

The Institutionalization of the Choral Movement in Nineteenth-Century Hungary

Rudolf Gusztin



All content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Received: 01/09/2019

ORCID ID Rudolf Gusztin:  [0000-0002-6482-6958](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6482-6958)

Institution (Rudolf Gusztin): Hungarian Academy of Sciences; Research Centre for the Humanities; Institute for Musicology

Published: 03/04/2021

Last updated: 03/04/2021

How to cite: Rudolf Gusztin, The Institutionalization of the Choral Movement in Nineteenth-Century Hungary, 'Exploring Music Life in the Late Habsburg Monarchy and Successor States,' special issue, *Musicologica Austriaca: Journal for Austrian Music Studies* (April 03, 2021)

Tags: [19th century](#); [Choral movement](#); [Hungarian music history](#); [Hungary](#); [National identity](#); [Nationalism](#)

This article is part of the special issue "[Exploring Music Life in the Late Habsburg Monarchy and Successor States](#)," ed. Tatjana Marković and Fritz Trümpi (April 3, 2021).

This study was written with the support of the Országos Tudományos Kutatási Alapprogramok (Hungarian Scientific Research Fund), as part of the research program entitled "[Erkel Ferenc és műhelye](#)" ("Ferenc Erkel and his Workshop;" OTKA K112504). The project was conducted at the BTK Zenetudományi Intézet Magyar Zenetörténeti Osztály (Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute for Musicology, Department for Hungarian Music).



Abstract

Male choirs established in a number of European countries following the German model transcended the framework of simple, self-organized singing in a relatively short period of time and grew into serious musical institutions. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the choral movement began to develop in Hungary as well, having an organized form already by the second half of the 1860s and being supported by musicians such as Kornél Ábrányi, Ferenc Erkel, Franz Liszt, and Mihály Mosonyi. Although male choirs in Hungary had become an important part of the system of musical institutions by the second half of the century and the significance of the choral movement in music history is thus unquestionable, basic research on the subject is still missing. Neither is there sufficient primary literature related to the choirs (Kornél Ábrányi), nor do later studies engaged in an overview of the archival and other primary sources document the beginnings of the movement. Furthermore, the contemporary press material has not yet been systematically considered.

In my study, I concentrate on the early stages in the history of the choral movement. On the one hand, I will explore how a movement primarily aimed at music lovers became an officially organized institution through the first national gatherings of choral societies (1864 in Pécs, 1865 in Pest-Buda, and 1867 in Arad). On the other hand, in a microhistorical approach, I will attempt to reveal the beginnings of the institutional framework of the choirs belonging to the National Hungarian Choral Society, which operated in an officially organized way from 1867 on. What was the background that enabled the earlier foundation and the more permanent functioning of certain choral societies? The level of the ecclesiastical and secular music institutions of the cities might have played a role, as well as the enthusiasm and commitment to the idea of music and/or nation building on the part of the actual actors involved in the founding and operation of these societies. I will also treat the challenges faced by the movement in Hungary, a multicultural state. This offers a good opportunity to examine the attitude of leading musicians in Hungary towards the different nationalities in the Habsburg Monarchy.


[previous article](#)


[back to index](#)


[next article](#)

Background

[1] Collective choir singing was not new in the 1800s, but choral societies related to national movements may be considered a special phenomenon of the nineteenth century. For example, the German choral movement was an important “musical conveyor” for the German “unificatory nationalism” and “nation-building ideology,”^[1] and as the movement later on extended to neighboring countries and to Europe as a whole,^[2] political and/or national overtones were transmitted by practically all newly formed choirs. Besides the German model, there were other examples, such as the French *orphéon*. However, the former model had a greater impact on the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, including Hungary, due to their geopolitical setting. The *orphéon* was connected to the state rather than the nation, which is an important distinction.^[3]

The Hungarian choral movement was built upon the German bourgeoisie. The first *dalárdas* (choral societies) were formed in German-speaking cities of western Hungary. This part of the country had an established musical tradition and a well-constructed musical infrastructure, and it quickly adopted Austro-German musical culture. As most of the literature on the subject declares, the aim of the national Hungarian choral movement was to enhance Hungarian culture, spread the Hungarian language, and establish Hungarian song and choral literature.^[4] This seems logical, since the 1830–40s was a period that saw the development of Hungarian language and literature as well as the prosperity of Hungarian singing. The Hungarian Theater of Pest (which later became the Hungarian National Theater) opened in 1837, a growing number of Hungarian operas were premiered, and there was an increasing demand for folk songs to be presented in the form of art songs. The rise of Hungarian culture was in the air, so it is not difficult to see that national sentiment was important. In 1868, the year when the Országos Magyar Daláregyesület (Hungarian National Choral Society) was formed, it declared that its aim was to cultivate Hungarian song and music. The National Choral Society openly stated that it had a cultural mission.^[5] It is also true that nationality became an even more relevant question by the end of the century. But we must not forget that several choral societies around the middle of the century (e.g. Pécs, Sopron, Eger, Székesfehérvár) were transformed from church choirs into secular choral societies. In these cases, however, it seems that the transformation was pragmatic rather than ideological or political. Also, we must take into consideration that the first treatises about the Hungarian choral movement were written in the 1890s and at the beginning of the twentieth century, in a political climate where national issues were more tense than they had been in the second half of the nineteenth century. My hypothesis—although further research is needed to prove it—is that the Hungarian national character was not so strong in the early years, but it was constructed in the first place by its contemporary narrator, Kornél Ábrányi (1822–1903), and carried on by others.

In my study, I analyze the beginning of the Hungarian choral movement: the conditions and motivations of its birth and the process by which the movement became—in my opinion: gradually—a tool for nationalistic ideology. As nationalism forged ahead, the multi-ethnic choirs were replaced by national ones (German, Hungarian, Serbian, Romanian) cultivating their own culture. As much as this made the choral movement varied, it also broke it up, since the cooperation between the different nationalities became limited and was mainly restricted to multi-ethnic cities with a rich history of pluriculturalism. This overall narrative will be refined by the deeper analysis of certain choral societies.



