

DLA Thesis
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The Golden Age of the Pedal harp

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I. Antecedents of the Research

The study of the 18th Century repertoire and the elements of the classical harp playing, the precise execution of the arpeggiatura and the description of the characteristics of the classical pedal harp is a less important part of our harp training, considering the harp literature of the 19th Century. The harp music of the classical age still has many questions to answer: what are the differences between the classical harp technique and harp playing of the modern, double-action harp? How did our ancestors play those pieces two hundred years ago?

As a student, I didn't understand the long classical harp sonatas; but in the last ten years - as I learned more and more about the first pedal harps and their players -, I began to appreciate the beauty of the unity of form and thought - and behind the simplicity and strict rules of these pieces I've discovered an exciting musical world.

We're very scarce in Hungarian language harp studies and writing my dissertation I also thought of the candidates and the harp teachers of the next generations.

During the compilation of the material for my album published at Hungaroton Records in 2015, I realized in my mind that these unknown but important compositions should not be forgotten. Even though most of them did not belong to the leading composers of the age, these works indicate the stages of development of the classical pedal harp and the harp literature and harp technique of the 19th Century were also based on these masters and pedagogues.

II. Sources

In my presentation and analysis of the general harp literature, harpists and harp teachers - I've used the main studies written by the most famous harp historians (Roslyn Rensch *Harps and Harpists* and Hans Joachim Zingel's *Harfe und Harfenspiel* and *Harfenmusik im 19 Jahrhundert*), also one of the most recent scholarly historical books, Laurie Barthel's *Au coeur de la harpe au XVIII^{ème} siecle*. Other important information was received from the forewords of the modern editions of the compositions discussed, by their editors (H. J. Zingel, Andor Adorján, Ann Griffith, Olivér Nagy). In the chapters of pedal harp development and classical methodologies, I used the studies of our popular experts, Andrew Lawrence-King, Mike Parker and Beat Wolf, and the relevant articles of the Grove Lexicon.

I was impressed by the style and depths of the main classical harp methods by Madame de Genlis, J.-B. Krumpholtz, J.-G. Cousineau, C. N. Bochsa; and the precision, clear structure and humanist view of L. Spohr's *Violinschool*.

About the music of the 18th century and the enlightenment culture I have been reading Enrico Fubini's *Music and Culture in the Eighteen-Century Europe*; I've enjoyed rediscovering of the galant and classical style by the writings of J. J. Quantz, Leopold Mozart and C.P.E. Bach, and I learned a lot from Spohr's *Hegedűiskola*.

For the presentation and analysis of Mozart's double concerto for flute and harp I found a lot of information in the intimate and thorough books of Hermann Abert and Alfred Einstein.

The Mozart letters cited in the dissertation were taken from Balázs Mikusi's book, published two years ago.

In the dissemination of questions related to the harp sonata of C. P. E. Bach: I've used the studies of Darrell M. Berg and Emily Mitchell, and most importantly, the explanatory study of Mary Oleskiewicz about C. P. E. Bach.

Clive Brown's *Critical Biography of Spohr* and Spohr's own autobiography; the many valuable datas of the studies in the most important harp magazine, the *American Harp Journal's* archive (Emily Mitchell, Darell M. Berg, Thomas Milligan, Jane Weidensaul, Ann Griffith's writings) contributed to my presentation of classical harp.

Describing Spohr's harp composer tools, his unusual tuning method of the harp in his chamber music pieces and Dorette Spohr's pedaling techniques, I used the methods of J. G. Backofen, C.N. Bochsa and the studies of researchers Ann Griffith, Jane Weidensaul and Maria Christina Cleary.

III. Research Methodology

Through our sheet archives and the libraries of our time we have access to a quantity of 18th century sheets; that as a first step, I had to narrow down the period for processing and decide the pieces which I would focus on.

I chose three different genres from the classical masterpieces of our harp repertoire: Carl Philip Emanuel Bach's *Harp Sonata (Solo für die Harfe, Wq 139)*, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *C-major Concerto for Flute and Harp (K. 299)* and Louis Spohr's *C-moll Fantasy (Op. 35)*. Since we have hardly any harp piece of Mozart and C. P. E. Bach, these compositions have particularly high value to us.

