

## THEOLOGICAL, LITERARY, AND MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE, ALL IN THE SERVICE OF SACRED MUSIC. THE PSALM ARRANGEMENTS OF KÁLMÁN CSOMASZ TÓTH

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**SUMMARY.** The present study aims to present the work of Kálmán Csomasz Tóth in the field of sacred music. Having had a theological education, and literary and musical studies, following an in-depth and extensive research process, he edited the Reformed hymnal published in Hungary in 1948. In addition to this important work, he has published numerous books, articles, studies in the field of musicology, literary translations, and a few poems in various ecclesiastical and professional journals in Hungary and abroad. The example of Kodály as a composer and the choral singing movement of the 1930s also captivated him and encouraged him to adapt the melodies of the church hymnal. I will hereby present his work and a musical analysis of the choral arrangements pertaining to the melodies of the Genevan Psalter.

**Keywords:** hymnological research, church singing, Genevan Psalter, praise, Hungarian folk melodies, male/female choir and mixed choir compositions, homophonic and polyphonic modes of composition.

Kálmán Csomasz Tóth is an important researcher in the field of Hungarian Reformed church singing and music. Although his work had been carried out and he became a decisive figure in the field of church music in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, numerous decades ago, his oeuvre still stands before us as an example and still bears a great influence on today's church music.

He was born on 30 September 1902, in Tapolcafé, Veszprém County, Hungary. His father was a Reformed cantor teacher,<sup>2</sup> so the young child was exposed to harmonium playing, church singing, and elements of folk culture

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<sup>2</sup> His father led a congregational choir, founded a reading circle, and was a collector of children's songs and folk rhymes.

in the family home.<sup>3</sup> After completing four grades of elementary school, he studied at the college in Pápa. His interest in music was preceded by his curiosity regarding literary history.<sup>4</sup> In seventh grade, he wrote several poems in the spirit of the Ady school of thought, but because of these, after the fall of the 1919 revolution, he was accused of unpatriotic sentiments by the faculty. He was only allowed to graduate as a private candidate and could not enroll in the Faculty of Letters at the University of Budapest, where he intended to study. He enrolled at the Theological Academy in Pápa, where he was awarded an American scholarship after his basic exam. He studied for three years in the United States,<sup>5</sup> where he also received his diploma. In the meantime, he also trained himself in the field of music: in Pápa he studied harmony with Lajos Tóth, a music teacher, and in America he was a student of J. F. Williamson, the founding conductor of the famous Westminster Choir. His interest in church music was evident already during his American years.

On his return home, he graduated the English-Hungarian studies at the Budapest Faculty of Letters, and in 1926 he became a student of the Eötvös College. In 1927-28 he was actively involved in the movements of the progressive university and college youth of Budapest celebrating Zsigmond Móricz and Endre Ady.

In 1928 he was appointed as a pastor in Kaposvár. He led two choirs, a congregational choir, and a youth mixed choir.<sup>6</sup> In 1932, the congregation of Sárkeresztes elected him as an independent parish pastor. At this time, he began to study Kodály's writings in musicology. The choir singing movement of the 1930s captivated him also and encouraged him to compose choral adaptations for melodies of Genevan Psalms. These musical compositions caught the attention of Béla Árokháty,<sup>7</sup> among others. In 1938 he was elected pastor of the Csurgó congregation, where he served until 1950. In 1943, after the death of Béla Árokháty, Imre Révész, the Bishop of the Tiszántúli Church District, chairman of the editorial committee of the church hymnal, took notice of his musical work and involved him in the preparatory work of the hymnal. From 1943 he concentrated on hymnological research. In 1950 he moved permanently to Budapest with his family. From 1952 he worked as a lecturer

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<sup>3</sup> His mother was Julianna Csomasz. He took her name as writer's name as well. He published his works under this name, and both his doctorate and his candidate's degree are published under this name.

<sup>4</sup> As a high school student in Pápa, he wrote his first poems, several of which won prizes. Later, after a long break, he wrote more poetry as a mature adult.

<sup>5</sup> He studied in Dayton, Cleveland, and Detroit.

<sup>6</sup> At this time, he married Gizella Méreg. Their marriage resulted in five daughters.

