

Theses of DLA doctoral dissertation

Dénes Karasszon

Richard Strauss, the opera composer,
considered from the cello music-stand

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I. Preliminary

Since I am a cellist, the romantic cello literature always played an important role in my life. It was a great pleasure for me to discover Richard Strauss' symphonic poem „Don Quixote”, which is not a cello concerto in a classic way, but still the most special piece in cello literature. Later I analysed the composer's other symphonic poems too, which gave the theme of my final thesis at Music Academy.

As a member of the cello section of the Hungarian National Opera, I had the opportunity to play many Strauss performances. So it was obvious for me to continue my thesis analysing the cello parts of Strauss operas. By playing them I realized that not only the solo moments are technically critical, but the tutti parts themselves can be very significant and really difficult and their musical meaning deserves utmost attention.

During the performances, it's really important for me to follow exactly the happenings on the stage. I like to see how the story is connected with the part I am playing. Of course it is specially exciting if I can read the correlations from my own part.

II. Primary sources

I used basically two books during my work:

Batta András: Richard Strauss szemtől szemben, Budapest, 1984

Boyden, Matthew: Richard Strauss, Budapest, 2004

The orchestral rehearsals with János Kovács, Péter Oberfrank and István Dénes were very important for me. Their instructions revealed many times the composing technique of Richard Strauss. The DVD recordings of the three chosen works rendered useful help again and again.

Elektra: DVD, Deutsche Grammophon 1981, Carl Böhm, Wiener Philharmoniker

Der Rosenkavalier: DVD, Deutsche Grammophon 1979, Carlos Kleiber, Bayerische Staatsoper

Ariadne auf Naxos: DVD, Arthaus Music, 2000, Sir Colin Davis, Semperoper Dresden

Principally, of course, I used the observed works's partitures, and the cello-parts.

III. Methods of the research

Beside the cello part, of course, I had to study the libretto. I tried to analyse the acoustic feelings and the visual impressions that were written by Strauss for the cello. I only had to collate the significant cello appearance with the text sung in the same time, and to put these two together, trying to understand the composer's intentions.

IV. Achievements

I intended to examine properly the significance of the cello in three Strauss operas. My investigations revealed Strauss as the master of the „speaking technique”.

I could follow most of the dramatic processes in a single line of the partiture: the cello-part, and this turned out to be a great experience for me.

V. Documentation of the professional work regarding the subject of the dissertation

Due to the quantity of the opera performances it would be impossible to enumerate all the occasions that are connected with the subject of this dissertation. Pincipally the following professional activites are to be mentioned: as a member of the Hungarian National Opera, I could regularly

participate in the institute Strauss performances, operas and symphonic poems.
The effect of these experiences helped me to decide, and to choose this theme as a DLA dissertation.