

Thesis of the doctoral dissertation

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## The Birth of the Cello

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### I. Premises

The existence of the cello as a solo instrument is quite natural for us. My interest only turned toward the roots, the evolution of the cello, I only began to discover the premises when I happened to get in a closer connection with the baroque cello, the predecessor of the modern cello. The story – especially that of the beginnings – seemed very interesting, exciting but rather chaotic. The scene is Italy where the violoncello was born in the second half of 17th century. However, it was the result of a long process, and the so-called „cello’ didn’t exist until the end of 17th century.

There are plenty of great academic works representing the whole history, literature, techniques of the instrument in general, giving useful and extensive description of the history, evolution and repertoire of the instrument. Such works are for example the book of Wolfgang Boettcher – Winfried Pape (Boettcher – Pape: Das Violoncello), the article „Violoncello” of The New Grove or the article „Violoncello” of MMG which proved to be very important sources of my work, too. But there’s hardly any, if any works especially in Hungarian on the initial period, the works, the authors, the first cellists of this era, liberation of the cello from the continuo role, the emancipation, through which it gained solo instrument status.

My aim was to focus on this era with its premises, the evolution and the initial development of the instrument, the major steps toward becoming a solo instrument and the major characters, the early cello-

play and the first solo repertoire while also tried to give an overall view from the aspect of history, terminology, construction of the instrument and performance.

## II. Sources

The main sources of the Part I-II:

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Schnoebelen, Anne: „Giovanni Maria Jacchini” In: Stanley Sadie (szerk.) *The New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians, Second Edition*. London 2001

Suess, John G.: „Giovanni Battista Vitali” In: Stanley Sadie (szerk.) *The New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians, Second Edition*. London 2001

——— / Vanscheeuwijck, Marc: „Domenico Gabrielli” In: Stanley Sadie (szerk.) *The New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians, Second Edition*. London 2001

- Vanscheeuwijk, Marc: „Preface” In: Giuseppe Maria Jacchini: *Sonate a violino e violoncello e a violoncello solo per camera*. Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore 2001
- „Preface” In: Domenico Gabrielli: *Ricerari per violoncello solo. Canone a due violoncelli. Sonate per violoncello e basso continuo*. Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 2004
- „Preface” In: Giavanni Battista Degli Antonii: *Ricerate sopra il Violoncello o clavicembalo e Ricerate per il violino*. Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 2007
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The primary sources of the major, III. chapter are the pieces itself. The starting point of my study was provided by the reprinted manuscripts, urtext sheet music of pieces by Giovanni Battista Vitali, Giuseppe Colombi, Domenico Galli, Giovanni Battista. Degli Antonii. Domenico Gabrielli, Giuseppe Jacchini., Besides, since being a baroque cellist myself, my practical experiences through examining, playing and performing these pieces defined the base and the guideline of my work. I was also helped by studies and books on pieces, authors and performance and by several discussions with some experts of the period.

### III. Method

My study mainly deals with the pioneer authors composing principally for *violone* as the direct predecessor of cello and for *violoncello*, also with the solo and the first *basso continuo* pieces composed by them. I begin with a general historical introduction which is followed by a detailed description of the evolution of cello – in which one of the most important factors was the invention of the metal wound strings and as a result, the development of the size of the instrument – the age, circumstances, significant composers and an analysis of their works in details. The most relevant part of the essay is the discussion of the repertoire, first of all from a practical point of view. I make my conclusions on contemporary techniques and possible approaches, ways of performance, composing, tuning based on the pieces of music.

### IV. Results

Beside my strong personal interest – mainly as a baroque cellist – concerning the development of the cello into a solo instrument, the contemporary repertoire and the style of the period it was the lack of

a both practical and theoretical analysing work on the issue that lead me to bring myself to write this study. My work gives a general idea of the birth of cello, the reasons why it happened so late compared to other instruments (it was mainly the unaproppriate technic of the cello that couldn't make itself free of that of the violin; and the size of the cello, hand in hand with the thickness and lenght of the strings that made it difficult to play), the initial history and most of all the works, which are undeservingly undervalued and unpopular and still waiting for their revelation on many stages. Not only do I summarize the early composers and works of the cello but I also attempt to demonstrate their significance. Thinking backwards, I judge by the pieces themselves to the aspects of contemporary performance and technique and I seek to draw some attention to this hardly appreciated period and its virtues. My study might contribute to the popularization of this era and its works among which I find the works and role of Domenico Gabrielli as epoch-making and particularly particular.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to be able to represent the musical pieces from different angles, theoretical and practical sides, combining the different aspects. Being a cellist and knowing the works form "inside", I was able to search them from at

least two different point of view. I joined the different approaches and put the emphasis on the practical way of thinking thus presenting a comprehensive idea about the contemporary ways of performance and thinking, a so far hardly discussed area.

## V. Documentation of activities in connection with the thesis

I had the chance to meet and regularly play and study the works of this era, especially those of Gabrielli during my baroque cello studies. I performed his *Ricercare* in D major publicly at the Bach competition in Leipzig in 2008 and at the Baroque Soloist competition in Schärding in 2010. I also played publicly the Canon by him in Lübeck in 2009. In scope of my thesis I am performing the D major and the D minor *Ricercar*. I also find it important to mention that in Berlin in July 2010 I am going to perform a *Ricercar* and both Sonatas of Gabrielli and the Sonata in C major by Jacchini accompanied by theorba as part of a chamber music concert titled "The history of cello".