

ORGAN ACCOMPANIMENT PRACTICES OF UNEDUCATED CANTORS IN SMALL VILLAGES OF THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

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Cantors uneducated in music are usually outside the church hierarchy, but inside the community in small Christian villages of east-central Europe. Their organ playing and accompaniment may preserve characteristics from previous centuries and can be regarded as proof of a formerly widespread harmonization method, but may also appear within music learning as a certain degree of musical knowledge, offering an anthropological explanation of the entire phenomenon. Using the inductive method, the results of case studies from the Carpathian Basin can be considered more or less valid for the larger European region (i.e., east-central Europe) with similar history, social development, and cultural circumstances.

Keywords: *peasant cantors, organ accompaniment, harmonization, Carpathian Basin, east-central Europe, music tradition, church music practice*

Glasbeno nešolani kantorji navadno niso del cerkvene hierarhije, so pa del skupnosti krščanskih vasic v vzhodni Srednji Evropi. Način njihovega igranja in spremljave na orgle lahko ohranja značilnosti igranja prejšnjih stoletij ter tako ponazarja nekdanj razširjeni način harmonizacije, lahko pa se pojavlja tudi pri samem učenju glasbe, in sicer kot določena raven glasbenega znanja, ki prispeva k antropološki razlagi celotnega pojava. Izsledki študij primerov v Panonski nižini, pridobljeni na podlagi induktivne metode, bolj ali manj veljajo tudi za druge kraje na širšem evropskem območju (tj. v vzhodni Srednji Evropi) s podobno zgodovino, družbenim razvojem in kulturnimi okoliščinami.

Ključne besede: *podeželski kantorji, orgelska spremljava, harmonizacija, Panonska nižina, vzhodna Srednja Evropa, glasbena tradicija, cerkvena glasbena praksa*

INTRODUCTION: ANTECEDENTS AND ANALOGIES IN RESEARCH METHODS

The basic condition for all research is comparison, but within the study of music¹ this circumstance is indicated separately with the label “comparative musicology.” Earlier, during the first decades of the twentieth century, in the German-speaking area, it was the science of musical folklore, and music folklore research was called the comparative study of music (Germ. *vergleichende Musikwissenschaft*). This designation was meant to indicate that what is called ethnomusicology today differs from historical and systematic musicology, the latter typically measuring commensurable phenomena and parameters of music. By analyzing the characteristics of Hungarian music history, Zoltán Kodály combined the historical and comparative musical sciences in order to create a complex approach that examines cultural interactions, interrelationship between peoples, civilizations, social groups, and strata, performs musical analysis, and—based on the results—determines, separates, and locates individual stylistic strata in a historical context.

¹ This study was made possible through the support of the Hungarian–Slovenian project *Memories of Religion in Folk Music Archives* (NKFIH SNN 117057 and N6-0044).

Kodály called researchers' attention to the relationship between Hungarian music history and folk music quite early, in 1933: "The precondition and the most important auxiliary science of Hungarian music history is music ethnography. Only ethnographic knowledge and experience can bring the color and warmth of life to musical historical data" (Kodály 1933: 233). After eight decades, Kodály's words became reality: in studies on Hungarian music history, especially with respect to certain epochs, it has become almost compulsory to compare printed and notated musical memories with folk tradition, with folk data. Moreover, among other things, comparative studies have a two-way impact: data on music history must be explained, interpreted, and vivified through folk musical data, and the historical approach reveals the complex relationships between the individual stylistic layers of musical folklore. Following the guidance of Kodály, Hungarian researchers included in the comparison "the material of the entire living and written tradition, including orally transmitted, monophonic church music, as well" (Kodály 1933: 229). Then, in a few decades, following a number of minor studies, the great summarizing historical anthologies were completed, accompanied by publications of analogies from folk music. Kodály's statements are fully supported by studies in Hungarian music history and ethnomusicology conducted after the Second World War; moreover, their validity is more general, transcending the aspects of Hungarian music history.²

The Kodály approach to music research in general also seems to be the only effective one in the case of the organ playing—specifically, accompaniment by uneducated cantors. This topic requires ethnomusicological experience and knowledge on the one hand, and a music historian's attitude and observations on the other. To analyze the way uneducated cantors play and their style of accompaniment in the Carpathian Basin, it is necessary to have fieldwork, including audio and video recordings of their playing. Based on a carefully compiled questionnaire, it is possible to obtain information about their musical knowledge, where they learned to play the keyboard, how they create the accompaniment and harmonization, and what the models for them are. To confirm or to deny the hypothesis that this kind of accompaniment by cantors unschooled in music may preserve characteristics from previous centuries, comparative research should be performed on historical sources and the harmonization practice of instrumental folk music. In any case, the results of this investigation will reveal the entire context of the practice, independently from the presuppositions of the hypothesis.

