

Mihály Ittzés:

Forty-five pieces for mixed voices, Forty pieces for equal voices.

Evidences and lessons of two volumes of Bárdos' choir works

Lajos Bárdos (1899-1986) was one of the leading personalities of Hungarian choral music both as composer and performer among Kodály's disciples. Editio Musica Budapest published two collections of Bárdos's *a cappella* choir works on the occasion of his 85th birthday. Similar but smaller volumes had been published on his 60th, 65th and 80th birthday. (Bárdos' 70th and 75th anniversaries were greeted with volumes of his collected musicological writings.)

The contents of both volumes are organised in groups/chapters.

45 pieces: *Signals* – 6 pieces; *Folksong arrangements* – 20 works (from 2 to 4 parts; 10 compiled in cycles); *Lyric choirs* (on poetic texts) – 17 pieces; *Motets* – 3 pieces; *A closing chorus*.

40 pieces: *Mottos* – 3 pieces; *Hungarian folksongs* – 5 pieces (3 cycles); *Foreign melodies* (Songs of other nations) – 5 pieces (4 sets); *Various/Other* pieces – 7 works.

(In both volumes it is not completely clear how the composer counted the number of pieces; besides the independent pieces there are strongly organised cycles and pieces in sets which can easily be separated because they are only loosely connected.) The term “equal voices” refers to pieces for treble choirs, female and children's voices. (Some of them can be performed by male voices as well.)

There are pieces which can be found in variants in both volumes – simple transcriptions, reduced or enriched forms. On the one hand some works were basically intended for various types of choir (for example a choir-motto, *Cantemus!* 1977); other adaptations probably came into being on the requests of choir conductors.

The two most typical genres of Bárdos' secular pieces are folksong arrangements and musical settings of poems. The latter texts are selected partly from the poems of the greatest, from earlier periods and contemporary poets, partly from occasional writings (for example about historical topics). There are pieces which are based on foreign melodies to which translated or newly written texts were adapted. To create these *ad notam* type of texts the most important co-worker of the composer was László Lukin. (Among others sets for children's choir, *On the edge of Europe*, and *Four Continents, Hellas* consist of arrangements of other peoples' folksongs.) Texts from 24 authors were used in the mixed choir works, and from 12 in the

pieces for equal voices. In the 1950-60s inspiration from folk materials slowly gave way to independent settings of lyrical and historical texts.

Several pieces represent a close co-operation between the composer and a choir conductor and his ensemble: Rezső Lantos and the Choir of the Communist Youth Organisation were talented and successful performers. Of course Lajos Bárdos declined the choice of actual political texts, and he had set to music poems with general humanistic content.

There are only three religious works in the volume of the mixed choirs: two on Latin texts from the 1930s, and one on a biblical text in Hungarian: *The Laments of Jeremiah* conveyed a special message for the nation when it was composed in 1956.

The study also refers to compositional elements: wordless introductions, characteristic melodic turns or a frame of head motives (with a special deviation of an octave, for example g—c'—d'—g'). Changes of tempi are mentioned as elements of the organization of cycles.