

Jó!

A lively rendering of the Edict of Torda

King John Sigismund II

SAA or vocal trio



Elizabeth Alexander

The Edict of Torda - Historical Context

In 1568, King John Sigismund II of Hungary (later of Transylvania), at the behest of Unitarian minister Francis David, issued The Act of Religious Tolerance and Freedom of Conscience, commonly referred to as The Edict of Torda. This decree extended unprecedented religious freedom to Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists and Unitarians, and lesser but significant religious tolerance to Jews, Muslims and Eastern Orthodox Catholics. Sigismund's decree was a more forceful rendering of a 1557 decree of his mother, Queen Isabella, which was itself a document of unprecedented tolerance during the violence of the European Counter-Reformation.

At the time of these decrees, some European countries appeared to be moving away from the Counter-Reformation's violence — with the end of Germany's Thirty Years' War and the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I — but elsewhere in Europe, religious violence was abundantly evident. The Inquisition was in full force in Spain, and Catholics and Protestant Huguenots were waging an all-out war in France. Four years before Queen Isabella's decree, Unitarian leader Michael Servetus had been burned at the stake in Switzerland. In this context, Transylvania's attempt to avoid this bloodshed was, no doubt, a welcome one for its citizenry.

The Edict of Torda

As excerpted for musical setting
(For complete text, see inside of back cover)

Hungarian:

A prédikátorok minden helyen hirdessék az evangéliumot, kiki az ő értelme szerint, és a közösség, ha venni akarja, jó, ha nem, senki rá ne kényszerítse, az ő lelke azon meg nem nyugodván, de tarthasson olyan prédikátort, akinek tanítása ő neki tetszik.

És ezért senki a prédikátorokat meg ne bánthassák, a religióért senki ne szidalmaztassék, mert a hit Istennek ajándéka, az hallásból leszen, mely hallás Isten igéje által vagyon.

English:

Preachers may proclaim the Gospels according to their own interpretation in all places. If the community wants to accept it, then it is a good thing. If not, no one may be coerced, for their soul might not be at peace unless they retain those preachers whose teachings appeal to them.

And because of this no one may cause harm to the preachers, no one may revile or disparage them on account of their religion. As faith is a gift from God, that comes from listening — listening to the word of God.

Translation by Eva Kish

Acknowledgments: I am very grateful to Eva Kish for her patient and meticulous help with Hungarian translation and pronunciation, as well as to Scott Prinster for helping me understand the historical context and intent of certain passages of the Edict of Torda. -E.A.

Cover illustration: Embroidery design from the Székely people of Transylvania

Program Notes: I conceived *Jó!* as an imagined moment in Torda centuries ago — a moment which may or may not have actually happened. It is 1568, and a group of Transylvania women have just heard about the Edict of Torda. Pleased by the prospect of their country avoiding the violence and religious persecution that is plaguing the rest of Europe, they are running through their village spreading the word to everyone.

The word “jó” is a casual, all-purpose, good-feeling word, like “okay,” “alright” or “cool.” (I’ve actually seen it translated as “hunky-dory”!) In this lively song, which is influenced Eastern European folk music styles, “jó” serves as both a refrain and an exclamation of harmony and goodwill.

Performance Notes: Most ensembles which sing *Jó!* will not be skilled in Eastern European vocal production. In the absence of a vocal coach, I encourage singers to do their best to create what anthropologist Carol Silverman calls a “concentrated” sound¹, with more resonance in the face, and less in the head.

However, I am less concerned with artistic perfection than I am with joy. Twenty years ago, I heard the Bulgarian State Radio and Television Women’s Choir perform *Oh, Susannah!* as an encore. Alas, the tone was too focused, the vowels completely off the mark, and the consonants either too articulated or completely inaudible! Was I offended by their inauthentic rendering of my country’s idiom? Far from it. I was touched that they had made an effort to engage with an unfamiliar language and singing style.

Pronunciation Guide for *Jó!*

Symbols within [] brackets are in IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet)

In addition to this guide, and the English “singing pronunciations” in the score, Eva Kish’s reading of Edict of Torda can be heard at www.seafarerpress.com/works/jo.html

Vowels:

“a” = [a] as in *awful* (This is a more covered “a” sound.)

