

Theses of the DLA dissertation

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The influence of Zoltán Kodály's violin-cello
Duó on Pál Hermann's *Vonós kettes, Grand Duo*
and Mátyás Seiber's *Sonata da Camera*

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I. Research background

The main pillar of my thesis is the Kodály violin-cello *Duó*. The work of Dávid Popper and the Hungarian cello department contributed significantly to the creation and spread of the work, through artists such as Pál Hermann or Jenő Kerpely. Béla Csuka's chapter: *Arcképek a gordonkajáték történetéből Magyarországon (Portraits from the history of cello playing in Hungary)*, and György Éder's dissertation: *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)* proved to be extremely useful in establishing the historical context. My dissertation aims to demonstrate that the Kodály *Duó*, one of the first violin-cello duos in the 20th century, is of great importance both in terms of the development of the violin-cello duo genre and in the composer's oeuvre. Numerous reviews, newspaper articles, concert reports and reviews have been written about the *Duó*. János Breuer in the *Kodály kalauz (Kodály guide)* and Antal

Boronkay in his *A hét zeneműve* (The *music composition of the week*) wrote a detailed analysis of the *Duó*. The composer himself also shared important thoughts regarding the creation of the work. Suzanne Barber Veiga's doctoral dissertation *An analysis and comparison of the Duo of Zoltan Kodaly and the Sonata of Maurice Ravel for violin and violoncello* (The Graduate School University of Kentucky, 1998.) provides many novelties.

One of the main goals of my research was to bring back to the public consciousness some undeservedly forgotten composers and violin-cello duos by comparing them with *Duó*. After the *Duó* was created, many Hungarian composers composed in this genre, but for personal reasons and out of curiosity I chose the works of two of Adolf Schiffer's students: Pál Hermann and Mátyás Seiber. No research has yet been done on the works of Pál Hermann – apart from Ádám Menyhei's complex exam¹ (Pál Hermann's piano solo and chamber compositions: *Quatre Épigrammes; Toccata; Piano Suite; Piano trio*), so I received my sources from the Hermann

¹ 2019.09.04.

heirs – Corrie Hermann and Paul Hermann Jr. – and the Dutch Forbidden Music foundation supported my work. Several publications have been published on the art of Mátyás Seiber. I prepared a comparative analysis using the above compositions. No one has ever made such a detailed analysis of the Kodály *Duó*, and in comparison, with the duos of Pál Hermann and Mátyás Seiber, important observations came to light about the impact of the *Duó* and Zoltán Kodály's pedagogy.

II. Sources

The writings of János Breuer were of great help in my work. The *Kodály kalauz (Kodály guide)* helped me from a historical perspective and in the analysis, and the *Kodály dokumentumok I. (Kodály documents I.)* helped me grasp the central subject of my research, the *Duó*, based on reviews and newspaper articles. The reviews shed light on important details, informing about the international reception of the *Duó* and the preparedness of the performers, in many cases praising Pál Hermann and Zoltán Székely, and praising the new kind of folk music sound. Piroska Baranyay's dissertation: *A gordonka születése (The birth of the cello)* and Stephen Bonta's writings on cello history were of great use to me in preparing the first half of the Introduction, György Éder: *Magyar gordonkások a 20. században. Dénes Vera és Banda Ede életműve a Popper iskola tükrében* and Béla Csuka's writings: *Arcképek a gordonkajáték történetéből Magyarországon* helped to put the works of cellist composers into context.

Carine Alders' precise biographical notes, the stories of the Hermann family, and Pál Hermann's diary written during the war gave me a much deeper insight into the composer's life, and I was able to get closer to the composer's family and work. My friendship with Corrie Hermann for more than ten years and the countless lectures on Hermann's works helped me to get to know the composer's oeuvre.

Last but not least, the writings of Zoltán Kodály collected in the volumes of *Visszatekintések (Reflections)*, the interviews of Kodály's students, Gábor Lilla: *Kodály pedagógiájának nyomában – Bárdos Lajos, Ádám Jenő, Kerényi György és Bors Irma visszaemlékezése (In the footsteps of Kodály's pedagogy - The recollections of Lajos Bárdos, Jenő Ádám, György Kerényi and Irma Bors)*, and Kathryn Smith Bowers' writings: *Egy váratlan fordulat Seiber Mátyás pályafutásában (An unexpected turn in the career of Mátyás Seiber)* were of great help to me in finding out more information about the life of the composer Mátyás Seiber and his relationship with Kodály. These sources facilitated the comparative analysis of the pieces.

