

**The “Lost” Plays of József Mártonfi  
– and the Ms. 354 Composite Volume –<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:** The paper presents a miscellany dating back to the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century preserved in the Special Collections Department of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library. The volume contains didactic materials used by the Jesuit order, among others four school dramas, which are probably Bishop József Mártonfi's plays thought to be lost.

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In this paper I should like to present a rather interesting miscellany, entitled *Iskolai drámák, latin versek, oratiók* (School Dramas, Latin Poems, Orations). The volume is preserved in the Special Collections Department of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library under the shelfmark Ms. 354; no authors are mentioned. It contains unpublished texts written in the third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (before 1773<sup>2</sup>). It is quarto volume bound in cardboard, having 193+3 leaves. The book came to the University Library from the collection of the Transylvanian Museum Society.

It was bound in one from 39 parts different in content and size. The texts, judging from their content, must have served as didactic material, used probably by the Jesuit order.<sup>3</sup> The title specified above reflects the content of the volume in great lines, but not entirely. The texts are mainly written in Latin, with a few exceptions. There are

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<sup>2</sup> Before the dissolution of the Jesuit order (the arguments for this statement can be read at the end of the study).

<sup>3</sup> Several references are made to the Jesuit order in the volume: the abbreviation of the Jesuits' motto, *Omnia ad maiorem Dei gratia* (O. A. M. D. G.) figures several times. Besides this, there are concrete references to the *Academicum et Universitatis Collegium* in Buda, as the location where the dramas were performed. The name of the college appears both on the title page of the oration written about Emperor Joseph II (*Oratio Panegyrica in laudem Josephi Secundi Caesaris Augusti Proincias Suas Virtute et Exemplo Lustrantis Dicta Coram Admodum Reverenso ac Clarissimo Pa: Joanne Bapt. Gottgeisl. Scholarum Humaniorum Praefecto e Societate Jesu AA. LL. & Philosophia nec non SS. Theo. Doctore ac tota facultate inferiori sub Reverendo Rhetorices Moderatore Josepho Martonfi. Buda mense Junio die 12. 1772. A Praenobili ac Perdocto Domino Gabriele Rotterstain Hungaro E comitatu Hevesiensi Tulliana Eloquentia In primum annum Auditore*), and in the oration about the founder of the school.

four Hungarian poems,<sup>1</sup> which can be classified as epistles and are addressed to János Sajnovics<sup>2</sup> in Nagyszombat.<sup>3</sup> In these the author praises János Sajnovics's activity and results in the field of Hungarian linguistics, and, on the other hand, urges him to write him a letter. Other Hungarian texts in the volume are: *Szomorú levél mellyel Hunyadi Mátyás a Prágai tömlőczben való állapotjáról az Annját tudósítja* (A Sad Letter by Which Mátyás Hunyadi Informs His Mother on His State Being Imprisoned in Prague),<sup>4</sup> László Beniczky<sup>5</sup> being mentioned as its author, as well as the poem entitled *Leander kedves Attyának Clemonnak halálát sirattya* (Leander Laments for the Death of his Father, Clemon).<sup>6</sup>

The book also contains ten Latin orations (these were written in the praise of Maria Theresia and Joseph II, in memory of Archbishop György Szécseny,<sup>7</sup> in the praise of the town of Buda, etc.), recorded here for educational, illustrative purposes, since it is usually marked on the margin of the text to which structural unit of an oration a passage corresponds (*exordium, propositio, confirmatio, peroratio*, etc.).

Thematic parts resembling textbooks are also to be found: the part entitled *Succincta Methodus Libros utiliter Legendi*<sup>8</sup> enumerates books useful for different types of text (poetry, rhetoric, epistle, historiography). In a similar section we can find the list of important Greek, French, German, and English authors,<sup>9</sup> then the *Catalogus Librorum*...<sup>10</sup> groups the writers according to genres and themes (who wrote about the history of each empire, country). There is also a short chapter on punctuation, completed by instructions regarding orthography, Roman numbers, weight measures, and the name of months.<sup>11</sup> The volume also contains a *compendium* about dramas<sup>12</sup> and its continuation, the *Observationes Poeticae de Dramate*,<sup>13</sup> observations on letter writing,<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Iskolai drámák, latin versek oratiók*, 140<sup>r</sup>–145<sup>v</sup> (from now on *Iskoladrámák*).