“á” = [ɤ] as in *father* (This is a more open “a” sound.)

“e” = [e] as in *every*

“é” = [e] as in *ate*

“i” and “í” = [i] as in *leave*

“o” and “ó” = [o] as in *wrote*

“ö” = [ø] as in the British pronunciation of “earth” or the German pronunciation of *könig*

Consonants:

“g” [g] as in *get*

“gy” [ˈ] as in *edge*

“j” and “ly” = [j] as in *yellow*

“s” [•] as in *shake*

“sz” [s] as in *sake*

“th” [t] as in *take*

“z” [z] as in *zone*

“r” receives a single roll (but not a double roll)

“t” is very very articulated, in the front of the mouth

¹ “The Mysterious Voice! American Women Singing Bulgarian Songs” by Jamie Lynn Webster. *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, vol. 22, no.1, Spring 2004.

Jó!

King John II Sigismund of Hungary
From Edict of Torda (1568)

SSA or vocal trio

Elizabeth Alexander

(♩ = 112-116) Joyfully

S I *mf*
Jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó: A *mp*
Yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh: Aw
*It's all good! ** *The*

S II *mf*
Jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó: A *mp*
Yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh: Aw
*It's all good! ** *The*

A *mf*
Jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó: A *mp*
Yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh: Aw
*It's all good! ** *The*

5
S I
pré - di - ká - to - rok min - den hely - en hir - des - sék az e - van - gé - li - u - mot, ki -
pray-dee - kah - toh - rohk meen - dehn hel - yehn, heer - deh - shake awz eh vawn - gay - lee - oo - moht, kee -
preachers (in) every place shall preach the Gospel every

S II
pré - di - ká - to - rok min - den hely - en hir - des - sék az e - van - gé - li - u - mot,
pray-dee - kah - toh - rohk meen - dehn hel - yehn, heer - deh - shake awz eh vawn - gay - lee - oo - moht,
preachers (in) every place shall preach the Gospel

A
pré - di - ká - to - rok min - den hely - en hir - des - sék az e - van - gé - li - u - mot,
pray-dee - kah - toh - rohk meen - dehn hel - yehn, heer - deh - shake awz eh vawn - gay - lee - oo - moht,
preachers (in) every place shall preach the Gospel

* "Jó" is an all-purpose good-feeling word, like "okay." It can be also translated as "well," "cool" or "hunky-dory!"

9

S I

- ki az ö ér - tel - me sze - rint, sze - rint, és a kö - zös - ség, ha ven - ni
 - kee awz ö air - tel - meh seh - reent, seh - reent, aish aw kö - zösh - shayg, haw vehn - nee
one of them interpreting according to one's belief and the community if they

S II

ki - ki az ö ér - tel - me sze - rint, sze - rint, és a kö - zös - ség, ha ven - ni
 kee - kee awz ö air - tel - meh seh - reent, seh - reent aish aw kö - zösh - shayg, haw vehn - nee
every one of them interpreting according to one's belief and the community if they

A

ki - ki az ö ér - tel - me sze - rint, sze - rint, és a kö - zös - ség, ha ven - ni
 kee - kee awz ö air - tel - meh seh - reent, seh - reent aish aw kö - zösh - shayg, haw vehn - nee
every one of them interpreting according to one's belief and the community if they

13

S I

mf a - kar - ja, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, *mp* Ha
 aw - kawr - yaw, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh. Haw
accept [it] If mp

S II

mf a - kar - ja, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, Ha
 aw - kawr - yaw, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh. Haw
accept [it] If mp

A

mf a - kar - ja, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, Ha
 aw - kawr - yaw, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh. Haw
accept [it] If

17 **A**

SI
nem, sen - ki rá ne kény - sze - rít - se, sen - ki rá ne kény - sze - rít - se, az
nem, shen - kee rah neh kayn - seh - reet - cheh, shen - kee rah neh kayn - seh - reet - cheh, awz
not, no one upon may not press/compel that