Figure 1: The dalárda in Pécs on the occasion of its thirtieth anniversary, 1891 (photograph by Károly Zelesny); by courtesy of National Széchényi Library, Budapest, [Digital Image Archive](#)

Primary and Secondary Sources

In spite of the significance of the choral movement in Hungarian music life, thorough research has not yet been conducted on the subject, and an examination of the movement's primary sources still needs to be carried out. As part of a large-scale project, the Magyar Zenetörténeti Osztály, Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, Zenetudományi Intézet (Department of Hungarian Music History, Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute for Musicology) has started to collect and process the very abundant and diverse sources.^[6] Besides the historical summaries of the different choral societies, there are also letters, minutes, financial reports, booklets, music sheets, photos, objects, etc.^[7]

Important primary sources pertaining to the life of the choral movement are the *Zenészeti Lapok* (Musical Journal)^[8] and the *Magyar Dal és Zeneközlöny* (Hungarian Song and Music Bulletin). The *Zenészeti Lapok*, published between 1860 and 1876, was the first musical journal in Hungary. Between 1869 and 1872, it was the official journal of the National Choral Society. It was published with the subtitle "The Official Journal of the National Choral Movement."^[9] The founder of the journal was Ábrányi, the secretary general of the National Choral Society. The *Magyar Dal és Zeneközlöny* was published between 1895 and 1910, and it became the official journal, as the *Zenészeti Lapok* had ceased publication more than two decades earlier.

Even the newest studies still rely upon works written around the turn of the century, mainly Kornél Ábrányi's book on the history of the Hungarian Choral Society (*Az orsz. m. daláregyesület*

negyedszázados története 1867-től 1892-ig [The 25-Year History of the Hungarian Choral Society from 1867 to 1892; see [note 4](#)]) published in 1892, as well as his summary of nineteenth-century Hungarian music (*A magyar zene a 19-ik században* [The Hungarian Music in the 19th Century; see [note 4](#)]).^[10] These are very valuable sources, but they require interpretation. Similarly, the summary booklets of the local societies have to be treated critically, but they are relevant sources, in spite of their partiality and self-representation.^[11]

The Beginning of the Hungarian Choral Movement

[2] Although it is true that German minorities played an important part in the rise of the choral movement in Hungary, other musical institutions were also necessary to establish and, to an even greater degree, maintain these singing societies. The first societies were mainly founded in the German-speaking cities of western Hungary in the 1830s and 1840s.^[12] As mentioned earlier, this part of the country had a long musical tradition along with a good music infrastructure and was always quick to adopt the latest developments from the music culture of Austria and Southern Germany.

In Hungary, choral singing had for centuries primarily been an activity associated with the church. Several summaries of the Hungarian choral movement mention the four-part singing of the Protestant students and the choirs and vocal-instrumental ensembles of the Catholic Church as predecessors. Pécs, one of the most important cities in the *dalárda* movement, is a good example of the fundamental role played by local musical infrastructure. This Catholic city was known for its vibrant church music.^[13] In the 1740s, the cathedral's choir was very active under the direction of Franz Anton Paumon (1704–50). In addition to singing in the church, the choir was also asked by the city on several occasions to perform at different secular events. During the cathedral's golden age in the 1780s, the choir had a steady pool of participants, which guaranteed the quality of their performance.^[14] We must also note that there were two secular choirs in Pécs in the 1790s: namely the Bürgerliches Ungarischen Chor (sic) and the Deutsches Bürgerchor (sic). They performed both at secular and at ecclesiastical events.^[15] This meant that when the Pécsi Dalárda (Pécs Choral Society) was formed in 1847 by Ferenc Sebestyén Hölzl (Franz Seraphin Thomas Hölzl; 1808–84), the *regens chori* of the cathedral, it built upon an already existing choir culture. As Lajos Haksch summarizes in his book *A negyvenéves pécsi dalárda története, 1862–1902* (The History of the Forty-Year-Old Choral Society in Pécs, 1862–1902; see [note 11](#)), the direct ancestor of the society was a German-speaking choral society in the 1830s and 1840s, formed by the singers of the cathedral's choir and some dilettantes.^[16] The society existed for one year before it broke up due to the revolution, but when it was re-established in 1861, the organist of the cathedral, Péter Schmidt (1799–1874), was the leader of the organizing team, and Károly Wachauer (1829–90), an active church musician, became the conductor.

Sopron serves as another good example of the relationship between church choirs and the *dalárda*.^[17] The choral society itself arose directly out of a church choir in Sopron. The Lutheran cantor Keresztély Altdörfer (Christian Altdörfer; 1825–98) created a male choir in 1847, which took on the name Dalfüzér (Liederkrantz) in 1859.^[18] Nándor Till, founder of the Pest-Buda Dalárda (Choral Society of Pest-Buda), was a chorister of Lipótváros in Pest-Buda. The statutes of this society start with the following statement: “The society's aim is the cultivation and dissemination of the good church song and also partly the practicing and fostering of singing.”^[19] The choral

society in Kronstadt / Brassó / Braşov was formed by church musicians and reformed funeral singers and was joined by few others. They were preparing to perform at a school ball. Although the ball was canceled, they decided to stay together and establish the Hungarian *dalárda*.^[20]

Music schools also helped the work of the choral societies, especially the schools for singing. In Sopron, János Lorenz (n/a-1877) brought new life to the Musikverein at the end of the 1850s and gave the singing-school a new boost. In Pécs, Wachauer opened his singing-school in 1860 and, as a local newspaper reported, encouraged the students to participate in the *dalárda*. In Debrecen, the students of the *zenede* (music school) performed together with the reformed college choir and the local choral society,^[21] and in Szeged the *zenede* itself established the choral society.^[22] So we can see how music education complemented the choral movement, especially in the way it taught students to sing, created a supply of trained singers, and intentionally collaborated with the movement.