² As an example, I would like to recall an item from my own research: a *Dies irae* melody transcribed in Transylvania in the seventeenth century and its folk versions are sung with Hungarian text in several places throughout the Hungarian-speaking area. Further recorded versions of the same melody are known from a seventeenth-century Polish source and a later Czech source as well. At the same time, it is still widely sung today. It also occurs as a burial song in the northern part of the Italian-speaking area, in the canton of Ticino, Switzerland, from which no historical sources of the melody are available yet, only folk music collections (Richter 2006).

THE ROLE OF MUSICALLY UNEDUCATED OR PEASANT CANTORS³

In east-central Europe, the use of the organs in church practice has become increasingly popular since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is testified by historical documents reporting the building of organs. Smaller portable organs could be purchased even by small village churches. It was an old established custom of the congregations to assign the task of precentor (i.e., choir-leader) to people who had the best vocal abilities and were willing to accept it. Thus a tradition was born: in the churches in small villages, both Catholic and Protestant, simple farmers became cantors, church musicians who served the community. They were not educated in music at a church musicians' school and they had no theological qualifications; in fact, they could hardly write or read, and they certainly did not know how to read music. Thus they learned the repertoire and the ritual of their denomination from their predecessors and their community, through oral tradition. Their manner of singing and their organ accompaniment practice, however, has retained and preserved the characteristics of folk music to the present day, and not the learned manner of singing, performance style, and harmonization practice of individual denominations.

The repertoire of uneducated or self-taught (mainly rural) cantors, church musicians itself can be found in numerous booklets and manuscripts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that contain the texts of the songs. In addition, sound recordings were made in the second half of the twentieth century documenting the practice of organ accompaniment. The role of uneducated cantors was even more pronounced in linguistic islands such as the Hungarian-speaking Csángó villages in Romania's Moldavia region, or the handful of Slovenian villages in the the Raba Valley in western Hungary, preserving a Slovenian dialect called Vend by locals⁴ (Figure 1).

FOLK HARMONIZATION PRACTICES

Ethnomusicologists use the term "folk harmonization" for various phenomena of intentional folk polyphony connected to instrumental performance. The nature of the instrument itself provides opportunities for harmonization in the case of the drone instruments (bagpipe, hurdy-gurdy, and zither). The research, however, primarily determines the use of chords

³ Uneducated cantors typically serve(d) in smaller localities, in villages, and they are (or were) usually simple rural people with good vocal abilities among the faithful.

⁴ The population of these villages was left out of the Slovenian language unification process that took place in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes after the First World War due to the fact that they remained in Hungary. The political situation during the following decades did not facilitate contact between this small Slovenian community and the main ethnic community, and so their dialect survived.

in instrumental folk music played by ensembles based on the practice of string bands. In the most frequently examined case, and the richest in harmonization from the point of view of Transylvanian practice, two types of harmonization are basically used, which can be related to the accompaniment practice of uneducated cantors: 1) harmony adjusted or oriented to the melody (i.e., the harmonization follows the tune), and 2) harmony that asserts functional relationships known from classical art music (i.e., governed by the functional attractions used in classical art music).