S II
nem, sen - ki rá ne kény - sze - rít - se, sen - ki rá ne kény - sze - rít - se,
nem, shen - kee rah neh kayn - seh - reet - cheh, shen - kee rah neh kayn - seh - reet - cheh,
not, no one upon may not press/compel

A
nem, sen - ki rá ne kény - sze - rít - se, sen - ki rá ne kény - sze - rít - se,
nem, shen - kee rah neh kayn - seh - reet - cheh, shen - kee rah neh kayn - seh - reet - cheh,
not, no one upon may not press/compel

21

SI
— ö lel - ke a - zon meg nem nyu - god - ván; de tart - has - son oly - an
— ö lel - keh aw - zohn meg nem nyew - gohd - vahn; deh tart - hawsh - shohn oy - awn
his/her soul however also not reassured/at peace but keep such

S II
az ö lel - ke a - zon meg nem nyu - god - ván; de tart - has - son oly - an
awz ö lel - keh aw - zohn meg nem nyew - gohd - vahn; deh tart - hawsh - shohn oy - awn
that his/her soul however also not reassured/at peace but keep such

A
az ö lel - ke a - zon meg nem nyu - god - ván; de tart - has - son oly - an
awz ö lel - keh aw - zohn meg nem nyew - gohd - vahn; deh tart - hawsh - shohn oy - awn
that his/her soul however also not reassured/at peace but keep such

25

S I

pré - di - ká - tort, a - ki - nek ta - nít - á - sa ö ne - ki
 pray - dee - kah - tort aw - kee - neck taw - neet - ah - shaw ö neh - kee
 preacher whose teachings he/she himself/herself

S II

pré - di - ká - tort, a - ki - nek ta - nít - á - sa ö ne - ki
 pray - dee - kah - tort, aw - kee - neck taw - neet - ah - shaw ö neh - kee
 preacher whose teachings he/she himself/herself

A

pré - di - ká - tort, a - ki - nek ta - nít - á - sa ö ne - ki
 pray - dee - kah - tort, aw - kee - neck taw - neet - ah - haw ö neh - kee
 preacher whose teachings he/she himself/herself

28

S I

mf
 te - tszik, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó. És
 teh - tseek, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh. Aish
 approves, exuberantly

S II

mf
 te - tszik, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó. És
 teh - tseek, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh. Aish
 approves, exuberantly

A

mf
 te - tszik, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó, jó. És
 teh - tseek, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh. Aish
 approves, And

40 , *mp* warmly

S I
 szid - al - maz - tas - sék, jó, — jó, — jó, — jó, — jó, — jó. — Mert a
 seed - awl - mawz - tawsh - shake, yoh, — yoh, — yoh, — yoh, — yoh. — Mairt aw
revile/denounce/disparage *For one's*
, *mp* warmly

S II
 szid - al - maz - tas - sék, jó, — jó, — jó, — jó, — jó, — jó. — Mert a
 seed - awl - mawz - tawsh - shake, yoh, — yoh, — yoh, — yoh, — yoh. — Mairt aw
revile/denounce/disparage *For one's*
, *mp* warmly

A
 szid - al - maz - tas - sék, jó, — jó, — jó, — jó, — jó, — jó. — Mert a
 seed - awl - mawz - tawsh - shake, yoh, — yoh, — yoh, — yoh, — yoh. — Mairt aw
revile/denounce/disparage *For one's*




44 C

S I
 hit — Is - ten - nek a - ján - dé - ka, az hal - lás - ból, hal - lás - ból
 heet — Eesh - tehn - neck aw - yahn - day - kaw, awz hawl - lahsh - bole, hawl - lash - bole
faith God's gift the hearing

S II
 hit Is - ten - nek a - ján - dé - ka, — az hal - lás - ból, hal - lás - ból
 heet Eesh - tehn - neck aw - yahn - day - kaw, — awz hawl - lahsh - bole, hawl - lash - bole
faith God's gift the hearing

A
 hit Is - ten - nek — a - ján - dé - ka, — az hal - lás - ból, — hal - lás - ból
 heet Eesh - tehn - neck — aw - yahn - day - kaw, — awz hawl - lahsh - bole, hawl - lash - bole
faith God's gift the hearing