III. Method

My research followed 3 main lines:

1. Establishing the historical context of duos through the centuries-long history of the cello. The importance of the Hungarian cello school, which created the opportunity for high-level cello playing and composition to enable the creation and performance of masterpieces similar to the *Duó*. Precise definition of the duo and duet genre.

2. Analysis of the Kodály *Duó*, from aspects that make it comparable to the other three duos. The circumstances of the creation of the works and the collection of reports on the performances. Analysis of the duos of Pál Herman and Mátyás Seiber and their comparison with the Kodály *Duó*.

3. Summary of the results, demonstrating the influence of Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály and the Viennese school, illustrated with examples of scores.

IV. Results

The first chapter of my thesis clarifies the concepts of duo and duet. This chapter sheds light on important antecedents regarding the past of violin-cello duos and musical works written for other instruments. The second chapter contains Zoltán Kodály's relationship with the string quartet, the history of the work's creation and performance, and an analysis of the work. Among the performers of the *Duó*, the names of Pál Hermann – and his good friend and chamber partner Zoltán Székely – often appear. This is further evidence of the good relationship between Hermann and Kodály. Pál Hermann was greatly influenced by Zoltán Kodály's teachings, and the young composer enhanced the reputation of Kodály's works – including the *Duó* – on several occasions. In the second chapter of my thesis, I deal with the life of Pál Hermann and his relationship with Zoltán Kodály, and I analyze and compare the String Quartet and the Grand Duo with the Kodály *Duó*. In the case of the *Vonós kettes* (*String Duo*), I explored the motifs inspired by Hungarian folk music, as well as the 12-degree composition

technique found in the work through the friendship between Hermann and Schönberg. The *Grand Duo* was entirely inspired by Kodály's work, and the composer did not want to hide this. The structure of the movements and motifs is sometimes completely identical in the pieces. At the same time, the *Grand Duo* is more cheerful, more entertaining music than Kodály's. The third chapter of my thesis is the biography of Mátyás Seiber, especially his relationship with Zoltán Kodály, and a comparison of the work *Sonata da Camera* and the Kodály *Duó*. The chapter reveals that Bartók and Kodály highly appreciated Seiber's art, and that the composer was looking for new paths from a very young age. The work contains Bartók and Kodály quotations, folk music motifs, 12-step composition, composed jazz-like improvisations, and permutation-like motif sets, all of which are evidence that Mátyás Seiber quickly absorbed and expanded the compositional techniques of his masters. The last chapter of my thesis summarizes the similarities and differences discussed above, illustrates them with sheet music examples, and draws attention to further details.

V. Documentation of the activity related to the subject of
the dissertation

2018. August 10.

Netherlands - Bergen

The International Holland Music Sessions (TIHMS)

Pál Hermann: *Vonós kettes*,

Piano trio - Andante tranquillo

Bálint Kruppa -violin, Ádám Menyhei -piano, Barnabás
Baranyai -cello

2020. September 8.

Budapest – Tóth Aladár Zeneiskola

Pál Hermann: *Vonós kettes*

Pál Hermann - *Piano trio - Andante tranquillo*

Ágnes Langer- violin, Ádám Menyhei -piano, Barnabás
Baranyai -cello

2021. September 11.

Netherlands- Amsterdam

Pál Hermann - *Piano trio - Andante tranquillo*

Pál Hermann - *Suite for piano*

Pál Hermann - *Vonós kettes*

Henriëtte Bosmans - *Piano trio*

Eszter Kökény -violin, Ádám Menyhei -piano, Barnabás
Baranyai -cello

2021. September 12.

Netherlands- Amsterdam

Pál Hermann - *Piano trio - Andante tranquillo*

Pál Hermann - *Suite for piano*

Pál Hermann - *Vonós kettes*

Eszter Kökény -violin, Ádám Menyhei -piano, Barnabás
Baranyai -cello

2022. August 27.

Netherlands - Groede Great Church

Pál Hermann - *Toccata for Piano*

Pál Hermann - *Piano trio - Andante tranquillo*

Ioana Olteanu-violin, Ádám Menyhei -piano, Barnabás
Baranyai -cello

2022. August 28.

Netherlands - Den Hoorn (Texel)

Reformed church

Pál Hermann - *Grand Duo* for violin and cello

Pál Hermann - *Piano trio - Andante tranquillo*

Ioana Olteanu-violin, Ádám Menyhei -piano, Barnabás

Baranyai -cello

2022. September 4.

Netherlands – Corrie Hermann’s birthday concert

Pál Hermann - *Toccata for Piano*

Pál Hermann - *Piano trio - Andante tranquillo*

Pál Hermann - *Grand Duo* for violin and cello

Ioana Olteanu-violin, Ádám Menyhei -piano, Barnabás

Baranyai -cello