Figure 2: The consecration of the Pécsi Dalárda's flag on August 15, 1864 during the National Choral Gathering (picture by Gusztáv Keleti, published in *Vasárnapi Újság*, September 4, 1864); by courtesy of National Széchényi Library, Budapest, [Digital Image Archive](#)

The First National Choral Meetings: 1863, 1864, 1865, and 1867

In the 1850s, further singing societies were formed throughout the country, and in spite of the oppression of the arts by the autocratic political establishment in power, male choir literature increased. In the early 1850s, the Pest-Buda Dalárda was established, led by Till, but choirs were founded in the countryside as well. For example, the choir in Szombathely dates back to 1850,

and the one in Lugosch / Lugos / Lugo dates back to 1852.^[23]

By the 1860s, the concept of *dalárda* had spread widely enough to facilitate the organization of a national choral meeting. Indeed, by 1863, more than thirty societies existed throughout the country.^[24] In 1862, József Halász (1805–82) made an appeal in the *Zenészet* *Lapok* to organize a national choral society gathering. He asked Till, the conductor of the Pest-Buda society, to assume the leading role.^[25] But the countryside was not to be outdone by the capital city. In 1863, choirs from Hungary and Austria were invited to a celebration in Sopron by the local society and the city.^[26] The journal *Vasárnapi Újság* (Sunday News) reported on May 17, 1863: “(Song-celebration in Sopron.) The Sopron Dalárda is organizing a song-celebration on the 28th and 29th of next month, inviting all the societies of the country to be there, either with all of their members, or through representatives.”^[27] The country’s first choral meeting, organized by the Lutheran cantor Altdörfer, leader of the city’s choral society, was attended by around 600 singers. Several foreign and Hungarian societies (mainly of other towns in the vicinity of Sopron) were present.^[28]

[3] Later, Ábrányi interpreted this event as an unsuccessful gathering. He said that Sopron was intended to be the site of a national choral meeting, but since mainly Austrian and German choirs came, in addition to a few Hungarian societies from the surrounding area, it did not have an impact on the Hungarian movement.^[29] In 1902, Ábrányi wrote that Sopron had not been a Hungarian city at that time, and that it had also taken the “inappropriate step of inviting the societies of Austrian provinces, trying to unify the Hungarians with them.”^[30] The topic of nationalities within the choral movement might have been relevant and present from the beginning. An article in *Zenészet* *Lapok* from 1864 seems to support this notion. It mentions religious and national prejudices as some of the obstacles that lay before the choral societies. The article quotes the yearbook of the Lugosi Dal- és Zeneegylet (Lugos Song and Music Society).^[31] After Ábrányi deemed the Sopron event unsuccessful in an article written in 1864^[32] as well as in his own account of the choral movement, it was removed from the list of national meetings in some of the Hungarian music history writings, in spite of the fact that it was among the first attempts to organize a nationwide celebration and became a model for further celebrations, thus inspiring the foundation of several other societies. The Sopron society was aware of this. In a letter to the *dalárda* in Pécs in 1864, they proudly wrote that they had organized the first singing-celebration the previous year, to which “every society from the country was invited.”^[33]

A significant milestone in the national choral movement is the year 1864, when the second national choral society gathering took place in Pécs. The celebration in Pécs was more distinctly Hungarian—unlike in Sopron—since the society in Pécs was leading the way in becoming Hungarian.^[34] The direct ancestor of the first choral society in Pécs (bearing the name *dalárda* in its name: Pécsi Dalárda) was established in 1847 by Hölzl. It was founded on the model of the German-speaking choral society that existed in the 1830s and 1840s.^[35] Although, according to Haksch, the new society was initially multilingual even after its 1861 reestablishment, the group expressed Hungarian nationalistic tendencies soon after its foundation:

The Pécsi Dalárda [Pécs Choral Society] was a Noah’s Ark at that time [1862] with its polyglot company ... Ferenc Sebestyén Hölzl, the well-known regens chori of the Pécs Cathedral, was the choir’s elected leader, who was only there at the beginning, since he fell out of favor with the ones who promoted the Hungarian national direction and thought that this was superior.^[36]

Around 1864, the society decided “to perform even foreign works in Hungarian translation.”^[37] Ábrányi praised this attitude in one of his articles published in *Zenészeti Lapok*, and later he cited another positive example from Arad in the same year.^[38] The fact that transforming the repertoire in Pécs became an issue again in 1876 shows the absence of Hungarian choir repertoire:

Magyarization of the repertoire is constantly an issue; the demand for it is getting louder. A new committee is responsible for the acquisition of Hungarian songs, and the board entrusts the conductors to apply the nicer Hungarian folksongs—for a fair payment—to male choirs. Wachauer and Hoffer hand in most of their arrangements in these times.^[39]

In 1865, a concert review noted that the Pest-Buda Dalárda only performed songs in Hungarian, which made it a pioneer.^[40] That same year, the “Sängerhort” society in Buda also switched to Hungarian, and some “Sängerhortian” members left the society as a result. The reviewer also added that the Budai Dalárda (Buda Choral Society) had become more popular due to its turn to the national direction.^[41]

No doubt, the reports of *Zenészeti Lapok* and the aforementioned societies reflected their own efforts to become Hungarian.^[42] Still, it is striking that these news reports and the letters of intent reflected so closely the stated purpose of organizing a choral meeting.

Criticism was articulated before the *dalárda* in Buda was transformed.^[43] Moreover, some objected to having the 1865 gathering in Pest because many of the city’s societies were not “Hungarian enough.”^[44] In the end, the third National Choral Society gathering was held in Pest—in connection with the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the *Nemzeti Zenede* (National Conservatory)—with the participation of Franz Liszt (1811–86) and under the baton of Ferenc Erkel (1810–93), thus signaling that the leading figures of Hungarian musical life were supportive of this national movement. The invitation was sent by the Buda society on January 12, 1865, and it was well received. More than fifty societies and over 1200 members participated. This exceeded the numbers of the previous two gatherings. The movement was ready to be institutionalized.^[45]

