

Theses of the DLA dissertation

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Interpretative characteristics and differences in the art of Ede Banda as a
soloist and chamber musician

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I. Background of the Research

The primary aim of my dissertation was to contribute to the preservation of Ede Banda's legacy and to promote a deeper understanding of his pedagogical and artistic achievements. In my thesis, I present in detail his career as both an artist and a teacher, as well as the mutual influence of these two paths. By introducing and juxtaposing Ede Banda as a soloist and as a chamber musician, I sought to highlight the essence of his artistry. Through the analysis of audio recordings, I shed light on the distinctive features of his musical thinking and his consciously developed performance style in both solo and chamber music contexts.

During the course of my research, a key point of departure was György Éder's dissertation titled *Magyar gordonkások a 20. században. Dénes Vera és Banda Ede életműve a Popper iskola tükrében* (*Hungarian Cellists in the 20th Century: The Oeuvre of Vera Dénes and Ede Banda in the Light of the Popper School*). This work significantly contributed to the study of Ede Banda's artistic legacy through its valuable foundational research and numerous important insights. It undoubtedly represents a major step in the scholarly treatment of the topic; however, it remains incomplete, as certain areas were not explored in sufficient depth. As I gathered material and reviewed available sources, it became increasingly clear to me that the memory of Ede Banda is still vivid and accessible—many contemporaries, students, colleagues, and family members are still alive and able to enrich the picture of him through their personal recollections. With this realization, I felt that perhaps this is the last opportunity to create a truly comprehensive, monograph-style study that encompasses multiple perspectives and biographical dimensions. Such a work would not only aim to present his professional journey, but also to illuminate the multifaceted mindset and highly conscious approach that shaped his relationship to music—an approach deeply rooted in humility and which ultimately led to such a richly varied artistic career.

II. Sources

The primary foundation of my research consisted of contemporary reviews, newspaper articles, interviews, and audio recordings that document various stages of Ede Banda's career.

As a first step in the source analysis, I examined the press materials published about Ede Banda, with particular attention to music criticism. A surprisingly rich body of critical material is available, which enabled me to present a nuanced picture—particularly in the

second chapter of my dissertation—of how the contemporary music press perceived and evaluated Banda’s artistry. I sought to organize these critical sources according to both thematic and chronological criteria, in order to allow for meaningful comparisons between opinions from different periods of his career.

Particularly significant among the sources are the interviews conducted with Ede Banda. These include numerous shorter conversations focused on specific topics, as well as several more extensive, life-history-style interviews. The most prominent among these is a six-part interview series titled *Művészpályám emlékeiből* (*From the Memories of My Artistic Career*), discovered in the archives of Hungarian Radio. This series comprises several hours of recorded conversations and has been digitized, transcribed, and annotated in detail with the assistance of the Radio’s staff. It is an especially valuable document, as it contains numerous unique biographical and professional details that are not documented elsewhere.

To support the presentation of Banda’s pedagogical work, I examined the annual yearbooks of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music from the years 1948 to 1996. These documents provide detailed information regarding his teaching activities. In addition, I conducted in-depth interviews with several of his former students. These interviews are an essential part of the dissertation, not only from a biographical perspective but also in terms of pedagogy and methodology. Edited and revised versions of these conversations are included in the appendix of the dissertation. In the final chapter of the dissertation, I examined Ede Banda’s interpretations based on a selection of solo and chamber music recordings, drawn from works representing various musical periods. This chapter focuses on sounding sources, as one of the most crucial aspects of musicological research is the live performance—that is, the concrete realization of musical interpretation.

Audio recordings serve as primary documents that not only reflect Ede Banda’s artistic personality but also offer direct insight into the performance practices characteristic of his era. These sources made it possible to conduct a detailed analysis of his interpretative traits and to explore his approach to specific works, including his understanding of form and style. Such an approach is particularly important in the case of a musician whose artistic legacy was fulfilled primarily through performance and pedagogy.

III. Method

The aim of my dissertation is to explore and contextualize Ede Banda’s multifaceted artistic and pedagogical work within a methodological framework that combines historical source

research, oral history, critical analysis, and interpretation analysis. Throughout my research, I strived to approach the intersections of musical artistry and biographical background with a personal and reflective perspective—focusing particularly on those points where the life story had a tangible impact on performance character and artistic attitude.

The structure of my dissertation is built upon both thematic and functional logic. The first chapter presents the life and career of Ede Banda—not merely with biographical intent, but with the aim of examining how events in his life influenced his musical identity. Special attention is given to interpreting his life through the lens of his parallel roles. Chamber music—especially his work with the Tátrai String Quartet—plays a central role in this chapter, as it represents the most profound dimension of his artistic legacy. The second chapter adopts a less conventional approach: it reconstructs Banda’s performance style exclusively through contemporary reviews and statements by his peers. By comparing these critical perspectives, the chapter aims to describe the defining characteristics of his artistry. The third chapter focuses on Banda Ede’s pedagogical activity. Here, I applied a dual perspective: on the one hand, the analysis is grounded in institutional sources; on the other, the interview materials—including Banda’s own statements and the recollections of his former students—reveal deeper layers of his pedagogical attitude. This approach allows for more than just a presentation of factual data; it also offers a more personal, internal perspective on the individuality of the music educator. The final, fourth chapter undertakes a musical analysis of Banda’s interpretations. The methodology employed is both analytical and comparative, with the goal of identifying the key features of Ede Banda’s interpretive practice and tracing its evolution through recordings from different periods of his career.

IV. Results

The choice of my dissertation topic was motivated both by my personal connection and by the experiences I gained during my musical studies. Ede Banda, as a defining Hungarian cellist of the second half of the twentieth century, exerted a significant influence on the development of the domestic musical scene as a soloist, chamber musician, and pedagogue alike.

One particularly important achievement of this research is the collection, organization, and analysis of previously unexplored or difficult-to-access sources. These include radio interviews with Ede Banda, such as the six-part series *From the Memories of My Artistic Career* recorded in 1995, as well as interviews I conducted with his former students and

colleagues. The reception history analysis carried out in the second chapter, which examines Banda's performance style exclusively through contemporary reviews, also represents a novel approach within Hungarian musicological practice, especially in research focused on performing artists. The interpretation analysis chapter of the dissertation aims to uncover the stylistic traits of Banda's performances and to compare these traits across temporal and contextual changes. This type of stylistic-historical approach is still rarely applied in Hungarian performance studies, thus it can be regarded as a valuable contribution in itself.

The goal of my work was not only to explore the oeuvre of Ede Banda but also to demonstrate how an artist can shape the musical culture of their own era, and how one can simultaneously be an active performer and an influential pedagogue. Through my findings, I hope that not only the figure of Ede Banda will become more visible, but also an important, previously under-researched segment of twentieth-century Hungarian musical life will be brought into new light.

V. Documentation of Activities Related to the Subject of the Dissertation

During my research, I had multiple opportunities to hear the solo Bach suites performed by Ede Banda's son. For my doctoral final recital, I carefully selected a program that reflects connections to Ede Banda's artistry at several points.