

DLA doktori értekezés tézisei

Éder Pál

European Roots, Hungarian Relations in the Revival of
American Quartet-playing Culture

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Experiences leading up to the research

During day to day conversations with my musician colleagues and students, I was surprised to realize how little the younger generations know of our musical ancestors, those prominent figures who established the Hungarian school of string quartet playing, and, after gaining considerable success internationally, played a vital role in the blossoming of string quartet culture in the United States in the Twentieth Century. Apart from the few lexicon entries and the even fewer actual biographies written about these musicians, we sadly have very little accessible information that discusses their importance and the impact they had in Hungary and abroad on string quartet playing and musical life in general (Apart from contributions by Brandt, Kenneson, Steinhardt and Levin in the English language, I only know of one publication in Hungarian – *The Lener Quartet* by Antal Molnar – that focuses on one string quartet ensemble). These works, however important they are, seem to lack any definitive conclusions from a professional musicians' standpoint and only Levin's article manages to place the impact of these musicians into a broader perspective.

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Personal interviews with: Lóránt Fenyves, János Starker, Zoltán Székely, Dénes Koromza, Sándor Végh, Sándor Devic, András Mihál, György Sebő, and also Raphael Hillyer, Jerry Horner, Felix Galimir, Menahem Pressler.

Method of research and conclusions

As shown by the title of my dissertation, I chose a very specific path to follow during the course of my research. I chose to present in detail only those quartets that had ties to Hungary and played a significant role in the growth of string quartet culture in the United

States. As an introduction, I decided to talk briefly about the origins of string quartet playing in Hungary, followed by its parallel development in the US, then focused on the merging of European and Hungarian quartet ensembles into American musical life.

I placed an emphasis on the New York debuts as well as recording contracts with American recording companies, since these- like instrumental soloists – were of great importance to those ensembles pursuing musical careers in the US. I also felt it important to discuss in a separate chapter the Coolidge Foundation and the role of string quartet residencies at American universities.

In this respect I feel my dissertation is aimed at filling in the gaps. It connects the lives of more than fifty musicians as well as an equal amount of string quartets, and places their impact in the American musical community into a wider perspective. I have not come across a publication that covers this particular area in such a comprehensive way. In any case, I believe it is the first time that an in-depth look into the history of

American quartet life has become available in the Hungarian language.

It is interesting to examine the role of string quartet playing in the lives and careers of the notable Hungarian violin virtuosos of the 19th, leading up to the 20th century. I mention these important people in passing, since even though it is not for their quartet playing that they are most known and remembered today, their presence in that field surely inspired the younger generations who emerged to form the first professional quartets.

The story of the five quartets (the Lener, Budapest, Roth, Kresz-Hart House and the Hungarian Quartet) - those that are presented in detail in separate chapters - gives us an opportunity to examine how historical events of an era influenced the lives of these musicians and shaped music culture in general, especially that of the United States. I would also like to mention here the double CD appendix to my dissertation, a collection of archive sound material from some of the quartets mentioned in my paper, which I hope can provide audible proof of the quality of the music making, their importance in the timeline of string quartet culture, and their place as some of the finest musicians of their time.

Notes on the author's professional connection to the subject matter of the dissertation.

As the first violinist of the Eder String Quartet, founded in 1972 while still a student at the Franz Liszt Academy , I was a participant and prize winner in numerous international competitions: 3rd prize in the International Leo Weiner Quartet Competition in Budapest in '73, and winner of both the Evian ('76) and the Munich ARD ('77) Quartet Competitions.

With the Eder Quartet and later the Australia-based Stirling String Quartet, I performed extensively in Europe, North and Central America, Asia and Australia.

My quartet recordings include the complete Bartok cycle and the Haydn Op. 76 set. The

Eder Quartet premiered works by Kurtag (12 microludiums- Witten,1980), Schittke (3rd Quartet- Mannheim, 1984), Hallfiter (3rd Quartet- Evian, 1979) and Kubik (String Quartet- Paris, 1980).