<sup>2</sup> János Sajnovics (1733–1785) Jesuit astronomer, linguist, who together with imperial astronomer Miksa Hell participated in the polar expedition proposed by the King of Denmark and the Scientific Society of Copenhagen; see Emil Kisbán, *Tordasi és Kálóczi Sajnovics János* (János Sajnovics of Tordas and Kálóczi) (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1942). During the expedition, encouraged by Hell, he began to study the relationship between the Hungarian and Lapp language, this analysis resulting in *Joannis Sajnovics S. J. Ungari Tordasiensis socii Demonstratio idioma Ungarorum et Lapponum idein esse*, the first Finno-Ugric comparative linguistic work in Hungary.

<sup>3</sup> Sajnovics lived in Nagyszombat from 1771 to 1773, the dissolution of the Jesuit order (Kisbán, *Tordasi és Kálóczi Sajnovics...*, 51–52.), therefore these texts must have been written in this period.

<sup>4</sup> *Iskoladrámák*, 146<sup>r</sup>–146<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> László Beniczky's name appears in the volume several times (see also note no. 40).

<sup>6</sup> *Iskoladrámák*, 147<sup>r</sup>–148<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> He founded the *Academicum et Universitatis Collegium* of Buda in 1687. Cf. István Nagy, "A Jézus Társaság budai gimnáziuma" (The College of the Society of Jesus in Buda), *Távlatok* 63. (2004)1, Supplement: 16–31, <http://w3.exnet.hu/~tavlatok/6311papie.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> *Iskoladrámák*, 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Auctores Graeci praecipui*, *Iskoladrámák*, 69; *Auctores Galli*, *Ibid.*, 70; *Auctores germani*, *Ibid.*, 71; *Nonnulli auctores Angli*, *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>10</sup> *Iskoladrámák*, 83<sup>r</sup>–94<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 10<sup>r</sup>–11<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 11<sup>v</sup>–12<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 40<sup>r</sup>–54<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 13<sup>r</sup>.

four fables,<sup>1</sup> different poems<sup>2</sup> (odes, elegies), etc. An interesting section of the collection refers to different cleansing agents, cosmetics, therapies (preservation of sight, lachrymation, etc.).<sup>3</sup> Here different potions, instruments are enumerated as well as the precise amount of the ingredients necessary for their preparation.<sup>4</sup> For example, rosewater and myrtle are recommended to perfume the body and clothes, honey, milk, and egg white to whiten women's skin, salt to whiten teeth, potions made of brimstone, myrtle, and ambergris to give back the face's youthfulness, etc.

The most important part of the volume for me is the four school dramas; in fact these led me to this collection. I started to look for an unknown drama about King Matthias based on the following reference found in a book entitled *Történelem a színpadon*: "Recently the Latin text (Mathias Corvinus), which was premiered in Buda on December 30, 1772 has been found. (...) In the 7 scenes dreams have an important role, as well as in the 1702 play in Kolozsvár. Its shelfmark is: Ms. 354, Academy Library of Kolozsvár."<sup>5</sup> I found the drama mentioned here in the composite volume, entitled *School Dramas, Latin Poems, Orations* in the manuscript collections of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library. Later on, (with the aid of Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér and Tamás Fejér) I succeeded in identifying the author as well.<sup>6</sup> The volume probably contains Bishop József Mártonfi's dramas, believed to be lost, therefore it is more interesting and valuable.

József Mártonfi<sup>7</sup> was born in Csíkszentkirály in 1746. He began his studies in Mindenszent in 1752, then, in 1758 he went to study in the Jesuit grammar school of Székelyudvarhely. Between 1761 and 1763 he was a student of the Jesuit college in Kolozsvár. He became a member of the Jesuit order in October 1763, and was a novice in Trencsén until 1765. From here he went to Nagyszombat, where he took his first vows. He continued his studies in Vienna in 1767. Between 1770 and 1771, as well as between 1772 and 1773 he was the teacher of the grammar class, and later of the rhetoric class in the grammar school of Buda.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fabula 1<sup>ma</sup> de Leone et Culice. Versibus iambicis Phaedrinis, (Ibid., 194<sup>r</sup>). Fabula 2<sup>da</sup> de Urso et Eremito. Versibus Elegiacis, (Ibid., 194<sup>v</sup>–195<sup>v</sup>). Fabula 3<sup>ia</sup> de Cerva et Cervula. Iambis scenariis Phaedrinis, (Ibid., 38<sup>v</sup>). Fabula 4<sup>ta</sup> De Pullo, Gallo et Vulpe. Iambis Phaedrinis, (Ibid., 38<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> At the end of the volume a poem consisting of six stanzas has been pasted (on a page without a number) standing apart from the other parts, entitled *Hoc dicolos tetraastrophos*. It is specified that it was written on July 2, 1766.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 59, 68.