<sup>7</sup> Béla Árokháty (1890-1942), a religious teacher and church choirmaster. He is credited with the publication of the Yugoslavian Reformed Hymnal (1939), in which he published the Genevan Psalter with their original rhythm.

in church music field at the Budapest Theological Academy, and from 1966 as a university teacher there. In 1962, he was awarded a PhD in Musicology for his highly significant work, entitled: *Hungarian melodies of the 16th century*, and a year later he was awarded a doctorate in the letters at Eötvös Loránd University. He was elected a member of the Musicology Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1973, and its President in 1976.

His main field of activity was Hungarian Reformed hymnology. It is in this area that he pioneered and, almost without precedent, raised this field of study to a world-class level, showing that Reformed church music occupies a significant place in Hungarian culture and national values. He worked as an educator, as a teacher of religion, and later as a professor of music.<sup>8</sup>

The most significant achievement of his life's work is the 1948 Hungarian *Reformed Hymnal*. He joined in the preparatory work for this volume in 1943. In February 1943, at a conference organized by the Convention to clarify the basic, mainly musical problems of the hymnal to be renewed, he gave a lecture on the criteria for the selection of the hymn material and presented a draft of the material to be included in the new Hungarian Reformed hymnal.<sup>9</sup> He collected more than 250 hymnbook melodies published up to the end of the 18th century, together with their variants, and took stock of the hymns of foreign origin that had been translated or were yet to be translated.<sup>10</sup> The research on the hymnal was interrupted by the events of World War II, and only in 1946 could he resume his editorial work.<sup>11</sup> Two different approaches emerged in the compilation of the psalm chapters of the hymnal: Péter Balla advocated a kind of rubato rhythm<sup>12</sup> that could be taken from Hungarian folk music, while Kálmán Csomasz Tóth strictly adhered to the original Genevan

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<sup>8</sup> He considered the latter to be the most important service of his life. For two and a half decades, he taught hymnology to young theologians. He was actively involved in the work of the cantor training school in Fót and later in Debrecen and lectured on Hungarian Protestant church music as a visiting professor at the Musicology Department of the Music Academy.

<sup>9</sup> During the preparatory work, he arranged the more than 1300 hymns that had appeared at least once in the hymnbooks of previous centuries into a card index, grouping them thematically, metrically, melodically and, in the case of hymns of foreign origin, linguistically.

<sup>10</sup> For more information see Tamás Bódiss, *Csomasz Tóth Kálmán himnológiai öröksége [Kálmán Tóth Csomasz's Hymnological Heritage]*, in *Magyar Egyházzene [Hungarian Church Music]*, Vol. VIII, No. 2-3, 2000/2001, 231.

<sup>11</sup> Imre Révész was the chairman of the convention's song committee, Kálmán Csomasz Tóth's direct colleagues were Dr. Sándor Karácsony, Jenő Ádám, and the various specialist members of staff were Lajos Áprily, Péter Balla and Dr. Kálmán Kállay.

<sup>12</sup> Rubato: an unconstrained rhythm or tempo (literally: robbed, i.e., the length of one note increases at the expense of another).

rhythm. Bence Szabolcsi also favoured the latter.<sup>13</sup> Kálmán Csomasz Tóth reintroduced part of the musical material of the Hungarian Reformation, the valuable melodic treasure of the 16th century, into the hymnal.<sup>14</sup>

In a later interview, in 1985, when asked what he would do differently in editing the hymnal, Tóth Csomasz replied: “I would include some of the old Hungarian hymns that were not considered, while some that did not work would be omitted... As for the psalms, I would not include all the Genevan psalms. There can no longer be popularized today. I would modify the texts in such a way as its prosody requires, but only as much as is necessary, since they can be sung very well with the right free accentuation and melodic modification...” He took a strict position on the question of including the new 20<sup>th</sup> century hymns in the hymnal: he did not consider them suitable, either textually or melodically. He did not recommend the counterfactuals written to Hungarian folk melodies either but considered the purely pentatonic melodies of Péter Balla to be remarkable.<sup>15</sup>

In 1989, the church musician János Máté described the hymnal as follows: “It preserves both the Hungarian and Reformed traditions, restoring the old Hungarian hymns and the Genevan psalms to their original beauty and within their rights, but it is also an open, truly ecumenical collection, because it has made the treasury of hymns of different denominations and nations our own”.<sup>16</sup>

He has written a scholarly work on the cultural and historical background of the hymns included in the hymnal, entitled *A Református Gyülekezeti éneklés [Reformed Congregational Singing]*.<sup>17</sup> In the first part of the book, he writes about the church-historical aspects of congregational

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<sup>13</sup> On the restoration of the original Genevan rhythm, Bence Szabolcsi says: “It is an extremely bold, but worthy of consideration, and we hope that it will be a successful experiment, which will make the Huguenot melodic treasure a valuable part of Hungarian church music again, bringing it back in its original rhythm, melodic form and structure, in the original form, which is superior to the diluted form to which the singing congregations have become accustomed in the last 100-150 years.” See *Az Út - Református egyházi hetilap, [The Way - Reformed Church Weekly]*, III/13, Budapest, 1950.

