

Franz Liszt Academy of Music

Doctoral Program

Mihály Bächer's Career

Pedagogical Work, Interpretational Features, Reception

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DLA Doctoral Thesis

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2019

I. Preliminaries

The subject of my doctoral thesis, Mihály Bächer's (1924-1993) career and the presentation of his art through thoroughly analyzing his interpretations, has led me to a yet undiscovered field. It was already obvious to me when choosing my subject that there have not been any publications in this topic, not even any research done, thus my thesis can work as a gap filler.

Iván Bächer's book, *Dance of Death* published in 2002 by Göncöl Press, is the only work that reflects on the personality of the artist, the author's father, from a certain point of view, showing the main stages and the most important details of his life. However, this is more like literature than a professional musicological study. Katalin Fittler wrote a short description of Bächer in a publication entitled *Great teachers and great students*, edited by Ágnes Gádor and Gábor Szirányi, which was published for the 125-year anniversary of the Liszt Academy of Music. Except for this, there are not any other studies in this topic.

II. Sources

At the very beginning of my work I could gain access to the whole bequest of Bächer thanks to Iván Bächer. This consisted of two parts. One of them is the album of the artist's mother, where she collected press clippings, invitation cards, reviews or parts of reviews, most of the time without exact data, unfortunately. I actually built up Bächer's career based on this material. However, the most important and fundamental source was the other part of the bequest, namely all the music recordings borrowed from Radio Budapest. While listening to and analyzing Bächer's music recordings I could get closer to understanding and characterizing the pianist's personality.

Another primary source were the recollections of Iván and Anna Bächer, the children of the artist, who helped me with biographical data and in other questions in connection with the topic.

The chapter about Bächer's pedagogical work was based on the reminiscences by his former students. During the interviews they shed light on Bächer's figure from different perspectives. The interviews I made with János Breuer and Zoltán Kocsis were also major and significant sources of information.

The source of research in Bächer's activity as a performer was the Catalogue of Budapest Concerts of the Institute for Musicology of the Research Center of Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. I also found excellent and valuable reviews in the

Library of the Budapest Academy of Music while searching among the National Philharmonic's Program Guides (Filharmónia Műsorfüzetek), examining thirty-five years' full material. Besides, I must also mention the online database, arcanum.hu, where I found articles about Bächer and which helped me specify the data of the press clippings.

III. Method

My first task was to organize the bequest, while completing and specifying the missing data. Arcanum.hu, the online database of the Library of the Budapest Academy of Music was of a great help in this work, where I could search among old journals, so I was able to find the much of the missing data from the collection of press clippings.

At the same time I started to list and tabulate Bächer's concerts in Budapest. I could specify and extend this table while doing research in the Catalogue of Budapest Concerts of the Institute for Musicology of the Research Center of Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In the table I mentioned the date, the venue, the program, the potential contributors, and if there was a review published about the concert, the writer and source of the review. After that I started to examine the Yearbooks of the Academy of Music. First I checked Bächer's years of study, then his years of teaching at the Academy of Music.

It took a long time to search all the reviews about Bächer in the Library of the Academy of Music. As Bächer was the National Philharmonics's soloist between 1952 and 1987, I found most of the materials while examining thirty-five years of the National Philharmonic's Program Guides. Reading and analyzing these reviews were the basis of the chapter about Bächer's critical reception.

Nevertheless, it was obvious to me from the very beginning that my most essential task while writing the dissertation was listening to Bächer's music recordings and analyzing his activity as a performer and the characteristics of his interpretations. As time passed I gradually got a deeper and deeper insight into the two compositions the performance of which I analyze in detail in the third chapter of my thesis, Beethoven's op. 111 sonata and Liszt's Dance of Death.

IV. Results

My dissertation deals with the art of Mihály Bächer in three separated large parts, from three different aspects. In the five chapters of the first part I review the biography and teaching carrier of Bächer. In the second I introduce his life as a concert pianist, and using the help of his interviews I delineate his art as a performer and interpreter. Finally, in the last part I analyze Bächer's performing art using and interpreting his recordings in detail, with two different methods.

As a result of my work a table came to existence, in which I collected Bächer's concerts in Budapest. Through this research, my work ended up to be more particular, than the online database of Budapest Concerts of the Institute for Musicology of the Research Center of Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, though it is based on its former source, the Concert Catalogue.

With the help of the Year Books of the Liszt Academy of Music, I listed all the students of the thirty years teaching period of Bächer, as well as his whole discography, including his solo and chamber music recordings. Furthermore it can not be negligible to mention the 88 reviews which I collected about his concerts during my research. My dissertation – according to my hope – can arouse the interest of the young pianists for the art of Mihály Bächer.