

## **The Collection *Odae cum harmoniis* by Johannes Honterus / In memoriam Astrid Philippi-Niedermaier/**

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**Abstract:** *The colonisation of the Transylvanian Saxons in the 12<sup>th</sup> century created direct and indirect connections with their places of origin. These connections can be sensed until today and are manifested first of all through the effort of the Transylvanian Saxons to permanently keep up with the achievements in Western Europe, mainly in the German territories. Many young people went to study and work abroad for a while, gathering experience, which was then turned to account in their home country. Johannes Honterus (1498–1549), son of a leather tanner in Braşov, also followed such a path, who, after returning from abroad to his hometown at the age of 35, became the reformer of the Saxons in Transylvania and founded the gymnasium “Schola Coronensis” (today’s “Johannes Honterus” Theoretical High School) on humanist bases in 1541. Here he compiled the collection *Odae cum Harmoniis* in 1548, dedicated to teaching metric verses in Latin with the aid of music. The volume was analysed and reedited by the musician Astrid Philippi-Niedermaier (1944–1998) and the historian Gernot Nussbächer in 1983.*

**Keywords:** *Reform, Humanism, metric verses, Latin, odes*

### **1. Introduction**

Motto: “Ever since their colonisation period in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Transylvanian Saxons have not only shown their wish, but also their ability to develop a musical culture of their own. Connected mainly to the German music through confession and language, they broadly took over the trends promoted in Central Europe.”

(Hans Peter Türk, 1984 [1])

The colonisation of the Transylvanian Saxons in the 12<sup>th</sup> century created direct and indirect connections with their places of origin. These connections can be sensed until today and are manifested first of all through the effort of the

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Transylvanian Saxons to permanently keep up with the achievements in Western Europe, mainly in the German territories. Due to historic particularities there has never been a prince's court in Braşov, so the social support for musical education was the task of the town bourgeoisie, who fulfilled this mission in an exemplary manner and provided the knowledge-eager youth with the necessary moral and financial support. Many young people went to study and work abroad for a while, gathering experience, which was then turned to account in their home country after their return.

Johannes Honterus (1498–1549), son of a leather tanner in Braşov, also followed such a path, who, after returning from abroad to his hometown at the age of 35, became the reformer of the Saxons in Transylvania and founded the gymnasium “Schola Coronensis” (today's “Johannes Honterus” Theoretical High School) on humanist bases in 1541. The collection *Odae cum Harmoniis*, printed in Braşov by Honterus in 1548 – in the printing press also founded by him [2] – was dedicated to teaching metric verses in Latin with the aid of music, thus effectively combining the Humanist principles referring to the importance of nature sciences, respectively of grammar, with Luther's concept regarding the place of music in the education of the youth and in everyday life.

The volume was analysed and reedited by the musician Astrid Philippi-Niedermaier (1944–1998) and the historian Gernot Nussbächer in 1983. It is to be noted that it is a bilingual edition, Romanian-German.

## 2. Objectives

### 2.1. Astrid Philippi-Niedermaier (1944–1998) and Honterus (1498–1549)

Astrid Philippi, co-author of the 1983 edition of the 1548 compendium by Johannes Honterus, *Odae cum Harmoniis*, was active between 1968–1989 as a violist in the symphonic orchestra of the “Gh. Dima” Philharmonic in Braşov and a colleague of the author of this paper, who was a violinist at the same institution.

Astrid Philippi's connection to the Honterus odes very likely came about due to the historic music ensemble *Cantus serenus* in Braşov, founded in 1973 and composed mainly of teachers at the 3-year pedagogical Institute: Kurt Philippi (tenor viola da gamba), his sister, Astrid Philippi (alto viola da gamba), Wolfgang Meschendörfer and his wife Roswitha (recorder), Horia Cristian and Gabriela Popescu (cembalo).

This paper's author became a member of the *Cantus serenus* ensemble after the Meschendörfers had immigrated to Germany. At the first public appearance, at the Early Music Festival in Miercurea-Ciuc in 1981, I sang two odes by Honterus

from the collection *Odae cum Harmoniis*, accompanied by a viola da gamba consort, composed of Kurt and Astrid Philippi and Ilse László-Herbert. This event took place two years before reediting the odes, thus the repertoire choice could also serve to promote the results of the already begun research about the odes.



