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**THE ART OF JENŐ HUBAY
AND THE HUBAY-SCHOOL**

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I. Premises and goals of the research

Over almost fifty years Hubay was an outstandingly appreciated and venerated artist and professor in Hungary. The transformations that occurred in the social life after his death lead to an astonishing reticence concerning his musical and pedagogic achievements; he became „inexisting” for the musical life of the after-war period.

This reticence, expanded over more decades, referred not only to his personality, his scenic works (all performed in his lifetime, but the quality of which can be put in question), but also to his compositions for violin. His etudes, his virtuoso pieces, his violin concertos disappeared from the concerts programmes and from the musical libraries as well. His estate lies until today in the storerooms of the National Széchényi Library, unsorted, in boxes.

When I decided to write this thesis, I wanted to study the school of Hubay, its subject-matter and its influence on the present violin-playing and pedagogy. I wanted to rediscover and to present this unusually rich and valuable artistic and pedagogic career and this colourful oeuvre. I held it important to remind and emphasize, that the so-called „Hungarian violin tradition” has its starting point in Jenő Hubay’s activity, who was a pioneer in achieving to establish an internationally acknowledged violin school in Hungary.

II. Sources

The first biography which appeared after Hubay's death was the one of Pál Neubauer, who had been asked by Hubay himself to give a literary shape to the curriculum of Hubay. The biography, almost a romantic novel, was issued 1941 with the preface of the wife of Hubay and included the memoirs of Hubay. It is striking, that between 1943, the issue of the biography of Elemér Preszly and 1976, when Ferenc Halmy edited his work only a few short articles was written on Hubay.

Halmy's book is of major importance; it contains many details which are not found in other sources. This allows us to suppose, that he had access to the notes contained in the Hubay estate. However many of his assertions are out of date, it is a source of major importance together with the methodic recapitulation of Maria Zipernovszky. In 1977 a wider scale writing was issued by István Homolya, in which Hubay is presented in the series of the rectors of the Academy of Music.

After 15 years of silence, in 1992 a most important source was issued by Andor Hubay-Cebrián. This biography is rich in original autobiographical quotations and fragments of letters of Hubay. The last biographical writing belongs to László Gombos, who issued his short work in the series „Magyar Zeneszerzők” (Hungarian Composers) in 1998. He continues to write and publish essays on Hubay.

I reclined mainly on the works of Hubay Cebrián, Ferenc Halmy and László Gombos, completed, naturally, with data originating from other studies. The methodic part was mainly set out based on the memoirs of the students edited by Mária Zipernovszky.

III. The Method of the research

At the construction of my thesis I did not necessarily follow the chronological order, but tried to focus on the different aspects of Hubay's activity: Hubay as a performer, as a composer, as a school-leader; and at the end of the methodic part, Hubay as the leader of the Music Academy, and as a dominant personality of the Hungarian musical life.

In the presentation of the first aspect, the activity of a performer, I could follow the chronological order up to a certain point, where I had to discuss the role of the chamber music in the life and art of Hubay. This is a most interesting and important part of my thesis, very defectively treated even in the biographies of Johannes Brahms, deeply implied in this chapter.

I held for very important the detailed presentation of the violin compositions of Hubay. This part was introduced by a smaller historical presentation of the violin composers and virtuosos who preceded Hubay, and who represent the tradition to which Hubay affiliated himself. Hubay is often referred to as a composer, but this aspect of his activity is not to be separated from his activity as a virtuoso performer; composing manifests itself as an attitude of the performer. Hubay did not strive to modernize or expand the style of his composition; these were closely tied to his instrument and to the classical repertoire of the violin.

I attempted to uncover the incredible success of his violin school from more points of view. Next to the social premises the most important feature of his teaching activity was the incentive effect of his personality as a teacher, combined with a very conscient working system focused on

development. Speaking about the school of Hubay, we speak about his pupils and the pupils of those. In the chapter „A Hubay iskola továbbélése” (The continuation of the Hubay school) I briefly presented those pupils, through whom we can follow the continuation of the tradition until today. I came upon some unexpected connections; most interesting of them was the one with the Russian violin school.

The chapter discussing Hubay’s „method” – the central chapter of the thesis – is based on the reminiscences of the pupils. The most important document concerning the topic was the series of studies collected and edited by Mária Zipernovszky, in which the students of Hubay wrote in detail about certain important aspects of the methodic of the violin. By studying these documents I came to the conclusion that besides the important role of the personality of Hubay, he consciously directed his teaching method to the development of the technique and style of the student, always adapted to the capacities and the level of the student. The new information was only given after the old one was already assimilated. Hubay’s method in handling the bow insisted on the smooth moving of the right arm, which produced a great sound, but had other positive effects as well. Studying the „experimental” practising, I came upon important discoveries, which led me back to the method of Hubay, as the „Kató Havas” approach, which seemed very much related to Hubay’s method. She gave a very clear and easily understandable explanation to many intuitions of Hubay, and she completed them with her own experiences.

The most problematic and contradictory chapter of the thesis, and also the least documented one was the chapter on Hubay’s role in the musical life of his time. In this chapter I tried to give a systematic image of the

personality of Hubay. The documents (specially those from the interwar period) present Hubay as an extremely impulsive personality, who is led in his decisions by his feelings. I discussed in detail the „musical afternoons”, which Hubay organized in his own house. These were important events of the social and musical life of his time.

In the appendix I tried to give a chronological list of the activity of Hubay as a virtuoso and a conductor on the basis of the partly defective extant literature. Despite its lacks, it displays the features of an imposing international carrier. This list, supplemented with the data of his activity as a teacher and a composer, allow us to review the richness of an outstanding and fulfilled artistic life.

IV. Conclusions

Concluding the result of my research work I must affirm, that everyone, who studies the violin at a higher level in Hungary, is at least in a mediate way the heir of Hubay.

We might not be able to talk about a „method” in a very strict sense – Hubay himself repudiated the idea of a method invented by him. But if we consider the elements of Hubay’s violin teaching, as they came off in the presence and inspired by Hubay, we must talk about a special and coherent tradition of playing the violin, the influence of which can be sensed even today. On the other side we may not ignore the importance of the very strong impression which was exerted by the personality and career of Hubay on his students. He was a very positive personality,

gifted with multiple talents, emanating an intensive exhilaration, which inspired all those, who knew him.

Studying the technical part of the Hubay-method I came upon an interesting connection between a modern method and the one Hubay. This connection helped me make useful comparisons and draw interesting conclusions. It also helped me to achieve a deeper understanding of the reminiscences of the students. The „method” of Hubay can be briefly described through the following proceedings:

- prevention of the cramped movements, leading to the transformation of the entire process of playing the violin;
- developing the appropriate activity of the right arm through natural movements induced by natural feelings;
- through the appropriate controlling of the movements the playing of the instrument really becomes a delection, a „game”.

The intensive study of the life and art of Hubay led me to the conclusion, that the image of Jenő Hubay needed to be revised. By organizing the material which I could collect, by reconsidering the testimony of the documents from a distance of 70 years, I tried to design a worthy portrait of Jenő Hubay, the father of the Hungarian violin playing.

V. Selective bibliography

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