

Abstract of DLA thesis

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Changes in the interpretation of Haydn violin
concertos from Kismarton-Estherháza to the present
day

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Abstract

I. Background of the study

My interest in studying changes in performance practice was sparked by the wide spectrum of performance styles encountered in different European orchestras. As a practising musician, my choice of research topic was inspired by my encounter with historical performance practice, especially when interpreting Haydn's works. The actual writing of my dissertation was preceded by studies of cultural history, primarily concentrating on the functioning, musical life and traditions of Hungarian noble households in the 18th century. The fact that I have been playing music for decades in Fertőd and Kismarton, two important and significant places in the lives of the Esterházy princes and Joseph Haydn, helped me with collecting material, since I had easy access to the documents there. I have found abundant literature on Haydn's life and work, but research in Hungarian into the interpretive issues of his violin concertos has been lacking. These pieces have been in my repertoire for almost forty years. As a member of the Austrian-Hungarian Haydn Philharmonic, I have accompanied the interpretations of several world-class soloists, and wondered why Haydn's violin concertos have been absent from concert programmes for almost two centuries. My interviews with internationally renowned violinists of today's music scene have served as a source for answering this question and for examining the attitudes of performers. In my research, I have examined changes in

interpretation in the context of contemporary performance practice and the diversity of editions.

II. Resources

For general issues of performance practice, I consulted Clive Brown's *Classical and Romantical Performance Practice* (Oxford University Press, 1999) and Dorottya Fábíán's *A Musicology of Performance: Theory and Method Based on Bach's Solos for Violin* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2015). Regarding violin technique, I have drawn primarily on two sources: Robin Stowell's *Violin Technique and Performance Practice in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and David D. Boyden's *A History of Violin Playing from its Origins to 1761* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965). I drew a lot from Malcolm Bilson and Elisabeth Field's lectures for practising musicians; *Performing the Score* (Cornell University, 2011, online source: <https://youtube/7qTN7JdiRJQ>).

The study of major schools has served to deepen my understanding of contemporary performance practice:

Corrette, Michel: *Hegedűiskola [1738] L'École d'Orphée*, published by István Soltész (Budapest: Art Face Seven Kulturális Bt., 2007).

Geminiani, Francesco: *The Art of Playing on the Violin [1751]* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951).

Quantz, Johann Joachim: *Fuvolaiskola [1752]*. (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 2011).

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen* [1753]. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1957).

Mozart, Leopold: *Hegedűiskola* [1756]. Translation: Székely András. (Budapest: Mágus, 1998.)

Dr. Stefan Ottrubay, Managing Director of the Esterházy Collection, assisted in the research of the sources from Kismarton:

Tank, Ulrich: „Die Dokumente der Esterhazy-Archive zur fürstlichen Hofkapelle 1761–1770.” In: Feder, Georg (ed.): *Haydn-Studien*, Band IV, Heft 3/4. (Munich: Henle, 1980.)

Pratl, Joseph – Scheck, Heribert: Eisenstädter Haydn-Berichte, Volume 10. In: Reicher, Walter (publisher): *Esterhazysche Musik-Dokumente*. (Vienna: Hollitzer, 2017.)

Dies, Albert Christoph: *Biographische Nachrichten von Joseph Haydn* [1810]. (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1976.)

III. Methods

In Chapter 1, I aimed to describe Joseph Haydn's activity in the 1760s and the operation of his orchestra in the service of the Esterházy princes. I have also looked at the relationship between the first violin concerto performer, Luigi Tomasini, and Haydn, which had a decisive role in the way violin concertos were performed at the time. In Chapter 2, I approached the interpretation of violin concertos by discussing the differences between contemporary and modern instruments, the changes in concert venues in view of emerging needs, and the general issues of changing performance styles. In Chapter 3, after discussing the origin

and history of violin concertos, I illustrated the changes in interpretation by analysing a representative sample of music notes and performance methods and by presenting specific recordings. When comparing the different approaches to performance, I primarily relied on interpretations by artists who I also had the opportunity to interview. I have tried to compare the recordings according to the performers' characteristics - school, age, culture -, the instruments – rebuilt, contemporary, modern violin or copy - and the different performance approaches of the different periods – articulation, tempo, rubato, ornamentation, vibrato - which was also completed with the performance rules of the (historical) schools of the time.

