

THESIS OF A DLA DISSERTATION

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**GEORG ANTON BENDA
AND HIS SONATAS FOR HARPSICHORD**

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I. ANTECEDENTS OF MY STUDIES

I became acquainted with the compositions of Georg Anton (Jiří Antonín) Benda written for keyboard instruments more intimately while a student at the Prague Academy of Music. The peculiar style of his music, his passionate tone rich in emotion fascinated me from the very beginning. Unfortunately, his works appear only sporadically in the concert repertoire in Hungary. The phases of the history of Czech music that preceded Romanticism are unfamiliar here. In the 17-18th centuries several prominent masters produced compositions of permanent value which, also ought to be present in the musical life of Hungary. These perceptions led me to choose my subject, which is why I judged it indispensable to begin my dissertation with a musicological introduction. At this point I tried to provide a survey of Czech musical life from the early centuries up to the end of the 18th century, as well as to present those important masters who worked either in their native country or as emigrants. All this leads us to a better understanding of Benda's musical world.

During my work, as it follows from the topic, I used first of all the literature written in Czech and German. In the absence of recent, comprehensive publications, when I completed the introduction on musicology, I depended on sources written in the fifties, sixties, and seventies of the last century or even earlier: J. Němeček: *Nástin české hudby XVIII. století*, G. Černušák: *Dějiny evropské hudby*, T. Volek-S. Jareš: *Dějiny české hudby v obrazech*, K. M. Komma: *Das böhmische Musikantentum*, R. Batka: *Geschichte der böhmischen Musik*. All these works, however, deal mostly with only certain strata in the history of Czech music. Therefore, I turned to the encyclopaediae *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* to complete them and also to correct certain data that have proved to be out-of-date today.

E. Stilz's dissertation, entitled *Die Berliner Klaviersonate zur Zeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, was of essential importance for me in writing about the development of the Berlin sonata form. Although it was written more than 80 years ago (in 1930), a work on this topic of similar size and quality has not been published since. In this publication, in addition to presenting the emergence of this peculiar form, Stilz deals with the style of the representatives of the Berlin school. The fundamental reference books of Th. Schmidt-Beste: *Die Sonate. Geschichte-Formen-Ästhetik*, and of F. Ritzel: *Die Entwicklung der „Sonatenform“ im musiktheoretischen Schrifttum des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* assisted me considerably in writing this chapter of my dissertation and discussing the contemporary terminology of sonata form.

As for the publications concerning Georg Benda, my most important source was the monograph of V. Helfert, who was one of the most distinguished Czech musicologists of the 20th century. His book, entitled *Jiří Benda*, was published in two volumes, in 1929 and 1934. Although since that time several other authors have also written about Benda, nobody else has provided such a detailed and exhaustive account of the descent, conditions of life, and art of the composer. Unfortunately, only two parts of the book were completed; it was originally intended to have three. Therefore Helfert's book only got as far as the year 1774; nevertheless, he furnishes extremely valuable information, missing from other papers written in German.

Furthermore, another book in two volumes by F. Lorenz, entitled: *Die Musikerfamilie Benda* has also proved to be very useful. The first part of the work discusses the life and art of Franz Benda, while the second part concerns Georg Benda. Similarly to Helfert's work, it quotes and represents many original documents.

In his dissertation entitled, *Georg Benda (1722-1795). Sein Leben und sein Werk mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Sinfonien und Cembalokonzerte* and written in 1967, K.-H. Löbner focused on Benda's sinfonias and harpsichord concertos. Nevertheless, I found

several data important for my work in the detailed biography as well as the analysis of compositions.

Th. A. Komm's dissertation (Mozarteum, Salzburg) entitled *Die Klaviersonaten von Georg Anton Benda. Geschichtlicher Stellenwert und formale Strukturen* was written in 2007. He begins his work by presenting the history of sonata/sonata form, from the beginnings up to 1820. After this, citing the most important contemporary treatises, he outlines the 18th century terminology of parts of the sonata form. He also touches on rhetorical parallels, at the same time he does not mention the doctrine of affections (Affektenlehre), which, on the other hand are of fundamental importance for understanding and interpreting the compositions of the Czech master. Komm provides an individual analysis of all of Benda's 17 sonatas. After a form analysis he focuses on the formal, rhythmic, harmonic, structural or other characteristics of the movements. Almost 30 years passed between the composition of the early and mature sonatas. The author investigates them from an evolutionary viewpoint as well, quoting examples by way of illustration, and comparing them with the melodramas that were composed in the meantime. At the end of the dissertation a lot of tables and diagrams are provided that contain not only the summary of the form, structure, length, range, tempo indications, theme, keys, time signatures, number of bars and note values of the given sonatas, but also the exact number of occurrences of signs of ornaments and dynamics. Although Komm's work is impressively thorough and elaborate, I was able to extract only a few data, apart from some footnotes, as I worked with an analytical method of quite different character. In contrast with him, I approached the sonatas from the practical standpoint of a performing musician. At the same time through its valuable bibliography I have got knowledge of some sources important for my researches.

