

Thesis of DLA dissertation

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**Scale Publications Ahead and Beyond of Slonimsky**

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## I. Background of Research

During my career as a performer I quickly realized that I lack the knowledge concerning scales and tonalities, especially in relation to the music of the last more than one hundred years. During my studies for 17 years, I have never seen a publication about systems that are different from minor and major keys and diatonic tonal system. However, I really aimed to gain excessive knowledge on the subject, strengthened with practical experience.

So I felt I had no key to the scales of the 20th and 21st century, but at the same time I have become devoted to the music of these eras and felt the urge to perform it.

In the search for publications introducing the novel scales of the music of the 20th century I also asked for the help of contemporary composers whom I worked with. This is how I met Zoltán Jeney, who introduced me to the work of Nicolas Slonimsky. The book titled *Thesaurus of Scales and Music Patterns* made a huge impact on me, and it led to the center of the subject. Another time I received a copy of a handwritten notation of 21 variants of the diatonic scale (of the 21st century), written down by Barnabás Dukay – later it turned out to be the system described by Lajos Bárdos. On the basis of these resources I started to research writings and analyses that spotlight characteristics and specifications of scale systems and tonalities.

It's become a strong need for me to overview and know the scale question as a whole. This time the only detailed work I found on the subject was the 15-part series by Imre Földes, *Hangrendszerek és hangsorok századunk zenéjében*. This series introduces tonal systems and shows musical examples as well, but it contains no information about editions describing the characteristics of scales and the changes in their use. Therefore I gradually started to collect editions, books and scientific publications on scales. I have not found one that would compare and summarize the resources available, or any collecting and correlating them. I realized such a work would be supplementary to consult for exacting performers.

## II. Resources

Apart from the abovementioned Slonimsky work, I primarily turned to resources offering practical approaches to scale systems and tonalities. Bearing in mind some works from the 18th century (methodological publications from Bach, J.J. Quantz, L. Mozart), I was browsing through the related works from the 19th century, starting from the lecturers of Conservatoire de Paris (P. Baillot, R. Kreutzer, É. Decombes) to Liszt and Brahms. About the changes in the use of scale systems, mostly theoretical

works appeared at the turn of the 20th century. However, I realized that the yet theoretical articles and books by D. Alaleona, F. Busoni, A. Schönberg and A. Hába could be used as a base for practical use.

From a later period, *Technique of my musical language*, O. Messiaen's self-analysing work served not only as a theoretical framework, but also provided quite a few practical ideas with rich and detailed sheet music examples as well. In the USA, not only Slonimsky but Joseph Schillinger and Howard Hanson introduced their own theories on tonality and scale systems. In the Hungarian context, these findings are clearly reflected in the pieces of Béla Bartók. But as for printed editions, for this paper I rather used Lajos Bárdos' related analyses. Bárdos primarily showed examples of the unconventional use of diatonic scale systems in the works of Liszt and Kodály. Later Imre Földes' framework appeared to be of high significance in terms of summarizing tonalities and scale systems. It is easy to read, thorough and illustrated with a large number of musical samples.

During the second part of the 20th century jazz musicians were the ones to react in a very creative way to the changes in musical thinking, also in the area of scale systems. These inventions gradually started to appear in publications as jazz education became institutionalized. I was looking through the works among which the ones of Ramon Ricker, Georg Russel and Dr. Yusef Lateef appeared to be the most extensive.

Károly Binder and Máté Pozsár's monograph published in 2012 is the one to collect every present and possible scales and their harmonic possibilities in a very precise and statistical approach that was never seen before.

Apart from these, all the musical pieces that I encountered as a music performer I used as a resource. Deepening my knowledge of scales and patterns helped me to understand and recognise the phenomena of contemporary pieces easier and faster. I am going to list many examples of these recognitions and identifications in the last chapter of my paper.

### III. Methodology

My primary aim was to find a way to gain profound knowledge on the researched materials. Moreover, I was to find a method that can show the significance of certain questions from theoretical and historical perspectives and give guidance for the praxis at the same time. The aim of my paper therefore is to provide an extensive overview for 21st century performers about this significant topic that needs constant rethinking, to show connections related to history, content and thinking.

I tried to see and show the works of artists with similar ways of thinking and conclusions, by comparing them to and analyzing in the light of each other, to introduce their works with the wish to point out correlations. These works sometimes came to similar conclusions and results

while being distant in time and place. In other cases connections between them and joint thinking were obviously present. I attempt to point out similarities and differences as well.

Considering all of these aspects, my method of comparison between papers and collective works is rooted in Nicolas Slonimsky's *Thesaurus of Scales and Music Patterns*. The system of this edition enabled me to survey the change process following the long principality of the diatonic scale system. It proved to be a strong base also in order to compare effectively the heterogenous manifestation of theoretical background to musical variety in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the light of my research, I sincerely hope that the findings of my thesis are valid and my aim to capture the development of scales and possibilities in their use from classical to contemporary music will become beneficial for other readers.

#### IV. Results

The way I researched, systematized and interpreted resources that served as subjects to my paper is inevitably unique as it comes from the individual characteristics of my performing career, my own musical taste and the specific choices related to it. These characteristics include finding common ground and connection points between the performance praxis of classical, written music and the one of pop music, especially the world of improvisational jazz. According to this approach I treated editions that appeared on both sides as equals if those appeared to stimulate thinking in relation to composition and performing art.

As far as I am concerned, this topic is only scarcely covered in music science and daily music praxis, its importance is not taken seriously despite the fact that the classical music scene is trying hard to be in line with the needs of the entertainment industry. These are natural processes but they have their consequences in everyday praxis. If any colleague of mine finds himself in a situation that one day he plays jazz, another day a renaissance motet while contemporary experimental music or Vienna classics in pop rhythm on another day - as it is not unusual for many -, I think we have to deal with the musical professional consequences of this variety, also in terms of the use and behavior of scales and tonal systems in the mirror of music history.

Being a performer who wishes to constantly redefine and research the spiritual background of everyday work, and aims to create valuable performances, based also on analytic interpretation of musical works, I would like to offer this thesis as a useful synthesis about scales for fellow performers who seek practical guidance.

In the context of my dissertation: selected list of my CDs, mostly with music of 20. and 21. century.

***Metrum Ensemble Live in Budapest;*** works of Marian Lejava Hudobny fond, SF 0102213

***Clarinet and Piano Recital*** (live) with Martin Tchiba (piano), Telos Music, TLS095, Jeney Z., Sály L., R. Kelterborn, Károlyi P. művei

***Double Portrait*** Vajda Gergely/Horváth Balázs művei Hungaroton HCD 32577

***Trialog*** Trio Lignum; BMC Records, CD 127

***Offertorium*** Trio Lignum; BMC Records CD 090

***Chamber music of Ferenc Farkas;*** Toccata Cl., London TOCC 0345

Sály László: ***Hyperion sorsdala*** BMC Records, CD 218

Gadó Gábor: ***Lung-gom-pa*** BMC Records, CD 154

Gadó Gábor: ***Byzantinum*** BMC Records, CD 137

Sály Bánk: ***Timebells*** Hungaroton HCD 32435

***Works of Serei, Soós, Vidovszky;*** Rondino Fest. 2004, BHKZ CD02

Veress Sándor ***Chamber music*** Hungaroton HCD 32013

Dukay Barnabás: ***Over the face of the deep*** BMC Records CD 052

Kondor Ádám ***Szerzői Lemez*** Hungaroton HCD 31969

Igor Stravinsky: ***A katona története*** BMC Records CD 041

Csapó Gyula: ***Kézfogás lövés után*** BMC Records, CD 013