Fig. 1. The „Cantus serenus” ensemble from Braşov, at the Early Music Festival in Miercurea-Ciuc, 1981. The performers (from left to right): Astrid Philippi – alto viola da gamba, Horia Cristian – cembalo, Ecaterina Hanke – voice, Ilse László- Herbert and Kurt Philippi – tenor viola da gamba)

### 3. CANTUS SERENUS (Brassó)

Horea Cristian (csembaló), Hanke Katalin (ének), Ilse L. Herbert, Astrid Philippi, Kurt Philippi (viola da gamba), Gabriela Popescu (orgona).

— Johannes HONTERUS (GRASS) (1498—1549. száz): *Iambicum Dicolon* és *Phalaetium Hendecasyllabicum* az *Odae cum harmoniis ex diversis Poetis in usum Ludii literarii Coronensis decerptae* című gyűjteményéből (Brassó, 1548)

Fig. 2. Excerpt from the programme of the Early Music Festival in Miercurea-Ciuc in 1981.

Two odes by Honterus, performed by the „Cantus serenus” ensemble

As a researcher and musicologist, Astrid Philippi dealt with the odes' modern transcription and editing, and also wrote the introductory study, where "she depicts a fresco of music in mediaeval Braşov, then she categorizes the ode as a genre in the history of European music." [3]

After her marriage to the architect Paul Niedermaier, Astrid Philippi moved to Sibiu (1989) and – after a career as a music performer and musicologist – dedicated herself to the pedagogy of music and was active as a teacher at the Arts High School and at the "Andrei Şaguna" High School for Pedagogy. Her pedagogical ideas were published in the posthumous edition of her book, *Modern Education in Music* [4].

She died in 1998, 500 years after the birth of Honterus, and 450 years after the first publishing of the volume *Odae cum Harmoniis*.

Gernot Nussbächer, the co-author of the 1983 edition, a historian, archivist, and writer – published, alongside with 25 books and brochures, more than 100 scientific articles resulting from the research undertaken regarding Johannes Honterus.

### **3. About Honterus**

#### **3.1. Studies and Achievements from Abroad**

After having studied at the University in Vienna and having obtained the academic degree of „baccalaureus” (1520), then the title of master of the “free arts” (1525), the Humanist Johannes Honterus (1498–1549), son of a master leather tanner from Braşov, left this city only in 1529 because of Vienna's siege by the Ottomans. After a halt in Regensburg, he is named a professor at the University in Krakow on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1530 – the city where he also published his main works, *Latin Grammar* and *Cosmography* (the *Latin Grammar* had 14 editions, and the *Cosmography* has remained the most used handbook for geography and astronomy in Germany and in South-Eastern Europe until the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century). Since the autumn of the same year he spent three more years in Basel, Switzerland, where he became involved in the publishing activity of the Humanist movement and perfected himself in the art and technique of woodcarving. He published in 1532 two maps of the sky firmament (after Albrecht Dürer) and a map of Transylvania (the first cartographic representation of this province ever).

### 3.2. Achievements in Transylvania

In 1533, aged 35, Honterus returned to his hometown, where, due to his professional education, he unfolds a multilateral activity. One of his most important feats is founding the first printing press in Braşov in 1539. The printings made it easier to propagate Luther's principles, which, next to the Humanist ideas, brought about radical and lasting changes in the lives of the Transylvanian Saxons not only in their religion. The change also touched upon the domain of everyday life and influenced the relationship of people with music, too, even that of simple folks.

Three years after his return to the country, Honterus was elected a senator, and thus eventually turned into the reformer of the Transylvanian Saxons.

#### 32.1. *Honterus and the Reform*

In 1543, Honterus published the *Book of Reform for Braşov and the Bârsa Land*, positively appreciated by the German reformers Martin Luther and Philipp Melancthon. In 1544 he was elected as the foremost reverend of the Evangelical Church in Braşov. After this town's model, the Reform also included the other towns with German population in Transylvania. Thus, by the cooperation of Honterus, the *Church Regulation of All Germans in Transylvania* was elaborated for the *Augsburg Confession* in 1547.