In addition to the above-mentioned ones, another dissertation was written on a similar subject, that is, the work of Georg Dwight Fee, entitled: *The Solo Keyboard Sonatas and Sonatinas of Georg Anton Benda* (University of Indiana, 1985). Unfortunately, however, I met with difficulties in trying to obtain it.

II. SOURCES

Historical part:

J. Němeček: *Nástin české hudby XVIII. století*. Praha: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění, 1955.

G. Černušák *Dějiny evropské hudby*. Praha: Panton, 1974.

T. Volek-S. Jareš: *Dějiny české hudby v obrazech*. Praha: Editio Supraphon, 1977.

K. M. Komma: *Das böhmische Musikantentum*. Kassel: Johann Philipp Hinnenthal-Verlag, 1960.

R. Batka: *Geschichte der böhmischen Musik*. Berlin: Bard, 1906.

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. Old and new editions, 1980 and 2001.

Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Old and new editions, 1949-1979 and 1999-2007.

The Berlin sonata form, contemporary terminology:

E. Stilz: *Die Berliner Klaviersonate zur Zeit Friedrichs des Grossen*. Phd dissertation. Berlin: Philosophische Fakultät der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1930.

Th. Schmidt-Beste: *Die Sonate. Geschichte-Formen-Ästhetik*. Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 2006.

F. Ritzel: *Die Entwicklung der „Sonatenform“ im Musiktheoretischen Schrifttum des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf&Härtel, 1968.

The life and works of G. A. Benda:

V. Helfert: *Jiří Benda. Příspěvek k problému české hudební emigrace. I-II.* Brno: Filosofická fakulta Masarykovy University, 1929, 1934.

K. Hůlka: *Jiří Benda. Studie o starším českém hudebníkú.* Praha-Lipsko: Mojmir Urbánek, 1903.

F. Lorenz: *Die Musikerfamilie Benda. Georg Anton Benda.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971.

K.-H. Löbner: *Georg Benda (1722-1795). Sein Leben und sein Werk mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Sinfonien und Cembalokonzerte.* Phd dissertation. Zwickau: Philosophische Fakultät der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 1967.

Contemporary sources:

F. von Schlichtegroll: *Musiker-Nekrologe. Georg Benda, herzogl. Sachsen-Gothaischer Kapelldirektor (Gotha, 1798).* Published by Richard Schaal. Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1954.

Between 1787 and 1800 Schlichtegroll was a secondary school teacher in Gotha. He knew the Czech master personally; therefore, he too furnishes first-hand data on the personality of Georg Benda.

A considerable part of the literature used for my dissertation consists of the works of 18th century theorists. Their works are essential for understanding better the mentality, ideas, and manner of that period. The most important ones are as follows:

J. Mattheson: *Der vollkommene Capellmeister. 1739.* Faksimile-Nachdruck. Published by Margarete Reimann. Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1991.

J. A. Scheibe: *Critischer Musikus.* Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1745.

J. J. Quantz: *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flute traversiere zu spielen. 1752.* Faksimile-Nachdruck. Published by Hans-Peter Schnitz. Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1964.

C. Ph. E. Bach: *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen. I-II. 1753, 1762.* Faksimile-Nachdruck. Published by Lothar Hoffmann-Erbrecht. Leipzig: Breitkopf&Härtel, 1976.

Ch. Burney: *Tagebuch einer musikalischen Reise. 1773.* Published by Eberhardt Klemm. Leipzig: Verlag Philipp Reclam jun., 1968.

J. F. Reichardt: *Schreiben über die berlinische Musik. 1775.* Published by Grita Herre és Walther Siegmund-Schultze. Leipzig: Verlag Philipp Reclam jun., 1976.

H. Chr. Koch: *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition. II-III. 1787, 1793.* Published by Wilhelm Siebert. Hannover: Siebert Verlag, 2007.

J. F. von Schönfeld: *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag.* Wien: Schönfeldischer Verlag, 1796.

Chr. F. D. Schubart: *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst. 1806.* Published by Jürgen Mainka. Leipzig: Verlag Philipp Reclam jun., 1977.

III. METHOD

The purpose of my work was to make the most complete and thorough presentation possible of the personality and music of Georg Anton Benda, including a discussion of his early harpsichord sonatas published in 1757. A survey of the detailed biography of the composer, as well as that of the background, taste, and environment of his music, together with the world of ideas characteristic of that age, are indispensable for a better understanding of his personality and style.

I also deal with the traditions of his homeland, within the centuries-old development of Czech music. In a musico-historical survey comprising a period lasting from the beginning up to the end of the 18th century, I also touch upon those historical–political events that have played an important role in the development of the traditions of this people that have survived up to the present.

An independent chapter focuses on the most illustrious emigrant composers and musicians of the 18th centuries. Many of them had a considerable influence on the tendencies of the development of European music.

The appearance of the so-called *North German* or *Berlin clavier-sonata* in the development of the sonata form (which books on musicology used to mention only briefly) was an important stage in the evolution of the sonata. For this reason, I wished to omit from my dissertation neither the emergence of this artistic form nor its most characteristic stylistical features and representatives.

