

**doc. PaedDr. Mgr. Mária Strenáčiková, PhD.**

**Dr. Morel Koren**

Academy of Arts, Faculty of Music Arts, Banska Bystrica, Slovakia

Former member of the Music Department Staff, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel

## **SLOVAK FOLK SONGS IN THE DIGITAL PROGRAM SOLFY**

### **ABSTRACT**

Theoretical, digital technologies are integral to education, enabling learners to choose their path and speed, provide immediate feedback, and make learning more exciting and enjoyable. Therefore, many dedicated software products are offered to teachers and their students in many subjects, including music. One of the recommended software programs is “Solfy,” designed in 2018 and continuously developed. Solfy states for *Self-Singing Songs & Solfege*s and *Auto Evaluation* and is dedicated mainly to helping teachers in teaching and students in practicing and receiving immediate feedback. Simultaneously, introducing Solfy in schools beginning with primary helps update music education by integrating new technologies in natural symbiosis with the traditional methods and adding countless hours of individual and differential practice at home to the educational system.

Furthermore, Solfy helps promote singing songs and Solfege and opens the doors for students to learn the (western) music language, raising the level of music literacy in public schools. Containing songs and solfege with flowing melodic lines and relatively simple rhythm and harmonic structure from the scholar repertoire and the children’s folk repertoire, Solfy represents a new and modern didactical solution that integrates traditional methodological material for music education beginning with elementary. Extending the song repertoire with popular folk songs from different countries, Solfy will become a “communicator,” facilitating local music cultures to be accessible internationally by many users, contributing to better understanding, friendship, and cooperation between nations and countries. The authors warmly invite Slovak teachers to participate in creating an extensive collection of children’s popular songs from their regions that will be accessible and enjoyable for every user regardless of their country of origin. As examples, the article will present a few such songs that might become part of Solfy.

**Keywords:** Singing, Solfege, Music Literacy, Music Education.

In teaching intonation, knowing Solfege might become a very facilitating factor. Therefore, many professionals dedicate lots of time and energy to finding effective methods to teach solmization and implement it in music classes. Furthermore, with current trends in education, it is advisable to use technologies in classrooms to make studying more exciting and more enjoyable for pupils. “*ICT can improve the quality of education and heighten teaching*

*efficiency through preservice training and programs that are relevant and responsive to the needs of the education system*“ (Bonifacio, 2013, p. 2). Implementing ICT (informative-communicative technologies) is even enforced by current laws and recommendations in many countries. Moreover, European Union Council included Digital competence among other key competencies for lifelong learning. It explained that it *“involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society”* (The Council of the European Union, 2018, p. 9).

To comply with the standards, support the key competencies development, and keep music education up-to-date, ICT is also being implemented in music classes. An example is the program SOLFY, a didactic, interactive, and integrative artificial intelligence-based program for teaching and self-practicing Solfege. It helps pupils to learn solfeggio and to sing from music scores. *“Digital technologies have an impact on education, training, and learning by developing more flexible learning environments adapted to the needs of a highly mobile society”* (The Council of the European Union, 2018, p. 2). Implementing Solfy in elementary schools in close symbiosis with the traditional methods of music education generates a positive impact on SEL (social-emotional learning), improving the school climate and preventing violence. SOLFY helps teachers in teaching, pupils in practicing and receiving individual feedback and evaluation, integrating new methods with the traditional, and adding countless hours of personal practice to the educational system

The program was co-founded in 2018 by dr. Morel Koren from the Bar Ilan University, Israel, and a small team of passionate professionals. It is still developing but already used in Israel, Romania, Cyprus, Greece, and other countries. At this point, it runs in two modules: the Solfege module, in which the user receives feedback on the sung syllables, pitch, rhythm, and dynamics, and the Song module, which focuses only on pitch, rhythm, and dynamics correctness.

