

Thesis of a Dissertation

Tornyai Péter

Attempts to Analyze Salvatore Sciarrino's  
Instrumental Works

Supervisor: András Wilhelm

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## **I. Antecedents of the research**

The literature about the best-known and most performed living Italian classical composer, Salvatore Sciarrino has reached a large number of items by now. Most of them is listed in the appendix of Pietro Misuraca's book published in 2018. This is the first comprehensive monograph about Sciarrino's life work (to date, since the oeuvre has not terminated at all), so its significance is fundamental for any research related to the composer. A similarly thorough approach to the topic is reached in some PhD researches, the most notable of which are presented in the dissertations by Carlo Carratelli, James Dennis Bunch and the flutist Matteo Cesari, one of the best known performers of Sciarrino's music. The literature also contains several studies and articles in connection with certain pieces or aspects, primarily in Italian, and to a lesser extent in English and French.

Sciarrino himself frequently speaks or writes about his music and other subjects too. His theoretical book (*Le figure della musica da Beethoven a oggi*), and his studies

(many of them collected in the volume titled *Carte da suono*), as well as the numerous published interviews had an unavoidable role in the research.

However, compared to this extensive bibliography and the high frequency of the performances of Sciarrino's pieces, there are quite few writings, which could be considered as detailed, in-depth analyses of his works. Undoubtedly, this may also be due to the fact that Sciarrino's music is hardly understandable and interpretable by means of traditional categories of music theory, to which the composer himself willingly draws attention in his texts. My intention was to find an approach and type of analysis, which corresponds with Sciarrino's aesthetic and compositional principles, while at the same time being able to explore the way this music works as thoroughly as possible.

## II. Sources

The primary sources for my dissertation were Sciarrino's instrumental works, focusing on his first creative period (around the 1970s) and the solo pieces. The scores were published by Casa Ricordi and Rai Trade. In some cases also the published audio recordings of certain pieces were used as important sources, similarly to the graphic sketches ("diagrams of flow") of the composer. In addition significant role should be attributed to Sciarrino's written texts, especially to his interdisciplinary lectures in the book titled *Le figure della musica da Beethoven a oggi (The Figures of Music. From Beethoven to the Present)*.

I have used several studies as secondary sources, of which I have to mention particularly an earlier analysis of – the Sciarrino-piece chosen to investigate in detail in my dissertation – *All'aure in una lontananza*, written by Brendan P. McConville.

### **III. Method**

I conducted my research according to three main aspects. In the first part of the dissertation, I intended to provide a comprehensive picture of Sciarrino's way of thinking – from aesthetic issues to instrumental techniques – drawing conclusions from the observations of several pieces. Based on these, I developed an analytical strategy, which I presented through a detailed analysis of a solo piece. In addition to these, it seemed important to examine Sciarrino's *figures* explained in his book, in the context of the interpretation of the author's own compositional solutions.

### **IV. Results**

My dissertation is the first scientific publication in Hungarian on the art of the Italian composer. In addition, I think its role can go beyond Sciarrino's works, meaning that the musical approaches and methods of analysis presented here may prove fruitful for the examiner of the

works of other (primarily contemporary) composers. In the context of the entire international Sciarrino literature – in addition to the detailed analysis – the novelty of my writing may be the decipherment and presentation of the unique compositional method used by Sciarrino in his *Sonata per due pianoforti*. Its significance, in my view, is not limited to the specific work, but can be an important link in understanding Sciarrino's treatment of form and material.

## **V. Documentation of the activities relevant to the topic of the dissertation**

The greatest influence on my compositional thinking, (after that of my closest masters), was exerted by the art of Salvatore Sciarrino. The process of research has undoubtedly deepened this effect, and my pieces created in the recent years bear traces of the analyses. The influence is not stylistic, but rather Sciarrino's way of thinking and in some cases his method of composing left a mark in my compositions. The pieces which can be

associated mostly to my Sciarrino research are: *Sospiro congelato* (2015), *füstjelek* (2016), *fiori sfiorati* (2016), *Dixit* (2016-17), *l'alone del silenzio* (2018), *Ferne* (2019), *Weitere intime Briefe* (2019), *Hymne a la nuit* (2020).

As the artistic director of the Anima Musicae Contemporary Music Workshop, I organized the Hungarian premiere of some chamber works by Sciarrino, the concert planned for the spring of 2020 had to be postponed due to the epidemic situation.

I utilize the results of my research regularly, both in connection with Sciarrino's works and in a broader context, in my teaching work: composition and analysis lessons at the Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest.