

FERENC LISZT ACADEMY OF MUSIC

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF ARTS

No. 28

SYNTHESIS AND NOVELTY

THE VIOLIN AS A TOOL OF EXPRESSION  
IN THE TONE POEMS OF RICHARD STRAUSS

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DLA DISSERTATION THESIS ABSTRACT

2014

## **I. Background of the research**

By the time of this dissertation I have already been playing for 22 years in the Miskolc Symphony Orchestra as the 1<sup>st</sup> concertmaster. During these years I had the chance to play the tone poems of Richard Strauss under the leading of excellent conductors. Both the bowing and finding the fingering were deeply challenging each time. The difficulty and the beauty of the violin solos directed and motivated me to choose the violin aspect of the tone poems of Strauss, deepening my knowledge in the wonderful structure of his oeuvre. Regardless I read much about it, I felt I could not find an exact answer for the questions coming up when playing. The approach of musicians calls for a different angle. How to play it, why that way and on what base? I followed the track of these questions hoping that the result of my research can help interpreting, before and meanwhile, the tone poems of Richard Strauss.

## II. Sources

As an active musician, I mainly looked for help in studying the scores and parts. All the time I could feel these materials gave me the most information and inspiration regarding the pieces/plays. In line with studying, playing them, I was searching for books about Strauss, biographies, documentations related to his tone poems and other pieces, critiques of often high literature value, reminiscences of coevals and colleagues, moreover, opinions and reminiscences of musical inheritors.

The four most important books I relied on:

Batta András: *Richard Strauss*. Budapest: Gondolat, 1984

Berlioz, Hector: *Treatise on Instrumentation enlarged and revised by Richard Strauss* Translated by Theodore Front  
New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1948

Boyden, Matthew: *Richard Strauss*. Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 2004

Fábián Imre: *Richard Strauss*. Budapest: Gondolat, 1962

Besides, a great help was also:

Del Mar, Norman: *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on His Life and Works volume I*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983

Kennedy, Michael: *Richard Strauss: Man, Musician, Enigma* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999

### **III. Method of the research**

For the reasons mentioned above, it was obvious before starting this thesis and when writing it to analyse the pieces with my violin in the hand. In the last 20-25 years I got to know a broad repertoire playing in the Miskolc Symphony Orchestra, at my quartet, the Anima and as the art leader of Camerata Miskolc chamber orchestra. As a result of all, I have a lot of real-life experience that could be used for the comparative analysis besides the helpful hints of the conductors. I compared all these with the already existing sources. I tried to approach the pieces from an angle that

was not usual; to highlight the most apparent ability of Strauss-addressing others with music without losing his own individuality. Furthermore, my purpose was also to show the development of his string, violin expressions, the roots and his new view based on these roots. I attempted to introduce Strauss from a perspective where music, painting and poetry do not decompose into parts but ally and in this process the incomparable beauty of the violin has an important role.

#### **IV. Results**

In my opinion, the main result of my thesis is that a violin player can get a documentation that provides information and help interpreting tone poems; facilitates to overcome certain obstacles by introducing the way how a phrase or motif was created and reveals the actual difficulty. Last but not least, the knowledge I got during this research also belongs to here as everything I studied or refreshed with it can not only give newer guidelines in the approach to the

Strauss' pieces but supported me with a short course of music history, seeing and recalling the many of fame and of high niveau who inspired the different compositions of Strauss. I hope the readers of my dissertation can feel this way.

## **V. Documentation of the activity related to the research**

In the last two decades I played all the tone poems in Miskolc Symphony Orchestra except for the Macbeth. Among our conductors were the biggest names such as Zoltan Kocsis, Imre Kollar, Ervin Lukacs, Laszlo Kovacs, Adam Medveczky, Jurij Szimonov, Kobayasi Ken-Ichiro.