor, it is likely Erkel conducted at least some performances of the latter two. The works were all later conducted by him at the *Nemzeti Színház*. See Amadé Németh, *Az Erkelek a magyar zenében: Az Erkel család szerepe a magyar zenei művelődésben* (Békéscsaba: Békés Megyei Tanács, 1987).

emphasis on his steadfastness in his ‘swan song’—climaxes in his final walk to the scaffold in the procession of a funeral march (Act 4, scene iv, No.22). This is likely modelled on prominent orchestral examples such as Beethoven’s Symphony No.3 (second movement, 1804), and Chopin’s Piano Sonata No. 2 (third movement, 1837).¹⁸⁸ Marches in this genre: slow, melancholic and commemorative, provided examples for creating effective tension and solemnity befitting the gravity of historical tragedy, functioning as a grave *intermezso* in which the audience can reflect on the (historical) events in *Hunyadi László*. However, though likely influenced by the kinds of dotted rhythms found commonly in this genre, Erkel utilises dotted rhythms akin to *verbunkos* traditions to accompany László’s journey to the executioner. The turn-like melodic nature of these figures in Erkel’s funeral march are akin to *bokázó* cadences common in contemporary *verbunkos* pieces.¹⁸⁹ This rhythm grows obsessive as the procession develops, suggesting the prisoner is laboured by chains with each step: emphasising victimhood. The *pianissimo* and *maestoso* indications of the A section (see Example 8, bars 1 to 8, repeated) contribute to creating an atmosphere of sombre dignity. Triplet figures in brass and timpani evoke further stately, fanfare-*esque*, effects, evocative of public funeral processions.¹⁹⁰

Example 8, Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act IV, scene iv, No.22, *Marcia Funebre*, Bars 1-4 (overleaf)

Saint George’s square, in Buda¹⁹¹

(Backstage László is led toward the scaffold, wearing the King’s gift: the purple velvet robe. The wind blows, and the skies are foreboding.)

¹⁸⁸ Erkel was deeply familiar with Beethoven’s works throughout his life (see Chapter 1), and also with Chopin’s piano works. Erkel even performed the Hungarian premiere of a Chopin work in his early career as a pianist (the playbill unfortunately does not state the piece). See Amadé Németh, *Az Erkelek a magyar zenében: Az Erkel család szerepe a magyar zenei művelődésben* (Békéscsaba: Békés Megyei Tanács, 1987), 45.

¹⁸⁹ See Shay Loya’s definition in his *Liszt’s Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 16.

¹⁹⁰ See the chapter ‘Choral Lament and the Mourning Public’ in Olivia Bloechl, *Opera and the Political Imaginary in Old Regime France* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 53-84.

¹⁹¹ György térnek egy része Budán, Hátul a színmélyén gyászmenet alatt kísértetik László a vérpad felé, rajta a Király ajándékozta bársonyruha. Szélmoraj hallik. Az idő elsötétül. Saint George’s Square stands in front of the royal palace in Buda, and accurately reflect the location where László was executed. Today, a plaque commemorating László Hunyadi is erected in the square, adjacent to the National Gallery in the castle district of Buda.

Flauto piccolo

Maestoso

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Contemporary models (both operatic, discussed below, and orchestral) resolve in their B sections (modulating through Db major and Bb major in bars 15-18 and 23-26 in Chopin's march, and modulating through Eb major when the second theme is introduced in bar 17, in Beethoven's third symphony). László's walk to his fate markedly intensifies in the following section (see Example 9). The B section pivots briefly (for six beats, bars 9-10) through B major before returning to eb minor. The tension finally resolves, though remains harmonically ambiguous, in ascending chromatic sextuplet flurries in the strings (bars 16-19), before the solemn opening material returns. The texture becomes increasingly monophonic: the repeated *bokázó* figures unite orchestral forces, now suggesting conviction, a sole focus on spiritual freedom amidst imminent death. This contrast of the *fortissimo* material in the B section (bars 9 to 16) encompasses a spirited approach to death: pride in sacrifice for the 'nation-religion'.

marcato

Flauto piccolo

Corno 1, 2 in Mi b

Corno 3, 4 in Si b *f*

Tromba 1, 2 in Mi b

Tromba 3, 4 in Si b

Trombone I, 2, 3

Tuba

Timpani

Tamburo militare

Gran Cassa

marcato

Violinni I

[illegible]

Operatic precedents for funeral marches derive from rescue operas and more recent Italian and French works. The funeral marches found in Rossini's *La gazza ladra* (Act II, No.15) and Spontini's *La vestale* (Act III, No.17), both of which Erkel had conducted (see Chapter 3), are likely models: minor keys (c and f respectively), solemn tempo, percussive tremolo, and fanfare figures, though these models also employ choruses who lament the fate of the protagonist,¹⁹² whereas László's march is purely instrumental. In *La vestale*, divine intervention resolves the tension of the funeral march when the sacred flame re-ignites (Act III, No.21), saving Julia from execution. Rossini's opera resolves happily when Ninetta is found innocent of the crime she had been accused, and so the tension built in the march scene resolves in the 'cacophony' of the finale.¹⁹³ In creating a similar effect, Erkel musically establishes the tension of László's grave prospects. However, the lack of musical and narrative resolution accentuates the impact of the preceding material. In *Hunyadi László* the musical intensity only subsides momentarily before rebuilding with even greater ferocity into a tempest (discussed below). Whereas previous models disrupt the narrative to reflect and emphasise the tragic situation of the heroine, in *Hunyadi László* the use of anticipatory musical gestures lead up to the spectacle of the sacrifice. László's march also bears some parallels with the Act III funeral march in Donizetti's *Dom Sébastien* in the solemnity and tonality. However, akin to Bellini's *I capulet e i montecchi*, where Romeo hears Julietta's funeral march as a *tempo di mezzo* in the finale (Act 2, scene ii), both funeral marches take the form of a choral blessing on the deceased. Dramaturgically, the march in *Hunyadi László* broadly diverges from operatic examples by functioning as a device through which to depict victimhood, rather than to anticipate a resolution: whether happy, as in the former examples discussed, or tragic, as in the latter.