In the case of tune-oriented harmonization (the first principle), the accompanying instruments will also seek to play the melody in their own manner: with double stops (Germ. *Doppelgriffe*, Ital. *doppia corda*) and longer notes according to the dance rhythm. The most common form of this accompaniment, as practiced by bands consisting of a violin, three-stringed viola (Hung. *kontra*), and double bass, is harmonization moving in mixtures of parallel major chords. This kind of ensemble playing can be described as follows:

Of course, the pivotal notes are not always identical: they might differ even if the same instrumentalist harmonizes a tune several times consecutively, or if we compare the parts of the viola and that of the double bass. This is partly explained by the fact that the players consider different pitches of the melody to be pivotal notes; on the other hand, the two instruments have different technical capabilities. Other adaptations may be caused by the nature of the rhythmic pattern, the tempo, and the variety of [...] non-musical factors [...]. Sometimes the instrument players simply make a mistake: instead of playing the proper note (or chord), they randomly pick a different one. At other times they arrive a little late at the pivotal note of the violin, or they play it before the violin does. (Pávai 2012: 354–355)⁵

The second principle, functional harmonization, is used in a different manner compared to its practice in art music. All accompanying instruments, and sometimes also the melodic instrument, will play the main melodic step of the dominant followed by the tonic; that is, the move from the leading tone to the tonic, thus amplifying the functional attractions. Most harmonic progressions involve authentic steps, where the main melodic notes are preceded by some kind of a dominant chord, usually the incomplete seventh chord (with the leading tone in the bass!) or, in urbanized practice, a chord with a diminished seventh.

[...] not only is it not forbidden to double the leading tone, or the seventh scale degree, but it is almost obligatory, because the musicians can signal each other this way that they can hear what is to be played to create a chord leading to the next harmony. For this reason, double bass players often will play the root of the

⁵ English translation by István Csaba Németh.

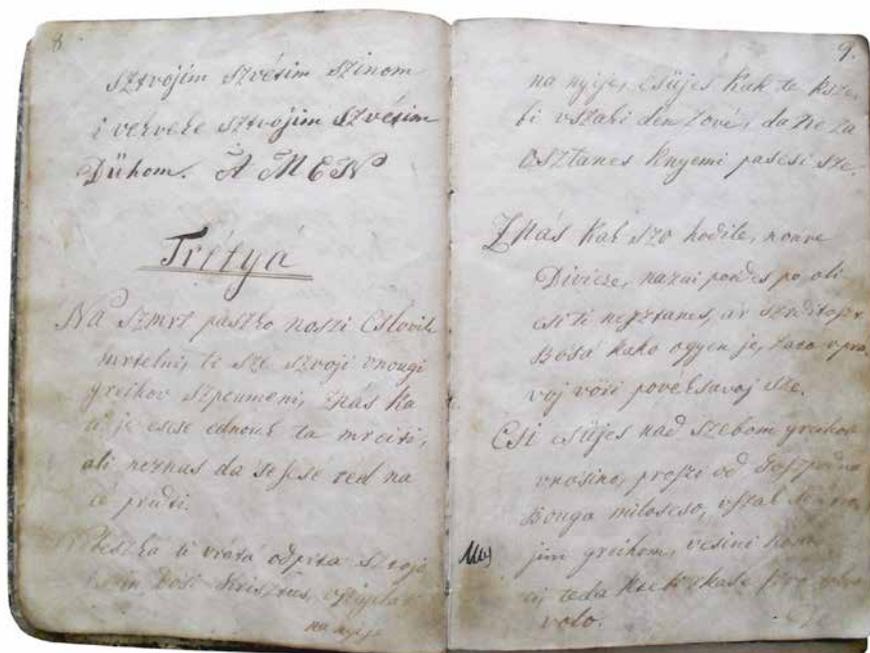


Figure 1. Text from the local manuscript *Cantiones Ritkaróczeinsis* (1858).

Asztali nóta [Table song]

2. strophe Magyarpéterlaka

Figure 2. Tune-oriented harmonization, mixed with functional harmonization in the cadence (violin and bass parts, a so-called “table song,” not for dancing, only for singing). Recording by Tibor Rostás in Budapest, March 26th–28th, 1989, musicians from the Transylvanian village of *Magyarpéterlaka* (Petrlaca de Mureș, Romania), transcribed by Pál Richter (Fekete 2009).

dominant chord followed by its third, which leads to the root of the next chord; meanwhile in the chord of the viola, but also in the melody, the same note can be heard. Thus the leading tone is doubled. The examples show that, as far as the viola is concerned, these leading tones or sevenths are not resolved stepwise into the neighboring tone, but rather to their octave transposition. (Pávai 2012: 357)⁶

In practice, of course, these two styles of harmonization appear together, mixed to various degrees (Richter 2013: 118–120).

