

14th September 2014 - The Day of Hungarian Song, Palace of  
Arts (Müpa), Budapest  
Jenő Pertis: Across the water

DLA Doctoral Thesis

21st June 2015 - Concert of the Prelude Mixed Choir, Szent Imre  
Grammar School, Budapest  
Jenő Pertis: Three love poems, Wall No. 3, Across the water

Sándor Kabdebó

20th August 2015 - Concert of the Prelude Mixed Choir,  
Synagogue of Tokaj  
Jenő Pertis: Three love poems – My heart is heavy

THE CHORAL WORKS OF JENŐ PERTIS AND THEIR  
PLACE IN THE HUNGARIAN CHORAL LITERATURE

Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music

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## *I. Antecedents of the research*

Until now there has been no extensive analysis of the works of Jenő Pertis. His name appeared only in concert reviews, in the periodicals „Muzsika” and earlier the „Kóta”. These articles could not embark on a detailed analysis of his works. They provided no more than a critique of the performance and a short characterization of the pieces.

Hungarian Radio produced some reportages with Pertis, but because of the audience these were rather biographical or conversational with the participation of his family.

The best opportunity for those interested to get an insight into the inner world of his works was to listen to the readings of the programmes written by Máté Hollós for the memorial concerts after the death of the composer.

The articles of the 2000s agree in that Jenő Pertis is a composer who deserves to be better known and whose works are too infrequently performed. However, an academic analysis of either his instrumental works or his vocal compositions has not been produced to date.

## *V. Documentation of the activities related to the subject of the thesis – catalogue of the concerts of the author*

10th December 2010 - Concert of the Prelude Mixed Choir, Nádor Hall, Budapest

Jenő Pertis: Three love poems

22nd April 2012 - In memoriam Pertis Jenő, Choral works of Jenő Pertis in the Auditorium of the ELTE Faculty of Law, Budapest

Jenő Pertis: Three love poems, Wall No. 3

21st December 2013 – Christmas concert of the Hungarian Radio’s Children’s Choir, Academy of Music, Budapest

Jenő Pertis: Kings of Bethlehem; with the contribution of Eleonóra Krusic: flute, Zsuzsanna Arany: piano

23rd May 2014 – Jenő Pertis memorial concert, Club of Óbuda, Budapest

Jenő Pertis: Three love poems, Wall No. 3, Across the water

25th May 2014 – Pentecost concert of the Hungarian Radio’s Children’s Choir, Academy of Music, Budapest

Jenő Pertis: Bear dance, with the contribution of Eleonóra Krusic: flute, Zsuzsanna Arany: piano

29th June 2014 Concert of the Prelude Mixed Choir, Nádor Hall, Budapest

Jenő Pertis: Across the water

7th August 2014 – International Choir Competition Neuchatel

Jenő Pertis: Across the water

## *II. Sources*

I sought to gather and use all available articles about and recordings of Jenő Pertis that have been published. The bibliography lists all the articles published in periodicals. With the help of Anikó Zakariás I gained access to all radio broadcasts that Hungarian Radio made with Pertis, as well as to recordings made at other events with the composer. Among those are an interview in the *Artisjus* with Máté Hollós and Antal Babits, a lecture in the framework of a folk music programme in Kecskemét in the summer of 1985, or the October 2009 episode of the series „*Overdue premieres*” of the *New Music Journal*, edited by Sándor Kovács, where a Pertis composition came under discussion.

For lack of studies and analysis of musicological standards the thesis is mainly based on the available scores (mostly manuscripts). Thirty-one choral works of Jenő Pertis are discussed in the dissertation.

## *IV. Results*

I believe myself to be fortunate because the theme practically found me when in 2009 Anikó Zakariás gave me as a present the volume containing six mixed choir works by Jenő Pertis, which was published one year after the death of the composer. In the following period my choir, the Prelude Mixed Choir, sang and got to know a number of Pertis works. It seemed therefore natural to write about the choral works of this composer, who received the Erkel Award and the *Artisjus* Award, but whose oeuvre had been neglected. My hopeful expectation is that as a result of my presentation of his works an increasing number of performers and choral conductors will focus their attention on the exciting sound world of Pertis.

The thesis definitely fills a gap. It is an innovative dissertation, a first on this topic. I regard an important result of it to be the analytical presentation of how many exciting musical challenges Pertis's choral works have in store, of how many interesting musical messages, inspired by the chosen text, are to be found in them. After having performed some of his works in concerts and now having got to know the complete choral works, it was a revelation for me too with what power and what abundance of colours musical profundity is presented by Pertis's composing methods. I consider a further result of the thesis to be the putting into context of Jenő Pertis's oeuvre, the comparison of his creative tools with the musical solutions of other well-known contemporary composers, a first collection and cataloguing of his choral works according to performing apparatus and level of difficulty.

### *III. Methodology*

In regard to the facts that the thesis is a pioneering work on this topic and that the author is not a professional music critic or music aesthete, the work follows traditional methods.

After a short and sketchy biographical chapter I placed Pertis in the age that he lived and worked in and I introduced his choral works in detail, also touching upon his instrumental works. Finally, I systematized his compositions, compared them to the works of other, well-known and often sung composers, and I prepared a catalogue of his works.

I applied the following methods – in order of the structure of the thesis:

- Biographical research based on written documents and personal conversations.
  - Introduction to the compositional path searching of the 70s and 80s based on contemporary interviews and reports.
  - The analysis of the choral works of Pertis from a dramaturgical point of view and in respect of his choice of text, with the presentation of the compositional tools for the sake of achieving those effects. In my analysis I elaborated on Pertis's usage of dissonance, aleatorical style, melodic invention, playing with rhythm, typical intervals, and where present the tonality of the works.
  - Comparison of the compositional style and solutions of Pertis with the compositional techniques in certain typical and important works of composers whose pieces are well known and often sung by the amateur choir movement.
- Finally, tabulation of Pertis's vocal works according to performance apparatus and level of difficulty, as well as a publication of a detailed work catalogue in chronological order.