¹⁹² Chorus: 'Infelice, sventurata, si rassegna alla tua sorte. No, crudel non è la morte quando è termine al martir.', Gioachino Rossini, *La Gazza Ladra*, Act II, No. 15; Chorus: 'Dieux clément, pardonnez les larmes, que nous arrachent nous arrachent ses malheurs par donnez les larmes que nonsarrachent ses malheurs', Gaspard Spontini, *La vestale*, Act III, No.17.

¹⁹³ I use this term as understood in broadly Rossini scholarship, particularly with reference to *stretta* sections. Melina Esse has argued that such busy-textured moments as in *La Gazza Ladra* are not simply for dramatic effect, but to 'allow us to hear the social implications of Rossini's noisy bodies more clearly'. Melina Esse, 'Rossini's Noisy Bodies', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol.21, No.1 (2009), 51.

Despite other structural similarities with *La Juive*, the funeral march in Erkel's opera differs markedly from Halévy's, which is meditative and centres largely on the relative major (A; tonic is F# minor), with gentle arpeggiated oscillations in the string accompaniment. The fanfare-like figures rather reinforce a plagal cadence (see Example 10, bars 20-21): foreshadowing moral triumph as opposed to the grave commemorative function of such figures in *Hunyadi László* and the aforementioned orchestral examples.

Example 10, Frontmental Halévy, *La Juive*, Act V, No.24, *Marche Funèbre*, bars 18-21.¹⁹⁴



More recent likely influences include the Act IV funeral march of *Nabucco*, as Fenena and the Israelite prisoners are led to be sacrificed. This is scored for a *banda*, which Verdi's left largely to assistants: local 'banda interna' capabilities and forces would have varied in performances.¹⁹⁵ Erkel's march by contrast employs extensive textual forces and layering. Dramaturgically, the image of persecuted peoples led to death serve a similar function to László's walk to the scaffold. The modulations and cadences are likely influenced by the Verdi example (g minor, b minor, eb minor, g minor). However, similar to the deviation from instrumental models of Beethoven and Chopin, Erkel's divergence is the increasing tension in the B section, as opposed to the

¹⁹⁴ Frontmental Halévy, *La Juive*, Piano reduction score (Paris : Maurice Schlesinger, 1835).

¹⁹⁵ See David R. B. Kimbell, *Verdi in the Age of Italian Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 327.

modulation anticipating the final resolution in *Nabucco* (beginning with D major in bar 10, Eb major bar 17, returning to g minor at bar 23).

In *Hunyadi László*, facing death as an innocent and betrayed man ensures corrupt power is emphasized: execution is preferable to fleeing. László rejects this opportunity in the opening of the final act when Mária Gara bribes the guard to free her fiancée so they can escape to the Hunyadi castle in Temesvár. Textually the lack of resolution, and musically the almost obsessive repetitions of rhythmic structures depict the steadfastness of the hero's exemplary courage. This final emphasis on the hero's pride and conviction in righteousness at the cost of his own life underlines the historical integrity of a nation wronged by corrupt foreign powers. The 'liberty or death' slogan of the revolutionaries is paralleled by László's steadfastness when faced with the scaffold: willingly dying as a martyr rather than fleeing as though in guilt. László's final words demonstrate his belief that justice transcends earthly power:

(on the gallows) Hungarians! Hear my last words! I shall die innocent! I'll face my only judge in a few minutes, and he'll read my soul: that all my thoughts and all my deeds were devoted to my nation until the very last moment!¹⁹⁶

Approaching the revolution, historical defeat became a symbol of historical strength. Endurance despite past defeat meant the possibility for revival, most directly fought for by liberal revolutionaries. In the failed aftermath, defeat became synonymous almost exclusively with oppression and art became preoccupied with lamenting injustice. By the 1840s, fear for the survival of Hungarian identity, and a subsequent preoccupation with preserving longstanding traditions, became justification for revolutionary sacrifice. During the nationalistic programme staged at the *Nemzeti Színház* during the revolutionary year, Erkel's opera was utilised to vindicate and even inspire rebellion, whereas in the aftermath, portraying suffering becomes cathartic: expressing newly reinforced victimhood but now apparently without the potential for change

¹⁹⁶ László: *(a vérpadon)* Magyarok! halljátok végszavam! Én ártatlanul halok meg! Az látja lelkem, kinek bírói széke előtt leendek néhány perc múlva, hogy tehetségem, gondolatom, mindenem e pillanatig a honévala! Act IV, No.22, *scena ultima*.

that the years leading to the mid-century revolution embodied. In 1844, an interim year in which liberal nationalism was established and radical-revolutionary rhetoric was cultivated (namely in the Pilvax circle by revolutionaries such as Petőfi), Erkel's second opera was still indebted to the transhistorical understandings established in the reform period. The constellation of anti-Habsburg parallels in the plot and the musical markers of Habsburg resistance nevertheless meant when revolutionary fervour took hold of the Hungarian-language theatre's repertoire, *Hunyadi László* featured centrally as a display of nationalist resistance to political oppression. Erkel's two pre-revolution operas illuminate the brief shift in historical understanding in Hungary from indissoluble cycle to anticipating (revolutionary) rupture.

Mater dolorosa: Resurrection

Gather, Hungarians, as will the resurrected people gather on the Day of Judgment, and onto our enemy!