<sup>14</sup> Regarding the hymnal, Bence Szabolcsi writes: “This ancient Hungarian melodic material was a valuable musical legacy of the Hungarian Reformation, which was displaced from the Hungarian Reformed hymnal a century and a half ago by an excessive and misguided reform.” See *Az Út - Református egyházi hetilap, [The Way - Reformed Church Weekly]*, III/13, Budapest, 1950.

<sup>15</sup> The source of the information is Éva Turcziné Csomasz, *Akik könnyhullatással vetnek, vigadozással aratnak majd [Those who sow with tears will reap with consolation]*, in Zsoltár [Psalter], Volume I, No. 2, ReZeM, 1994, 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> See János Máté, *Dr. Csomasz Tóth Kálmán emlékezete [In Memory of Dr. Kálmán Csomasz Tóth]*, in *Theologiai Szemle*, 1989/XXXII/2, 119.

<sup>17</sup> *Református Egyház kiadása [published by the Reformed Church]*, Budapest, 1950.

singing, the history of Hungarian Reformed congregational singing, including the hymnbooks that have been in use over the centuries, the relationship between the Genevan Psalter and Hungarian Reformed congregational singing, the musical characteristics of congregational singing, the literary forms of singing and the function of the hymnbook. In the second part there is a guide and data base for the hymnal,<sup>18</sup> which includes data on the appearance of the psalm verses and their melodies; data on the lyricists, melody composers, sources; the metrical structure of the hymns, and even the beginning of the hymns of foreign origin in the original language. It is an extremely rich repository and is still useful today. The material in this volume is supplemented by the book entitled *Dicsérvjétek az Urat [Praise the Lord]*,<sup>19</sup> which is a guide for learning the hymns. In presenting the hymns, the author reveals important data on the history of music as well as church history.<sup>20</sup>

The volume *A XVI. század magyar dallamai [Hungarian melodies of the 16th century]* provide a systematic summary of the Reformed stylistic level.<sup>21</sup> It is a well-known fact that the majority of the sources stemming from the 16<sup>th</sup> century are secular collections of hymns, but the melodies borrowed from earlier times stem from church hymnals.<sup>22</sup> Kálmán Csomasz Tóth, in his volume, publishes melodies from the 16<sup>th</sup> century meant for Hungarian verses. Thus, only the texts are from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the creation of these

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<sup>18</sup> Although the 1948 hymnal was intended as a trial hymnal, its sound and sophisticated compilation made it suitable for permanent use. It was replaced in 2021 by a newly edited hymnal.

<sup>19</sup> Published by the Magyarországi Református Egyház Kálvin János kiadója [Kálvin János Publishing House of the Reformed Church of Hungary], Budapest, 1970/1995.

<sup>20</sup> Where you can learn about Luther, Zwingli and Calvin's views on congregational singing, followed by a brief overview of the hymnbooks published in the different centuries. We will read about the life and work of Albert Molnár Szenci; the tragic fate of Imre Anderkó Szilvás Újfalvi; the orphaned Benjamin Szőnyi and his hymnal, *The Violin of the Saints*; and the pioneering work of György Maróthi. The author also introduces the great musician pastor of the first half of the 20th century, Béla Árokháty.

<sup>21</sup> It was published in 1958 in the *Régi Magyar Dallamok Tára [Old Hungarian Melodies Series]*, published by Akadémiai Kiadó. The melodies published here prove that in the 16th century there was no distinction or sharp boundary between secular and ecclesiastical functions, the same melody appeared as a historical song, as a congregational song, or as a lyrical text, and lived on in different collections, linked to humanistic, national, Protestant-ecclesiastical purposes. The first part of the volume is a scholarly study of the published melodic material; the second part is the actual songbook. It gives the most important data on the songs: notes on melody and text, an index of verse forms and line endings, and an alphabetical list of initial lines and song titles help to familiarize the reader with the melodic material. 239 melodies are discussed, but if the melodic variants are included, this number rises to 376. The material is supplemented by melodic material related to 16th century Hungarian verses. Thus, the writing of this book was preceded by a thorough research into the history of literature.