IV. Results

My thesis aims to provide a comprehensive review of the changes in the interpretation of Haydn's violin concertos from the 1930s to the present day. Several prominent representatives of both the historical and the mainstream performance styles commented on performance style issues in my interviews, based on their own experience. Via the analysis of selected recordings, I could trace the changes in performance practice over the past nearly one hundred years. The differences in interpretation that can be heard and traced in the recordings of the three basic performing styles provide tangible evidence to illustrate these changes. I try to present the circumstances and sound quality of contemporary performances, as hypothesised by musicological research today, and the documented changes since that period that have had a major impact on

interpretation. The best examples will reveal that the way in which Haydn's violin concertos are performed depends on the current trends in performance practice, as well as the demands of concert organisers and audiences. Over the past two centuries, publishers have completed the original text with notes on articulation and dynamics of contemporary performance practice, which have not only followed but also significantly influenced the interpretation. Today's performers are free to choose from the performers' recommendations in the various editions to suit their own interpretation.

Today, saleability has become an important factor; it is not so much the message of the music - as in Haydn's time - but an interesting presentation and staging of the performance that serves the audience's needs. Performances that are in tune with the demands of the times lead to a constant change in the interpretation of the pieces. I can illustrate the audible evidence of these changes through sound recordings. The musicians I interviewed, in turn, can provide evidence of significant changes in the interpretation of violin concertos through their personal experience. This process is not complete; current trends will be determined by the influencers of the day, namely how and by what means they can make a piece of music written hundreds of years ago saleable and popular.

V. Documentation of professional activities related to the subject of the thesis
As a practising musician, my ideas about performance practice have changed and my knowledge has grown, and as a concertmaster and

chamber musician, I aim to utilize my research findings by studying sources and editions in depth when studying and performing various pieces of music. My intention is to continue presenting Haydn's violin concertos to as wide an audience as possible at my own performances, but with a short introductory lecture to give the audience an insight into the circumstances of their creation and the diversity of interpretative possibilities. My teaching is also aimed at stimulating my students' interest in studying the various editions, which, by widening their horizons, will help them to interpret the pieces of this period. Beyond my own personal development, I have been able to create a tangible document for deepening general knowledge of the subject. My thesis also includes a summary of the changes in performance style over the last three centuries through Haydn's violin concertos, with literature and, where available, sound material to illustrate these changes. I hope that my review will be helpful to those interested in the subject and will encourage further research by my fellow musicians.

Haydn: performances of the Violin Concerto in C major:

Éva Mihályi and the Orchestra of the Pécs Youth Centre, cond. István Mihályi. Lahti (Finland), 28 July 1985.

Éva Mihályi and the Orchestra of the Pécs Youth Centre, cond. István Mihályi. Pécs, Liszt Ferenc Concert Hall, 10 September 1985.

Mihályi Éva and the Chamber Orchestra of Graz, cond. Erich Raschl. Graz (Austria), Stefaniensaal, 18 August 1990.

Éva Mihályi and the Weiner-Szász Chamber Orchestra, conducted by the soloist. Budapest, Institute for the Blind, 12 May 1998.

Rainer Küchl and the Austrian-Hungarian Haydn Philharmonic, cond.

Ádám Fischer. Kismarton, Haydn-Saal, September 1998 (1st violin soloist: Éva Mihályi).

Rainer Honeck and the Austrian-Hungarian Haydn Philharmonic cond. Adam Fischer. Kismarton, Haydn-Saal, 11 September 2012 (1st violin soloist: Éva Mihályi).

Rainer Honeck and the Austrian-Hungarian Haydn Philharmonic, conducted by the soloist. Beijing, National Center of Performing Arts, 15 October 2013 (1st violin soloist: Éva Mihályi).

Rainer Honeck and the Austrian-Hungarian Haydn Philharmonic, conducted by the soloist. Shanghai, Symphony Hall, 15 October 2013 (1st violin soloist: Éva Mihályi).

Fabio Biondi and the Austrian--Hungarian Haydn Philharmonic, conducted by the soloist. Kismarton, Haydn-Saal, 9 September 2018 (1st violin soloist: Éva Mihályi).