Lajos Kossuth¹⁹⁷

In Hungary, the mother-son relationship is dubbed 'typically Hungarian' since the period of 'national awakening'.¹⁹⁸ In the Hungarian reform period, the 'mother image' was steeped in Christian symbolism, utilised prominently in promoting national consciousness. The mother figure became a supplementary force to (masculine) heroism. As Éva V. Huseby-Darvas puts it: 'motherly powers were seen as a major force in national awakening as a political socialization centred mainly on language'.¹⁹⁹ In *Hunyadi László*, Erzsébet is characterised by her concern for her sons and attempts to secure their safety throughout the opera; her motherly dedication defines her character. In Hungarian nationalisms the mother figure also functioned as 'a

¹⁹⁷ 'Gyűljön össze az egész magyar nép, mint összegyűlend ítélet napjakor a feltámadott emberiség, s rajta az ellenségre!' Lajos Kossuth, *Kossuth Hírlapja*, 19 September 1848, 313.

¹⁹⁸ Éva V. Huseby-Darvas, "'Feminism, the Murderer of Mothers': The Rise and Fall of Neo-nationalist Reconstruction of Gender in Hungary" in Brackette F. Williams (ed.), *Women Out of Place: The Gender of Agency and the Race of Nationality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), 163.

¹⁹⁹ Éva V. Huseby-Darvas, *op. cit.*, 168. See also Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 207.

supplementary hero'. Though secondary to their male counterparts, women nevertheless 'emerge from [the shadow of men] and provide help in the case of emergency'.²⁰⁰

Musical depictions of a storm utilised previously in allusions to revolutionary forces again erupt temporarily in Erzsébet's Act II *sortita*, in which visions of her son's death become prophecy when they unfold (and musically reoccur) in the *scena ultima*. Erkel thereby establishes the relationship between *mater dolorosa* and divine fury (see Example 11).

Example 11, Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act II scene ii No.9 Bars 111-117 (overleaf)

Erzsébet: Alas! He is kneeling, his eyes bandaged, above him the executioner ruthlessly wields the terrible axe! Halt, you murderer! He is innocent! He must not die! Heavens! Good heavens! The sacrifice is made! (collapses).²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Éva V. Huseby-Darvas, *op. cit.*, 164.

²⁰¹ Erzsébet: Hah! Térdel ott a vérpadon, bekötve homloka, s fölötté villog szörnyűen a hóhér pallosa. Gyilkos, megállj! Ártatlan ő! Megölni nem szabad! Jaj! nagy ég! nagy ég! Lehullt az áldozat! (*földre omlik*).

Doppio meno
Flauto piccolo

Flauto 1, 2

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinetto 1, 2 in Sib

Fagotto 1, 2

Corno 1, 2 in Mib

Corno 3, 4 in Sib

Tramha 1, 2 in Mib

Tramhone 1, 2, 3

Tuba

Timpani

Tamburo militare

Gran Cassa e Piatii

ERZSÉBET

bad!

Jaj! nagy ég! nagy ég! Le-hull az ál - do

Doppio meno

Violini I

Violini II

Viola

Violoncelli

Contrabassi

In the *scena ultima*, Erkel again makes this connection clear by holding back the most overt tempest depictions until Erzsébet enters the execution scene. In the *scena ultima*, Erzsébet remains steadfast in her conviction to save her son, attempting twice to push past the guards and physically save László. A brief outline of the *scena ultima*'s structure and musical devices follows:

Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act IV, No.23, *scena ultima*

Bars 1-3	Introduction (brass fanfares; <i>forzando</i> triplets in lower strings and woodwind; sextuplet runs; timpani and tambourine tremolo. <i>Fortissimo</i> . Eb minor)
Bars 4-8	Erzsébet's entrance (recitative)
Bars 8-12	Orchestral storm
Bars 12-13	Erzsébet (recitative); guards push her away
Bars 14-17	<i>a tempo</i> ; orchestral storm introduction returns
Bars 18-20	Erzsébet (recitative)
Bars 21-32	Orchestral storm (chromatic swells; brass fanfares; woodwind reinforce vocals)
Bars 33-42	Storm subsides: <i>meno mosso, poco diminuendo. Pianissimo</i> .
Bars 43-92	Erzsébet's <i>Preghiera, moderato</i> .
Bars 93-98	<i>tempo di Marcia Funebre</i> ; march material; chromatic storm swells
Bars 99-105	Return of A section of march; Erzsébet sings funeral march melody
Bars 106-118	Guards push Erzsébet away from the gallows
Bars 118-134	László addresses the absent King (recitative).
Bars 135-166	<i>molto allegro ed agitato</i> : return of Erzsébet's vision material (from Act II)
Bars 167-168	Executioners strikes
Bars 176-182	László recitative declaring he is now legally released from his sentence
Bars 183-185	Chorus: 'mercy, mercy!'
Bar 186	bar of silence
Bar 187	Gara: 'strike!'; orchestral storm returns
Bars 187-204 (end)	descending sequences of cadences in Eb minor: final unanticipated E major chord.

In her *sortita*, the storm abruptly subsides when Erzsébet hallucinates the executioner striking (example 11, first beats of bars 113 to 116). When she enters the execution scene with Ó, *mennydörögi*, 'thunder, strike!'²⁰² (See example 12), the storm momentarily halts, a musical 'parting of the seas' (see Example 12, bar 25-27), before her words conjure a tempest of furies (bars 28-31). This reflects the interplay between the historical figure of Erzsébet Szilágyi, and her depiction as mother of sorrows: both a commanding and a sacred figure, who in Erkel's opera, can conjure as well as command the elements, raising supra-natural furies in her motherly sorrow.

Example 12, Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act IV, No.22, *scena ultima*, Bars 21-31 (overleaf).
Erzsébet, guards, offstage: László, Gara, the people

²⁰² The word 'to thunder' (*mennydörög/ mennydörögni*) is here conjugated in imperative form (i.e. a command), most closely translated as saying 'thunder!' as a command in English.