50

S I

lé - szen, mely hal - lás Is - ten i - gé - je ál - tal va -
 lay - sen, may hawl - lahsh Eesh - tehn ee - gay - yeh ahl - tawl vaw -
 is, which hearing God's word brought about by is

S II

lé - szen, mely hal - lás Is - ten i - gé - je ál - tal va - gyon, —
 lay - sen, may hawl - lahsh Eesh - tehn ee - gay - yeh ahl - tawl vaw - dyohn, —
 is, which hearing God's word brought about by is

A

lé - szen, mely hal lás Is - ten i - gé - je ál - tal va -
 lay - sen, may hawl - lahsh Eesh - tehn ee - gay - yeh ahl - tawl vaw -
 is, which hearing God's word brought about by is

56

S I

- gyon, ál - tal va - gyon, Jó, — jó, jó, jó, jó, — jó, — jó, —
 dyohn, ahl - tawl vaw - dyohn, Yoh, — yoh, yoh, yoh, — yoh, — yoh, —

S II

— ál - tal va - gyon, Jó, — jó, jó, jó, jó, — jó, — jó, —
 — ál - tal vaw - dyohn, Yoh, — yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, — yoh, — yoh, —

A

- gyon, ál - tal va - gyon, Jó, — jó, jó, jó, jó, — jó, — jó.
 dyohn ahl - tawl vaw - dyohn, Yoh, — yoh, yoh, yoh, yoh, — yoh, — yoh.

The Edict of Torda, complete text

(The passages in bold are the lyrics of *Jó!*)

Hungarian:

“Urunk ofelsége, amint az ennek elotte való gyuléseken országával együtt végzett a religió dolgáról, azonképpen a mostanin is ezt megerosíti, hogy ti. **A prédikátorok minden helyen hirdessék az evangéliumot, kiki az ő értelme szerint, és a közösség, ha venni akarja, jó, ha nem, senki rá ne kényszerítse, az ő lelke azon meg nem nyugodván, de tarthasson olyan prédikátort, akinek tanítása ő neki tetszik.**

És ezért senki a szuperintendensek közül, se mások, a prédikátorokat meg ne bánthassák, a religióért senki ne szidalmazassék, az elobbi konstitutiok szerint. Nem engedtetik meg senkinek, hogy a tanításért más bárkit is fogsággal vagy helyétől megfosztással fenyegetsen; **mert a hit Istennek ajándéka, az hallásból lészen, mely hallás Isten ígéje által vagyon.**”

English:

“As it was the will of our Lord Sovereign, his Highness, to bring decisions along with his country on the sessions of the Diet the preceding days, regarding the matters of religion, he is willing to confirm the same this very day, namely that **preachers may propagate the Gospels according to their own understanding in all places. If the community wants to accept it, then it is a good thing. If not, no one may be coerced, for their soul might not be at peace unless they retain those preachers whose teachings appeal to them.**

And because of this no one among the superintendents or any others **may cause harm to the preachers, no one may revile or disparage them on account of their religion,** according to the former rules. No one may threaten anyone with imprisonment or deprivation of his office; **as faith is a gift from God, that comes from listening — listening to the word of God.**”

A Final Note about the text of the Edict of Torda: I am rather meticulous when it comes to setting a text exactly as it was originally written. When I abridge a text, as I have here, I document it fully, making sure that singers and audiences have access to the original, unabridged version. Therefore, it was rather distressing to me to discover that there were several different versions of the Edict of Torda!

My response was, as always, to seek expert advice. How can this be? I asked Scott Prinster, a Hungarian speaker and Edict of Torda scholar. In retrospect, Scott’s answer should have been obvious to me. The Edict was written in 1568, long before the standardization of Hungarian. It was not duplicated by mechanical printing, but by instead hand. Over the centuries, scribes took it upon themselves to update or edit the language, often by slight changes in word forms.

For this reason, there was some latitude regarding word choice. For instance, in some versions, the word “község” (village) is used instead of “közösség” (the wider community). Translator Eva Kish recommended that I use the latter in my song, because of the Edict’s broad scope. In all cases, we tried to make conscious choices which reflected the intent of the original decree. -E.A.