<sup>22</sup> Most of the 16th-century melodies can be found in the 1744 Cluj-Napoca Reformed hymnal. Kálmán Csomasz Tóth considers it to be the most significant and complete source.

melodies had often time occurred even earlier than that. The reason for the late notation of the melodies is the oral tradition of passing down such treasures, which was common in the past for Hungarian music culture. The published melodies are not all Hungarian origin, only their occurrence with Hungarian text was the criterion for their inclusion in the collection itself.<sup>23</sup> Many of the melodies that originated in foreign musical materials exhibit the wonderful, transformative, and assimilating effect of Hungarian folk music. Dr. Zoltán Gárdonyi,<sup>24</sup> while evaluating this work, says: “The exhaustive scientific study of a century’s collection of melodies is indeed beyond the limits of a lifetime’s work. What Kálmán Csomasz Tóth has accomplished is a great achievement for which both music history and literary history owe an endless debt of gratitude”.<sup>25</sup> The recognition itself was not delayed, and for this enormous scientific work he was awarded the title of PhD in Musicology.

The volume *A humanista metrikus dallamok Magyarországon [The humanistic metrical melodies in Hungary]* was published in 1967. It presents Hungarian pieces of humanistic metrical melodies, while at the same time touching on interesting aspects of the history of the Reformation in Hungary. The book deals with the history of music, but also contains a wealth of information on Hungarian church history.<sup>26</sup> The traces of the humanist style of singing in Hungary have been preserved for the longest time in the Hungarian-language melodies in Protestant church hymnals, but with texts created in antique verse meter. Bence Szabolcsi began to explore this melodic material in 1928. Kálmán Csomasz Tóth’s treatise on the Hungarian melodies of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is in many respects a forerunner of the monograph published in 1967.<sup>27</sup> The book presents the reader with remarkable results, not only on a detailed question of European and Hungarian music history, but also in many aspects of the history of congregational singing.

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<sup>23</sup> “The hymnody of Luther and the beginning of the German Reformation has a modest share in old Hungarian Protestant hymnody (the author writes on page 99). The connections that link 16th century melodies to Czech Hussite and Polish Protestant sources are broader and more significant”. Kálmán Csomasz Tóth begins his exploration of the Polish connections. Some of the melodies are of Gregorian origin, others show affinities with metrical humanist ode melodies. The value of his work is enhanced by the examination of the folk music context of the old church histories.

<sup>24</sup> Composer Zoltán Gárdonyi (1906-1986)

<sup>25</sup> See Zoltán Gárdonyi’s book review in *Theológiai Szemle [Theological Review]* 1959/II/5-6, pp. 247-249.

<sup>26</sup> Published by Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1967.

<sup>27</sup> The document from which Kálmán Csomasz Tóth explains the Hungarian Reformed aspects of the humanist metrical melodies is the school hymnal of Imre Anderkó Szilvás-Újfalvi, pastor and teacher in Debrecen, probably written between 1596 and 1599. It is for this reason that the chapter on Szilvás-Újfalvi is the focus of this work. Also of interest are the section on the life of Albert Molnár Szenczi, especially the twilight of his life, and the chapter on the relationship between humanist metrical poetry and the poetic practice of the Hungarian language at the time.

The volume *Maróthi György és a kollégiumi zene [György Maróthi and Collegiate Music]* was published in 1978. The authors stated the following regarding the creation of his book: "I received the first impetus for this book at the end of the 1950s from Zoltán Kodály and Bence Szabolcsi, who, in the great debt we owe them, placed the analytical presentation of György Maróthi's musical work and its proper place in the history of our musical education among the most important tasks".<sup>28</sup> When the book was published, it was highly acclaimed by the representatives of the field. Ferenc Bónis wrote: "He illuminates his subject with an impressive knowledge of history, music, literature and church history, with a fervor that only someone who has tried to break the domestic fallow ground under circumstances like those of Maróthi can achieve... His book is certainly one of the most significant undertakings of Hungarian music history, well worth studying".<sup>29</sup> Sándor Berkesi published in *Theological Review*, Béla Tóth in *Confessio* and Jenő Bányai in *Békehírnök* put pen to paper in praise of the work.