Folk songs *“have appropriate music-construction elements (rhythm, melody, vocal range), which are an expression of the musical sensitivity of simple folk creators, they are time-tested and selected, and only the most popular ones have been preserved and are still in use today”* (Derevjaníková, 2016, p. 28). Therefore, introducing a collection of Slovak folk songs in the Solfy repertoire can enlarge the suitable material for teaching and practicing singing with local music examples already tested for popularity. Furthermore, they provide space for singing activities with the names of the notes – as Solfege, or with the Slovak lyrics, in the local music still. SOLFY is an international program, and including folk songs from different nations can facilitate the users’ musical and cultural interaction, contributing to better understanding, friendship, and cooperation between nations and countries. All the songs from the present and future collections will be accessible as Solfege for all, while the songs with lyrics in a specific language will be understandable for users that speak and can read that written language – in our case, the Slovakian. A few examples of such songs, planned to be included in SOLFY, are presented in this paper.

## 1. Vretienko mi padá

[My spindle is falling]

$\text{♩} = 80$



Vre - tien - ko mi pa - dá, kto - že mi ho po - dá?

Vre - tien - ko mi pa - dá, kto - že mi ho po - dá?

Ne - mám tu mi - lé - ho, a - ni bra - ta je - ho.

Ne - mám tu mi - lé - ho, a - ni bra - ta je - ho.

Figure 1: The music scores for the song Vretienko mi padá; Source: own

Table 1: Lyrics in Slovak and English language (Vretienko mi padá)

Vretienko mi padá	My spindle is falling
Vretienko mi padá, ktože mi ho podá? (2x)	My spindle is falling, who will hand it to me? (2x)
Nemám tu milého ani brata jeho. (2x)	My beloved is not here, nor his brother is here. (2x)
Nebanovała by, keby nemusela, (2x)	I would not be sorry, if I did not have to, (2x)
keby ťa šuhajko, nerada videla. (2x)	if I did not like to see you, my beloved. (2x)
Nerada videla a nerada mala, (2x)	If I did not like to see you or to love you, (2x)
keby ja za tebou dvierka zatvárala. (2x)	and if I would to close little door behind you. (2x)

Source: own

Table 2: Lyrics with rhythmic syllables (Vretienko mi padá)

Slovak lyrics	English lyrics
Vre-tien-ko mi pa-dá,	My spind-le is fall-ing,
kto-že mi ho po-dá?	who will hand it to me?
Ne-mám tu mi-lé-ho	My be-loved is not here
ani bra-ta je-ho.	nor his bro-ther is here.
Ne-ba-no-va-la by,	I would not be sor-ry,
ke-by ne-mu-se-la,	if I do not have to,
ke-by ťa šu-haj-ko,	if I did not like to
Ne-ra-da vi-de-la.	see you, my be-lo-ved.
Ne-ra-da vi-de-la	If I did not like to
a ne-ra-da ma-la,	see you or to love you,
ke-by ja za te-bou	and if I would to close
dvier-ka za-tvá-ra-la.	lit-tle door be-hind you.

Source: own

### Song content:



Figure 2: Woman with Irish spinning wheel (around 1900), similar to the ones that were used in Slovakia; Source: Detroit Publishing Co. - Library of Congress

The spindle is a part of a spinning wheel, the early machine for turning fibers into thread or yarn. This was afterward woven into cloth. This song is sung by a young woman/girl, who prepares threads. The spindle falls down and she is asking, who will hand it to her, since nor her beloved, nor his brother is nearby her. Then, she says she would not be sorry (for them not being there), if she did not have to (be sorry), if she would not like to see her beloved, and if she did not like him. Then she repeats if she did not like to see him and if she did not like him, and she adds: “And if I would to close little door behind you. “

The song has two parts (A and B), each containing only five measures sung twice each. Inside the five measures, the rhythm of the first two is like that in a mirror, and this fact suggests a spinning action; the 3rd measure is rhythmically identical to the first one, while the fourth

brings a new surprise, proposing to reduce the spinning speed - that will close the cycle in the last musical measure, which is the preparation for the first one - or for continuing to the B part.

The song is in D major scale, and the harmony is based on the accords built on the main steps of the diatonic scale: I, IV, and V, respectively re, sol, and la major.

The song originates in the Region of Liptov (Liptovské Sliache).

