

Thesis of a Dissertation

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Dallapiccola's Serialism in the
Canti di prigionia

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I. Antecedents of the Research

The Italian composer Luigi Dallapiccola, one of the most important and prominent figures in 20th century music history, is unfortunately less known in Hungarian cultural life, and therefore there is practically no literature in Hungarian dealing with his work. Péter Várnai's book of interviews with Luigi Dallapiccola, published in 1977, is the only surviving work that traces personal encounters and conversations during the last year of the composer's life. The most important of these are the two books - *Appunti Incontri Meditazioni* and *Parole e musica* - in which Dallapiccola himself compiled and organised his writings, reminiscences and letters. Although these two volumes do not analyse his own works, they provide an excellent insight into Dallapiccola's personality and way of thinking. It is important to highlight Ben Earle's book *Luigi Dallapiccola and Musical Modernism in Fascist Italy*, which examines the composer's work in a historical context. This volume also includes detailed analyses of the major compositions, often comparing them with works by

contemporaries. As *Canti di prigionia* was written during the period of fascism, Earle's book was of particular importance in the writing of my thesis.

II. Sources

In addition to the above, it is important to mention Roman Vlad's *Luigi Dallapiccola* and Bruno Zenolini's *Luigi Dallapiccola - La conquista di un linguaggio (1928-1941)*, as both contain detailed analyses of the composer's works composed during the first major period of his life and show his development through these compositions.

I was also greatly assisted in writing my thesis by Raymond Fearn's *The Music of Luigi Dallapiccola* and Sergio Sablich's *Luigi Dallapiccola*, which present the composer's complete life and works. Fearn's book places greater emphasis on the analysis of individual works and the biographical information is secondary, while Sablich's is the reverse. Sablich interprets the music as a reaction to historical events. In Fiamma Nicolodi's volume *Luigi Dallapiccola - saggi, testimonianze, carteggio, biografia e*

bibliografia, in addition to the memoirs, I found a selection of the composer's correspondence from 1935 to 1974, which also helped my work.

III. Method

As Dallapiccola began composing *Canti di prigionia* in response to the public events of the time, I had to first examine the historical and political background.

In the second chapter, I want to demonstrate the 'dodecaphonic development' through three of the composer's compositions – *Sei Cori di Michelangelo Buonarroti il Giovane*, *Tre Laudi*, *Volo di notte* – and how he arrived at composing his first work based on a twelve-tone row by 1938. Also here, I will deal in detail with Dallapiccola's relationship with literature, including Dante and Homer.

In writing the above two chapters, I have drawn heavily on the literature listed in my bibliography. The second half of the thesis contains analyses of the *Canti di prigionia*.

The writing of the three movements of the *Songs of the Captivity*, written between 1938 and

1941, took several years, and since the compositional techniques used in the second and third movements are more advanced, I have devoted a separate chapter to the analysis of the *Preghiera di Maria Stuarda*. The analysis of Dallapiccola's dodecaphony line is also included in this chapter.

The last chapter contains the analysis of *Invocazione di Boezio* and *Congedo di Gerolamo Savonarola*.

IV. Results

I owe my encounter with Dallapiccola's work to Salamon Kamp, who suggested the *Preghiera di Maria Stuarda* for my graduation concert. It was only in analysing the first movement during the preparation process that I sensed that this work had depths worth exploring in more detail.

Initially, I tried to examine *Canti di prigionia* through the Italian tradition of Rossini-Verdi-Puccini, but my research soon changed direction and I began writing through an analysis of the piece and an exploration of its direct current political influences.

As neither Dallapiccola nor *Canti di prigionia* is widely known in Hungary, I hope that my dissertation will lead to more attention for the author and his work.

**V. Documentation of the Activities
Relevant to the Topic of the Dissertation**

29 May 2019 - Liszt Academy - Great Hall

MA Choral Conductor Diploma Concert

Schütz – *Musikalische Exequien* – Canticum B
Simeonis

Hauptmann – Sei mir gnädig, Gott op.57

Tibor Oláh – *Cantata*

Dallapiccola – *Canti di prigionia* – *Preghiera di
Maria Stuarda*

Performers: the National Choir, the Jubilee Symphony
Orchestra of the Szent István Gymnasium, the
Graduate choir of the Academy of Music and an
ensemble of students