In addition to the works published independently, Kálmán Csomasz Tóth has also written several partial studies. In the theoretical part of Volume I of the *Egyházzenei vezérfonal [Church Music Guide]*, he provides comprehensive information on the science of hymnology and medieval sing styles. He focuses on the significance of Calvin and the Genevan Psalter and highlights the work of Albert Molnár Szenczi and György Maróthi, including the latter's revolutionary innovations in choral singing. For the *Református Korálkönyv [Reformed Chorale Book]* he prepares the organ settings of 116 hymns. He has published song arrangements in Volume II of the *Egyházzenei vezérfonal [Church Music Guide]* to the Cantor Courses. In the collection of choral works by Kálmán Csomasz Tóth, entitled *Háromszólamú feldolgozások a Református Énekeskönyv dallamaira [Three-voice arrangements of the melodies of the Reformed Hymnal]*,<sup>30</sup> he has arranged ten Geneva psalms, 31 hymns, one 18th century hymn and one of his own compositions. It is intended as music for beginner and advanced congregational choirs and school choirs.

Less well known is his research for the Institute of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in the service of general Hungarian music history. In the series *Musicological Studies*, he published an article on the melodies of funerary hymnbooks and on the Eperjes Gradual. In the series *Népzene és Zenetörténet (Folk Music and Music History)* he published a joint study with Kornél Bárdos on the history of Hungarian gradual hymns. He compiled the material and notes for volumes I, V and VI of the 17th century series of the *Régi Magyar Költők Tára [Old Hungarian Poets' Library]*. In the

<sup>28</sup> Cited from the author's words by Sándor Berkesi in *Theologiai Szemle*, 1979 XXII/1, 56-59.

<sup>29</sup> Excerpt from a radio lecture given in April 1979.

<sup>30</sup> Published by the Református Egyházzeneészek Munkaközössége [Union of Reformed Church Musicians], Budapest, 1997.

*Magyarország Zenetörténete [Music History of Hungary] II (1541-1686)*, edited by Kornél Bárdos, he wrote the chapter on Protestant churches, as well as the chapters on *The Development of Musical Literacy*, *The Practice of Melody Notation*, *The Forms and Types of Popular Monophony*, and *The Musical Works of Our Poets*. In addition to the above, many of his studies have been published in the *Református Egyház [Reformed Church]*, *Theológiai Szemle [Theological Review]*, *Confessio*, and the *Ráday évkönyv [Ráday Yearbook]*. Among these I would like to highlight his articles on the melody of Bálint Balassi's hymns, on the liturgy of the communion of Gál Huszár's hymnal, on congregational singing at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, on the role of Imre Szilvás Újfalvi, on Bartók, and Zoltán Gárdonyi.

At the end of his life, one of his dreams could be realized with the publication of 50 hymns in German, selected from the Hungarian Protestant singing tradition.<sup>31</sup> The volume, entitled *O wahres Wort*, was the gateway to the West for Hungarian church song literature.<sup>32</sup>

### Psalm arrangements

According to Kálmán Csomasz Tóth, the Genevan Psalter should be sung in their original form, i.e., with the original rhythm and without dyesis (without a leading note present in the cadence at the end of the melodic line). Thus, in monophonic church singing, the melodies retain their modal character. In contrast, in the Transylvanian hymnbooks of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the psalms are sung with a balanced rhythm and the leading note appears in the cadences at the end of the melody line. This latter phenomenon can be observed as early as the Renaissance when the spread of polyphony in church music led to a noticeable friction between melodic and harmonic aspirations. The introduction of a leading note at the end of polyphonic works was increasingly felt necessary.<sup>33</sup> Hungarian hymnologists were divided on this issue.<sup>34</sup> In Zoltán Kodály's bicinia, as well as his choral works written for three and four voices based on the Genevan Psalter, the leading note version is to be found.

Kálmán Csomasz Tóth wrote a total of 12 Genevan Psalter arrangements for two-voice, 10 for three voices and 3 meant for four voices.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The translator of the text was Pastor Günter Ruterborn, who was active in the French congregation in Berlin at the time of the publication of the book.

<sup>32</sup> The collection includes an opening hymn, a penitential hymn, a psalm, a festive hymn and a hymn of thanksgiving.

