

## **V. Experience of the author related to the subject matter of the dissertation**

As a harpsichordist of the Erkel Ferenc chamber orchestra I was a continuo-player and soloist for 10 years from 1987. I also taught teachers and students as well on a harpsichord course in the University of Debrecen Faculty of Music from 1997-1998.

2004: Marble Hall of the Radio: J.S. Bach: V. Brandenburg concerto.

2011: University of Debrecen Faculty of Music: J. S. Bach Toccata in E minor and other baroque chamber pieces, concert together with György Lakatos.

2012: University of Debrecen Faculty of Music: Diploma concert of my student Tamara Széllné Ványi: François Couperin: XIII. H minor Ordre: *Les Folies françoises, ou les Dominos*

March, 2014: University of Debrecen Faculty of Music: François Couperin: L'Art de toucher le Clavecin, preludes.

Thesis for DLA dissertation

Péter Lakatos

The possibilities of historical interpretation on piano based on the pieces of F. Couperin and  
The Art of Playing the Harpsichord  
Couperin and Bartók - harpsichord and piano

Supervisor: Anikó Horváth DLA

Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music  
28. Doctoral School of Arts and Cultural History

BUDAPEST

2014

## **I. Background and topic selection**

I haven't found any publications about the historical interpretation of Couperin's music on piano. However, according to the interview in my dissertation I am not alone with my opinion on the topic. From high school I had the privilege to learn to play the harpsichord beside the piano. Finally, after I got my degree in piano I started a two years postgraduate course on harpsichord as a student of Anikó Horváth at Liszt Academy.

At first I thought that historical music and piano music are two different worlds. But then I started slowly to rediscover the piano as a genuine tool in the interpretation of baroque music. The book of Nikolaus Harnoncourt called "Music as Speech – Ways to a New Understanding of Music" was of immense help to me as it emphasizes the appropriate way of thinking, the principles and the interpretations filled with true meaning. At that time András Schiff started to perform the English and French Suites of J. S. Bach in Hungary that was also a huge inspiration for me. As a student

## **IV. Results**

My goal was to collect information that is useful and understandable for piano teachers and students who are not familiar with the results of the historical movement but still want to play François Couperin's music on piano. Before, historical interpreters and piano teachers all questioned if it is possible or if it's these pieces were worth playing these pieces on piano. With my methods I was trying to prove that it is possible and I collected the most important principles that can help us if we try it. The art of Couperin is played down in the Hungarian music education with some honorable exceptions. This is why it is very important to understand that playing these pieces can be a useful experience with regard to its interpretation and technique.

decades. This was the point of view from which I examined the writings of Béla Bartók about selected pieces of Couperin. As Bartók didn't know the practice of historical interpretations of the past decades he made different consequences about the performance of Couperin's music. In my dissertation I analyzed in detail the cases when the historical Urtext edition gives us different explanations than Bartók. I was trying to feature the most important principles of Couperin's *The Art of Playing the Harpsichord* about ornaments, the explanation of slurs, and the early fingering. After all this I made suggestions about how to perform Couperin's music on a more genuine way on piano. I wrote about the most important questions of dynamics, the usage of pedal, ornaments, tempo and articulation. I made interviews with recognized Hungarian artists who represent the historical interpretation on period instruments and on piano as well. Their answers confirmed my theory about the topic.

of Kornél Zempléni who is particularly well-informed and flexible I had the opportunity of trying every new discovery that I made in practice whether it was about the ornaments, performances without pedal or the connection between the baroque music and rhetoric.

Later, as an entrant professor I was trying to share my knowledge and experiences with the next generation of pianists. In the beginning I didn't have much success in that but later my work became more and more fruitful. In the course of teaching I started to develop clear concepts on how to help the students in learning articulation, phrasing and ornaments.

Finally, I realized that with regards to this topic there are very few literatures as for those who were devoted to historical interpretations - especially among the most famous books and publications - piano was not an option as an instrument to use. The possibility of performing baroque music on piano was primarily accepted in the case of J. S. Bach and D. Scarlatti while they usually passed over the pieces of F. Couperin. We can only find sources about them that were written

before the historical movement. For example Béla Bartók: “*Selected pieces of F. Couperin*”. This is why I decided to try to use the historical principles when I teach or perform Couperin’s music on piano.

## II. Sources

“*A Performer’s Guide to Baroque Music*” written by R. Donington is a basic sources for everyone trying to interpret the baroque music so as a starting point this book set the direction for my dissertation as well. “*The Early music*” edited by Judit Péteri with its two volumes containing studies, articles and interviews provided many useful experiences of performance. The book of Nikolaus Harnoncourt called “*Music as Speech – Ways to a New Understanding of Music*” was a clear guide in understanding the music of this era. François Couperin: *L’Art de Toucher le Clavecin – The Art of Playing the Harpsichord* (1717) translated to modern English by Margery Halford with her explanations and instructions

is the foundation of writings in connection with Couperin’s music.

I used two doctoral dissertations as well: Anikó Horváth “*The Golden Age of the Harpsichord in France*” helped me to have a general understanding on the topic while Dalma Cseh: “*François Couperin: Pièces de clavecin*” provided the explanation of the concrete pieces. In my analysis

I used different editions of the music books. Béla Bartók: “*Selected pieces of F. Couperin*” was the starting point in comparing the different styles of interpretation. *Pièces de Clavecin* volumes I. – IV. published by József Gát - which is an Urtext edition - provided the original form of the texts.

## III. Method

First of all I was trying to sum up the most important statements of the historical movement from the past