Music Collection
Although the stock of National Széchényi Library had contained music documents since its foundation, the idea of setting up a separate Music Collection came up only at the beginning of the 20th century. Following the purchase of Ferenc Erkel's heritage, which ended in the 1910s, first the
so-called “Musica” division was formed within NSZL’s Manuscripts Archive, and then, in February 1924, Chief Librarian Kálmán Isoz, PhD was assigned to organize a proper Music Collection for Hungary’s National Library.

NSZL’s current Music Collection comprises as many as 170,000 items of printed sheet music, while the number of manuscript sheet music items registered under code Ms. mus. is approximately 18,000. In addition to that, National Széchényi Library keeps a great number of manuscript- and printed sheet music in its repositories and its opera and stage music collection of the size of roughly 550 running meters of shelves. As accessory materials, Music Collection also keeps music-related photos, text manuscripts on the history and theory of music as well as several heritage collections of composers. It is important to know that items of manuscript sheet music written before the 16th century are stored by NSZL’s Manuscripts Archive, while printed sheet music made before the 18th century are kept by the Early Printed Books Archive.

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Comprising over seventy voice books, the archive of sheet music of Saint Egyed Church in the city of Bártfa (today’s Bardejov in Slovak Republic) got into the possession of National Széchényi Library in the first decades of the 20th century. This archive gives an overall view of the rich international repertoire used in the cities of 16th-17th century Hungary.

Following World War II, the archive of sheet music, once belonging to the Esterházy princes, was acquired by NSZL. The archive makes our Music Collection the world’s richest collection of documents related to the life and works of Joseph Haydn. Not only does it contain Haydn’s approximately one-hundred manuscripts, one-time copies of his works and first editions, but the collection also comprises manuscript sources (amendments in Haydn’s own handwriting and some of his arias) of the Italian opera repertoire performed for Miklós “Bright” in the Opera House at
Eszterháza, together with the archives *Acta musicalia* illustrating music life at Esterházy Court. The archive of sheet music also includes works by outstanding composer contemporaries such as Gregor Joseph Werner, Michael Haydn, Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf or Franz Xaver Süssmayr. NSZL’s virtual exhibition entitled [Seven Times Haydn](http://www.oszk.hu) gives you a hint how rich our Haydn collection is.

Out of the author’s manuscripts of [Ferenc Liszt](http://www.oszk.hu), National Széchényi Library owns some fifty items, together with a number of correction copies, printed sheet music and letters bearing the famous composer’s handwriting. Letters written by Liszt can be found by NSZL’s readers in the Manuscripts Archive, too.

The rich heritage of [Erkel Ferenc](http://www.oszk.hu) was purchased by National Széchényi Library in the beginning of the 20th century, so today you can study the author’s manuscripts of all of Erkel’s operas in our Music Collection. Another part of the heritage (letters and other manuscript materials) can be studied in the Library’s Manuscript Archive. In 2010, on the occasion of the bicentenary of Ferenc Erkel’s birth, NSZL purchased the heritage of Gyula Erkel, son and fellow-composer of Ferenc Erkel, too. Currently, this material is under processing.

Quite a few of the most important documents of this rich collection can be accessed free on the continuously developing [Erkel site](http://www.oszk.hu) of National Széchényi Library.

In addition to the above-mentioned Erkel and Liszt documents, NSZL keeps a rich source material on other outstanding figures of [Hungarian music life in the 19th century](http://www.oszk.hu), too. In our Reading Room, you can study most of the works by János Bihari, János Lavotta, Antal Csermák, Márik Rózsavölgyi, Gábor Mátrai (Rótkrepf) and Béni Egressy, just to mention a few. In NSZL’s Music Collection, you can also find the majority of music manuscripts and first editions of works by Mihály Mosonyi and the author’s heritage of Károly Huber, Imre Székely and Mór Vavrinecz. The document collection related to Károly Goldmark’s oeuvre is also of international significance.
[6] Even richer is our collection highlighting the **oeuvre of 20th century Hungarian composers.** Especially fascinating is the heritage material related to Ernő Dohnányi but in NSZL, you can also study the musical heritage related to, among others, Lajos Bárdos, Zoltán Horusitzky, Jenő Hubay, István Kerner, Sándor Jemnitz, Pongrác Kacsóh, Tibor Kazacsay, György Kerényi, Aurél Kerner, Gyula Kiszely, Rezső Kókay, György Kóska, Tibor Pikéthy, Béla Reinitz, Sándor Reschofsky, Albert Siklós, Ferenc Szabó, Xavér Ferenc Szabó, István Szelényi and Endre Székely.

The Music Collection of National Széchényi Library keeps Péter Szőke's musical-ornithological and István Volly's folk music collections. (The latter contains 60 phonograph cylinders, the digitized versions of which can be accessed online as well.)

The **Theater Music Collection** of the Library has been documenting the musical material of stage productions in the repertoire of municipal and rural theaters since around the 1830s. In the archive of more than 550 running meters of shelves, one can find the historical sheet music collections of Népszínház (Folk Theater), Nemzeti Színház (National Theater) and Magyar Királyi Operaház (Hungarian Royal Opera House). The archive gives an overall view of the development of Hungarian musical stage productions, in genres such as folk play, operetta and opera.
In addition to sheet music, NSZL’s Music Collection collects sound recordings as well. Currently, our **Sound Archive** keeps 100 wax cylinders, over 15,000 units of “normal”, 78-rpm discs (mainly from the private collection of József Kovács who had purchased these items in the past decade), 13,000 units of LP discs, 5,000 audiocassettes and approximately 9,000 CDs.

In line with the scope of collection of the Hungarian national library, the vast majority of these items contain musical recordings which have been sold in retail trade in Hungary since the 1900s and which are Hungary-related in one way or the other. Although since 1957, NSZL’s Sound Archive has been expanded by legal deposit items, our collection gives a true picture of the history of Hungarian disc publishing, and it also contains a whole lot of archival recordings (e.g. radio recordings of Andor Földes).

The Music Collection includes not only music but also various text recordings, the current number of which exceeds 2,000. Outstanding items are the two phonograph cylinders that recorded the speech of Lajos Kossuth delivered at the unveiling of the monument dedicated to the Martyrs of Arad. This recording, made in September, 1890, can be accessed freely on our website: [http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/kossuthhangja](http://mek.oszk.hu/kiallitas/kossuthhangja)

**Source URL:** [http://www.oszk.hu/en/music_collection](http://www.oszk.hu/en/music_collection)

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