TUNE-ORIENTED HARMONIZATION IN ORGAN ACCOMPANIMENT

First, let us take a look at the historical analogies of this special kind of tune-oriented harmonization. Polyphonic composition, the aspect of European polyphony that is seen as requiring the highest level of compositional training, definitely avoids and even forbids parallel fifths and octaves. For this reason, for a long time there was a widespread belief that those that composed such parallel intervals had to be uneducated musicians with insufficient expertise. However, this opinion is contradicted by some historical sources, especially those from central and eastern Europe from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These sources consist of songbooks with organ accompaniment and contain bass accompaniments that are matched to the tunes in parallel motion (see Richter 1999, 2001). The excessive simplicity of these notated accompaniments is paired with the presence of parallel fifths and octaves. Other similar sources from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (such as the *Codex Kájoni*, the *Vietoris* tablature book,⁷ the contemporary manuscripts of the Franciscans, etc.) reveal after thorough examination a particular harmonization practice that does not acknowledge (or ignores) the logic of the horizontal voice leading, and focuses solely on vertical relationships; that is, on chords.

The earliest surviving monuments containing harmonizations of the Ordinary that are comparable to Kájoni's *Organo Missale* (Richter 2005) were composed by Lodovico Viadana. The "Missa Dominicalis," a monophonic piece with organ accompaniment, was published in 1607 in the second volume of his *Cento concerti ecclesiastici*, and then in 1619 Viadana published twenty-four monophonic Credo settings in a separate volume titled *Venti Quattro Credo a canto fermo*.⁸ It is true that, unlike Kájoni's manuscripts, Viadana's

⁶ English translation by István Csaba Németh.

⁷ *Tablatura Vietoris* (Ferenczi & Hulková 1986), *Codex Kájoni* (Diamandi & Papp 1993/94). In these sources one finds a series of examples of parallel fifths and octaves.

⁸ Presumably due to their excessive simplicity and the small size of the ensemble they employed, Viadana's monophonic ordinaries with bass accompaniment had little influence on the development of mass settings. See Flotzinger (1976: 79) and Massenkeil (1976: 101). On contemporary masses with organ accompaniment, see Szigeti (1967: 305–309).

compositions do not contain direct parallel fifths. On the other hand, the presence of barely concealed consecutive fifths is quite common between the vocal parts and the accompaniment.⁹ In connection with parallel motion, it must be pointed out that if a community of men, women, and children sings together, parallel octaves arise spontaneously. The same sound becomes more homogeneous in the case of organ accompaniment.¹⁰ The shorter sections with consecutive fifths and octaves found in these historical sources reinforce the hypothesis that the tune-oriented harmonization must have been widely used earlier in Europe. In it, polyphonic composition only enriched the sound, but there is no trace of voice leading, or at least some kind of structured polyphonic thinking.

As a matter of fact, the accompaniment of non-functional melodies caused problems even in the German-speaking countries. The organ accompaniment of Gregorian melodies was first recorded and the entire issue was first discussed on a theoretical level at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Contemporary records mostly show the use of triads in root position, but harmonizations applying inverted chords throughout occurred as well. However, in these harmonizations the accompaniment did not seek to follow the melody—unlike the folk-music practice of the Hungarian-speaking area. The simultaneous presence of chords of the same types and of the tune-oriented harmonization inevitably leads to parallel movement and mixture.

In the eighteenth-century manuscripts from Saint Peter's Benedictine monastery in Salzburg there are interesting examples of accompaniment (Figure 3). They now seem overly simple, as though notated by an unskilled organ player, and can be described as follows: 1) The *cantus firmus* is placed in the upper voice, which is also played by the organ; 2) the accompaniment itself is a simple counterpoint of the “note against note”-type (*contrapunctus simplex*); and 3) the chords are in root position (there are very few inversions, especially sixth chords).¹¹

As for Hungary, the publication by György Maróthi and the eighteenth-century practice of homophonic four-part singing documented in the Calvinist *melodiaria* (i.e., song collections) should also be mentioned here because they served as a model for singing and harmonizing

⁹ See Viadana's remark on the use of parallel fifths and octaves in his preface to *Cento concerti ecclesiastici* (Richter 1999: 248; 2001: 23).

