

Theses of the DLA dissertation

ZSUZSA VÁMOSI-NAGY

HERITAGE OF PAUL TAFFANEL

Consultant: Gergely Ittész

Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music

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I. Research History

The heritage of Paul Taffanel, establisher of the modern French flute school is much better known in other countries of Europe than in Hungary, interestingly enough not primarily in France, rather in England. In the course of my studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London, I have recognized how strongly the English flute education has emphasized the significance of the works of Paul Taffanel. However, in Hungary, Taffanel is usually mentioned as a technically demanding composer, but not one of great musical quality.

By writing my dissertation, I would like to bring to the attention of Hungarian flutists that the heritage of Taffanel is much more than a few virtuoso fantasies written for our instrument. This French artist not only established the modern flute school of his homeland, but also those of other countries (first of all that of England and the United States of America). The widespread negative opinion in the 19th century regarding our instrument – namely that the flute repertoire is limited to musically and formally rather objectionable virtuoso compositions – had been changed by the influence of Taffanel. (For example works by flutist composers such as the Italian Giulio Briccialdi or the French Jean-Louis Tulou, Jules Demersseman and Henri Altès.) Furthermore, Taffanel broadened the restricted flute repertoire not only with his own works, but also encouraged and inspired the excellent composers of his time (Fauré, Saint-Saëns, Tchaikovsky, Widor, Enesco, Chaminade) to write for our instrument. It is thanks to Taffanel and his teacher, Louis Dorus that the modern flute innovated by Theobald Boehm in 1832 immediately spread in France, however in Boehm's homeland, the German region only about eighty years later.

There is no available literature in Hungarian demonstrating the whole oeuvre of Taffanel, therefore I decided years ago to write a dissertation analyzing in detail the heritage of the artist. There are numerous American essays regarding the founder of the modern French flute school (e.g. Dorothy Glick: *Paul Taffanel and the Construction of the French Flute School*, University of Kansas, 2014), but I have not found any of them to embrace all the details of Taffanel's heritage. The English musicologist, Edward Blakeman wrote a book about Taffanel in 2005 (Edward Blakeman: *Taffanel, Genius of the Flute*, Oxford University Press, 2005) in which a detailed analysis can be found concerning the life and career of the artist, the series of concerts founded by him and their programmes. Although Blakeman's work is the most comprehensive monograph about Taffanel in English so far, my dissertation has not been limited to the subjects studied by him. In addition to the detailed description of the life and activity of the artist I have mainly concerned myself with the following: how the French

flutist had continued the traditions of the European – and among them especially the French – flutist composers and how his oeuvre fitted into the flutist traditions developed over the course of centuries. Furthermore, in my dissertation I have emphasized the successful attempts of the flutist to broaden the repertoire of our instrument as well as the works of composers inspired by the flute playing of Taffanel to write their pieces of music.

II. Sources

In the course of writing my dissertation I have read and used books, reviews/journals, articles, dissertations and encyclopaedias exclusively in English, except for one Hungarian and two French works. The primary and secondary sources of the four main chapters of my dissertation will be detailed below:

1. Overview of development/formation of the French flute school

Writing the large introduction about flutist composers has been supported by the following books and encyclopaedias on our instrument, for example works by R. S. Rockstro, Ardal Powell, Nancy Toff and András Adorján. (R. S. Rockstro: *A Treatise on the Flute*, Musica Rara London W. I 1890; Ardal Powell: *The Flute*, Yale University Press, 2002; Nancy Toff: *The Flute Book*, Oxford University Press, 1996; András Adorján und Lenz Meierott: *Lexikon der Flöte*, Laaber Verlag, 2009.) Research for the chapter regarding the foundation, significance and development of the Paris Conservatoire and its first flutist generation has primarily been performed by studying the American flutist journal, the *Flutist Quarterly* and the dissertation written by Patricia Ahmad in 1980 (Patricia Joan Ahmad: *The Flute Professors of the Paris Conservatoire from Devienne to Taffanel, 1795-1908*. DLA disszertáció, North Texas State University, 1980.)

Active correspondence with the oboist László Hadady, professor at the Conservatoire, has helped me to get a realistic overview of the current functioning of the institution and details of flute education. For the two chapters describing the acceptance of the flute innovated by Theobald Boehm and its adaptation in France the dissertation by Antal Szabó on Boehm (Antal Szabó: *Theobald Boehm and his flutes*, Budapest: HTSART, 2005) and the associated editio of the English flute journal, *Pan: the Flute Magazine* have primarily been used.

2. Paul Taffanel, establisher of the modern French flute school

Primary sources for the chapters discussing the life and compositional and teaching activities of Taffanel have been the aforementioned book by Edward Blakeman on Taffanel and that by Claude Dorgeuille on the prominent representatives of the modern French flute school (Edward Blakeman: *Taffanel, Genius of the Flute*, Oxford University Press, 2005; Claude Dorgeuille: *The French Flute School 1860-1950*, London: Tony Bingham, 1986.)

3. Taffanel and his composer contemporaries

For the section describing the circumstances of composition of flute works of outstanding musical quality written by the influence and inspiration of Taffanel's art a wide variety of supports have been found, out of which studying of the last 10 years' editions of the American flute journal, the *Flutist Quarterly* should be emphasized as a primary source.

