

Theses of the DLA dissertation

ESZTER OSZTROSITS

**ERNST VON DOHNÁNYI'S
VIOLIN CONCERTOS
TRADITION, PERSONALITY, INTERPRETATION**

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1. Antecedents to the research

I got acquainted with Ernst von Dohnányi's music in 2012 through his Sonata for Violin and Piano in C sharp minor. After his well-known and popular chamber music and large orchestral works, I happened to encounter the composer's two violin concertos (Op. 27 and Op. 43) almost as the very last pieces unknown to me. As I gradually became familiar with Dohnányi's violin concertos, I was confronted with the fact that the appreciation of these works was not commensurate with their quality and that they had so far been undeservedly overlooked by the professional community.

At the beginning of my research, I tried to map the most important sources available for the two works: music scores, recordings, the composer's correspondence and, of course, the literature on Dohnányi's life.

The starting point for my work was Bálint Vázsonyi's monograph and Deborah Kiszely-Papp's small monograph, followed by the *Dohnányi Yearbooks* and the volumes of *Dohnányi Studies*, which provided further guidance for my study of the oeuvre. The book of

Dohnányi's Family Correspondence, edited by Éva Kelemen in 2011, and the collected edition of Dohnányi's writings and interviews, published by Veronika Kusz in 2020, further clarified my picture of the composer.

In the course of my study of the literature, I have found that despite decades of research, there has been little in-depth analysis of Dohnányi's works and their interpretations.

2. Sources

In addition to the literature already mentioned, two books: Ilona Kovács's *Dohnányi in a New Perspective* and Veronika Kusz's *Dohnányi's American Years* were of great help to me in outlining the history of the two works, and in their analysis. I would also like to emphasize two shorter works by Veronika Kusz, her National Cultural Fund (NKA) project report of an intriguing viewpoint: *Konzert für Violine mit Orchester – Concerto no. 2 for Violin and Orchestra. Dohnányi's two violin concertos in the context of genre history*, published in 2011, and *The*

First World War – First creative crisis? Dohnányi's Violin Concerto No. 1, published in *Magyar Zene* in 2017.

For a detailed musical and formal analysis of Dohnányi's Violin Concerto No.1, I consider the first edition of the score, published in 1920 by the *Alberti Verlag* in Berlin under the title *Konzert (D-moll) für Violine mit Orchester*, to be the primary source. The music examples in this dissertation are based on excerpts from the score and the composer's piano version.

As for the Violin Concerto in C minor, a saliently important source is the concert recording of the work by the Florida State University Symphony and violinist Frances Magnes, conducted by Dohnányi. This exciting, period-correct recording is currently in the Dohnányi Collection of the HUN-REN Institute for Musicology, Archives of 20th-21st Century Hungarian Music, as part of his American estate transferred to Hungary in 2015.

For the interpretation analysis in chapter 3, I have relied on Dohnányi's autograph score and the solo violin score edited by Frances Magnes, the dedicatee and commissioner of the work, as primary, authentic sources.

3. Method

In the first two sections of my thesis, I aimed to describe in detail the circumstances of the creation, premieres, performers, reception, printed edition and difficulties of interpretation of the two violin concertos.

After sketching the biographical and emotional background, I reviewed the available Hungarian and international recordings of the works.

The backbone and focus of my dissertation is the detailed musical and formal analysis of the Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 27, in Chapter 2, and the analysis of the interpretation of the Violin Concerto in C minor, Op. 43, in Chapter 3. Based on the recording of the private premiere in Tallahassee and Dohnányi's notation of the concerto dedicated to Frances Magnes, I have analysed it in seven subchapters, with a practical approach in mind.

4. Results

No in-depth analysis of Dohnányi's Violin Concerto in D minor has been done before, so my analysis is the first in this respect.

The interpretation analysis of the Violin Concerto in C minor is also new; here I have sought to explore the similarities, differences and characteristics of Frances Magnes's violin playing and Dohnányi's notation and its practical realisation through the study of the recording.

The appendix to the dissertation contains nine letters to Dohnányi and one autographic letter written by Dohnányi. I thought it important to include the correspondence of Emil Telmányi and Frances Magnes with Dohnányi, because they were of great interest to me in my research and had not previously appeared in print.

The appendix also includes the *Urtext* of the Violin Concerto in D minor, movement II, and a score of the work which I have edited. I felt it appropriate to prepare the *Urtext* score because of the faulty slurs and musically misleading bowing of the solo violin part published by the

Alberti Verlag. Since there is no editor named in the solo violin part – and therefore no fingering or bowing is indicated – it seemed obvious to prepare a historically appropriate edition highlighting the composer’s intentions, which would, I hope, be of practical help to those interested in the work.

5. Documentation of activity related to the topic of the dissertation

An important background for my dissertation was my 2020/2021 ÚNKP fellowship, during which I investigated the possibilities of applying the approach of historically informed performance to the violin sonata repertoire of the period of Romanticism.

I often play Dohnányi's Piano-Violin Sonata in C-sharp minor in my chamber concerts, and consider it an important foundation brick of my repertoire. I had the privilege of playing it for the first time with Mária Kovalszki at the 2012 József Szigeti International Violin

and Viola Competition. I would also like to mention two important concerts:

17 November 2017, FUGA, Concert of the Annie Fischer Scholarship holders

J. S. Bach: Sonata in E major, BWV 1016

Ernst von Dohnányi: Sonata for Piano and Violin in C-sharp minor, op. 21

Béla Bartók: Sonata for Violin and Piano, No. 1

Imre Dani (piano)

15 December 2020. Talent obliges:

Eszter Osztrosits and her chamber music partners' Dohnányi concert.

Dohnányi: Serenade in C major, op. 10

Dohnányi: Sonata for Violin and Piano in C-sharp minor, op. 21

Dohnányi: Sextet in C major, op. 37

Participating musicians: András Kurgyis, Oszkár Varga (viola), Flóra Matuska (cello), Balázs Rummy (clarinet), Bálint Tóth (horn), Imre Dani (piano)