Erzsébet: (amidst thunder and lightening) Strike and howl, storm, blow wind! let your thunder shake the earth! let the whole world know that the son of Hunyadi dies innocent. Even nature is ashamed, covering this deed with a shroud, and heavens take pity on him, shedding tears of sorrow!²⁰³

a tempo

Flauto piccolo

Flauto 1, 2

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinetto 1, 2 in Sib

Fagotto 1, 2

Corno 1, 2 in Mib

Corno 3, 4 in Sib

Tromba 1, 2 in Mib

Tromba 3, 4 in Sib

Trombone 1, 2, 3

Tuba

Timpani

Gran Cassa

Erzsébet

Violini I

Violini II

Viola

Violoncelli

Contrabassi

Recitativo

Ó, menny dörög, or - dits, te fer-ge-

²⁰³ *Erzsébet, örök, kívül: László, Gara, nép.* Erzsébet: (gyászban a színre rohan; nagy villámlás) Hol van ő? Hol fiam? bocsássatok, hogy tépjem ki őt a hóhér kezéből! Ó, mennydörögj, ordíts, te fergeget! dörgésed a földet hogy rázza meg! És tudja meg szerte a nagyvilág: ártatlanul ölik Hunyad fiát. Örök: (*visszataszítja*) Erzsébet: Bocsássatok a királyhoz! Örök: El innen! Erzsébet: (*iszonyú dörgés és villámlás*) Ó, mennydörögj, ordíts, te fergeget! dörgésed a földet hogy rázza meg! És tudja meg szerte a nagyvilág: ártatlanul ölik Hunyad fiát. Lám, a természet is szégyenében gyászkárpitot von e tett fölébe. És megszánta őt legott a menny maga, búvában mint zuhog könnyzápora.

a tempo
con forza

fz *f* *fz* *f* *fz* *f* *fz* *f* *fz* *f* *fz* *f*

[senza piatti]

con forza

tegl! dór - - gé sed - a föl - det hogy ráz - - za meg!

a tempo

fz *fz* *fz* *fz* *fz* *fz* *fz* *fz* *fz* *fz* *fz* *fz*

The storm in the finale of *Il pirata* (see Example 13) also temporarily subsides in Imogene's vocal entrance. However, the subsiding storms in Imogene's and Erzsébet's entrances diverge considerably, reflecting the characters respectively. Whereas Erzsébet halts as well as conjures the storm (emphasised by the use of imperative conjugation), in *Il pirata*, the storm only tentatively returns as *pianissimo* low-pitched tremolo (see Example 13, bars 50-52) without regaining momentum. When Erzsébet commands the storm to subside in her entrance at the gallows, it dies away immediately, and when she demands 'thunder, strike! Wind, howl!' (see Example 12), the full ferocity of the orchestral storm immediately returns.

Example 13, Vincenzo Bellini, *Il pirata*, Act II, scena iii, Bars 42-52.

Imogene: If only I could scatter the clouds that aggrieve my mind.

Recit.

Imogene

Oh! s'io po - tes - si dis - si-par le

nu - bi che m'ag - gra - va la fron - te

Primo Tempo

ppp

Furthermore, the storm is a depiction of Imogene's troubled mind ('If only I could scatter the clouds that aggrieve my mind'), whereas in Erkel's opera, the storm depicts divine anger at a (historical) injustice. The chromatic orchestral flights are steeped firmly in the energetic rhythmic repetitions evoking steadfastness—conviction in righteousness—over hysteria. The chromatic scalar passages (see Example 12, bars 27-31) become an emphasised rhythmic driving-force, evoking ritualistic percussive effects implying the imminent sacrifice and the divine anger this invokes. These musical effects are reinforced by the fanfare-like obsessive rhythms in the brass (throughout Example 12) which also connect the title role to the regal and the commemorative, inherent to the depiction of László throughout the opera.

In *Il pirata*, funeral march figures intrude into Imogene's aria. However, this is a narrative device: signalling imminent execution of Gualtiero (see Example 14). In *Hunyadi László*, Erzsébet sings melodically in tandem with the march, connecting the sacralised image of the *mater dolomsa* with Hungary's historical suffering emphasised in László's march which preceded Erzsébet's aria.

Example 14, Vincenzo Bellini, *Il pirata*, Act II, scena iii Bars 68-77.

Imogene: Listen to the groans of the surroundings

Imogene

A

scol - ta ge - me l'alt - ra d'in - tor - no

Imogene is tormented by her suffering, and loses her grip on reality as the women's chorus lament her deteriorating mental state (see Example 15).

Example 15, Vincenzo Bellini, *Il pirata*, Act II, scena iii, Bars 166-175.

Imogene: let me see of what I flee... they are erecting the fatal stage for him

Women's chorus: alas...

Imogene

no - di ch - ei fug - ga la - scia - te che veg - go... ai cu

Donne

stodi in ma - no lo da - te il pal - co fu -

oh no...

ne - sto per lui s'in - nal - zó

deh

dolce

In depicting Erzsébet's turmoil, in opposition to similar scenes such as *Il pirata*, *Anna Bolena*, *Marino Faliero*, the prospect of László's execution does not lead to a loss of sanity or an

unbearable strain which translates into a physical collapse (Erzsébet only collapses when the execution is eventually undertaken), but rather a passionate opposition to injustice. In the building orchestral storm, this could also be read as an outer reflection of Erzsébet's inner turmoil. However, helplessness does not triumph in quelling Erzsébet's efforts to oppose injustice, which is where she diverges from the traditional *mater dolorosa* figure to embody the 'supplementary hero' figure of Hungarian mothers. Even in her most hysterical moments, she does not buckle under the emotional strain like her operatic counterparts, but holds steadfast in demanding her son's release until the final blow of the axe. She begs the executioner to stop: repeating the word *megállj*, 'stop'²⁰⁴ in stepwise ascents which return to a pedal note sung over constant oscillating accompaniment driving the narration (see Example 16). This does not suggest the kinds of musical markers associated with operatic 'madness' in the manner of 'extravagant virtuosity'.²⁰⁵ Rather, Erzsébet's emotional turmoil only imbues her character with ever-more determination to halt her worst fears unfolding before her.