The Fantasy of Louis Spohr is a bit different, because it was composed by an author, who thoroughly studied the possibilities of the pedal harp, and was able to sum up the technical harp knowledge accumulated in the previous decades in a piece that was born at the end of the Classic era. I placed the focus of my thesis on a thorough analysis of this work.

In the chapters preceding the presentation and analysis of the three selected pieces, I presented the formation and development of single-action harp, the most famous harpists and teachers, the important genres, their authors and their performers.

My research was difficult a bit and slowed down by the fact that there is almost no researchable hungarian-language harp history or didactic material. In the past few years, only two harp studies have been written in Hungarian: Vigh Andrea DLA's dissertation, which thoroughly and comprehensively elaborates the 5000-year history of the harp, and Nora Mercz's book for younger readers, which also aims to describe the story of the harp.

Because of the poor native conditions, I worked almost exclusively from English and German sources, because I did not find a comprehensive study similar to my thesis on this topic abroad, but fortunately shorter articles and studies on certain areas of the subject are available and accessible in English language.

All quotations were translated by myself, except the Mozart letters (Balazs Mikusi).

For my research on the Internet I used the rich material of the International Music Score Library Project: imslp.org, The International Harp Archives: archive.org, Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek, also in identifying the older publications and releases of musics I've used worldcat.org and openlibrary.org site.

I contacted the editors of the American Harp Journal and the English and American Spohr Society, many of whom gave me invaluable help in my research.

In my thesis I focused on the most important elements of the history of classical harp, classical harp technique and the selected harp pieces - especially the Fantasy of Louis Spohr.

I wrote my dissertation focusing on the need of a performer's. I've searched for the answers of a practicing harpists' questions, studying and playing the pieces of my dissertation. When, why, how and for whom did these composition take place? What do we know about the author, the first performers of the compositions and the instrument they had been written for? How and on what kind of harp do we play them today, how does it resemble and differentiate our current instrument from the harp which these important pieces were made on? What were the earliest editions of the works and today what are the most useful editions of these compositions? What are the most important elements in interpreting and performing these pieces?

IV. Results

In my dissertation I presented the stages of development of the pedal harps and the most important harp-building dynasties. I've identified and summarized for the later scholars, harp students and harp teachers the most important harpists, teachers, authors and harp methods of the classical age. In the methods and the selected harp pieces I discovered the differences between the harp technique and harp playing characteristics of the single-action and double-action harp.

I presented the exciting history of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's Harp Sonata (Wq 139) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Concerto for Flute and Harp (K. 299), I've collected the main informations about the manuscripts, first and current releases and the most important cadences. I discovered the history of Louis Spohr's Fantasy (op. 35) and the collaboration of the musician husband and wife, Mr. and Ms. Spohr, whose joint work has resulted a series of solo and chamber pieces summing up the special elements of classical harp technique and style.

In my detailed comparative analysis, I highlighted the parallel elements of the Phantasie written by Johann Georg Backofen and the Fantasy of Louis Spohr. I have identified and described the special composing tools of Spohr and the unusual tuning of the harp in his chamber pieces. I have analyzed the double and triple pedalling technique of Dorette Spohr, one of the most famous harpist of the first decade of the nineteenth century.

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

Gulyás Csilla: Classical Sonatas for Harp (Budapest: Hungaroton, 2015. HCD32753)

The first golden age of the harp - in Music on Délibáb Street with Előd Juhász; classical music program in the Hungarian Catholic Radio, April 24, 2017.

Classical methodologies, exercises and etudes - methodological lecture for harp teachers and harp students, Summer Harps School, June 27, 2017 Budapest, Hungaroton Studio

The development of the single-action harp, sonatas of J.-B. Krumpholtz and J.F. Naderman - Vigh Andrea's The 5,000-year history of the Harp – concert series for adults, participated by Csilla Gulyás, 29 April, 2017, Festetics Castle

A comparison of Classical Methods and 20th-century Harp Pedagogues - Lecture at the Zagreb Harp Festival, November 25, 2017, Zagreb

The Bach family and the harp - Advent Concert, December 22, 2017, Calvinist Church of Buda