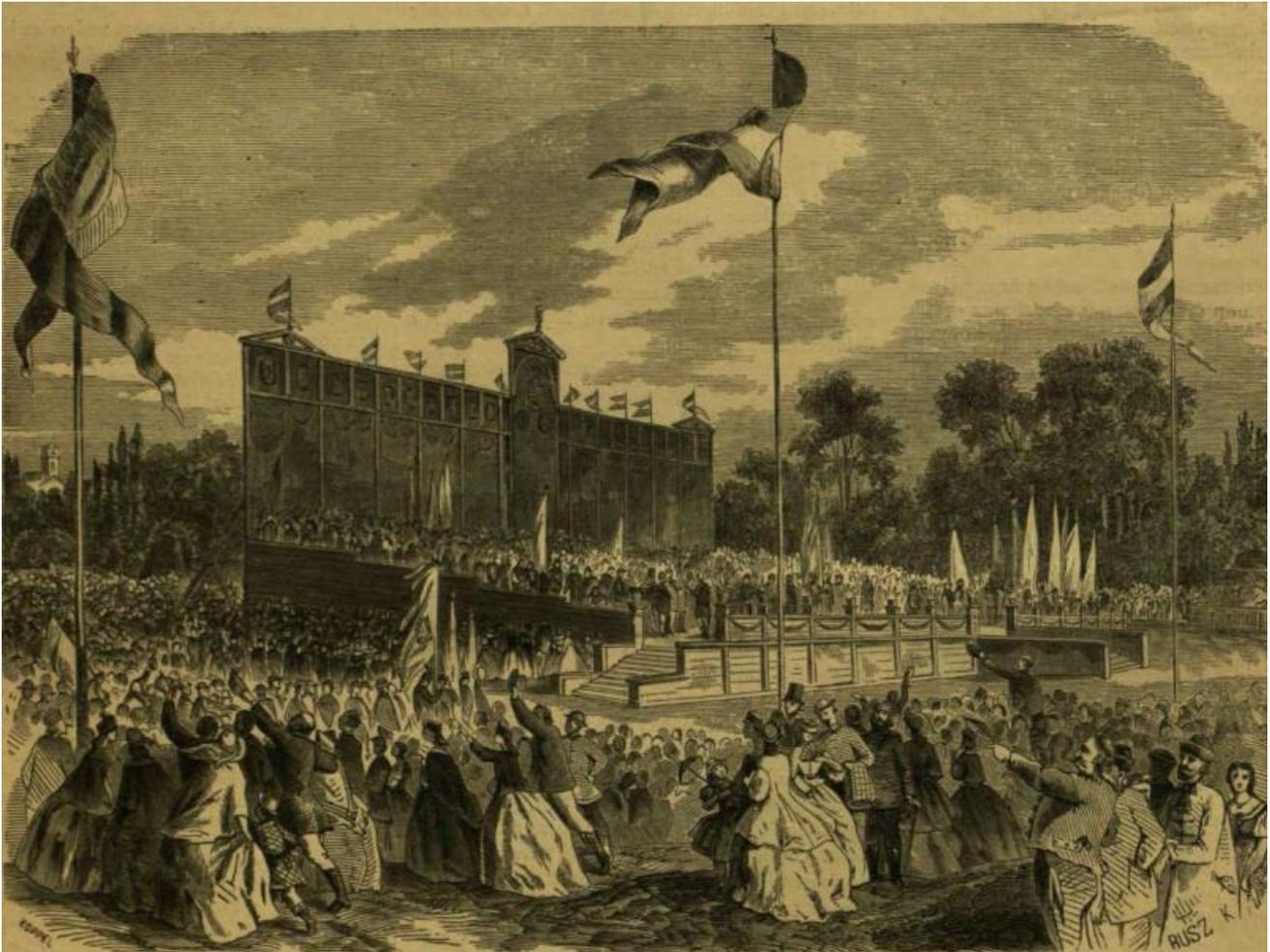


Figure 3: The 1865 national gathering in the Városliget (City Park), Pest (picture by Gusztáv Keleti, published in *Vasárnapi Újság*, August 14, 1892); by courtesy of National Széchényi Library, Budapest, [Digital Image Archive](#)

As the gathering got closer, the *Fővárosi Lapok* (Capital City Paper) reported the wish to form a national choral society.^[46] The *Zenészet* published an article on August 17 with the title “A megalakítandó ‘Országos Magyar Dalárszövetség’ érdekében” (In the Interest of Forming the Hungarian National Choral Society), which was written by Károly Bors, the president of the Kunszentmiklós Choral Society, and it urged the establishment of a national alliance.^[47] After the celebration, on August 25, 1865, the *Zenészet* reported that the general assembly held on August 21 had accepted the concept of a “national choral alliance,” and a committee was appointed to establish it and create its statutes by the following year.^[48] The fourth National Choral Society gathering took place in the multinational Banatian city of Arad in 1867, and on this occasion the Hungarian National Choral Society was formed.^[49] The statutes of the National Society were published in *Zenészet* on September 22, 1867. This is when the public was informed and therefore may be considered the symbolic date when the movement became an institution. On October 14, the Ministry of Internal Affairs approved it, and the first official directory board meeting was held on March 26, 1868, in Pest-Buda, where the new leaders decided to send a letter to every society that had not joined yet.

By this time, national commitment had become more important in the press, but in everyday life—especially in multicultural cities—choral life was colorful and still maintained its diversity. The issue is more complex than what we can read in the accounts of its history.



Figure 4: The 1868 national gathering in Debrecen; the societies decided here that in the future the national gatherings would have to be organized by the National Choral Society (picture by Mihály Munkácsy, published in *Vasárnapi Újság*, August 14, 1892); by courtesy of National Széchényi Library, Budapest, [Digital Image Archive](#)

The Hungarian Choral Movement and the National Question

[4] Moritz Csáky defines Central Europe as a pluricultural place where cultural differences were maintained until the second half of the nineteenth century, when the peaceful coexistence between ethnic groups broke up due to urbanization and nationalistic ideology.^[50] The modern “national identities” pitted the different ethnicities against each other.^[51]

We are aware of various founding documents which make references to the issue of nationalities in an inclusive way. The Békési Dalegylet’s (Békés Singing Society) deed of foundation stated the following: “It is declared that every person who would like to participate in the noble delight of the art song and submits himself / herself to the charter will be accepted as member regardless of religion and nationality.”^[52] In Kronstadt / Brassó / Braşov, where Hungarians and Saxons lived together, the charter declared that “every Hungarian citizen of good standing living in Brassó can be a full member who was examined by the conductor and recommended to the general assembly and voted in by three-quarters of the members of the society.”^[53] The choral and music

society of Lugosch / Lugos / Lugo published its yearbook in German in addition to Hungarian, so that members who did not speak Hungarian could understand it as well.^[54] This shows how many societies continued to be open for other nationalities. We have also learned that there was a Serbian choral society in Baja. In a letter from Baja published in *Zenészeti Lapok*, the Serbian choir is mentioned as a positive example in contrast to the Hungarian choir in the town.^[55]

Several issues of the *Zenészeti Lapok* in the 1870s mention the problems of the multilingual nation. An article titled “A gárda jelszava”^[56] (The Watchword of the Guard), published on March 5, 1871 (vol. 11, issue 20) by an unknown author, pointed out that Hungary had an even greater need for choral societies than Germany. The reason given was that Hungary was a polyglot, multilingual nation, whereas the Germans did not have to face such a challenge in the process of their unification. According to this article, the role of the choral society seems to have been the establishment and maintenance of the Hungarian unification. Similar arguments were stated in an article published in 1872. The writer insisted that the Hungarian choral movement served the purposes of Hungarian culture and nationality, but at the same time one could detect some openness, acceptance toward the choirs of other nationalities, and moreover a certain acknowledgement of their musical culture.