¹⁰ The contralto singer Antimo Liberati, who served until 1661 at the Vienna court then at the papal chapel, wrote in his memoirs: “Parallel octaves heard in the monophonic singing of men and children can make a good impression, also if created by the organ accompaniment. The octave and fifths registers of the organ themselves do not disturb the homogeneity of the sound. The desired effect is created not by strict rules, but by the liberties in the treatment of perfect and imperfect intervals as defined by their sound” (Fellerer 1982: 80).

¹¹ The original description in German reads as follows: “An diesem an Kunstlosigkeit kaum zu übertreffenden Stück lassen sich die Merkmale der Choralbegleitung ablesen: 1. Der cantus firmus (hier der Hymnus zu Christi Himmelfahrt) liegt in der Oberstimme. Sie wird von Organisten mitgespielt. 2. Die Begleitung erfolgt im contrapunctus simplex. 3. Die Akkorde stehen in Grundstellung” (Eder 2004: 83).

melodies in four parts with simple chords.¹² Followers of Maróthi's practice used more simple harmonization (the chords are in root position), and there are parallel fifths and octaves among the parts.¹³ This special singing practice based on vocal harmony survived within the folk tradition, as demonstrated by a collection from *Szászcsávás* (Ceuaş, Romania).¹⁴

FIELDWORK FOCUSING ON ORGAN ACCOMPANIMENT

Knowing all this, it hardly seems surprising that peasant cantors living in the Carpathian Basin employ a very simple manner of accompaniment even nowadays. This kind of practice and thinking on harmonization reflects in their playing.

During field research among peasant cantors, the researchers thoroughly interviewed them on where and from whom they learned to play the organ, on their theoretical knowledge, whether they were familiar with the names of the keys, whether they knew what major and minor are, whether they could read music and play other instruments, and so on. On the recordings one can only hear the pitches produced by the keys the cantors actually strike because the use of registers (which could have caused octave coupling and automatically generated harmonies) was not permitted. Only a few of the cantors interviewed had studied at a church musicians' school; instead, usually the priest (or pastor) or an older cantor taught them how to play.

Considering the manner of peasant cantors performance and accompaniment from the simplest to the more complex, so to speak, the following levels can be distinguished:

1. Both hands play the melody in octaves, rarely adding a drone bass, and it is only sometimes (in most cases at the cadences) that pitches enriching the harmony appear. According to what the cantors said, this manner of playing was usually picked up in a self-taught way. They cannot read the score; even if (occasionally) a song book with organ accompaniment is used, they only follow the text in it.
2. The cantors accompany the song with the so-called *Schusterbass* (Hung. *suszterbasszus*). Some of them fill the octave with a third, others with a fourth. The movement of the accompaniment is completely parallel to the melody. The employing this practice are usually familiar with the score, but they can read music only in the treble clef. Nevertheless, more often than not they played by heart. Typically, at the end of the strophes short interludes are played.

¹² Maróthi's collection was published in Debrecen (1743) with the title *A Soltároknak Négyes Nótáik* (Four-Part Psalm Melodies).

¹³ Examples of manuscript *melodiarium* are the *Szkárosi-melodiárium* from 1787–1792, and *Orbán Sigmond harmóniás könyv* (Sigmond Orbán's Choral Book) from 1766. Pieces from these sources were published in Szabolcsi (1955: 69*–70*).

¹⁴ Historical data and folk singing practice were compared by Csaba Szabó (2001); see also Szabó (1977: 109–123).