#### 3.2.2. *Honterus and the "Schola Coronensis"*

In the 1543 *Book of Reform* as well as in the 1547 *Church Regulation*, special highlight is set on re-organising the schools. Instead of the former town school, documentarily attested since 1388, Honterus founded the so-called „Schola Coronensis”, for which the town council built a new building in 1541, on the site of a former monastery which was closed.

At the centre of Johannes Honterus' concerns was re-organising the school education in the spirit of Renaissance Humanism. Due to the printing press founded by Honterus, the school library became one of the most important libraries in South-East Europe. Unfortunately, the 1689 fire destroyed the largest part of the documents that had been kept there, including those at the Black Church.

In 1543, Honterus set up the School Regulation, *Constitutio Scholae Coronensis*, the first school regulation ever in the country, in which “put the teaching of music in the foreground, obvious from the consideration the music teacher enjoyed, always mentioned right after the school's rector, as well as from the school regulation published in 1543, which stated the cultivation of music in several paragraphs.” [5]

## 4. Johannes Honterus: *Odae cum Harmoniis*

### 4.1. The Didactic Purpose of the Odes

The music genre of metric compositions on texts from ancient odes is due to Renaissance Humanist ideas, according to which the ancient man represented the most accomplished being, combining wisdom with virtue. To transform education based on these ideas, it was necessary that the works of the ancient writers be accessible to each pupil or student. Through the invention of the printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the possibility to multiply and spread these writings was created. Honterus set up the collection *Odae cum harmoniis* for didactic purposes, with the highest likelihood as a manual for the lower education cycle in the new school system, “Trivium”, as an addition to the main disciplines: grammar, rhetoric, and logic. In Humanist schools, learning the ancient metres was especially highlighted.

“Even though the Humanists and reformers started from different prerequisites, still, the determining factor for teaching music in schools was its educational value for everyone” (Honterus 1983 [1548] 75). Thus, combining metric verses with music connected the Humanist ideas with Luther’s ideas.

The full title of the collection is *Odae cum harmoniis ex diversis Poëtis in usum Ludi literarii Coronensis decerptae*.

### 4.2. *Odae cum Harmoniis*, the 1983 edition

The 1983 edition includes three sections:

- a complex *Introductory Study*
- the transcription of the 1548 edition
- the facsimiles – the full 1548 edition, and the title page and two more pages from the 1562 and 1617 editions, each

The first part of the *Introductory study* contains mainly historical information, referring to the ode as a genre in the history of European music, to the development of music in mediaeval Braşov, the Humanist Johannes Honterus, the compendium of odes within the work of Honterus and the 1548, 1562 and 1617 editions of the odes. It is to be noted that one single copy has been preserved from each edition. The analysed one, from 1548, is at the Library of the Romanian Academy Branch in Cluj-Napoca.

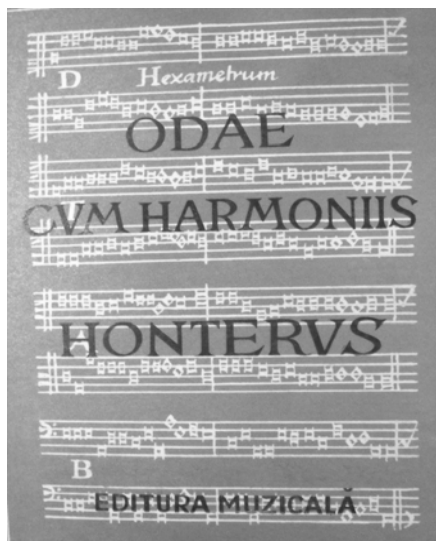


Fig. 4. *Odae cum Harmoniis*, 1983 edition, cover

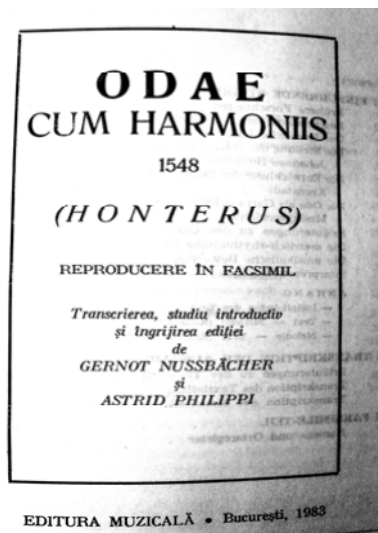


Fig. 5. *Odae cum Harmoniis*, 1983 edition title page

The second part comprises edge notes to the texts of the odes, presents their metric and rhythm structure, then the music analysis ensues, and performance issues.

