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Doctor School**

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**The Hungarian Piano Art
in the First Half of the 20th Century**

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Contents

I. Background	2
- <i>Preface</i>	
- <i>Key questions</i>	
II. Methods	3
- <i>Literary research</i>	
- <i>The Analysis of recordings</i>	
- <i>Examination of Scores and Facsimile</i>	
III. Results	3
1. <i>The Significant Pianists in the first Half of the 20th Century</i>	
2. <i>Artistic work of Dohnányi and Bartók</i>	
- <i>Teaching</i>	
- <i>Performance style</i>	
3. <i>Comparison of Recordings of the 2nd Piano Concerto by Bartók</i>	
IV. Scores and Facsimile	5
IV. Discography	6
V. Biography	7

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Székely Júlia. *Bartók tanár úr.* Budapest: Kozmosz, 1978.

Szóllósy András. *Bartók Béla Összegyűjtött Írásai I.* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1967.

Tallián Tibor. *Bartók Béla írásai I.* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1989.

Thomán István. „Emlékeim Dohnányi Ernőről”. *Zenei Szemle* 1927/XI

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Tóth Aladár válogatott kritikái 1934-39. szerk. Bónis Ferenc. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1968.

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Varannai Aurél. „Egy nagy magyar zongoratanító, Thomán István, Liszt növendéke és Bartók mestere”. *Muzsika* 1959/12

Vázsonyi Bálint. *Dohnányi Ernő.* Budapest: Nap Kiadó, 2002.

I. Background

Preface:

With the foundation of the Music Academy, Ferenc Liszt created the Hungarian School of piano. He set in motion an artistic development which brought Hungarian piano artistry to the European forefront. Amongst his students were Istvan Thoman and Arpad Szendy, whose pedagogical work played a role in the education of a whole generation of pianists from the previous century. It was from them that the greatest pianists of our time went into the music profession – they laid down the foundations of the music education of the century – the music education of today.

The most prominent artists of the 20th century were Ernő Dohnányi, and Béla Bartók. Both of them emerged from Thomán's class, and their musical activity influenced the development of a whole era of musical life. The criticisms often measured their students and contemporaries' interpretations up against the interpretation of Dohnányi and Bartók.

As a pianist and teacher I would primarily like to focus on the performance aspect of them. I would like to explore the artistry of piano playing from the first half of the past century; to give a comprehensive picture of the outstanding pianists of this time.

In order to deal with the question of interpretation on a deeper level it was necessary for me to choose one particular work, of which I could compare five different Hungarian performances. The work which I have chosen is the 2nd piano concerto by Béla Bartók. This is a contemporary piano concerto, which as a musical form, presents the performer with a difficult and exacting task in terms of both technical difficulty and musical expression. And it is through choosing this piece, that I can try to reveal the individuality of the Hungarian piano art, whether it is possible to discover a certain "Hungarian musical expression".

I would like to make my research on the basis of the following 3 questions:

1. Which pianists played an important role in the first half of the 20th century?
2. What influence did Bartók and Dohnányi's artistry have on the piano art of the 20th century?
3. In which ways does this influence appear in the performances of the 2nd Piano Concerto by Béla Bartók?

II Methods:

Literary research:

A relatively wide range of literature is at our disposal on the subject of Hungarian pianists from the first half of the 20th century. On the basis of a collection of biographies, memoirs, letters, documents and concert reviews, it is possible to recall the life's work, performances, repertoire and teaching methods of these pianists. Numerous studies have been written on the artistic work of Dohnányi and Bartók.

The Analysis of recordings:

Thanks to the technical progress made during the previous century, the first means of listening to recordings came into existence. And so, it became possible that with indirect sources and recordings, we can recall the main aspect of the art of performance – piano playing.

The Complete Centenary Edition of Bartók's Records, played a significant role as a main source for my dissertation, as were all the released recordings of Dohnányi. In order to analyse the 2nd Piano Concerto by Bartók, I have taken 5 recordings of the piece made by Hungarian pianists until the year 1960. Amongst these is a recording of the piece performed by Bartók himself, which exists in fragments as part of the private collection of Sophie Babitsné-Török. The other four recordings are those of Andor Földes and Edit Farnadi, made in 1953; Györgyi Sándor – in 1959, and Géza Anda's recording made in 1960. I have compared the recordings on a basis of seven identical extracts, examining the tempo, dynamics, timbre, phrasing, - the similarity and differences of the performance techniques.