3. The *Schusterbass* type of accompaniment is also present at this level. The ability to read music is more common; some cantors even studied at music schools. The accompaniment typically uses mixtures of major chords (e.g., first inversions in the right hand, and octaves filled with fifths in the left hand).
4. The performers are not only cantors, but also serve the village community with secular music. They play at rural dance parties. In the Transylvanian Plain, and the area along the Maros and *Küküllő* (Romanian Târnava) rivers, the harmonization in the accompaniment—usually learned from Roma musicians living in the same locality or nearby—is not based on functional attractions: its brighter sound is the result of major chords accompanying every note of the melody. The hymns sung by the congregation are accompanied either with *Schusterbass*, or with harmonization based on major chords (minor chords are typically absent). They can read music, usually both in the treble clef and in the bass clef. Many of them went to cantors' school, where they learned to play four-part chorale arrangements. In spite of all these factors, their accompaniment obviously aims for a rich and bright sound. In order to achieve this goal, they sometimes play five or six parts (the four-part setting is ignored because its drier sound is rejected by churchgoers). They say that the *susztərbasszus* “can be played by ear.” The aim of the accompaniment of the songs is to create the richest and brightest sound; sometimes they use five or six pitches at the same time, and consequently do not use four-part writing, the dreary sound of which is also disliked by the congregation. These cantors are also able to transpose and they are aware of basic theoretical terms.
5. In the accompaniment one finds both functional harmonizing and bass progressions following the melody in a parallel movement.
6. The last example (Figure 6) was recorded in Moldavia. The informant studied at a church musicians' school in the 1930s. The only written material he used was an old sheet of paper with the text of the song. He kept the sheet for a long time because singing in Hungarian was forbidden, and it is unfortunately still banned today.

CONCLUSION

The ethnomusicological research initiated in the Kingdom of Hungary at the beginning of the twentieth century by Béla Vikár, Zoltán Kodály, and Béla Bartók initially appreciated the fact that the tradition of rural communities was untouched by western European culture, and the differences were emphasized (such as the pentatonic structure of the melodies and so on). Later on, the examination of instrumental folk music, in parallel with research on folk dance traditions and on religious hymns, revealed increasingly more western European connections. It turned out that the tradition of the peoples from the Carpathian Basin has preserved to this day elements of western European culture from the previous centuries. The cultural continuity of the rural mode of existence, also designated as folk tradition or

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ERDŐKÖVESD /Heves/
asszonyok, kántor /orgona/
Dobszay L. 1967. III. 31.

A' G⁵ # A'

Örvend az én lelkem,

G E A' G

hogy ha idejöhét,

G a⁵ e' {e' E'

templomodba, j Uram,

A' G # A'

áldást kérni tőled.

2. Mert --- /?/ - akarok,
6 mert tudom, hogy így - nálad, veled vagyok. ||

3. Hallgass meg - /?/ engem - e helben, Istenem,
midőn arra kérlek, - áldást érjen /?/ engem. ||

4. Ezt küldd mindazoknak - kik téged áldanak,
kik búban, örömben - hozzád sohajtanak. ||

5. Dicsérjük és áldjuk - a Szent Háromságot,
kinek neve legyen - mindörökké áldott. ||

Transcription of a recording of a Vesper in Heves County, Hungary. Capital letters (under the notes) mark the chords of the accompaniment, showing a tune-oriented harmonization.

Beispiel 11.

Kantor Ferenc Benke (Külsőrekecsin – Moldva)

Gesang

Ar - ra a nép, jó ba - rá - tim, ró - lunk em - lé - kez - ze - tek

Orgel

mind-nyá - jan, jó a - ka - ró - im el ne fé - led - kez - ze - tek.

Ké - rünk Krisz - tus mi [... ...] egy szép - sé - ges fej - fá - ért,

Ej néz - zé - tek gyöt - rel - mün - ket, se - gít - se - tek ben - nün - köt.

Recording made by István Pávai and Pál Richter in 1996 in Fundu Râcăciuni, Moldavia, Romania (Hung. *Külsőrekecsin*), transcribed by Pál Richter.

folklore, not only had a value-creating character, but it also had an important role in value preservation. It functioned as a kind of living memory, a cultural museum.

In theory, the harmonization of traditional peasant dance music in the Carpathian Basin is a result of two styles of harmonization, which are mixed to various degrees. In the first style, harmonies are adjusted or oriented to the melody; that is, the harmonization follows the tune. In the second one, harmonies assert functional relationships governed by the functional attractions known from classical art music. Naturally, the more archaic manner is the tune-oriented harmonization, showing the influence of monophonic structures. Chords with a subdominant, dominant, and tonic character appear only later in the cadence, and so the archaic harmonization (the first style) has begun to reflect the impact of functionally used harmony (the second style).