4. Influence of Taffanel on the subsequent flutist generations

For writing the final chapter of my dissertation the works by Philippe Gaubert and Louis Fleury - written on the basis of manuscripts by Taffanel - have been studied which are only available in detail in English. For translation of other parts of works in French assistance was obtained and therefore I could get thoroughly acquainted with the message of these writings exceptionally important for me.

Description of the influence of Taffanel in England and America has primarily been helped by the books by Trevor Wye, Ann McCutchan and Angeleita Floyd. (Trevor Wye: *Marcel Moyse, An Extraordinary Man*, Winzer Press, 1993; Ann McCutchen: *Marcel Moyse: Voice of the Flute*, Amadeus Press, 1994; Angeleita S. Floyd: *The Gilbert Legacy*, Winzer Press, 1990.)

In addition to the above mentioned literature, comprehensive support has been gained from the books on flutes and flutists by Ardal Powell, Raymond Meylan and Philip Bate. (Ardal Powell: *The Flute*, Yale University Press, 2002; Raymond Meylan: *The Flute*, Amadeus Press, 1988; Philip Bate: *The Flute*, Philip Bate 1979.)

III. Method

In my dissertation I have initially given a detailed description of the flutist composers from the 17th century whose art was characterized by a rich diversity similar to that of Taffanel: they composed, conducted, wrote studies for our instrument and in addition had excellent reputations as teachers. During my research I have not been able to find any reference to the history of Taffanel's works, therefore I have considered it important to pay attention to this aspect. As far as I know, the issue of propagation of Boehm flutes in French and German regions were discussed fully up till now and that's why I have written about the role of Dorus and Taffanel in this regard.

I have discussed in detail the activity of Taffanel as a composer and teacher and the high quality works composed for him which have been considered an important part of our repertoire up until now. I have also discussed the influence of the artist to the subsequent flutist generations and the arrival of his heritage – by mediation of his students – in England and the United States of America. Furthermore, I have thoroughly analysed the two works prepared after the death of the French flutist on the basis of his own notes. (Paul Taffanel és Phillippe Gaubert: *Méthode complète de flûte*, Éditions Musicales Alphonse Leduc, 1923; Louis Fleury: „La Flûte: L'Art du Flûtiste” In *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du Conservatoire*, C. Delagrave, 1913–1931.)

Thanks to William Bennett, my teacher during my studies in England, I could get a direct knowledge on the French roots of the English flute school, so in the final chapter of my dissertation I have followed up the tradition handed down from Taffanel to Moyse and from Moyse to Bennett in the course of the 20th century.

IV. Results

I do hope that my dissertation discussing the life, works, influence of Taffanel and the compositions inspired by him will help Hungarian flutists to get better acquainted with the heritage of the French flutist. In my opinion, my approach to the subject can be considered original, because my starting points have primarily been the methods of the English and American flute schools and I have been looking for their roots in Taffanel's heritage of the French flute school.

At the time of writing my dissertation, I found the Hungarian literature on Taffanel rather insufficient (except for one or two dissertations on the French flute school of the 19th and 20th centuries), therefore I decided to write a dissertation on the whole heritage of the artist. I hope my research will offer an authentic view for those who are interested in the subject on the works of the artist whose oeuvre is worth knowing for all flutists.

V. Documentation of activities related to the subject of the thesis

The 15th August 2009 I attended the International Flute Convention in New York as an organizer and one of the performers, together with the flutists William Bennett, Denis Bouriakov, Unji Chung and Angeleita Floyd and the musicologist Edward Blakeman. The aim of the presentation in English was to present the life, works and compositions of Taffanel.

I frequently program Taffanel's works in my recitals. Recently I played last time the *Freischütz* fantasy by Taffanel on the 15th May 2014 at the Hungarian Cultural Centre in London with Tamás Vásáry and on the 30th June 2014 at the UNESCO Palace in Paris with Zsolt Balog. Compositions by Taffanel were included in the programme of both of my diploma concerts: I played the *Freischütz* fantasy on the 17th May 2006 in the Great Hall of the Liszt Ferenc Music Academy and the *Françoise de Rimini* fantasy in May 2008 in the David Josefowitz Recital Hall of the Royal Academy of Music in London. Furthermore, I played compositions connected to the subject of my dissertation (*Mignon* fantasy and *Sicilienne Etude* by Taffanel, *Suite* by Widor and the movement *Aviary* of the *Carnival of Animals* by Saint-Saëns) both at international competitions (in 2003 at the finals of the International Flute Competition in Bucharest and at the semifinals of the International Flute Competition in Budapest) as well as in the course of my chamber music series (2010-2012: Óbudai Társaskör, Ventoscala Chamber Music Concerts).

The programme of my doctoral concert will also include works by Taffanel and those written for him by significant French composers:

Ph. Gaubert: Sonata for Flute and Piano, No. 1 (A major)

P. Taffanel: Sicilienne Etude

C. Saint-Saëns: Airs de ballet (excerpt from the opera *Ascanio*)

P. Taffanel: Andante Pastoral et Scherzettino

P. I. Csajkovszkij: Concertstuck

Ch. M. Widor: Suite Op. 34

P. Taffanel: Wind Quintet