Present denominations of parts of the sonata form were either still unknown in the 18th century or they were used to mean something quite different. Therefore, in analyzing the works of Benda I considered the use of contemporaneous terminology to be more appropriate. I focus on this terminology in an independent chapter.

After this comes the analysis of the collection called *Sei Sonate per il Cembalo solo*. Here, in contrast with the usual method and with an original attitude, I analyze the pieces, not as individuals, but comparing them with each other, namely, according to the following method:

At first I deal with the opening movements of the sonatas, describe their subjects, drawing attention to various solutions. This is followed by a comparison of parts of the large forms (using the modern expressions: exposition–development–recapitulation), illustrating the presence of Georg Benda's personal style, his treatment of structure and musical material. The finales are followed by a somewhat more detailed discussion of the principal representatives of the aesthetics of the Age of Enlightenment, that is, of the slow movements. The central doctrine of the spirit of the age is the doctrine of affections. In introducing this chapter I also discuss its essential elements. Finally I systematize the results of the whole analysis.

In the closing chapter of my dissertation, I provide an evaluative account of the personality and significance of the Czech master, his influence on his own age and on posterity, by using the most authentic sources, the words of the eminent contemporary masters of W. A. Mozart, J. F. Reichardt and Chr. F. D. Schubart.

IV. RESULTS

As it is clear from the facts written in the Antecedents of my studies, the oeuvre of both G. A. Benda and generally those of the eminent masters of the history of Czech music, preceding the 19th century, are fairly unknown not only among Hungarian music-lovers, but also practically to the majority of professional musicians of our country. Apart from a booklet by Tibor Sárai written in 1959 – which treats of this subject only briefly, I could use only some footnotes –, so far as I know not a single work on this subject has been published in Hungarian. Thus, my dissertation could be important for those persons who are interested in the fascinatingly rich world of Czech music-history of past centuries and for whom a profound study could result in great discoveries and provide great pleasure. Furthermore, those musicians, who are studying the age of transition from the Baroque to Classicism, the Northern German masters of this changeable, exciting period, seeking for its ways and means, could make use of my dissertation. Among these masters, the most eminent next to C. Ph. E.

Bach, was Georg Anton Benda, who worked at first in Berlin and later in Gotha and whose peculiar compositions, original in tone, were highly appreciated by his contemporaries. Unfortunately, however, only rarely do they appear in the repertory of the musical life of our age. Moreover, the reader could obtain important information on the formation, characteristics and 18th century terminology of a special artistic form, that is, of the *Berlin clavier-sonata*.

V. ACTIVITY CONNECTED WITH THE TOPIC OF THE DISSERTATION

21th October 1984. Szombathely, „Berzsenyi Dániel” Highschool of Pedagogy

Benda: Concerto g-mineur for harpsichord and strings

Capella Savaria, cond. Pál Németh

22nd October 1984. Budapest, HAS Institute for Musicology, Kodály Hall

Benda: Concerto g-mineur for harpsichord and strings

Capella Savaria, cond. Pál Németh

8th December 1984. Budapest, Academy of Music, Small Hall

Benda: Sonata a-mineur

30th May 1988. XXXVI. International Festival Norway. Bergen, Mariakirken

Benda: Sonata a-mineur

Concerto g-mineur for harpsichord and strings

Ensemble Musica Maria, cond. Henryk Kniejski

3rd May 1990. Budapest, Old Academy of Music, Chamber Hall

Benda: Three Sonatinas: C-major, c-mineur, d-mineur

Two Sonatas: G-major, D-major

30th June 1990. Salzburg, Schloss Mirabell, Marble Hall

Benda: Sonata D-major

7th May 1993. Budapest, HAS Institute for Musicology, Bartók Hall

Benda: Two Sonatinas: c-mineur, d-mineur

Sonata a-mineur

15th May 1995. Montreuil (F), Atelier Marc Ducornet

Benda: Sonata c-mineur

5th March 1996. Königstein (D), Immanuel's Church

Benda: Sonata C-major

26th March 1997. Hungarian Radio, Studio 22.

Benda: Sonata F-major

11th June 1997. Concentus Moraviae International Music Festival (CZ)
Bystřice nad Perštejnem

Benda: Sonata F-major

Jiří Antonín Benda: Six Sonatas for Harpsichord (1757)
Hungaroton Classic LTD, 1997.

2nd August 2001. Festival van Vlaanderen, Brugge (B)
G. A. Benda and his keyboard music: Lecture and recital

26th September 2001. Brno (CZ), Governor's Palace
Benda: Three Sonatinas D-major, d-mineur, D-major
Sonata C-major

2nd April 2005. Clavicembalo-Days. Budapest, Óbudai Társaskör
Benda: Three Sonatinas: C-major, a-mineur, C-major

14th March 2006. Prague, Hungarian Cultural Centre
Benda: Sonata G-major

2nd June 2008. Concentus Moraviae International Music Festival (CZ)
Moravský Krumlov
Benda: Sonata F-major

18th June 2008. Cembalissimo. Budapest, St. Michael's Church
Benda: Sonata F-major

24th March 2009. Budapest Spring Festival, National Széchényi Library
Benda: Concerto g-mineur for harpsichord and strings
Ensemble Musica Florea (CZ)