## 2. Zahrajte mi, muzikanti [O, play to me, musicians]

♩ = 80



Za - hraj - te mi mu - zi - kan - ti, ve - se - le

5 do - kiaľ ja - mám svo - ju mam - ku pri se - be

Figure 3: The music scores for the song Zahrajte mi, muzikanti; Source: own

Table 3: Lyrics in Slovak and English language (Zahajte mi, muzikanti)

Zahrajte mi, muzikanti	O, play to me, musicians
Zahrajte mi, muzikanti, vesele, dokiaľ ja mám svoju mamku pri sebe.	O, play to me, my musicians, merily While I have my dearest mother next to me
Budete mi, muzikanti, smutne hrať, keď sa budem od svej mamky odberať.	Musicians, you will play sadly just for me when I will be saying good by to Mum-my.

Source: own

Table 4: Lyrics with rhythmic syllables (Zahrajte mi, muzikanti)

Slovak lyrics	English lyrics
Za-hraj-te mi, mu-zi-kan-ti, ve-se-le,	O, play to me, my mu-si-cians, me-ri-ly,
do-kiaľ ja mám svo-ju mam-ku pri se-be.	while I have my dea-rest mo-ther next to me.
Bu-de-te mi, mu-zi-kan-ti, smu-tne hrať,	Musicians, you will play sadly just for me,
keď sa bu-dem od svej mam-ky od-be-rat'.	when I will be saying good by to Mum-my.

Source: own

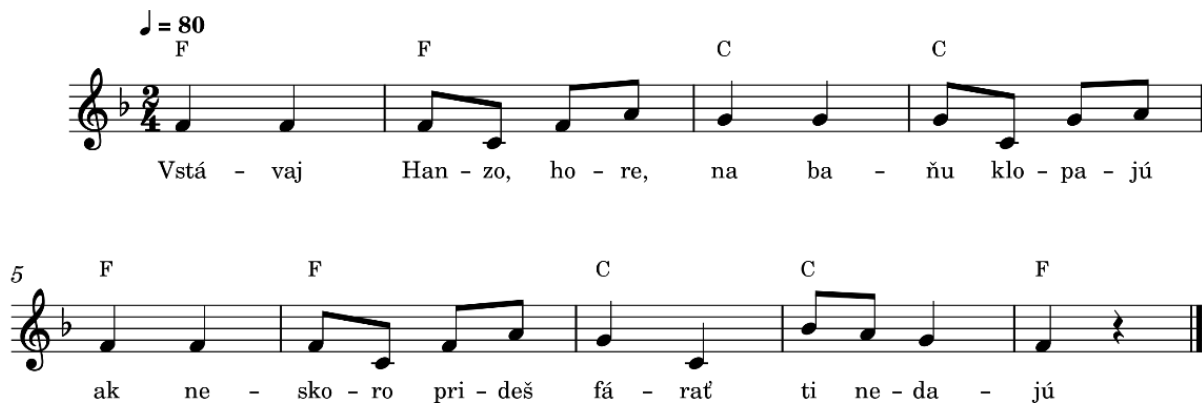
### Song content:

This song is sung on the occasion of a wedding by a young girl who is getting married and who is going to say goodbye to her mother. Musicians are to play for the bride-to-be at this event, so she asks them: “O, play to me, my musicians, merrily, while I have my dearest mother next to me”. Then, when she leaves her home (and her Mummy), the musicians will play sadly for her.

This simpler song has two symmetric parts (A and B), each containing four measures. Each part is built by two musical measures; the first two with eights and the other with quarters that can give the listener a feeling of a musical question. The song’s second part is like an answer to the posed question.

The song is in the C major scale, beginning with an arpeggio, and the harmony steps are based on the diatonic steps: I, IV, II, and V, respectively C major, F major, d minor and G major.