Unification ... is a significant factor all over the world, but nowhere does it have such a weight as it does in our country, where one political nation is separated from another by multiple walls. Even if not so many nations with differing languages and religions lived together with us within the same borders, we Hungarians do politics with such passion due to our differences of opinion that we would be divided into hostile camps instead of being opponents if we did not have numerous national matters in front of us that force us to shake hands as brothers in order to attend to these matters. ... Each and every choral society needs to be characterized by the conscious operation of the desire to work for Hungarian culture, and therefore the national song is not merely part of its activities; instead it is its most important feature and its main direction. We know that there are many obstacles in this regard. On the one hand, there are many choral societies speaking foreign languages; on the other hand, there is a lack of Hungarian compositions from which rich programs could be constructed. But these obstacles can be overcome. First of all, we do not wish to force the Hungarian songs on the German or Serbian choral societies, nor do we wish to exclude the compositions of excellent (especially German) composers at all, not even from the work of the Hungarian choral societies, since the nurturing of these significant works can render an essential service in our place, just like everywhere else.^[57]

In reality, the tendency was the opposite: national politics led the Magyarization, which reached the choral movement as well. Several choral societies that had been multi-ethnic before now became Hungarian (e.g. in Magyaróvár), and when the Szerb Dalárda (Serbian Choral Society) held its celebration in Temeswar / Temesvár / Timișoara, where the Serbian choral societies from Vojvodina / Délvidék / Southern Lands met, the report in the Hungarian choral movement's journal mentioned the lack of Hungarian language. The author stated that he felt as if he were in “Serbian land.” Next time, he expected his “Serbian brothers” to sing in Hungarian as well as in Serbian in order to prove that they really were Hungarian citizens.^[58] This cultural-political statement was foreign to the citizens of a region where in everyday life the different ethnicities lived together.

Toward the end of the century, we can see the development of both the inclusive and exclusive tendencies. The *dalárda* in Magyaróvár became Hungarian at the turn of the century. There was a strong German influence due to its geographical location. When this society was formed back in 1861, the majority of the city's population was German-speaking. Thus, every society had to be German-speaking, but as Hungarian culture developed and became stronger, it became desirous for the institutions to become Hungarian—including the *dalárda*.^[59]

[5] In 1875, a conflict arose in Kronstadt / Brassó / Braşov. The Szász Dalárda (Saxon Choral Society) would not agree to allow the Brassói Magyar Dalárda (Hungarian Choral Society of Brassó) to use a badge that contained the town's coat of arms, since the badge would have been too similar to its own.^[60] Eventually, the conflict between the two groups eased in 1878 as the people of the town worked to resolve the conflict.^[61] Mihály Józsa described the relationship with the Saxons very clearly in his secretarial report from 1887: "Our majestic goal ... in this polyglot town ... is to become the center of the nationalistic and patriotic operation of the Hungarian unity and to serve as a bridge in our conversation with other nationalities, and we would use the power of the song in order to get closer to one another and reach a brotherly and peaceful coexistence—what else is there to be desired for the future?"^[62]

For the celebration of its twenty-fifth anniversary, the Hungarian Choral Society of Kronstadt / Brassó / Braşov, in addition to inviting other Hungarian societies to join, invited "the local German and Romanian societies, as well as other fellow societies from the nearby areas that happened not to be members of the alliance of choral societies."^[63] Later they would perform together with the choral societies of other nationalities at charity events organized by the town—so the relationship seems to have been resolved and may even be called good.^[64] Furthermore, there is also evidence that the Pécs Choral Society had an especially good relationship with the Croatians from Essegg / Eszék / Osijek.^[65]

Conclusion

At the end of my study, let me summarize the main conclusions. The choral societies of Hungary started out by following the German trend in the 1830s and 1840s. Later, in the 1850s and 1860s, these societies were influenced by a rising feeling of Hungarian nationalism. This was in the period of autocracy, and this was also the time when the movement became truly Hungarian. It may be seen by the growing number of societies that the movement was supported by acknowledged composers—Liszt, Erkel, Béni Egressy (1814–51), Mihály Mosonyi (1815–70)—and in the end the movement became institutionalized. The development clearly shows that, first, the German choral societies were Hungarianized, mainly in the 1860s. Then there was a growing need for the translation of existing works (mainly German ones) into Hungarian. Later, there was a demand for the creation of original Hungarian compositions (see the song writing competitions). Although the literature suggests that nationalism was present from the very beginning, it seems that many of the *dalárdas* were established without any ideology. For instance, many of them simply came into existence by transforming an already existing church choir. Hungarian identity became more and more important in the 1860s and 1870s. At the same time, national identity also became relevant for the minorities living in Hungary. As a consequence, the different national choral movements parted ways. This fragmentation happened in parallel with the political debates of the day, which created conflicts between the Hungarians and the minorities. On the basis of the above processes, we can surely state one thing: the choral movement reflected the changes in society and its politics concerning nationalities. At the same time, the movement had a double nature: on the one hand, it reinforced national consciousness and thus generated conflicts between nationalities; on the other hand, it provided an opportunity for a common platform for all the nationalities living within the borders of Hungary.