Examination of Scores and Facsimile:

The various forewords, notes accompanying dedications, and analyses written alongside the published scores, have contributed greatly to my dissertation as an accompaniment to the recorded material.

III Results

1. The Significant Pianists in the first Half of the 20th Century:

The basis of my literary research on the pianists of the first half of the 20th century was collected from numerous sources. Biographies, concert documentation, memoirs, concert reviews, contemporary articles, press material released outside of Hungary, and written studies, constitute the summary of the first half of my dissertation. This part

Hopkins, Charles. „Bartók's Second Piano Concerto”, *International Piano* 2003 July/August.

Ifj. Bartók Béla. *Apám életének krónikája.* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1981.

Ifj. Bartók Béla. *Bartók Béla családi levelei.* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1980.

Kiszely-Papp Deborah. *Dohnányi Ernő.* Budapest: Mágus Kiadó, 2002.

Kocsis Zoltán. „Dohnányi és Bartók művészetéről”. *Holmi* 1994/5: 721-725.

Kovács Ilona. „Dohnányi Ernő, a Zeneakadémia tanára” In *Dohnányi Évkönyv 2004.* Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet, 2005.

Kovács Sándor. "Dohnányi Ernő. Művészete és pedagógiai nézetei" In *A Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Főiskola 100 éve.* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1977, 184-198.

Kroó György. *Bartók-kalauz.* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1980.

Lampert Vera. *Jemnitz Sándor válogatott zenekritikái.* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1973.

Mácsai János. „Megjegyzések Dohnányi Ernő gépzongora-felvételeinek jegyzékéhez”. *Holmi* 1994/5: 728-766.

Péterfi István. *Fél évszázad a magyar zenei életben, válogatott zenekritikák 1917-1961.* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1962.

Rudolf A., Bruil. *The Remington Site.* 2000. november

Somfai László. „A Bartók-kutatás műhelyében. Hat előadás” 5. „A hiteles Bartók-játék”. Budapest: Magyar Rádió, 1995.

Somfai László. „Notáció és előadási stílus”. In *Bartók Béla kompozíciós módszere,* Budapest: Akkord, 2000.

VI. Biography

Az Országos M. kir. Zeneművészeti Főiskola Évkönyve az 1906/07-iki tanévről. szerk.: Moravcsik Géza. Budapest: 1907.

Az Országos M. kir. Zeneművészeti Főiskola Évkönyve az 1935/36-iki tanévről. szerk.: Moravcsik Géza. Budapest: 1936.

Bartók Béla. „Thomán Istvánról”. *Zenei Szemle* 1926/XI (október)

Bónis Ferenc. *Így láttuk Bartókot 36 emlékezés.* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1981.

Bruno Monsaingeon. *Richter. Írások és beszélgetések.* Budapest: Holnap, 2003.

Cziffra György. *Ágyúk és virágok.* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1983.

Csáth Géza. *Éjszakai esztétizálás. 1906-1912 zenei évadjai közz.* Demény János. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1971.

Deményi János. *Bartók Béla a zongoraművész Nagy magyar előadóművészek V.* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1968.

Demény János. *Bartók Béla levelei.* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1976.

Földes Andor. *Emlékeim.* Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1995.

Gábor Ágnes és Szirányi Gábor. *Nagy tanárok, híres tanítványok, 125 éves a Zeneakadémia.* Budapest: Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Egyetem jubileumi kiadványa, 2000.

Gombos László. „Dohnányi Ernő művészi tevékenységének sajtóreceptiója. II. rész: A nemzetközi karrier kezdete, 1898. október – 1901. április”. *Dohnányi Évkönyv 2004*, Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet, 2005, 297.

Herzfeld, Friedrich. *Ferenc Fricsay, Ein Gedenkbuch.* Berlin: Rembrandt Verlag, 1964.

comprises of an overview of the artistic work of Dohnányi and Bartók, the teaching methods of István Thomán, and the significance of Arnold Székely and Keéri-Szántó. I have listed the significant pianists of the period, primarily those who at a young age had already attracted the attention of the audiences of the time and the music critics alike.