### 3. Vstávaj, Honzo, hore [Get up, Honzo]



♩ = 80  
F C C

Vstá - vaj Han - zo, ho - re, na ba - ňu klo - pa - jú

5 F C C F

ak ne - sko - ro pri - deš fá - rať ti ne - da - jú

Figure 4: The music scores for the song Vstávaj, Honzo, hore; Source: own

Table 5: Lyrics in Slovak and English language (Vstávaj, Honzo, hore)

Vstávaj, Honzo, hore	Get up, Honzo
Vstávaj, Honzo, hore, na baňu klopajú, ak neskoro prídeš, fárať ti nedajú.	Honzo, open your eyes, they are knocking to mine, and if you will be late, you won't be let go down.
Neskoro som prišiel, fárať mi nedali, ešte ma hutmanskou palicou vydrali.	I was coming too late, I could not work in pit, Even, I was beaten with a pit foreman's stick.

Source: own

Table 6: Lyrics with rhythmic syllables (Vstávaj, Honzo, hore)

Vstávaj, Honzo, hore	Honzo, open your eyes
Vstá-vaj, Hon-zo, ho-re,	Hon-zo, o-pen your eyes,
na ba-ňu klo-pa-jú,	they are kno-cking to mine,
ak ne-sko-ro prí-deš,	and if you will be late,
fá-rať ti ne-da-jú.	you won't be let go down.
Ne-sko-ro som pri-šiel,	I was co-ming too late,
fá-rať mi ne-da-li,	I could not work in pit,
e-šte ma hut-man-skou	E-ven, I was bea-ten
pa-li-cou vy-dra-li.	with a pit fore-man's stick.

Source: own

### Song content:

This mining song tells a story about Honzo (In Slovak language Jano, in English John), who didn't make it to the mine in time for work because he fell asleep. As a result, he was late, so they (the inspectors) wouldn't let him into the mine, and, what's more, they punished him by beating him up with a stick. It should be explained that in Slovakia they used to call the miners to work with the help of the so-called knocker (that is why the song says that they are knocking to mine). The knocker was a self-contained musical instrument, a specially adapted portable wooden board of a length 70 – 150 cm, a height of 10 – 15 cm, and a width of 4-5 cm (Encyclopédia, klopačka), on which people knocked to announce the miners that it was time to go down the pit/mine. Knocking was also heard on other festive occasions, funerals, miners' meetings, and in an emergency from fires. The knocker could be placed on a tree, on a unique holder, or in a specific building called Klopačka [Knocker].

One of these two-story tower-like buildings is in Banská Štiavnica (a town in central Slovakia), another one in Banská Hodruša and in other Slovak mine towns and villages.

Note: In the Slovak text, it is sung that Honza was beaten up with a hutman's stick. Hutman was a mine supervisor, pit foreman, an inspector (Kopecká, Laliková, Ondrejková, Skladaná, Valentová, 2011, p. 131).

The song has a non-symmetric number of measures (9) built into two parts (A and B). The A contains three patterns of two bars each (three times three quarters and four eighths), and a short



Figure 6: Renaissance knocker from 1521 in Banská Hodruša, local part of Hodruša-Hámre; Source: Lure, 2014, CC-BY SA 4.0.

B part of three measures. The song is in F major, the accompanying chords are on the tonic F, and the dominant C major. The song patterns consist of arpeggios or parts of arpeggios on the tonic F and dominant C.

The song originates in the region Banská Štiavnica (Central Slovakia).

## Conclusion

Using digital interactive programs in teaching is advisable and can permit their integration aside from traditional teaching methods. Moreover, it improves learning outcomes by offering each child the possibility of individual and differential practice outside the school. In this mode, such programs as SOLFY help add countless hours of unique and personal study with feedback, preparing at home, and being ready to sing in class with colleagues.

SOLFY developers invite the participants to the ninth Horizons of Art 9 web Conference and especially the music teachers from the Banska Bystrica to collaborate with Solfy on enlarging the repertoire of Slovak folk songs for their pupils/students. Simultaneously, they propose and ask teachers to be courageous and implement the software in their class, using it for 10 minutes in each lesson, together with the traditional methods. Then, to give homework knowing that the pupils will have the possibility to practice at home and receive immediate feedback about the quality of their recordings, and benefit from the opportunity to monitor and coordinate their students remotely. Furthermore, the developers will be happy to establish a relationship of collaboration and cooperation with passionate music teachers from the public elementary schools, teachers that will accept to become Solfty's ambassador in Slovakia, contributing to creating an extensive collection of popular songs that will be accessible and enjoyable for all. For this purpose, we have so far chosen three songs Vretienko mi padá [My spindle is falling], Vstávaj, Honzo, hore [Get up, Honzo] and Zahrajte mi, muzikanti [O, play to me, musicians]. We all know that *singing pupils are happy pupils*, so we continue to promote singing in all schools.