previous article



back to index



next article

References

1. "Romantic choral music was associated in Germany not only with *Gemütlichkeit*, the conviviality of social singing embodied in *Männerchöre* (male choruses in *volkstümlich* style), but also with the mass choral festivals that provided German unificatory nationalism with its hotbed. First organized in 1814, the Rhine festivals had reached grandiose proportions by the 1830s, with throngs of performers holding forth before even bigger throngs of spectators." Richard Taruskin, "Nationalism," in *Grove Music Online*; accessed September 5, 2019. Cf. Ryan Minor, *Choral Fantasies: Music, Festivity, and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Balázs Mikusi, "An 'Invented Tradition' for an 'Imagined Community': Male Choral Singing in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *New Sound* 28 (2006): 130–44. See also Ludwig Finscher's opinion concerning the German movement in John Kmetz, Ludwig Finscher, Giselher Schubert, Wilhelm Schepping, and Philip V. Bohlman, "Germany, Federal Republic of," in *Grove Music Online*; accessed September 5, 2019. ↑
2. Krisztina Lajosi and Andreas Stynen, eds., introduction to *Choral Societies and Nationalism in Europe*, National Cultivation of Culture (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1. ↑
3. *Ibid.*, 3–4. Cf. "Orphéon," in *Grove Music Online*; accessed January 3, 2019. ↑
4. Ágnes Fazekas, "Magyar zeneszerzők világi kórusművei a 20. század nagy zenei változásai előtt" [Secular Choral Works by Hungarian Composers Before the Great 20th-Century Changes in the Field of Music] (PhD diss., Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem [Franz Liszt Academy of Music], 2007), 6, 25. See also the first point in Kornél Ábrányi, "Az országos magyar daláregyesület első alapszabályai" [The First Constitution of the Hungarian Choral Society] in his *Az orsz. m. daláregyesület negyedszázados története 1867-től 1892-ig* [The 25-Year History of the Hungarian Choral Society, 1867–1892] (Budapest: Országos Magyar Daláregyesület, 1892), 78–79. The article "dalárda" in the Brockhaus-Riemann encyclopedia, for example, reads as follows: "Their true significance lies in the development of social spirit and social solidarity; following the footsteps of the German *Liedertafel* or *Liederkrantz*, the Hungarian *dalárda* is the most important place of contact for the urban bourgeoisie of the 19th century, and it is no coincidence that its heyday coincides with the emergence of the bourgeois lifeform. At the time of political repressions—in Germany, just as in Hungary—the choral society became a major focal point for patriotic unification and national demonstration." *Brockhaus-Riemann Zenei Lexikon* [Musical Lexicon], ed. Carl Dahlhaus, Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, and Antal Boronkay (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1983), 1:392. Ábrányi also strongly emphasizes the national character of the choral movement: "Besides, if it is necessary to attach importance to the cultivation of the national genius (and of course it is necessary), the Hungarian choral association must be regarded as the most national institution of the 19th century because during its long existence it was motivated only by this ideal; it fulfilled a protective mission and never served any other interest than the Hungarian." Kornél Ábrányi, *A magyar zene a 19-ik században* [The Hungarian Music in the 19th Century] (Budapest: Pannonia nyomda, 1900), 235. ↑
5. Viktor Vajda, "A magyar daláregyesület kérdése Debrecenben," *Zenészeti Lapok* 8, no. 50 (September 13, 1868): 787–88. ↑
6. The project started in the 1960s with archival and press research. As a result, books and studies were written on the subject of eighteenth- to twentieth-century music in Hungary. These works will form the basis for the monographic series on the history of music in Hungary published by the Zenetudományi Intézet (MTA BTK) (Institute for Musicology [HAS RCH]). Additional research was conducted in the

framework of the 2017–18 Visegrád Grant project “[The Network of the Musical Theatre Companies in the Multilingual East-Central Europe](#)” and the ongoing National Research, Development, and Innovation Office project of the Institute, “Ferenc Erkel and his workshop.” Within the Department of Hungarian Music History, I am conducting my PhD research on the history of the Hungarian choral movement at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest. ↑

7. I have conducted research in the following places: Baranya Megyei Levéltár (Baranya County Archives), Csorba Győző Könyvtár (Csorba Győző Library, Pécs), Győr-Moson-Sopron Megye Soproni Levéltára (Archives in Sopron of Győr-Moson-Sopron County), Debreceni Egyetem Egyetemi és Nemzeti Könyvtár (University and National Library of the University of Debrecen), Kodály Zoltán Zeneművészeti Szakgimnázium és Zeneiskola Könyvtára (Library of the Zoltán Kodály Conservatory), Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerületi és Kollégiumi Nagykönyvtár (The College Library of the Transtibiscan Church District and Library of Theology, Archives of Transtibiscan Reformed Church District), Méliusz Juhász Péter Könyvtár (Méliusz Juhász Péter City Library), Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Levéltár (Hajdú-Bihar County Archives), Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (National Széchényi Library), and the collection of Zenetudományi Intézet Magyar Zenetörténeti Osztály (Institute for Musicology, Department for Hungarian Music History). ↑
8. For more information about the journal, see the English introduction in RISM: [Katalin Szerző, “Zenészet Lapok \(1860–1876\),” *Répertoire international de la presse musicale*](#); accessed September 5, 2019. ↑
9. The *Zenészet Lapok* published its first issue in October 1860 and ceased in 1876. In September 1868, the general assembly of the choral societies during the Song and Music Celebration in Debrecen voted to make the *Zenészet Lapok* the official journal of the National Choral Society. As a result, the journal changed its profile from volume 9 on, and the support of choral societies became the main focus. As Katalin Szerző points out, “the local announcements were multiplied and articles about the inner organizational problems of the societies were published disproportionately.” Ábrányi, *Az orsz. m. daláregyesület negyedszázados története*, 102–103; Szerző, “*Zenészet Lapok*,” xx (see the Hungarian introduction). ↑
10. See for example Krisztina Lajosi, “Collapsing Stages and Standing Ovations,” in Lajosi and Styne, *Choral Societies*, 206–24. ↑
11. [Lajos Haksch, *A negyvenéves pécsi dalárda története, 1862–1902* \[The History of the Forty-Year-Old Choral Society in Pécs, 1862–1902\] \(Pécs: József Taizs, 1902\)](#); Tivadar Rombauer, ed., *Emlékkönyv a “Brassói Magyar Dalárda” fennállásának félszázados évfordulója alkalmára* [Album for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Hungarian Choral Society in Brassó] (Brassó: Égető, 1913); Mihály Józsa, *A Brassói Magyar Dalárda 25 éves története 1863–1888. és az 1888-ik 26. egyesületi évről szóló évkönyve* [The History of the 25-Year-Old Hungarian Choral Society in Brassó 1863–1888, and the Almanac for the 26th Year in 1888] (Brassó: Brassói Magyar Dalárda, 1889); Uzor Kuppis, *Jelentés a Pozsonyi Dalárda huszonöt évi művészeti tevékenységéről: 1857–1882* [Report on the Twenty-Five-Year-Long Artistic Activity of the Choral Society in Pozsony: 1857–1882] (Pozsony: Stampfel, 1882); János Reizner, *A Szegedi Polgári Dalárda emlékkönyve: alakulásának negyedszázados évfordulójára* [Album of the Civic Choral Society in Szeged for the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of its Establishment] (Szeged: Bába Nyomda, 1893); Vilibáld Pataki, *A “Magyaróvári Férfidalárda” 40 éves múltja: 1869–1909* [The Past 40 Years of the Male Choir in Magyaróvár: 1869–1909] (Magyaróvár: Dalárda, 1909); Lajos Kacz, *Huszonöt év a komáromi dalárda történetéből* [Twenty-Five Years of History of the Choral Society in Komárom] (Komárom: Ziegler, 1889). Cf. [Rudolf Gusztin, “A dalármozgalom századfordulós forrásainak értékelése” \[Evaluating the Turn of the Century Sources of the Choral Movement\], *Magyar Zenetörténet Online* \[Hungarian Music History Online\], August 19, 2020](#). ↑
12. As Lajos Haksch saw it at the turn of the century: “It is a fact of cultural history that the homeland of choral associations is the German-speaking area. As Kornél Ábrányi Sr. writes in one of his works on music history, the choral society is a specific German invention from the end of the eighteenth century. It is so simple to point at the map and clearly demonstrate that the channel transmitting this spirit to Hungary consisted of Transdanubian cultural points: Pozsony, Sopron, and Pécs. In that period, those

