

DLA thesis

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## The importance of Baroque Oboe Concertos in performing orchestral parts

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### I. The Preliminaries of the Research

We can read about the Baroque oboe, the changes of the instrument and its literature, the role it has been playing in the history of music in many books. Loads of books on history of instruments create a colourful scene about the origins and functions as well as the versatility of the usage of the two-reed instrument dating back to antiquity. The most vividly descriptive of these is the book *Instruments from Antiquity till Now* by John Henry van der Meer (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1988) In Gunther Jopping's marvellous book illustrated with pictures and note samples, *Oboe & Bassoon* (Mainz: Schott, 1984) we can read even more detailed information not only about the history of the instrument but also the literature of it as far as orchestral and solo pieces are concerned. However the relationships in the literature of oboe from the point of view of the performer are not discussed in those sources.

The analysis of the concept of Baroque concerto, just like the history of the instrument is such a field in music theory that we can deal with exhaustively, compare and analyse works by well-known theorists. We can rely on the results of research carried out by authors such as Claude V. Palisca (*Baroque Music*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1976), Karl H. Wörner (*The History of Music*. Budapest: Vivace Zenei Antikvárium és Kiadó, 2007) or Nikolaus

Harnoncourt (*Der musikalische Dialog*. Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 2002)

Some authors write detailed accounts on oboe concertos in their works focusing on concertos. Professor Hans Engel (*Das Instrumentalkonzert. Eine musikgeschichtliche Darstellung*. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1971) touches upon the analysis of some of the concerto movements by Marcello, Vivaldi and Telemann and mentions concertos for solo oboe by other Baroque composers, but he makes it in a chronological, and not in an analytical manner. In such a comprehensive work, covering all the instruments Hans Engel gives account on the concerto as a genre till the 19th century, obviously there is no way either to analyse nor to demonstrate the function the oboe concertos play in oboe literature.

In Walter Kolneder's book on the life and art of *Antonio Vivaldi* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1970) the author deals in details with the concertos of the father of three movement Baroque concerto as far as the rhythm, dynamics, tempo, harmonies, articulation and the numbered bass are concerned, but in accordance with the results of the research on this field that time, he was in error to give account on 10 oboe concertos only. Kolneder devotes just a sentence to Vivaldi as concerto composer in connection with oboe, that he used it for its singing voice-like quality.

The book by Siegfried Kross, on the concertos of Telemann, (*Das Instrumentalkonzert bei Georg Philipp Telemann*. Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1969) gives only a general analysis about the concertos of the significant representative of the "mixed German taste". The oboe concertos, together with the sources, the time of the publishing, *Besetzung* and sometimes supplemented by note samples, are merely listed.

The work of Professor Arthur Hutching focuses exclusively on concertos of the Baroque (*The Baroque Concerto*. London: Faber and Faber, 1973), but he demonstrates and compares the styles of the composers with the help of the oboe concertos, and he does not touch upon the character and significance these pieces *demand* from the performer.

Robert Donington deals with the performing of Baroque, (*A Performer's Guide to Baroque Music*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1978), with all the possible aspects of the topic, in his comprehensive book.

For a practising musician the book of Nikolaus Harnoncourt, *Musik als Klangrede* (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1988) can be of great significance, in which the reader can learn about the exciting and novel approach that is still free of dangerous extremities on performing Baroque music. However these excellent books do not seem to pay special attention to oboe concertos.

## II. Sources

Besides the books mentioned above in my thesis I rely on the note, book, periodical and CD collection of the libraries available for me (Library of the Music Academy, Music Collection of the Szabó Ervin Library, The Music Collection of the National Foreign Language Library) and my own collection of books, notes and CDs covering the topic. The bibliography of the thesis lists the books about these sources that served as a firm basis for studying Baroque oboe and oboe concertos and for widening my knowledge on the composition traditions and performing customs of the era. For quoting the orchestral oboe parts I used the material of the Notes Collection of the National Philharmonic Orchestra.

## III. Method

The novelty of my research method is in the originality of my research approach. As a secondary school teacher of oboe and as a performer, I am surrounded by two interrelated fields of the music carrier day by day that I can not just ignore the evidences of in the correlations of Baroque concertos and the orchestral oboe parts. The oboe concerto composers of different nationalities that differ so much as far as the numbers of movements, technical difficulties, degrees of passion and style are concerned do have one thing in

common: they can all contribute to necessary technical and interpretational skills that the oboe concertos of the composers of later eras require.

I draw parallels between details of subjectively selected Baroque oboe concertos and especially famous oboe and English horn solos of the 19th and 20th century that are suitable for demonstrating various technical problems as far as the performing techniques are concerned. I demonstrate the parallels with notes samples.

I cast light on the psychological background of the added value the Baroque concertos provide that can be used at composers of the later periods.

I analyse in depth Vivaldi's RV 447 in C major concerto from the point of view of the performer and I have a completely subjective, individual approach to Baroque concertos and instrumental performing art in general that I summarise in my thesis.

## IV. Results

As a secondary music school oboe teacher and a practicing oboe performer in an orchestra, I felt I needed to analyse the correlation between Baroque concertos and the works of composers who dedicated solos to our instrument, as Baroque concertos provide the basis for the right technique of playing the oboe.

The elaboration of the exciting novelty of the topic that I had in mind, with the notes samples in parallel were not yet worded before.

It is a fact that the backbone of both solo oboe literature and instrumental technical training is based on the Baroque concertos. But their significance, that is obvious as they are representing classical actuality, can also be seen how we can face many spectrums of their positive effects surpassing the periods of music history, as far as performing and instrumental technique is concerned.

Baroque concertos are milestones that are unavoidable in the stages of our instrumental development, as well as they constitute the foundation to our performing carrier. By the help of these concertos we are able to perform masterpieces of later periods, and to interpret them with authenticity. We can grow to be messengers only in the forewaters of Baroque.

## V. Documentation of the artistic activities connected to the thesis

I was glad to be admitted to the Hungarian State Orchestra during my studies at the Academy of Music in 1987. I had the chance to work with Kobayashi Ken-Ichiro and several Hungarian and foreign conductors in Hungary, in Europe and all over the world. I have been the member of the orchestra, led by Zoltán Kocsis, renamed as the National Philharmonic Orchestra in 1997, for 23 years.

During these years I had the chance to perform almost the complete repertoire of the symphonic literature from Baroque through Classicist and Romantic repertoire till the repertoire of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and contemporary music. During the interpretation of such a wide repertoire overriding the different periods of music history, I could form a comprehensive picture about the oboe parts of the orchestral literature. I had the chance to interpret the messages of first oboe, second oboe, English horn and oboe d'amore parts to the public. Thanks to this and the fact that I teach Baroque concertos, I take part in educating the next generation of musicians, in teaching playing oboe, while also passing the orchestral performing arts traditions.