<sup>33</sup> This phenomenon can be observed in the two-voice motets of Lassus (1532-1594).

<sup>34</sup> See the volume containing 19 studies: *Tanulmányok, dolgozatok, hozzászólások a genfi zsoltárok énekléséről. [Studies, papers and commentaries on the singing of the Genevan Psalter]*. Ed. László Draskóczy, ReZem Publishing House, Budapest, 1993.

<sup>35</sup> Bicinia: 1, 22, 32, 40, 45, 51, 75, 93, 97, 110, 118, 123; three-voice arrangements: 31, 35, 40, 51, 65, 68, 84, 90, 107, 121; four-voice arrangements: 61, 116, 125.



He composed his bicinia for a female choir, the only exception being Psalm 51, which is meant for tenor and bass voices. The majority of the three voice compositions, i.e., 6 psalm arrangements, are for mixed choir, and 4 for either male or female choirs.<sup>36</sup> The four voiced arrangements are meant for a mixed choir. Sometimes the number of voices is augmented in the final melodic line of the work. In some cases, only the two chords at the end of the work,<sup>37</sup> but in the two-voice arrangement of Psalm 51, the entire closing line is composed for three voices.

In terms of tonality, the arrangements retain the original psalm mode: 5 works are written in Dorian mode, 3 in Dorian-Aeolian, 3 in Phrygian, 3 in Mixolydian, 9 in major and 2 in minor. The only chromatically modified notes are within the accompanying voices.<sup>38</sup>

### E. g. 1



1. Te - ben - ned biztunk e - le - i - től fog - va, U - ram, té - ged tar - tottunk haj - lé - kunknak!  
 2. Az em - be - re - ket te meg hagyod hal - ni És ezt mondod az em - be - ri nem - zetnek!  
 9. Szol - gá - i - don lát - tassad dolga - i - dat, Di - cső - sé - ge - det ezek - nek fi - a - in!

### Kálmán Csomasz Tóth: *Psalm 90*, m. 1-4.

In terms of time signature, there are two types of markings. In most of the works there are no written time bars, and the drawn lines are only indications because the bars contain a variable number of beats. However, in some arrangements the time signature is precisely marked.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> 5 compositions for soprano, tenor, bass; 1 composition for soprano, alto, bass; 3 works for soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto; 1 work for tenor, baritone, bass.

<sup>37</sup> In the case of the two-voice arrangements of Psalms 32, 45, 97 and the three-voice arrangement of Psalm 107.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. in the second and third voices of Psalm 90 for tenor, baritone, bass.

<sup>39</sup> In the arrangement of psalms 68, 90, 107 for three voices and 61, 116, 125 for four voices.

E. g. 2

Ki - ál - tá - som halld meg, Is - ten! Vedd fü - led - be

Ki - ál - tá - som halld meg, Is - ten! Vedd fü - led - be

Ki - ál - tá - som halld meg, Is - ten! Vedd fü - led - be

Kálmán Csomasz Tóth: *Psalm 61*, m. 1-3.

The voices follow the rhythm of the main melody. When a sequence of syncopated notes appears in the psalm, the accompanying voices move to the beat.<sup>40</sup>

E. g. 3

S

1. Pe - relj, U - ram, per - ló - im - mel, Har - colj én el - len - sé - gim - mel,  
 9. Dí - csér - lek té - ged szün - te - len Nagy sú - rú gyü - le - ke - zet - ben,  
 13. Már a - zok é - ne - kel - je - nek, Kik i - ga - zam - nak ö - rül - nek,

T

1. Pe - relj, U - ram, per - ló - im - mel, Har - colj én el - len - sé - gim - mel,  
 9. Dí - csér - lek té - ged szün - te - len Nagy sú - rú gyü - le - ke - zet - ben,  
 13. Már a - zok é - ne - kel - je - nek, Kik i - ga - zam - nak ö - rül - nek,

B

1. Pe - relj, U - ram, per - ló - im - mel, Har - colj én el - len - sé - gim - mel,  
 9. Dí - csér - lek té - ged szün - te - len Nagy sú - rú gyü - le - ke - zet - ben,  
 13. Már a - zok é - ne - kel - je - nek, Kik i - ga - zam - nak ö - rül - nek,

Kálmán Csomasz Tóth: *Psalm 35*, m. 1-2.

<sup>40</sup> We find them in the three-voice arrangements. See 35, 40, 121. There is also one example in a work written for four voices. See Psalm 61.