One of the types of the first style, the tune-oriented harmonization, is harmonization moving in mixtures of parallel major chords, which is practiced in a much wider circle. According to studies and the analysis of field recordings, the way the uneducated peasant cantors play the organ and their style of harmonization show similarities with the tune-oriented harmonization moving in mixtures of parallel major chords. This kind of accompaniment may preserve characteristics from previous centuries. This tradition may go back many generations of church musicians, but research shows that from time to time similar phenomena might also appear within music learning, as a certain degree of acquired musical knowledge. Historical sources presenting similar harmonization can be regarded as traces of a formerly widespread harmonization method; on the other hand, they offer an anthropological explanation of the entire phenomenon. Only fieldwork in the broader territory of east-central Europe, recordings of nowadays practices, and analysis of further historical sources from countries in this region can reveal the various layers of organ accompaniment. Based on the results of thorough investigation of these, it will be possible to identify distinctions and to determine whether there really is (or was) an idiomatic harmonization method, and where the subtle border lies between traditional practice and learning process of music creating accompaniments to various melodies.

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PRAKSE ORGELSKE SPREMLJAVE PRI NEŠOLANIH KANTORJIH V VASEH PANONSKE NIŽINE

Harmonizacija tradicionalne ruralne plesne glasbe v Panonski nižini je teoretično rezultat dveh slogov harmonizacije: 1. harmonija izhaja iz melodije ali je vanjo usmerjena (tj. harmonizacija sledi melodiji); 2. harmonija uveljavlja funkcionalna razmerja, ki jih urejajo funkcionalne posebnosti, značilne za umetnostno glasbo. Ta sloga se v različni meri prepletata. Harmonizacija, ki sledi melodiji (tj. melodična harmonizacija), velja za arhaični slog, ki kaže vpliv monofonskih struktur. Potem ko se v kadenci pojavijo subdominantni, dominantni in tonični akordi, ta arhaična harmonizacija začne kazati vpliv funkcionalne harmonije.

Veliko bolj razširjena je melodična harmonizacija z uporabo durovih akordov. Slog igranja in spremljave na orgle, ki ga uporabljajo nešolani podeželski cerkveni glasbeniki, lahko ohranja značilnosti igranja iz prejšnjih stoletij. Ta tradicija lahko sega več generacij cerkvenih glasbenikov v preteklost, raziskave pa kažejo, da se občasno pojavlja tudi pri samem učenju glasbe kot določena raven pridobljenega glasbenega znanja. Zgodovinski viri, ki vsebujejo podobne harmonizacije, so sledi nekdanj razširjenega načina harmonizacije, po drugi strani pa omogočajo tudi antropološko razlago celotnega pojava.

Pri polifoni kompoziciji v načinu evropske polifonije, ki zahteva največ znanja, se je vsekakor treba izogibati vzporednim kvintam in oktavam oziroma so te prepovedane. Zaradi tega je bilo dolgo razširjeno prepričanje, da so takšne vzporedne intervale pri skladanju uporabljali predvsem samouki glasbeniki brez zadostnih izkušenj. Temu pa nasprotujejo nekateri zgodovinski viri iz 16. in 17. stoletja, zlasti iz Srednje in Vzhodne Evrope, ki vsebujejo pesmarice z orgelsko spremljavo. Notirane spremljave so izrazito preproste, poleg tega se v njih pojavljajo tudi vzporedne kvinte in oktave. Podrobnejša analiza je pokazala, da viri iz 16. in 17. stoletja razkrivajo posebno prakso harmonizacije, ki ne priznava logike horizontalnega vodenja glasu in se osredinja samo na vertikalna razmerja (tj. na akorde). Glede vzporednih intervalov velja naslednje: če skupnost moških, žensk in otrok poje skupaj, se vzporedne oktave pojavijo spontano. Ob orgelski spremljavi isti zvok postane homogenejši. Krajši deli z zaporednimi kvintami in oktavami v teh zgodovinskih virih potrjujejo hipotezo, da je bila melodična harmonizacija prej v Evropi zelo razširjena. Na podlagi poznavanja vseh zgodovinskih virov in tendenc torej sploh ni presenetljivo, da je spremljava podeželskih cerkvenih glasbenikov v Panonski nižini še danes zelo preprosta.

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