

Theses for DLA dissertation

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**THE REVIVAL OF THE HARPSICHORD IN HUNGARY FROM THE  
BEGINNING OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TO THE PRESENT**

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## I. History of the Research

Up until now, there has been no comprehensive study published on the topic of this dissertation. The only accessible source for the history of Hungarian harpsichord playing is a short study written by János Sebestyén in 2000 for the First National Harpsichord Competition in Budapest (“A magyarországi csembalózás rövid története,” <http://www.jsebestyen.org>), which summarises data from the beginning of the century, but mostly focuses on the era starting from the 1950s. This document mostly served as a starting point rather than a substantial source for my investigations. Nevertheless, the lack of scholarship in this particular field or research and my respect towards Sebestyén, my former harpsichord teacher, were two of the most important reasons why I decided to dedicate a full research project to this topic.

Another field that needed to be covered in preparation for my research investigations was the history of early music performance in Hungary, which closely related to the core topic of my dissertation. I found only one comprehensive study in the field, written by Ferenc János Szabó (*A magyar komolyzenei előadóművészet – intézmények, iskolák egyéniségek – Új terület: a régizenejáték*, <http://zti.hu/mza/m0404>), but consulted many publications that focused on different specific aspects of early music and its performance history. These include the concert, festival and competition reviews by Kristóf Csengery, Anna Dalos, Borbála Dobozy, Mária Feuer, Eszter Gát, Anikó Horváth, László J. Győri, Márta Katona, Katalin Komlós, János Malina, Máté Mesterházi, Éva Mikes, Judit Péteri and László Somfai, published in the journal

My own performances of contemporary Hungarian pieces composed for harpsichord (premieres):

Gyula Fekete: Sinfonia all’ ungherese fuvolára és csembalóra, 06. 03. 2014. Hungarian Radio Marble Hall, with Máté Pálhegyi  
Zoltán Györe: 2. Concerto, 26. 03. 2018. Miskolc, Music Palace, with Miskolc Symphony Orchestra, cond. Tamás Gál  
Máté Hollós: Cemballata per clavicembalo solo, 12. 10. 2009. Hungarian Radio Marble Hall  
Máté Hollós: Tre Toccate per clavicembalo solo, 28. 09. 2006. Bp. Olof Palme-House, Korunk Zenéje  
Barnabás Horváth: „Premier ordre” (... emlékek a konzis évekből...) – szvit csembalóra, 06. 03. 2014. Hungarian Radio Marble Hall  
Lajos Huszár: Szonáta – csembalóra, op.11, 17. 11. 2018. Old Academy of Music  
Katalin Pócs: Banffi impresszók, 10. 1998. Bp. Nádor-Hall, Korunk Zenéje  
János Nagy: Pannon-Kelta ballada – csembalóra, 28. 09. 2006. Bp. Olof Palme-House, Korunk Zenéje

Contemporary Hungarian harpsichord pieces that are currently on my repertoire:

Sándor Balassa: Művész utca 11/a – tételek csembalóra op.101  
Miklós Kocsár: Repliche – fuvolára, cimbalomra vagy csembalóra  
György Ligeti: Continuum, Hungarian Rock, Passacaglia ungherese

early music scene. I found several professionally trained musicians – including harpsichord players – performing in this era whom we can consider the forerunners of the Hungarian historical approach.

Another important finding of my research is that it sheds a different light on Bela Bartok's relationship with the harpsichord. As opposed to our previous understanding of the composer's indifference towards the instrument, this study provides evidence for Bartok's interest in the harpsichord, and for the fact that he used it for teaching purposes as well.

The compilation of the list of pieces composed for harpsichord, and the discovery of the first Hungarian piece written for the instrument in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Pál Hermann's Divertissement pour clavecin) are also major achievements.

## V. Documentation of performances and compositions related to the core topic of the dissertation

My own compositions for harpsichord:

Darabok csembalóra – Francia szvit, 1998

Előhang E. J. De La Guerre d-moll szvitjéhez, avagy E. J. D. La Guerre édes-bús vágyakozása – for harpsichord, 2006

M. csodálatos utazása – for flute, violin, cello and harpsichord, 1998

Metopé kertje – 3 tétel csembalóra, 1995., rev. 2018

Prelude és pavane – egy ismeretlen arckép emlékére, 1999

The Lyric Develops Toward Action / A líra az akció felé fejlődik – Dobai Péter versére – for vocals and harpsichord, 2010

Sonata dolce –for flute and harpsichord, 2011

Tombeau – for harpsichord and string orchestra, 2018

*Muzsika*, and the volumes of *Régi zene és Régi zene 2.*, edited by Judit Péteri.

