

The Liszt Academy of Music
Doctoral School

SZÜLE, TAMÁS

BUFFO BASS

THESES OF DLA DOCTORAL

DISSERTATION

BUDAPEST

2010

I. The Precedents of the Research

My career obviously offered the subject matter of my dissertation. I myself have been a buffo bass singer for thirty years. The opera buff, this slightly scorned branch of the art genre, can rarely be found among the junior singers' dreams as the main scope of their activities. However, the demands of the Hungarian State Opera in the 80s, as well as my existing aptitudes, namely nimble and strainless voice and physique, sense of humour and capability of characterizing started my career both in Hungary and in different foreign countries. Later I got affected by this wonderful line and by the multi-coloured figures of the masterpieces and I think I found the way how to perform on the stage real human beings, taken from life.

My experiences I've gathered as a singer-actor and a lecturer of the University of Science in Pécs gave me the decision to collect and give forth some of the most important results of my thirty years' career.

II. Research Methods

The references only tangentially deal with the topic of my dissertation. This fact made my work partly easy partly difficult. My research consisted in working out the subject matter on the bases of the little retraceable information.

I tried to find the most typical and best-known roles of the art genre, to get immersed in these figures' characters, and with their help to create the generally characteristic features of the buffo bass. While searching, I came across some curiosities and rarities, and by introducing these and by comparing them with their well-known companion I would have liked to colour the general conception. These comparisons can also lead close to understanding the archetypes, their characters of wider spectrum by what the writers and composers of the different eras consider important relating to the characters of the certain performer.

The buffo characters become arranged around some strange kinds of people. Exploring the development of these characters was also the subject of my research.

III. The Results of The Research

Although my selection is arbitrary, the result – I am inclined to think – is still representative. Italian comic operas appear in the main stream. The prominent type of the buffo bass, the Pantalone-Dottore commedia dell’arte figure, can be found among them in the greatest number. This is the dominating opera buffa trend of the 18th century as well as the trend of the first part of the 19th century. The way leads from Pergolesi to Rossini and Donizetti via Mozart and Paisello.

The German Singspiel characters are represented by Osmin, Mozart’s Austro-Turkish figure (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*), van Bett, the Saardam mayor (Loring: *Tsar and Carpenter*), as well as Nicolai’s Falstaff and Reich master (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*). The neoromanticism is presented by Richard Strauss’s Baron Ochs (*The Cavalier of the Rose*), the Russian opera is presented by the comparison of Varlam (Mussorgsky: *Boris Godunov*) and the Pope (Sostakovich: *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District*). Gianni Schicchi and Simone demonstrate the dark humour of

Puccini (*Gianni Schicchi*). I tried to select the most successful roles and parts from the enormous choice. However, I presumed, that I could not leave out the Hungarian composers. I analyzed the Shouting cantor (Ordító kántor), Erkel's less known role (*Sarolta*) and King Pomade, the figure of Ránki György's excellent Andersen tale adaptation.

IV. Summary

I offered a large scope for playing the roles, the peculiar problems and difficulties of the cue and voice type, and the different solutions of acting the role.

Finally, through typifying the physiques and voices of the excellent singers of the 20th century, I summarize the individual aptitude of the buffo basses and the artistic requirements demanded from them.