The rhythm is not very varied, since the psalms mostly contain two note values, quarter and eighth notes. Only at the end of the melody lines is there a longer note. However, an interesting phenomenon in the joint effect of the voices is that the two voices move in a compensatory rhythm (when one voice moves in quarter notes and the other in small eighths). This rhythm is seen in the two-voice arrangement of Psalm 40.

## E. g. 4

— Ki - vón a mély ve-rem-ből, — És a sá-ros fer-tő - ből, — És én lá - ba - i - mat —  
 — Ha el-kezdem szám-lál - ni, — Nem tu-dom ki-mon-da - ni, — Mert Te nem kí-ván-tad —  
 — No - ha én sze-gény va - gyok, — És én szük-sé-gim na - gyok, — De rám gon-dot vi - sel —

Kálmán Csomasz Tóth: *Psalm 40*, m. 11-16.

The tempo is not specified in the works. In only two cases is there a metronome mark at the beginning of the works.<sup>41</sup> The dynamics is left to the performer. Dynamic indications are found in only three choral works.<sup>42</sup>

The arrangement of the works is a strophic one, with usually three stanzas, more rarely two or four stanzas. These were chosen by the composer himself, but it is also possible to insert other stanzas.

Csomasz Tóth uses both homophonic and polyphonic composing techniques in his psalm arrangements. The bicinia are all polyphonic. The solo entrances usually occur in stretto, i.e., they follow each other at two beats, but Psalm 45 deviates from this pattern and the lower voice imitates the beginning of the work at 4 beats. It is only in the second half of the work that the spacing between the voices decreases, and in the final melodic line of the work the voices all move together. In the two-voice version of Psalm 75, from the third melodic line onwards, there is a single beat between the imitating voices. It is a common phenomenon that the last melodic line of a choral work is homophonic in structure.<sup>43</sup> Occasionally, the upper voice waits for the lower voice's movement with a long-sustained note.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Two four-voice arrangements have metronome markings: 90-96 in Psalm 125, and 100 in Psalm 116.

<sup>42</sup> In Psalm 107 for three voices and in the works for four voices (Psalms 61, 116, 125).

<sup>43</sup> Examples of bicinia arrangements include Psalms 1, 40, 45, 51, 93, 118.

<sup>44</sup> Examples of bicinia arrangements include Psalm 75, 110, 118 and Psalm 125 of the arrangements for four voices.

Hoz-zánk kö-zel jött hí-ven, Mi a - zért csu-dá - i - dat, Hir - det - jük jó vol - to - dat.  
 Sem nem a pusztá-ból jó: Min - den az is - te-nen áll, Ó a - láz, ő ma - gasz - tal.  
 És szar-vu-kat megszegem Az is - ten-te - le-nek-nek, Hogy a jók fel - kel - je - nek.

ved Hoz-zánk kö-zel jött hí-ven, Mi a - zért csu-dá - i - dat, Hir - det - jük jó vol - to - dat, jó vol - to - dat.  
 ról, Sem nem a pusztá-ból jó: Min - den az is - te-nen áll, Ó a - láz, ő ma - gasz - tal, ő ma - gasz - tal.  
 gét, És szar - vu - kat megszegem Az is - ten - te - le - nek - nek, Hogy a jók fel - kel - je - nek: fel - kel - je - nek.

**Kálmán Csomasz Tóth: Psalm 75, m. 7-12.**

The choral works written for three voices, with three exceptions,<sup>45</sup> are homophonic arrangements. The psalm melody is only in one case, in the arrangement of Psalm 84, placed not in the upper but in the lower voice, the alto.

The arrangement of Psalm 31 begins with a single voice, the soprano, but from the second melodic line onwards all three voices start singing together. Only in the final melodic line is there an occurrence of polyphonic imitation. In the three-voice arrangement of Psalm 107, there is more independent movement in the voices. Although most of the melodic lines start with a homophonic structure, after a few notes the rhythm of the voice's changes, with augmented notes and syncopations breaking up the rhythm of the voices.

meg-marad Ó tel-jes ir - gal - ma. A - kik meg - vál - tat - tak Ó ál - ta - la  
 meg-marad ő ir - - - gal - ma. A - - - - kik megvál - tat - tak ő ál - ta -  
 ő - rök - ké meg-marad ő ir - gal - ma. A - kik meg - vál - tat - tak ő

**Kálmán Csomasz Tóth: Psalm 107, m. 6-11.**

<sup>45</sup> The arrangement of psalms 40, 84, 107 are polyphonic choral works.

