

Theses of the DLA dissertation

Árvayné Nezvald Anett

The String Compositions of Jenő Takács Created in Hungary

Consultant: Dr. Mohay Miklós

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I. Antecedents of the research

Jenő Takács (1902-2005), the composer, lived through the entire 20th century. He originated from Cinfalva near Sopron, and his life unfolded across four continents. After his student years in Sopron and Vienna, he taught in Cairo and Manila before moving to Pécs, where he became the director of the Conservatory. His journey took him to Cincinnati and eventually back to his hometown, Cinfalva. In Austria, he was considered a Hungarian composer, in Hungary, he was regarded as Austrian, while a professor of the Music Academy thought of him as an Egyptian Bartók. Takács developed his unique musical language, rooted in Hungarian musical treasures, yet allowing influences from various other cultures' music.

His close acquaintances and friends were great figures like Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály, Ernő Dohnányi, György Ligeti, Paul Hindemith, Darius Milhaud, Yehudi Menuhin, and many others. All of this was possible thanks to his open, friendly, and approachable personality, broad interests, knowledge, individuality, and good sense of humour. He can serve as an example to us all, an outstanding pianist, composer, and folk music researcher, sadly overlooked in Hungary to this day. A musical giant who, with his extensive knowledge and artistic independence, crafted his unique musical world under all circumstances. Unfortunately, the number of concerts in Hungary, where his compositions are performed is negligible, with his piano and string pieces being even rarer.

As a musician living in Sopron for the past 20 years, actively participating in the region's musical life, currently serving as the concertmaster of the Sopron Liszt Ferenc Symphony Orchestra, a teacher at the University of Sopron, a chamber musician, and last but not least, a member of the Takács Foundation Board of Trustees, I feel it is my duty and responsibility to engage in a thorough study, exploration, and understanding of Jenő Takács's string compositions.

The primary goal of my dissertation was to uncover and find those chamber music works for violin and strings that have not been published or made accessible to the public so far. We only know of their existence through correspondence and memoirs. By researching, studying in detail, analysing these works, my aim is not only to discover but also to popularize these string pieces. Additionally, I intend to digitize the manuscripts so that they can be published in the near future.

II. Sources

To delve into the exploration of the subject, I relied primarily on sheet music, recordings, the author's correspondence, memoirs, and notes.

–Jenő Takács: Erinnerungen an Béla Bartók. (Wien: Doblinger, 1982.)

–Jenő Takács: Erinnerungen, Erlebnisse, Begegnungen. (Eisenstadt: Burgenländisches Landesmuseum, 1990.)

Dr.. Éva Radics, retired professor of the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, provided invaluable assistance with her books on Jenő Takács.

– Cinfalvától Cinfalváig. Takács Jenő élete és munkássága. (Budapest: Masszi Kiadó, 2002.)

– Takács Jenő élete és munkássága. 101 év krónikája. (Szentgotthárd: Virtuart, 2003.)

A collection of testimonies about Jenő Takács has been preserved in the publication created for his 100th birthday. In this compilation, fellow composers and musician friends share their thoughts and reflections on the personality of the composer

– Dr. Christian Heindl: Jenő Takács Festschrift zum 100. Geburtstag. (Wien: Doblinger, 2002.)

In addition, I endeavoured to gather as much background information as possible from reports and articles in the press and journals that covered Jenő Takács. These writings, whether as concert reviews or commemorations on anniversaries, bring the composer, pianist, person, companion, and friend even closer to us.

III. Method

I structured my thesis into three main parts:

1. Jenő Takács's Career:
2. Bartók Influences: Encounters, Correspondence, Pieces:
3. Presentation and Analysis of the compositions made in Hungary:

In the section dedicated to his career, my primary goal was to provide a detailed overview of Jenő Takács's life journey. Unfortunately, his accomplishments and activities are still not well-known in our country. Within this section, I particularly emphasized his activities in Hungary, dividing them into three distinct periods: the student years in Cinfalva and Sopron from 1916 to 1926, the middle, productive period in the cities: Sopron, Szombathely, and Pécs from 1939 to 1948, and the final return to his homeland in 1970.

In the second part, the focus of the research was on his relationship with Béla Bartók. Considering the immense impact of Bartók's personality, I thoroughly studied all available correspondence and Jenő Takács's recollections of Bartók. It quickly became apparent that this influential relationship deserved a dedicated chapter in my thesis.