## II. Sources

I began my scrutiny of the revival of the harpsichord in Hungary by consulting documents on the instrument's Western European history and its possible influences on the Hungarian music scene. For this, my major sources were: Edward L. Kottick *A History of the Harpsichord* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), David Rowland *Early Keyboard Instruments – A Practical Guide* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), Hanns Neupert *Das Cembalo* (Kassel und Basel: Bärenreiter, 1966), Eszter Fontana „Musikinstrumente für Karl-Straube und die Interpretation von Bach'scher Musik” (In: *800 Jahre Thomana, Glauben - Singen – Lernen. Festschrift zum Jubiläum von Thomaskirche, Thomanerchor und Thomasschule* [Wettin-Löbejün: OT. Döbel, 2012]), Howard Schott „The Harpsichord Revival. „Bach-Flügel” (*Early Music*. Volume 2, Issue 2. [1974], <https://academic.oup.com/em>).

My primary source in mapping the local histories of harpsichord performance in Hungary was the concert database of the Institute for Musicology at the Research Centre for Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Based on the database I summarised the history of early music and harpsichord performances in Budapest between 1900 and 1970. I also consulted reviews of these performances when they were available.

Among the several Hungarian publications that I used as source materials the most important ones are: *Filharmónia műsorfüzetek* (publications from the 1960s and 1970s), *Parlando*

(1970s), yearbooks of the Fodor Music School (between 1907 and 1931), yearbooks of the Ferenc Liszt University of Music, Molnár Imre dr. (szerk.): *A magyar muzsika könyve* (Budapest: Havas Ödön, 1936), *Kovács Sándor válogatott írásai* (Budapest, Zeneműkiadó, 1976), Wilhelm András *Beszélgetések Bartókkal – Interjúk, nyilatkozatok 1911–1945.* (Budapest: Kijárat, 2000), Bónis Ferenc (szerk.) *Így láttuk Bartókot – Harminchat emlékezés.* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó 1981), Tallián Tibor *Bartók Béla szemtől szembe* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1981), Frank Oszkár *Bevezető Bartók Mikrokozmoszána világába* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1994), and Péter Barna's dissertation entitled *Bartók és a csembaló – Egy különös találkozás története* (Budapest, Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem, 2005).

For the compilation of the list containing works written for harpsichord I used the archive materials of the Hungarian Radio, the database of the Budapest Music Centre, monographies of composers, and the score and manuscript collections of music libraries.

I was also provided with material by Anikót Horváth and Borbála Dobozy, who let me use their lists of the Hungarian harpsichord pieces of their own performance history.

### III. Methodology

The first part of my dissertation is based on the materials gathered from the concert database of the Institute for Musicology at the Research Centre for Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. I categorised and analysed the relevant data, while

collecting material for the second part of my thesis at the Hungarian Radio.

Processing the data for past performances led me to take new directions for further research and opened my scope in finding relevant secondary materials. Besides discovering the compositional and performance history of the pioneers of early music, I also familiarised myself with contemporary pieces written for harpsichord. I consulted related audio-visual materials when they were available.

In my investigation of the pieces discussed in the thesis I also relied on my own readings and interpretations both as a performer and a composer.

### IV. Research Outcomes

In my inquiry I was primarily interested in how the performance practice of early twentieth century musicians contributed to the growing interest in the harpsichord in Hungary, and what kind of instruments were used to perform new compositions. I also wanted to investigate twentieth century Hungarian composers' approach to the instrument, and discover how the historical practice of the second half of the century has influenced contemporary harpsichord music.

My research on the history of harpsichord performance in Hungary helped me reconsider the commonly accepted view on the Hungarian early music scene in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to which the performance culture of this type of music was limited and insignificant. My findings provide evidence for a thriving and colourful era of classical music concerts and a vivid