cities were flooded by the German manufacturers who were interested in culture.” [Haksch, A *negyvenéves pécsi dalárda története*, 1](#). Cf. [Ábrányi, *A magyar zene a 19-ik században*, 149](#); and his *Az orsz. m. daláregyesület negyedszázados története*, 8. ↑

13. Kornél Bárdos, *Pécs zenéje a 18. században* (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1976), 14–64. ↑
14. Ágnes Sas states that the rise in quality was due to the growing number of Viennese musicians: Ágnes Sas, *Többszólamú zene a magyar városokban, templomokban és főúri udvarokban* [Polyphonic Music in the Cities, Churches, and Aristocratic Courts of Hungary], *Műhelytanulmányok 1* (Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Zenetudományi Intézet, 2017), 42. Cf. Bárdos, *Pécs zenéje*, 22–64. ↑
15. Sas, *Többszólamú zene*, 47. It should be noted that these were music societies, more specifically wind ensembles (Harmonie), but there is a probability that they performed as choirs as well. Bárdos, *Pécs zenéje*, 85. ↑
16. [Haksch, *A negyvenéves pécsi dalárda története*, 1](#). ↑
17. For more information on the musical life of Sopron, see Kornél Bárdos, *Sopron zenéje a 16–18. században* [Music of Sopron in the 16th–18th Century] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984). ↑
18. “A 75 éves Dalfűzér fontosabb eseményei” [The Major Events of the 75-Year-Old Dalfűzér], typewritten document, Archives in Sopron of Győr-Moson-Sopron County, X/56. ↑
19. [Pest-Budai Dalárda, *A Pest-Budai Dalárda alapszabályai* \(Pest: Müller Emil könyvnyomdája, 1859\)](#). ↑
20. Józsa, *A Brassói Magyar Dalárda 25 éves története*, 6. Choral societies had a connection to church music in Serbia and Bulgaria as well. Cf. Tatjana Marković, “Choral Societies and National Mobilization in the Serbian (Inter)national Network,” and Ivanka Vlaeva, “Choral Societies and National Mobilization in Nineteenth-Century Bulgaria,” in Lajosi and Stynen, *Choral Societies*. ↑
21. [Zenede közgyűlési jegyzőkönyv és igazgatói jelentés a Debreczeni Zenedeegylet közgyűléséhez a lefolyt 1868/9 iskolai évről](#) [Minutes and Directorial Report on the 1868/9 School Year of the Zenede for the Zenede’s General Assembly] (Debreczen: Városi Könyvnyomda, 1870), 58. ↑
22. [Zenészet](#) *Lapok* 7, no. 8 (November 25, 1866): 127. ↑
23. János Felsmann tried to collect information about all the existing Hungarian choral societies, and the chronology of the choral societies can be found in his *Dalárzsebkönyv* [Dalárda Pocket Book] (Pest: 1865), 64–67. ↑
24. *Ibid.*, 13–14. ↑
25. József Halász, “Szózat a honi dalárdák érdekében,” *Zenészet* *Lapok* 47, no. 2 (August 21, 1862): 372–73. ↑
26. [Ábrányi, *A magyar zene a 19-ik században*, 325–26](#). ↑
27. [Vasárnapi Újság](#) 10, no. 20 (May 17, 1863): 179. ↑
28. See *Sürgöny* 3, no. 146 (June 28, 1863) and Johann Polster, *Geschichte des Oedenburger Männergesang-Vereines “Liederkranz” von seiner Gründung im Jahre 1859 bis zu seiner Jubelfeier im Jahre 1884* (Oedenburg: Litfaß, 1885), 20–29. ↑
29. [Ábrányi, *A magyar zene a 19-ik században*, 326](#); and his *Az orsz. m. daláregyesület negyedszázados története*, 17. ↑
30. *Ibid.* ↑
31. “A lugosi dal- és zeneegylet évkönyve,” *Zenészet* *Lapok* 4, no. 16 (January 14, 1864): 122–23. ↑
32. Kornél Ábrányi, “A pécsi dalárdaegylet által rendezendő dalárünnep” [On the Choral Meeting Organized