The third part concentrated on the analysis of string pieces created during the Hungarian period. The basis of the analyses primarily involved a detailed study of the scores. Additionally, I listened to available recordings and practiced and played these pieces myself. The analyses were not solely based on music theory or musicology; rather, they reflected the perspective of an experienced musician, seeking the origins, inspirational sources, and the musical techniques and methods that turned them into classical audience pieces.

IV. Results

Jenő Takács's life-work, particularly the exploration and understanding of his string compositions, amounted to a fascinating journey through time. His creative period was extraordinarily diverse from both historical and cultural perspectives, spanning an entire century. The fact that he lived for a hundred and three years and, during this time, travelled the world, experiencing numerous cultures from traditional tribal music to dodecaphony, remarkably enriched his compositional activities. This richness is evident not only in the quantitative abundance of his works but also in their diversity. Throughout his life, with the exploratory power of childlike curiosity, Takács sought and experimented with new paths and possibilities in composition, whether it involved assembling unconventional instrument combinations or reimagining older genres.

Jenő Takács's career was profoundly influenced by colleagues from around the world, as well as artist friends with whom he not only had professionally remarkable relationships but also lifelong personal friendships. Many of his compositions were inspired by these relationships, and these musician friends gladly incorporated his works into their repertoires, bringing them to life in concerts.

The goal set by my dissertation, which focused on the exploration and promotion of Takács Jenő's string pieces, is nearing realization. With the support of the Takács Jenő Foundation's Board of Trustees, discussions have begun with the publisher Universal Music Publishing–Editio Musica Budapest regarding the release of Takács Jenő's Suite for Violin and Piano, composed in 1922 without opus number. It brings great joy to know that the essential research process for my dissertation, involving visits to libraries and archives, studying and analysing numerous articles, journals, studies, correspondence, books, and musical scores, has yielded tangible results. This is not merely a theoretical work but a forward-looking practical outcome, as these discovered manuscript scores have resurfaced from the depths of a library's basement. Through their publication, they can reach performers who, hopefully, much like Takács's musician friends, will eagerly expand their repertoires and enhance their concerts with these compositions.

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

Concerts:

- May 12, 2015 Liszt Subscription Concert: Joy of the Hungarians

Concert by the Sopron Liszt Ferenc Symphonic Orchestra

Program:

Ludwig van Beethoven: King Stephen – Overture, op. 117

Ludwig van Beethoven: Romance in F Major, op. 50

Jenő Takács: Rhapsody, op. 49a

Jenő Takács: Passacaglia, op. 73

Paul Wranitzky: Symphony in C Major, op. 2, "Joy of the Hungarians"

Soloist: Wolfgang Göllner, Concertmaster: Anett Árvayné Nezvald

Conducted by: Salamon Kamp

- June 4, 2021 Inauguration of the Dohnányi Hall at the Fertőrákos Cave Theater

Thanks to the developments, a smaller cave hall has been created to accommodate chamber concerts. An interactive exhibition featuring seven composers closely connected to Sopron, including Jenő Takács, is now available for viewing in the Dohnányi Hall. Visitors can not only read about the musical activities of these composers but also listen to their works, including:

Jenő Takács: Rhapsody, op. 49, with a violin solo by Anett Árvayné Nezvald, accompanied by the Sopron Liszt Ferenc Symphonic Orchestra, conducted by Péter Oberfrank.

The following program was performed during the inauguration of the Dohnányi Hall:

- Dohnányi: Serenade for Trio, op. 10

- **Jenő Takács: Tiberika Duos, op. 103**

- Károly Goldmark: String Quintet in A Minor, op. 9

- Liszt: Liebesträume (arranged for string quartet)

- Bartók: Transylvanian Dances

Performed by the Chamber Ensemble of the Sopron Liszt Ferenc Symphonic Orchestra, led by concertmaster Anett Árvayné Nezvald.

– March 6, 2022 Pastoral Concert at the Liszt Ferenc Conference and Cultural Center in Sopron

Conducted by the Sopron Liszt Ferenc Symphonic Orchestra:

Conducted by Péter Kóczán, Soloist: Viktória Kiss-Szabó - piano

Concertmaster: Anett Árvayné Nezvald

Program:

Mozart: Symphony No. 26 in E-flat major, K 184

Jenő Takács: Tarantella, op. 39

Beethoven: Symphony No. 6, op. 68

CD:

– In June 2019, I had the opportunity to record Jenő Takács's Rhapsody, op. 49, for violin and string orchestra as a soloist for the CD commemorating the 190th anniversary of the Sopron Liszt Ferenc Symphonic Orchestra. Conducted by Péter Oberfrank.