## References

- Bonifacio, Armin L. (2013). *Developing Information Communication Technology (ICT) Curriculum Standards for K-12 Schools in the Philippines*. Retrieved from: <http://linc.mit.edu/linc2013/proceedings/Session7/Session7Bonifacio.pdf>
- Derevjaníková, A. (2016). *Hudobná výchova. Metodická príručka k vzdelávacej oblasti Umenie a kultúry Štátneho vzdelávacieho programu pre predprimárne vzdelávanie v materských školách*. Bratislava: Štátny pedagogický ústav. Retrieved from: [https://cloud5.edupage.org/cloud/hudobna\\_vychova.pdf?z%3A0vn%2FeVt%2FPjb2eMpmfWSp5ukpH4fkneOVPTSxfwUHdbUe22oso070gL7Dqy59dlws](https://cloud5.edupage.org/cloud/hudobna_vychova.pdf?z%3A0vn%2FeVt%2FPjb2eMpmfWSp5ukpH4fkneOVPTSxfwUHdbUe22oso070gL7Dqy59dlws)
- Encyklopédia. Klopáčka*. (n.d.). Centrum pre tradičnú ľudovú kultúru. Retrieved from: <https://www.ludovakultura.sk/polozka-encyklopedie/klopacka/>



- Kopecká, M., Laliková, T., Ondrejková, R., Skladaná, J. Valentová, I. (2011). *Staršia slovenská lexika v medzijazykových vzťahoch*. Bratislava: Veda, vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied; Jazykovedný ústav Ľudovíta Štúra. ISBN Retrieved from: [https://www.juls.savba.sk/attachments/pub\\_starsia\\_slovenska\\_lexika/starsia.pdf](https://www.juls.savba.sk/attachments/pub_starsia_slovenska_lexika/starsia.pdf)
- Langsteinová, E. & Felix, B. (2003). *Hudobná výchova pre 5. ročník základných škôl*. Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo.
- Lure. (2014). *Renesančná klopačka z roku 1521 v Banskej Hodruši, miestnej časti Hodruše-Hámrov [Renaissance knocker from 1521 in Banská Hodruša, local part of Hodruša-Hámre]*. CC-BY SA 4.0. Retrieved from: [https://sk.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%BAbor:Bansk%C3%A1\\_Hodru%C5%A1a\\_klopa%C4%8Dka\\_01.jpg](https://sk.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%BAbor:Bansk%C3%A1_Hodru%C5%A1a_klopa%C4%8Dka_01.jpg)
- The Council of the European Union. (4.6. 2018). Council recommendation of 22. May 2018 on key competences of lifelong learning. *Official Journal of the European Union*. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604\(01\)&rid=7](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&rid=7)
- Woman with Irish spinning wheel (around 1900)*. (n.d). Detroit Publishing Co. - Library of Congress REPRODUCTION NUMBER: LLC-DIG-ppmsc-09892. Retrieved from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spinning\\_wheel#/media/File:Elderlyspinnera.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spinning_wheel#/media/File:Elderlyspinnera.jpg)

## Contact

**assoc. prof. PaedDr. Mgr. Mária Strenáčiková, PhD.**

Academy of Arts, Faculty of Music Arts, Banska Bystrica, Slovakia  
[maria.strenacikova1@aku.sk](mailto:maria.strenacikova1@aku.sk)

## Dr. Morel Koren

Former member of the Music Department, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel  
[Morel.koren@biu.ac.il](mailto:Morel.koren@biu.ac.il). Currently, director of pedagogy and co-founder of Solfy  
[morelkoren@gmail.com](mailto:morelkoren@gmail.com)