- by the Pécs Choral Society], *Zenészet* *Lapok* 4, no. 42 (July 14, 1864): 329. ↑
33. Letter from July 24, 1874, National Archives of Hungary, Baranya County Archive, X.56. ↑
34. Ábrányi claims that Pécs only invited Hungarian choral societies: *A magyar zene a 19-ik században*, 326. ↑
35. Haksch, *A negyvenéves pécsi dalárda története*, 1–4. ↑
36. Ibid., 3–4, 8. On December 25, 1862, *Zenészet* *Lapok* also reports on the Pécs society's decision to sing only in Hungarian. The article emphasizes that Wachauer, the director of the choir, made this motion despite the fact that he was a foreigner: *Zenészet* *Lapok* 3, no. 13 (December 25, 1862): 104. ↑
37. Ábrányi, "A pécsi dalárdaegylet által rendezendő dalárünnep," 329–31. ↑
38. Kornél Ábrányi, "A pécsi országos első magyar dalárünnepély" [The First Hungarian Choral Celebration in Pécs], *Zenészet* *Lapok* 4, no. 48 (August 25, 1864): 379. ↑
39. Haksch, *A negyvenéves pécsi dalárda története*, 82. ↑
40. "A pestbudai dalárda első nyári dalestélye," *Zenészet* *Lapok* 5, no. 42 (July 20, 1865): 334. ↑
41. *Zenészet* *Lapok* 5, no. 43 (July 27, 1865): 343. ↑
42. As I mentioned earlier, we have to treat these sources critically. The *Zenészet* *Lapok* was edited by Ábrányi, who was in favor of Hungarizing the dalárdas. The articles thus reflect upon this issue, but reality might have been different. ↑
43. In one of his articles, Ábrányi mentions that on the way to the gathering in Pécs the "Sängerhort" society sang in German but the Arad society sang every song in Hungarian. Ábrányi, "A pécsi országos első magyar dalárünnepély," 377–379. ↑
44. Kornél Ábrányi, "A pécsi országos első magyar dalárünnepély," *Zenészet* *Lapok* 4, no. 50 (September 8, 1864): 393–95. ↑
45. As Haksch writes in his book about the society in Pécs, he already brought up the idea of a national choral society during the 1864 meeting, but the situation was not yet ripe for a vote on the issue: *A negyvenéves pécsi dalárda története*, 36. ↑
46. *Fővárosi Lapok*, July 29, 1865, 657. ↑
47. Károly Bors, "A megalakítandó 'Országos Magyar Dalárszövetség' érdekében" [In the Interest of Forming the Hungarian National Choral Society], *Zenészet* *Lapok* 5, no. 46 (August 17, 1865): 368. ↑
48. *Zenészet* *Lapok* 5, no. 47 (August 24, 1865): 376; and *Fővárosi Lapok*, August 24, 1865, 741. ↑
49. According to a letter written by the Arad society, the national gathering was planned to be in 1866 but was postponed by one of the institutions of the Council of Governor. It also mentions that in 1866, 45 societies registered with 900 members. National Archives of Hungary, Baranya County Archive, X.56, Box 10. ↑
50. Móric Csáky, "Culture as a Space of Communication," in *Understanding Multiculturalism: The Habsburg Central European Experience*, ed. Johannes Feichtinger and Gary B. Cohen, Austrian and Habsburg Studies 17 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 188. ↑
51. László Katus, "Magyarország a Habsburg Monarchiában (1711–1918)," in *Magyarország története*, ed. Ignác Romsics, Akadémiai kézikönyvek (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 2010), 609. ↑
52. Károly Szegedy, "A honi dalárdák statisztikájához," *Zenészet* *Lapok* 4, no. 20 (February 11, 1864): 157. Later, on May 26, they repeated the appeal due to the lack of response: "Ismételt fölhívás," *Zenészet* *Lapok* 4, no. 35 (May 26, 1864): 276–77. ↑
53. Józsa, *A Brassói Magyar Dalárda 25 évestörténete*, 7–8. ↑

54. [Zenészet](#) *Lapok* 5, no. 15 (January 12, 1865): 118. ↑
55. [Zenészet](#) *Lapok* 7, no. 10 (December 9, 1866): 152. ↑
56. "A gárda jelszava," [Zenészet](#) *Lapok* 11, no. 20 (March 5, 1871): 308-12. ↑
57. "A magyar dalárügy" [The Matter of the Hungarian Choral Movement], [Zenészet](#) *Lapok* 12, no. 46 (August 11, 1872): 718-20. ↑
58. *Magyar Dal és Zeneközlöny* 1, no. 2 (1895): 16. ↑
59. Pataki, A "Magyaróvári férfidalárda" 40 éves multja, 29-30. ↑
60. Józsa, A Brassói Magyar Dalárda 25 éves története, 21. ↑
61. *Ibid.*, 22-23. ↑
62. *Ibid.*, 72-73. ↑
63. Rombauer, *Emlékkönyv a "Brassói Magyar Dalárda,"* 46. ↑
64. In the following years it supported the cultural work of "rongyos egyesület" [Ragged Society], which was providing aid for poor school children, as well as the r. kath. Jótékony Nőegylet (Roman Catholic Women's Charity Organization), the EMKE (Transylvanian Hungarian Cultural Society), the csernátfalusi ág. h. ev. gyámintézet (Augustinian Lutheran Guardian Institution of Csernátfalva), the brassói református, unitárius and magyar ág. hitv. evangélikus egyház (Reformed and Unitarian Church of Kronstadt / Brassó / Braşov and the Hungarian Augustinian Lutheran Church)—on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the church building—and also the state science high school, which did not have a school choir at this time, so the society performed together with local choral societies of other nationalities on numerous charity and patriotic events. Rombauer, *Emlékkönyv a "Brassói Magyar Dalárda,"* 46. ↑
65. [Haksch, A negyvenéves pécsi idalárda története, 21.](#) Ábrányi, in his report on the first nation-wide choral movement, mentions that during a lofty toast, Grabarics, a member of Parliament, and Árvai, a lawyer from Eszék, drank to the unity of the Croatian-Hungarian sister nation. The audience replied with an "enthusiastic Hurrah!" [Ábrányi, "A pécsi országos első magyar dalárünnepély,"](#) 379. ↑