<sup>4</sup> These remedies and agents can probably be traced back to Plinius Maior's 37 volume *Naturalis Historia*.

<sup>5</sup> Imre Varga, Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, *Történelem a színpadon. Magyar történelmi tárgyú iskoladramák a 17–18. században* (History on Stage. Hungarian Historical School Dramas in the 17–18<sup>th</sup> Century) (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 2000), 122.

<sup>6</sup> I discussed the source and content of the drama, as well as Mátyás Hunyadi's role in it earlier: Kinga Papp, "Mátyás király egy 18. századi latin drámában", in *Erdély reneszánsza*, ed. Csilla Gábor, Katalin Luffy, Gábor Sipos (Kolozsvár, Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, 2009), 185–194.

<sup>7</sup> His life and work was studied by Lajos György, who compiled a monograph, which was published last year edited by Tamás Fejér. Lajos György, *Fejezetek Mártonfi József erdélyi püspök életrajzából (1746–1815)* (Chapters from the Life of József Mártonfi, Bishop of Transylvania) (Budapest: METEM, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 19–41.

Following the suppression of the Jesuit order, in 1773, he returned to Transylvania, where he became a mathematics teacher in Kolozsvár, then, in 1776 he went to Gyulafehérvár to become the regent of the seminary. In the same year he was transferred to Nagyszeben, where he became the mathematics professor of the orphanage.<sup>1</sup> From 1777 to the end of his life, he also activated as a censor. In 1779, as Chief Inspector of National Schools (Inspector primarius Scholarum Nationalium), with the rank of a royal counsellor,<sup>2</sup> he was assigned the task to modernize the education in Transylvania, conforming it to the new system introduced in other parts of the empire. On account of his results, he was awarded the rank of royal and gubernial counsellor, then, in 1798, he was appointed a bishop.

Mártonfi's work was also evaluated by Ágoston Ötvös,<sup>3</sup> who pointed out that "Out of his literary works, as far as I am aware of, only two were published: a) the German funeral oration he held over the remains of Queen Maria Theresa in Szeben and b) the beautiful little poem he improvised at Ábrahám Barcsai's desk in Csora."<sup>4</sup> Among Ágoston Ötvös' notes, in the collection entitled *Brandenburgi Katalinra vonatkozó s egyéb jegyzetek* (Notes Referring to Catherine of Brandenburg and Other Issues)<sup>5</sup> some remarks are also to be found on Mártonfi's orations: "Among his many orations it the Latin one in which he recommends the study and knowledge of the Hungarian language to the Hungarians is famous."<sup>6</sup> His dramas are also enumerated: "I have in manuscript the following of his plays: 1<sup>st</sup> *Buda*, in Latin, 3 acts, *Nádasdi*, in Latin, 3 acts, 3<sup>rd</sup> *Mathias Corvinus*, in Latin, consists of 7 scenes. 4<sup>th</sup> *Hypocrita*, in Latin. It consists of 9 scenes. 5<sup>th</sup> *Salamon, King of Hungary*, in beautiful Hungarian hexameters, it consists of 4 scenes. From among his poems I own *The Temple of Virtue* (Erkölc temploma), *The Hermit* (Remete), and *The Dream* (Álom)."<sup>7</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> note attached to the text Ötvös mentions that: "The above enumerated 5 plays and 3 poems were written by Mártonfi, their originals are in my collection."<sup>8</sup>

Ágoston Ötvös' collection came into the possession of the Transylvanian Museum Society after his death, and from here to the University Library. His works, however, have not been found so far; the miscellany escaped the researchers' – among them Lajos György's – attention, though Zoltán Ferenczi published a very short presentation of the dramas in the no. 6, Miscellanea section of the *Erdélyi Múzeum*'s 1900 issue.<sup>9</sup> Ferenczi did not specify the source of the dramas, the other texts of the volume or its shelfmark; he only published the titles, the dramatis personae, and the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 43–101.

<sup>2</sup> The role he played here and his efforts made in the restructuring of public education were evaluated by Lajos György. See: Ibid., 103–154.