2. Artistic work of Dohnányi and Bartók:

Having compared the press material and memoirs of the students, and having listened to the available recordings I was able realise the comprehensive picture of the two great artists: That of Dohnányi, whose talent gave him a keyboard touch type of many shades and colours, with which he could bring to life the innermost depths of compositions and could also recreate the natural essence of a work in front of audiences through his piano playing. The other great artist was Bartók, who captured his listener's attention primarily with his uniquely strong character, and performance techniques which revealed the fundamental nature of a composition.

Teaching:

The traditions of Liszt, through Thomán, were also apparent in the teachings of Dohnányi and Bartók. This comprises firstly of piano teaching based on performance techniques, making a full realisation of the compositions – involving the choice of a suitable tempo, rhythmical execution, character and timbre and being the discovery of the most natural and suggestive way of playing the instrument. It was a given requirement that to be in the class of Dohnányi and Bartók one had to have a secure knowledge of stylistic performance techniques, to have a wide knowledge of repertoire and chamber music playing. The emergence of a true artist could only come with the full grasp of a composition.

Performance style:

Dohnányi and Bartók's way of performing is free from any of the exaggerated romantic influences – free of any virtuosic piano playing with a purpose in itself. They represented a certain clarity and a way of getting straight to the essence of a composition. Any individual expressiveness had to mirror the true spirit of the composition.

3. Comparison of Recordings of the 2nd Piano Concerto by Bartók:

I made my examination of the 2nd Piano Concerto of Bartók on the basis of a comparison of the composer's own recording of the piece next to two of his students: Edit Farnadi and György Sándor, and two of

Dohnányi's students: Andor Földes and Géza Anda. It is fair to say that the most significant find of the comparison of the recordings was the difference of the arrival at a certain tempo. This very much depended on the orchestra and conductor, and also on how technically prepared the pianist was. I found the greatest difference to be in the way in which the solo piano part begins in the slow movement of the piece. The individual expression is mirrored from the point of view of the timbre and touch type. Yet the proportion of the building up of the tempo in and the clear compositional form of the piece is very distinct not only with Bartók, but also in the four other performances. However I have emphasised, as the most important individualistic was of playing, a certain kind of "Hungarian" declamation which exists both in Bartók's compositions and recordings of himself playing. The five kinds of declamations – as in human speech – were different through interpretation, in terms of individual voices. In conclusion I believe that each performance recording is connected in that they were all played in pursuit of the emphasis of the Hungarian language.

IV. Scores and Facsimile

Bartók. *Violin Concerto.* Piano Accompaniment. Boosey & Hawkes, 1941.

Bartók. *II. Koncert.* Philharmonia partituren UE 10442

Bartók. *II. Piano Concerto.* Az 1. faksimile kiadás egy példánya, Bartók játszópéldánya javításokkal és változtatásokkal (BBA BH48b).

Dohnányi Ernő. Essential Fingerexercises for obtaining a sure Piano Technique. Budapest: Musica Edition, 1967.

Thomán István. *A zongorázás technikája. Alapvető gyakorlatok egyenletes és virtuóz játék elsajátítására.* Budapest: Rozsnyai Károly, 1906.

V. Discography

Dohnányi at the piano 1955, 1956, 1969.
Hungaroton Classic HCD 12085

Dohnányi plays Dohnányi, The complete HMV solo piano recordings 1929-1956.
Appian Publications & Recordings, APR 7038.

Bartók Összes Hangfelvételének Centenárium Kiadása
Hungaroton LPX 12326-33
Hungaroton Classic HCD 12335

Földes Andor. Eugène Bigot, Lamoureux Orchestra; Párizs, 1953.
Hungaroton Classic HCD 32135

Farnadi Edit, Hermann Scherchen, Bartók: II. zongoraverseny Bécsi Állami Operaház Zenekara; Bécs, 1953.
Nixa / Westminster WLP 5249

Sándor György, vez. Michael Gielen, bécsi Pro Musica Zenekar; 1959.
Wox PL 11 490

Anda Géza, Fricsay Ferenc, Bartók: Klaviesrkonzerte 1-3. Radio Symphony Orchester Berlin; 1960.
Deutsche Grammophon CD 447 399-2