As in the ode compendium – for didactic reasons – the musical part and quoted texts are found separately, there are two tables of correspondence in the appendices to the *Introductory study*: one for text-melody, and the other for melody-text. The collection contains more texts than melodies, thus the match of texts with the given melodies was part of the pupils' homework.

The authors of the 32 texts quoted: Horatio, Vergil, Martial, Boethius, Prudentius, Philippus Gundelius, Ambrose, Nicolaus Borbonius, Georgius Thymus, Lactantius – mainly ancient authors and Humanists, contemporaries of Honterus. But we also find in the *Odae* a paraphrase of Psalm 127 by Martin Luther.

The 21 melodies correspond to the types of metric verses (for *Phalaetium hendecasyllabum* and *Iambicum dimetrum* there are two melodies for each), based on alternating long and short syllables.

Their names:

- I. *Hexametrum*,
- II. *Elegiacum*,
- III. *Choriambicum asclepidaeum*,
- IV. *Choriambicum tricolon*,
- V. *Sapphicum dicolon*,
- VI. *Sapphicum aliud*,
- VII. *Gliconium choriambicum dicolon*,

- VIII. *Gliconium choriambicum aliud,*
- IX. *Alcmanium tricolon,*
- X. *Heroicum dicolon,*
- XI. *Iambicum dicolon,*
- XII. *Phalaetium hendecasyllabum,*
- XIII. *Phalaetium hendecasyllabum,*
- XIV. *Iambicum trimetrum,*
- XV. *Aliud iambicum trimetrum,*
- XVI. *Iambicum dimetrum,*
- XVII. *Iambicum dimetrum,*
- XVIII. *Iambicum dimetrum catalecticum,*
- XIX. *Trochaicum dicolon,*
- XX. *Alcmanium dactylicum,*
- XXI. *Anapesticum*

Referring to the music compositions, we quote from the *Introductory study*:

“Even though the music form of these compositions is especially simple, however, differences can be noted in applying technical and stylistic procedures, from where we derive that these compositions of the Braşov compendium are not the unitary work of one single author. Honterus, who kept and edited this compendium, in our opinion, included in it compositions of known musicians, according to the custom of his epoch” (Honterus, 1983 [1548] 157).

The melodies are harmonised for four voices, noted with D, T, A, B – that is discant, tenor, alto, and base. The main voice is the *tenor*, but also the *discant* is characterised through a graduate melodic line, that is, a melodic line easy to sing.



Fig. 6. *Trochaicum dicolon*, 1548 edition

[XIX] TROCHAICUM DICOLON

Fig. 7. *Trochaicum dicolon*, modern transcription, 1983 edition



The *Introductory study* contains, at its ending, a series of practical performance hints, as the early music ensembles in the country started to include odes from the collection of Honterus in their repertoire. Thus, the “Electrecord” recording house in Bucharest recorded eight compositions from the compendium with the “Madrigal” choir, conducted by Marin Constantin.

## 5. Conclusion

The present article has as a main goal to draw the attention to this 1983 edition, so documented musically and historically. 2018 shall be a commemorative year for both Honterus (520 years since his birth, 1498), and for Astrid Philippi-Niedermaier (20 years since she passed away), and also 450 years since the first 1548 edition of the volume *Odae cum Harmoniis*. Maybe the time has come to re-edit the 1983 maintained edition. In the initial collection, the text and the music part are printed separately, the didactic purpose being that the pupils match the Latin texts to the music, based on the metric verses. This goal is no longer as important today, but the new edition could comprise the texts and melodies together, thus serving the practical performing purpose.

Here is a practical example from the *Cantus serenus* early music ensemble’s repertoire, with the text matched under the melody:

Fig. 8. “*Phalaetium Hendeca*”, on a text by Martin Luther, a paraphrase of Psalm 127 (128)

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