<sup>3</sup> Ágoston Ötvös, "Mártonfi József erdélyi püspök" (József Mártonfi, Bishop of Transylvania), *Kolozsvári Közlöny* 110, (1857): 443 and Ágoston Ötvös, "Mártonfi József erdélyi püspök", *Kolozsvári Közlöny* 111, (1857): 447.

<sup>4</sup> Ötvös, "Mártonfi József erdélyi püspök", *Kolozsvári Közlöny* 111, (1857): 447.

<sup>5</sup> It can be found in the Lucian Blaga Central University Library in Kolozsvár under the shelfmark Ms. 2873. The passages referring to Mártonfi are on pages 191–192.

<sup>6</sup> An oration with a similar subject figures in the *Iskoladrámák* volume as well (150<sup>f</sup>–158<sup>v</sup>). No author is mentioned, but it is not altogether impossible that it is the same speech.

<sup>7</sup> Ötvös, "Mártonfi József erdélyi püspök": 447.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 447.

<sup>9</sup> Zoltán Ferenczi, "Négy jezsuita dráma" (Four Jesuit Dramas), *Erdélyi Múzeum* 6(1900): 347–351.

Latin arguments: “Four, so far unknown Jesuit dramas are presented here to the reader; each of them is from the previous century, in Latin; three of them take their subjects from Hungarian history, mentioning the sources they were inspired from; the fourth (*Hypocrita*) is a comedy in the style of Terence with a shrewd and clever servant, who saves his masters from a great misfortune. From among the other plays *Buda* is a tragedy, *Nadasdius* and *Mathias Corvinus* are plays, the two former are so called dramas in the full sense of the word, the latter is a so-called short drama, *dramation* as the Jesuits called it. (...) None of these dramas are mentioned by either Bayer (Hungarian, drama literature, history), or Bahlmann (Jesuiten-Dramen), and their content suggest Hungarian Jesuit authors; for example, in the *Hypocrita* there is a Hungarian reference to Pápai-Páriz<sup>1</sup>, when Paleoptikus says (*Introductio tertia*) about a word that: ‘hoc in Páriz-Pápai me legere non memini’ (I do not recall having read this in Páriz-Pápai).”<sup>2</sup>

The dramas mentioned by Ferenczi are to be found in the *Iskolai drámák*, latin versek, oratiók volume as well, therefore he spoke of the same collection.<sup>3</sup>

The first drama in the volume is *Nadasdius*<sup>4</sup> in which Tamás Nádasdi fights bravely and exemplarily in the defence of Buda in 1529. The defenders of the city surrender against Nádasdi’s will, and give him and the city over to Suleiman. The drama consists of three acts, the acts of five, five, and six scenes respectively. One of the interesting facts with respect to the manuscript is that four persons were struck off from among the characters (by the writer/author); they appear several times in the play, but their words are always crossed out.

*Mathias Corvinus*<sup>5</sup> is the following drama, which is short, consisting only of seven scenes and having only four characters. The title page also gives the names of the persons who played the different parts: Georgius Podiebradius – III.[ustrus] S[acrum].R.[omanum].I.[mperium] Comes Joannes a Lymburg-Styrum, Mathias Corvinus – Ignatius Bésán, Victorinus, Georgii filius – Ladislaus Beniczky,<sup>6</sup> Cunegundis Georgii filia – Georgius Hirsch. In the course of the drama the young Matthias, held prisoner by George of Poděbrady, is unanimously elected as the king of Hungary, he is freed and raised to the throne. As a source the second volume of Károly Ferenc Palma’s *Notitia rerum hungaricum* is given. According to the manuscript the play was premièred on December 30, 1772: “Exhibitum ad Rhetorica Budensi Anno MDCCCLXXII. Mense Decembri die 30.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ferenc Pápai-Páriz (1649–1716), Transylvanian teacher, physician, and scientist, author – among several medical, devotional, etc. works – of a famous Latin–Hungarian dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 347–348.

<sup>3</sup> This is proved by the inscription on the first page of the volume: “Presented in part in the *Erdélyi Múzeum* 1899, 1900.”

<sup>4</sup> *Iskoladrámák*, 111<sup>r</sup>–118<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 119<sup>r</sup>–125<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> I have already mentioned László Beniczky as the author of the poem entitled *Szomorú levél mellyel Hunyadi Mátyás a Prágai tömlöczben való állapotjáról az Annyát tudósította*. He also authored an ode dedicated to Maria Theresa (*Ode ad Mariam Theresiam Augustam litterarum Patronam*; *Iskoladrámák*, 39<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>7</sup> *Iskoladrámák*, 119<sup>r</sup>. Ferenczi omitted this reference from his description, specifying the date of the premièred only in case of the drama *Hypocrita*. He also stated that only in case of this drama was the date known.