²⁰⁴ Again, imperative form is used here, the English equivalent of which is 'you, stop!'.

²⁰⁵ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 92.

Example 16, Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act IV, No.22, *scena ultima* Bars 145-148.
Erzsébet: You slaughterers, stop! Stop! Stop!²⁰⁶

accelerando ----- *e* ----- *crescendo*

Picc

Cl Si b

Cor Mib

Cor Sib

Timpani

Erzsébet

Gyilkos, megállj! megállj! megállj!

accelerando ----- *e* ----- *crescendo*

VI I

VI II

Vle

Vlc

Cb

²⁰⁶ Erzsébet: Gyilkos, megállj! megállj! megállj!

Victimhood again interacts with strength in the face of adversity and the heroes' proud sacrifice as opposed to compromising justice. The funeral march material returns (bars 94, 96, and 98-101) amidst the tempest (bars 95 and 97) as Erzsébet fearlessly faces the guardsmen, demanding her son be released (see Example 17). Simultaneously, she vocally reinforces the funeral march material, and again emphasises victimhood through her distress (see Example 17 bars 100-101, 'where is he? Where is my son? Let me grab him from the headman's hands!').

Example 17, Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act IV, *scena ultima*, No.22, *Tempo di Marci funebre*, Bars 83-101 (overleaf).

Erzsébet: Almighty God! My son! Where is my son? Let me grab him from the headman's hands! Allow me to the king²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Erzsébet: Nagy Isten! fiam! Hol van ő? Hol fiam? Bocsássatok, hogy tépjem őt ki a hóhér kezéből! Bocsássatok a királyhoz!

Tempo di Marcia funebre

ERZSÉBET

Tempo di Marcia funebre

Nagy Is - ten! Fi -

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When the storm temporarily subsides in the form of Erzsébet's *preghiera* (again her physical actions dictate the storm), this again suggests the kinds of relationships between sacrifice and victimhood found in revolutionary rhetoric. The contrast between Erzsébet's prayer material with the previous and subsequent attempts to save her son from the scaffold encompass the dual desire for action whilst emphasising victimhood.

Example 18, Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act IV, scene ii, Bars 90-97.

Erszébet: (*kneels for prayer*) Mighty God of heaven and earth! Look at my terrible pain!
(Give my heart enough strength under my immense grief not to bend.
My child is dragged to the gallows, to be slain, though he is orphaned and innocent.
Merciful God! you cannot let deceit overcome honesty).²⁰⁸

PREGHIERA
Moderato

The musical score is for a scene from *Hunyadi László*. It features a vocal part for Erszébet and an orchestral accompaniment. The tempo is marked **Moderato**. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The vocal part begins with the lyrics: "Ah! menny és föld ha-tal-mas Is - te - ne! te - kint - sed ször - nyü - fáj - dal-mi - mat!". The orchestral part includes Piccolo, Flute, Clarinet in Sib, Bassoon, Horn in Mib, and strings (Violins I & II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass). The score shows various musical notations such as dynamics (p, p1), articulation (accents), and performance instructions (con sord.).

The executioner's initial three miscalculated attempts to strike not only heighten suspense but emphasise injustice and suffering through the elapse of time between the opening of the scene: the funeral march; Erszébet's demands, fury, prayer and strength; evocation of furies in the forceful orchestral depiction of the storm, and the association with divine wrath; the tension

²⁰⁸ Erszébet: (*letérdel, és imádkozik*) Ah! menny és föld hatalmas Istene! tekintsed szörnyű fájdalmimat! Ó, adj erőt szívemnek, és ne hagyj leroskadni e nagy kín alatt. Vérpadra hurcolják gyermekemet, megölni ártatlanul az árvát, a bűntelent. Jó vagy te, Isten! azt nem engedheted, hogy ármány győzzön az igazság felett.

of the initial strikes of the axe; and the fleeting hope of a *deus ex machina* before the final brutality. The ‘divine intervention’ of the three initial strikes initially undermines the earthly corrupt, oppressive, power: such authority is not absolute. The momentary possibility of a just resolution is anticipated. When the three initial strikes of the axe miss their target, László embraces divine and medieval law alike. He addresses the absent King with ‘Majesty! I am innocent. Lord God knows and so distracts the headman’s axe. I am unscarred!’

The final spiral-like descent in orchestral forces amidst the lament of the chorus (‘the people’) and Erzsébet (see Example 19, bars 200-203) suggests the hopelessness of the anticipated *deus ex machina* both dramatically and figuratively. A false ending with a cadence in the funeral march key of eb is followed by a final, unanticipated, E major chord which concludes the opera, offering a beam of hope that sacrifice may yet be repaid.

Example 19, Ferenc Erkel, *Hunyadi László*, Act IV, *scena ultima*, No.22, *Presto*, Bars 188-204 (overleaf).

László: Majesty! I am innocent. Lord God knows and so distracts the headman’s axe. I am unscarred!

Chorus: Mercy! Mercy! **Gara:** (*shouting*) Strike again! (*the sound of the striking axe on stage*)

Erzsébet: Alas! Alas! My son! (*collapses*) **Chorus:** Alas! My God!²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ **László:** Király! ártatlan vagyok! Ím, az Úr látván azt, elvevé a bakó erejét, és én bántatlan vagyok!’ **Kórus:** Kegyelem! kegyelem! **Gara:** (*hangosan kiált*) Vágd! (*a vágás hallik a színpadon*). **Erzsébet:** Jaj, jaj! Ó, fiam! **Kórus:** Jaj, jaj! Istenem!