The four-voice works have a homophonic structure. In the arrangement of Psalm 61, the voices enter simultaneously, but in the case of Psalms 116 and 125, the other voices enter after the unison entrance of two sets of voices. The chords are structured and progress together according to the rules of classical musical harmony.

E. g. 7

♩ = 90-96

*mf*

A - kik bíz - nak az Úr Is - ten - ben Nagy hi - e - de - lem - mel,

*f*

Azok nem vesznek el Sem bajban, sem vesze - dem - ben, Mint a Si - on - hegy

*f*

4

Kálmán Csomasz Tóth: *Psalm 125*, m. 1-8.

As I mentioned earlier, the polyphonic parts of the works show imitation between the voices. Most of the time the imitation starts on a descending fifth, a third, a fourth, but in the two-voice arrangement of Psalm 22, the imitation of almost every melodic line starts to a different interval.<sup>46</sup> Most of the works contain free imitation. After the strict imitation of the first notes of the melodic lines, the size of the intervals is almost always altered, and the imitating voice does not follow the pitches of the melody faithfully. Strict imitation is only found in a few melodic lines<sup>47</sup> of the arrangements.

<sup>46</sup> In the two-voice arrangement of Psalm 22, the first melodic line is imitated at a perfect fifth, the second in minor third, the third in perfect unison, the fourth in major second, the fifth in perfect fourth, the sixth in the upper minor second, the seventh in minor third, and the eighth in perfect fourth.

<sup>47</sup> We find these in the two-voice arrangements of Psalms 75 and 110.

## E. g. 8

S

1. Dí - csé - rünk té - ged Is - ten, Dí - csé - ret lé - gyen né - ked, Mert a te dí - cső ne - ved  
 4. Mert a tiszt és az e - ró Nem a nap - ke - let fe - lől, Sem a nap - e - nyé - szet - ről.  
 6. Én ő - rök - ké dí - csé - rem A Já - kob - nak Is - te - nét, Hir - de - tem dí - cső - sé - gét.

A

1. Dí - csé - rünk té - ged Is - ten, Dí - csé - ret lé - gyen né - ked, Mert a te dí - cső ne - ved  
 4. Mert a tiszt és az e - ró Nem a nap - ke - let fe - lől, Sem a nap - e - nyé - szet - ről.  
 6. Én o - rök - ké dí - csé - rem A Já - kob - nak Is - te - nét, Hir - de - tem dí - cső - sé - gét.

Kálmán Csomasz Tóth: *Psalm 75, m. 1-6.*

In some of the two-voice arrangements, an appropriately interjected lateral movement or countermovement between the voices becomes apparent.

## E. g. 9

S

1. Vár - ván vár - tam a fel - sé - ges U - rat, És í - me hoz - zám for - du - la, Nagy  
 3. Csu - da - té - te - lid - nek sok ő - szá - ma, És nagy bölcs gon - do - la - tid - nak, Hoz -  
 8. Már te - ben - ned mind ör - ven - dez - ze - nek, A - kik ke - res - nek té - ge - det, Kí -

A

1. Vár - ván vár - tam a fel - sé - ges U - rat, És í - me hoz - zám for - du -  
 3. Csu - da - té - te - lid - nek sok ő - szá - ma, És nagy bölcs gon - do - la - tid -  
 8. Már te - ben - ned mind ör - ven - dez - ze - nek, A - kik ke - res - nek té - ge -

Kálmán Csomasz Tóth: *Psalm 40, m. 1-5.*

Kálmán Csomasz Tóth strove to provide music suitable for choirs with different voice combinations. His psalm arrangements are therefore meant for either male/female or mixed choirs of 2, 3 or 4 voices. The aim of the arrangements is to render the melodies of the psalms familiar and accessible, and to provide suitable musical material for congregational choirs. The arrangements were structured in a varied manner, considering the level of musical preparation of amateur congregational choirs. In his composition, we find the main elements of homophonic and polyphonic composing techniques, which he combines creatively in the development of the works' voices. He strives to ensure that the parts are easy to sing. Thus, he provides a rich and usable musical material for church congregations.

*Translated from Hungarian by Juliánna Köpeczi*

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