The drama entitled *Buda*<sup>1</sup> is the third in the volume. The dramatis personae are not enumerated. It consists of three acts, these being formed of seven, eight, respectively eleven scenes. The play is about the brothers Attila and Buda. Buzaldus schemes against Buda. He denounces him before Attila, who gives credence to the accusation that his brother wishes him dead. With the aid of Irnachus, Attila's son the treachery is brought to light, Attila begs forgiveness and names Sicambria after the dying Buda.

The authors of the book *Történelem a színpadon* also refer to *Nádasdius* and *Buda* as recently discovered plays by unknown writers, to which Norbert Schmikli drew the their attention.<sup>2</sup>

The fourth and last drama of the volume is the *Hypocrita*,<sup>3</sup> which is a comedy premièred, according to the manuscript, on February 17, 1773 in the grammar school of Buda: "Actum ad Rhetorica Budensi, Anno MDCCLXXIII, Mense Februario, die 17." The drama consists of nine scenes. The names of the actors are recorded: Palaeophilus senex – Franciscus Cséfalvi; Neophilus, Palaeopili filius – Ignatius Fáy; Vulpillus, neophilo ab obsequiis – Gabriel Rottenstein; Scarabon, eremita – Sebastian Koántz; Praetor urbis – Petrus Török; Tribunus milit. – Ignatius Horváth. This is the plot in brief: Scarabon is a parasite, whom Phaleophilus took into his house, and since then Phaleophilus' son, Neophilus has been suffering a lot. Their servant, Vulpillus devises and carries out successfully a plan to remove Scarabon from the house.

The drama in Hungarian, *Salamon, King of Hungary* mentioned by Ágoston Ötvös does not figure in the volume. Nevertheless, this play has not been lost, since Ötvös published it in the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume (1860) of the periodical *Hazánk*, in pages 177–187. I have not succeeded in finding the manuscript of the poems also mentioned by Ötvös, but he published those entitled *The Temple of Virtue* and *The Dream* in no. 126 and 140 of the *Kolozsvári Közlöny*. At the same time the volume also contains the list of contents and the preface of a text entitled *Synopsis*,<sup>4</sup> which discusses the structure of public education. Lajos György considered this to be Mártonfi's work, while Zsolt Trócsányi refutes this statement.<sup>5</sup> Maybe it is worth reconsidering the authorship of this work in the light of the information offered by the composite volume.

Mártonfi is also mentioned in the oration written to honour Joseph II as being the teacher of the rhetoric class in the grammar school of Buda at the time when the text was compiled.<sup>6</sup>

The contents of the miscellany and the commentaries regarding this matter reveal that the book must have come to Kolozsvár from the collections of the Jesuit college of Buda, maybe Mártonfi or another former Jesuit returned to Transylvania brought this miscellaneous manuscript here, after the suppression of the order.

The volume is not important only because, due to its form as a textbook, it is a relic of the Jesuit educational system, but also because it contains these four so far unpublished school dramas, which we can identify as József Mártonfi's extant works,

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<sup>1</sup> *Iskoladramák*, 126<sup>r</sup>–139<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Varga and Pintér, *Történelem a színpadon*, 59, 138.

<sup>3</sup> *Iskoladramák*, 168<sup>r</sup>–174<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 3<sup>r</sup>–5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. György, *Fejezetek Mártonfi József ...*, 13–14, 150–154.

<sup>6</sup> *Iskoladramák*, 169<sup>r</sup>, cf. note 3 on page 527.

the existence of which was already known,<sup>1</sup> and only the connection between the texts and the author had to be established.

At the same time, through the presentation of the volume's four dramas, the collection of extant Jesuit plays can be completed.

The writer of the poems whose author is not given remains to be identified, this being a difficult task, since the owner(s) of the volume or of its different parts is unknown.

Besides all these, the volume's content from the perspective of the history of education merits an analysis; it also should be investigated whether these didactic materials add something to our image of the Jesuit school and educational system, and to the list of textbooks, teaching material the Order used.

Translated by Ágnes Korondi

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<sup>1</sup> See Ferenczi, *Négy jezsuita dráma* or Varga and Pintér, *Történelem a színpadon*.