Presto
Flauto piccolo

Flauto *ff*

Oboe 1, 2 *ff*

Clarineto 1, 2 in Sib *ff*

Fagotto 1, 2 *ff*

Corno 1, 2 in Mi b *ff*

Corno 1, 2 in Mi b *ff*

Tromba 1, 2 in Mi b *ff*

Tromba 3, 4 in Si b *ff*

Trombone 1, 2, 3 *ff*

Tuba *ff*

Timpani *ff*

Gran Cassa e Piatti

Erzschet (foldre omlik/she collapses)

S
A
Coro
T
B

Jajl - - - - - Ó, fi - - - - -

Jaj, Jaj! Is - - - - - te - - - - -

Jaj, Jaj! Is - - - - - te - - - - -

Jaj, Jaj! Is - - - - - te - - - - -

Presto

Violinni I

Violinni II

Viole

Violoncelli *ff*

Contrabassi *ff*

Flauto piccolo

ff Flauto

ff Oboe 1, 2

ff Clarinetto 1, 2 in Sib

ff Fagotto 1, 2

Corno 1, 2 in Mi b

Corno 1, 2 in Mi b

Tromba 1, 2 in Mi b

Tromba 3, 4 in Si b

Trombone 1, 2, 3

Tuba

Timpani

Gran Cassa e Piatti
[senza piatti]

Erzsebet

am!

S

mem!

A

mem!

T

mem!

B

mem!

Violini I

Violini II

Viola

Violoncelli

Contrabassi

Fine dell' Opera

Earlier tragic operas which utilise a similar descending orchestral effect depicting a musical resolution mirroring the narrative, whether in major keys (such as *Anna Bolena*: Eb major), or mirroring the final shock such as in *Norma* (e minor), contrast with the curious ending in *Hunyadi László*. The uncertainty surrounding the future of Hungarian identity in the reform period differentiates historical representation in Hungary from examples such as Donizetti's and Bellini's historical-tragic operas which explore the consequences resulting from variously oppressive power-hierarchies. Erkel's opera diverges from Meyerbeer's and Auber's operas, which variously champion the status quo of a strong authority. The first wildly successful Hungarian-language opera, *Hunyadi László* contrasts starkly with the manner of glorifying historical golden ages found in comparable 'peripheral' examples. The new revolutionary voices establishing themselves in the 1840s in Hungary meant representing historical heroes and sacrifice began to behold new meanings connecting martyrdom with liberty. These pluralities and transitional crossovers meant that, although *Hunyadi László* primarily presents Hungary as a historical victim characterised by valour and virtue, the opera nevertheless offers a glimmer of a future Hungarian resurrection.

Conclusion

In *Hunyadi László*, the role of Hungary as historical victim of injustice and corrupt power is established as beyond the control of the hero, who, to be sure, is unwavering in his loyalty to the King. Material which will culminate in his walk to the scaffold anticipates and emphasises the theme of victimhood. This almost excessive mourning in the allusions to the *marche funèbre* material is contrasted by invocations of 'the furies', or the tempest material in the Act I chorus and Erzsébet's Act II aria. The final eruption of the storm in the *scena ultima* connects divine anger with earthly injustice, and relates Hungarian identity to 'divine' fate: the fate of humanity. These musical tropes link suffering with the ability to withstand historical defeats, whilst simultaneously glorifying sacrifice for the 'nation-religion' and mankind.

The revolutionary undercurrents in *Hunyadi László* relate to representation of the Hungarians, embodied in the Hunyadi men's chorus, and to historical Hungarian heroes through referencing the *Rákóczi induló*. However, exploring the rhetoric which emerged in the 1840s from the radical fringe of the liberal-nationalists, but which quickly gathered popular support, reveals how tropes of sacrifice not only relate to liberty, but to victimhood, which in turn situates contemporary political subjugation in a trans-historical understanding of 'the nation' as a historical victim of intrigue. The divergencies of Erzsébet from similar operatic scenes demonstrate her forceful character as a 'supplementary' hero, in relation to contemporary understandings of womanhood and motherhood in Hungary. Although she fails to derail the execution, her character is able to bear emotional strain which is unbearable in her operatic counterparts, embodying the manner of 'inflated self-esteem' Vermes identified as Hungarian pride in withstanding historical catastrophes.²¹⁰ Including the young Mátyás in this account of the Hunyadi chronicles—King of the Hungarian golden age—alludes to the strength of the communal identity which may yet revive. The divine anger conjured in the tempest material further implies the possibility of a future return to the powerful past: divine justice in the form of a 'national resurrection'. Nevertheless, the marginal role of Mátyás in this representation (and contemporary examples which artistically depict the Hunyadi theme) ensures the focus remains firmly on the tragedy resulting from intrigue.

Hunyadi László mediates contemporary fears beyond political allegory of anti-Habsburg rhetoric. An inherently paradoxical celebration of a defeat narrative is steeped in contemporary, ambiguous understandings of history. Rather than a cyclic understanding of Hungary's past, this opera tentatively encompasses the hope that the term of punishment might expire, and that a new golden age might ensue. First however, the 'nation-religion' demanded sacrifice, championed in discourse from Kossuth's speeches to Petőfi's poems. *Hunyadi László* sheds light

²¹⁰ Vermes, *op. cit.*, 170.

on the radicals' willingness to die for the 'nation-religion'. Artistic depictions of historical defeats, briefly pivoting between the reform period into an absolutist decade via a revolution, could present contemporary turmoil as a single chapter in a grander scheme of events. A newly-forged interpretation of the past which encompassed the possibility for a rupture, or a *resurrection*, was nevertheless significantly shaped by prior cyclic imaginings of Hungary's history. The revolutionaries emphasised and even cherished the possibility of individual death and collective—nation—death which attempting to create a break with the past would bring, what David Lederer frames as utilising the 'populist legend of self-sacrifice'.²¹¹ Defeat narratives such as Erkel's *Hunyadi László* could imbue suffering and sacrifice with purpose.

²¹¹ David Lederer, 'Honfű: Nationhood, Manhood, and the Culture of Self-Sacrifice in Hungary' in Jeffrey R. Watt (ed.) *From Sin to Insanity: Suicide in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 132-133.

Musical Monuments of Hungarian History:

Conclusion

The fears which drove ‘national awakening’, the language revival, nation-building, and the 1848 revolution, are recognised in historiography concerned with Central-Eastern Europe. However, this study is the first examining the role of opera in these processes. The reform era—violently discursive, fearful and, increasingly, desperately hopeful—is a period which had an enduring impact relating to musical traditions, history and identity. Voids in both Anglophone and Hungarian-language scholarship concerned with deciphering early nineteenth-century traditions in Hungary means Erkel’s operas have previously been understood through simplified versions—or even separately—from these contexts. This study has sought to rectify this disjuncture. I have attempted to demonstrate how *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László* relate to artistic polemics, reform projects, political radicalisms and anxieties surrounding identity and in relation to the past in complex, sometimes ambiguous and contradictory, ways.

As the century wore on, Erkel composed (with the aid of his sons to varying degrees), six further operas between 1861 and 1885.¹ Currently, this repertoire is accessible only through the autographs and surviving performance materials held in the music collection of the National Széchényi Library. As with Erkel’s earlier operas, these materials are often puzzling, and it is currently unclear which versions of these works were performed, and when. The Erkel Critical Editions will undoubtedly clarify many of these issues and increase the accessibility of these works. This study establishes a step towards improving the understandings of nineteenth-century Hungarian musical traditions in Anglophone scholarship, upon which future studies can build.

An operatic tradition in Hungary began in earnest in 1840s Pest-Buda at the *Nemzeti Színház*, with the première of Erkel’s *Bátori Mária*. The liberals and radicals in the opera war

¹ See Appendix I

variously found opera problematic—even dangerous—these operas nevertheless engaged with liberal aesthetics and revolutionary rhetoric. Barely any study aside from the critical editions has so-far examined *Bátori Mária*. It is my hope that situating this opera in a broader context and in relation to Erkel’s celebrated second opera has demonstrated that such largely forgotten works can shed new light on how history is negotiated amidst political tensions. *Bátori Mária*, steeped in contemporary interpretations relating to Árpád history, presents a historical episode in which attempts to break with the sinful past are unsuccessful. In a period which inherited a fear of *nemzethalál* verging on hysteria, the lack of resolution reflects both contemporary tragic opera and the more specific obsession with a cyclic punished past, present and future.

Hunyadi László overtly relates to radical political aspirations and accordingly featured as part of the revolutionary programme staged at the *Nemzeti Színház* during 1848. Presenting a defeat narrative in a manner which at once glorifies martyrdom and signifies a sliver of hope for the future, *Hunyadi László* embodies some of the contradictory rhetoric which finally exploded on 15 March, 1848. Though *Hunyadi László* is still wildly popular in Hungary today, there are barely any studies discussing the cultural implications of this musical narrative. Examining this work through contemporary interpretations of the medieval past and hopes for future liberty, this study has sought to provide new perspectives. Revolutionary fervour relating Hungary’s liberation to the freedom of mankind grew from the trope of *nemzethalál*, an enduring anxiety stemming from imperialism. *Hunyadi László* anticipates a break with the past, yet which is still steeped in contemporary victimhood. The strikingly contrasting natures of Erkel’s pre-revolution operas illuminates the rapid shifts through which revolutionary activity grew out of political reform, and the role of historical interpretation in these political developments.

Erkel’s first resounding success has traditionally been understood through the familiar framings of how opera ‘becomes’ national. Though pieces from *Hunyadi László* were utilised in revolutionary programmes precisely because of their ‘national’ musical markers and a context in which audiences were primed for receiving these pieces as nationalistic, I have sought to

demonstrate that this opera relates to contemporary political rhetoric in complex ways. In the case of *Bátori Mária*, a relative though not fervent—by no means revolutionary—success, this long-neglected work can nevertheless complicate how ambiguity can function in historical narratives. The uncertainties embedded in the historical representation in the first Hungarian language opera partially prevented a response akin to that which the anti-Habsburg, anti-aristocratic rhetoric of *Hunyadi László* inspired. It is nevertheless these kinds of non-conformity to traditional understandings of ‘national’ opera which can aid understandings of ‘peripheral’ repertoires. Such works can enrich contextual readings beyond viewing ‘national’ operas as a handful of curiosities, explained through a symbiotic relationship between a style understood as national, and coinciding with a national movement which fostered a receptive audience.

In the introduction, and throughout the case studies, I have argued that the amalgamation of specific historical-political tropes relayed through various musical devices in Erkel’s operas resulted in a repertoire which is in some ways distinct. Primarily, this resulted from a set of political circumstances which pivoted on the edge of the legacy of despair and the new optimism of Young Hungary in the 1840s. The fact that Erkel’s pre-revolution operas were composed several decades earlier than the first successful operatic endeavours of other Habsburg minority peoples differentiate these works from the examples of Czechs, Croats, or Slovenians. The lack of Anglophone studies relating to other examples which might point to similarities, or equally, further distinctions amongst such examples, highlights the necessity for a more thorough, encompassing understanding of operatic traditions in which ‘peripheries’ form constituent parts of the puzzle as a whole.

Neglected operatic repertoire such as Erkel’s can challenge understandings of how operatic devices can relate to history; how discourse can inform or respond to concepts of historical representation; how political factions and artistic polemics can both relate to and shape nation-building efforts; how anxieties surrounding identity can inflect understandings of the past

in relation to the future as well as artistic representation of historical eras, events, and figures. Encompassing multiple operatic influences and historiographical currents, *Bátori Mária* and *Hunyadi László* are steeped in the specific contexts and contemporary thought relating to identity of reform-era Pest-Buda. Nevertheless, the distinctive aspects through which history is relayed on the new Hungarian-language stage is tied up with transnational influences, which became reimagined, filtered through new and competing perspectives. These case studies contribute to understandings of how histories, identities, and anxieties interpolate. Further studies unravelling how neglected traditions diverge and interact with historical and operatic trends are critical to progress knowledge of the hybrid, transnational genre of opera.

Appendix I: Select List of Ferenc Erkel's compositions

***Bátori Mária*, 'Mary Bathory'**

Opera in two acts, libretto by Benjámín Egressy after András Dugonics's *Bátori Mária* (1793).
Première: *Nemzeti Színház* 8 August 1840, overture in 1841, and revised version including the No.8 cabaletta (1852) and a duet for István and Mária (No.6), première d in 1858.

***Hunyadi László*, 'Ladislaus Hunyadi'**

Opera in four acts, libretto by Benjámín Egressy after Lőrinc Tóth's *Hunyadi László* (1839).
Première: *Nemzeti Színház* 27 January 1844, overture in 1845, and revisions until 1885 including (with insertions and re-composed numbers for specific performers: The 'La grange aria' (No.12b, composed for Anne de la Grange's guest appearance, and a subsequent rearrangement likely by Sándor Erkel with the approval of Ferenc Erkel), Mária's No.19 cabaletta (1847) and cadenzas (1862-1864).

***Erzsébet*, 'Elizabeth'**

Opera in three acts in collaboration with Károly Doppler and Ferenc Doppler (Act II by Erkel), libretto by József Czanyuga. Première: *Nemzeti Színház* 6 May 1857.

***Bánk bán*, 'Palatine Benedict'**

Opera in 3 acts, libretto by Benjámín Egressy after József Katona's *Bánk bán* (1819).
Orchestrated in collaboration with Gyula Erkel and Sándor Erkel.
Première: *Nemzeti Színház* 9 March 1861, revisions made throughout the 1860s, and for the Kolozsvár première (1866), the Arad première (1866).
Revisions to the libretto by Kálmán Nádasdy and to the music by Nándor Rékai, staged in 1940.

***Sarolta*, 'Sarolta'**

Comic opera in 3 acts. Set in a village in Moson county, Hungary, 1146 (in twentieth-century revivals, this is usually changed to the fifteenth-century, and King Geiza I is substituted by King Matthias I). The plot centres on a farce between the King, Sarolta (the daughter of the village cantor), and a Knight of the King, Gyula, concluding happily with the marriage between Sarolta and Gyula.
Libretto by József Czanyuga. Orchestrated in collaboration with Gyula Erkel.
Première: *Nemzeti Színház* 26 June 1862.

***Dózsa György*, 'George Dóza'**

Folk music drama in 5 acts, libretto by Ede Szigligeti after Mór Jókai's *Dózsa György* (1860).
Collaboration with Gyula Erkel and Sándor Erkel.
Première: *Nemzeti Színház* 6 April 1867.

***Brankovics György*, 'George Brankovic'**

Folk music drama in 4 acts, set in the 15th century in Brankovic's castle, and in the camp of the Sultan. The daughter of Brankovic, Mara, has fallen in love with an unknown man (the Sultan). Brankovic breaks his oath to the Sultan and sides with the Hungarians under General Hunyadi. The Hunyadi's attack the Sultan's camp, where Mara awaits, having been kidnapped by (but is now faithful to) the Sultan. Brankovic is fatally wounded and dies as the curtain falls.
Libretto by Lehel Odry and Ferenc Ormay after Károly Obernyik's *Brankovics György* (1856).
Collaboration with Gyula Erkel and Sándor Erkel.
Première *Nemzeti Színház* 20 May 1874.

***Névtelen Hősök*, ‘Unknown Heroes’**

Comic opera in 4 acts, set in a market town during the 1848 war for independence. Ilonka is promised to Tamás Csipkés but loves Elek Andorffi. They are separated when Andorffi is recruited to join the Honvéd army (the revolutionaries). She disguises herself as a soldier to be reunited with Andorffi, and to escape the prospect of her promised marriage, but is captured by the enemy. The fourth act concludes happily when Ilonka is released, re-joins Andorffi, and they marry.

Libretto by Ede Tóth. Collaboration with Gyula, Sándor, Elek and Lajos Erkel.

Première: *Nemzeti Színház* 30 November 1880.

***István Király*, ‘King Stephen’**

Opera in 4 acts, set in Visegrád (Northern Hungary), approaching the mid-1000’s. Based on tensions between István I, the first crowned King of Hungary, and the succession of his son Prince Imre, amidst power struggles between the Pagans and the Christians. István’s bride (Crescimira) is persuaded by Péter (younger brother of István, who loves Crescimira) to poison her husband. Imre dies, and the curtain drops with István hopeful about the uncertain future of Hungary.

Libretto by Antal Váradi after Lajos Dobsa’s *Első István király* (1861). In collaboration with Gyula Erkel.

Première: *Királyi Operaház* 14 March 1885.

Choral works

Szózat, ‘Appeal’ from Mihály Vörösmarty’s *Szózat*, 1843

Hymnus, ‘Hymn’, from Ferenc Kölcsey’s *Hymnus*, 1844

Köri kördal, ‘The Circles roundel’, text by János Garay, 1844

Gyászdal, ‘to the death’, lyricist and exact date of composition unknown. Performed in memory of Count István Széchenyi in Győr in 1860, the retirement of Ede Szigligeti from the *Nemzeti Színház*, and for Lajos Kossuth’s death in 1894.

A halálnak éjszakája, ‘The Night of Death’ author of the text unknown, 1856

Magyar Cantate, ‘Hungarian Cantata’, text by Ede Szigligeti, 1867

I. Magyar Király-himnus ‘1st Hungarian Royal Anthem’, text by Ede Szigligeti, 1873

II. Magyar Király-himnus ‘2nd Hungarian Royal Anthem’, text by Mór Jókai, 1892, performed on the occasion of Erkel’s conducting ‘farewell’ concert.

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