

DLA thesis abstract

**KALLÓ, ZSOLT**

**The impact and application of the historical  
performing style in contemporary violin teaching**

DLA course No 28. focusing  
on the science of the history and culture of art,  
Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music

Szombathely

2009

**I. Research background**

In my capacity as the leader of Capella Savaria, and the founder of Authentic Quartet and Trio Antiqua, I have proved my commitment to the historical performing style on CDs and at concerts a great number of times. I have been involved in baroque violin playing for over 20 years, the principles and virtues of which I attempt to apply when teaching modern violin. I perform both on authentic copies and on modern violins and since I have played quite a few pieces written by contemporary composers I have had ample opportunities to observe the similarities and differences between the two types of instruments. I have played the works of relatively unknown baroque and classical composers, whose names only seldom feature on concert programmes; e.g. violin concertos by J. Kraus, L. Tomasini, or by Michael Haydn that had not been performed before, but my ensemble has also recorded string chamber music rarities, which the audience could hear on CD or on radio.

Modern violin pedagogy tends to focus on learning the perfect technique and we only very rarely get clear instruction as to the performing style of a particular piece. The present paper intends to fill this particular gap, because there are a large number of good violin players, but significantly fewer musicians, in the genuine sense of the word, who are familiar with the appropriate style to perform a particular piece in. This paper has a secondary objective; to help put a particular emphasis on the theoretical knowledge of appropriate musical tenets. I have also deemed it essential to provide a summary

of the practical experience I have gained on the baroque violin, a large proportion of which can be employed for the modern violin. Once you have acquired a performing style on an authentic instrument, you will have a different approach to the modern violin, a flexible attitude that I consider to be highly beneficial for the player. A true musician ought to be interested in the music of different periods; and s/he should not only be familiar with the individual rules of a given period but should be able to apply its relevant rules as well. In Hungary, early music is not taught in the framework of a systematic institutional education, one of the reasons why I regarded it as vital to summarise my experiences in this field. I believe that the content of this paper might be most useful for those learning to play the modern violin, as well as for their instructors, who understand that being familiar with an authentic performing style is essential in earlier musical styles. I have attempted to highlight a few items of the relevant literature that I have found useful, and would like to provide the reader with a system that I hope will work in practice.

## II. Sources

Primary sources:

- Donington, R. (1978) *Baroque Music: Style and Performance*. Budapest, Zeneműkiadó.
- Harnoncourt, N. & Pauly, R. G. (2002) *Baroque Music Today: Music as Speech*. Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó.
- Harnoncourt, N. & Pauly, R. G. (1988) *Musical Dialogue*. Budapest: Editio Musica.

- Mozart, L. (1998) *Hegedűiskola [Music for the violin]* Budapest: Mágus Kiadó.
- Corrette, M. (2007) *Hegedűiskola [Music for the violin]* Budapest: Art Face Seven.
- Geminiani, F. (1951) *The Art of Playing on the Violin* London: Oxford University Press.

I have used and compared these pedagogical works in an attempt to create my individual violin technique; and I have found these books absolutely indispensable in learning the correct interpretation of a piece of music. These works are not only mandatory for learning to play the baroque violin but also to perform baroque and classical pieces on a modern violin as well. It is not by accident that Robert Donington's book is the first item on the list, because this book served as a solid fundament upon which I could base my further readings.

Other resources:

- Barsi, E. (2003): *Violin Playing*. Vámoszabadi, Harmónia kiadó.
- Boyden, D. (1965): *The History of Violin Playing from its Origins to 1761 and its Relationship to the Violin and Violino*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Brockhaus, R. (1983): *Zenei Lexikon [A Lexicon of Music]*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó.
- Erdélyi, M. (1979): *Schubert*. Budapest: Gondolat.
- Galamian, I. (1978): *A hegedűjáték és tanítás alapjai [The Basics of Playing and Teaching the Violin]*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó.
- Menuhin, Y. & Davis C. (1981): *Az ember zenéje [The Music of Man]*, Budapest: Zeneműkiadó.

- Pap, J. (1993): *Tudomány vagy művészet (A hegedű akusztikai problémái)* [*Science or Arts – the Acoustic Problems of the Violin*]
- Péteri, J. (1987): *Régi zene 2. [Early Music 2]* Budapest: Zeneműkiadó.
- Spányi, M. (1987): “A Kirnberger-temperálás titkai” [The Secrets of Kirnberger’s Temperament’] in *Muzsika* 1987:VIII
- Rakos, M. (1981): *Veszprémtől Szentpétervárig. [From Veszprém to St. Petersburg.]* Veszprém: Veszprém Megyei Tanács.
- Quantz, J. J. (1857): *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen.* Berlin.
- Wolff, C. (2004): *Sebastian Bach: A tudós zeneszerző. [Bach, the Scientist Composer.]* Budapest: Park.

Internet resources:

[http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historische\\_Auffuhrungspraxis](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historische_Auffuhrungspraxis) (Accessed: 12 August 2009.)

### III. Methods

Theory and practice cannot be separated on this field of science, and for this reason I have attempted to employ both aspects in the appropriate proportion during my career as a violinist. Those playing on authentic instruments only very rarely perform on the modern violin, and thus they tend to take little or no notice of several other works of the literature of music. Therefore, I believe it is absolutely essential that we have a comprehensive knowledge not only of the music of different periods but also of the instruments used during these ages. One can only acquire the rules of the various musical languages in an authentic manner by systematically studying the given musical period. Contemporary violin teaching is inclined to focus on

the acquisition of modern techniques, and therefore this method often fails to employ the adequate musical and technical solutions when playing earlier music; most typically due to certain changes over time in the instrument itself. My attempt was to address some of the most controversial issues and provide some answers on the basis of my theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience without getting lost in the details.

The use of the various musical embellishments has always been a problem for violinists. Employing vibrato or trills in a stylistic manner is vital in the interpretation of earlier musical periods; a topic that received a special emphasis in this paper. I attempted to collect relevant documents from all possible sources, even if they contained controversies here and there. To be able to choose the adequate musical solutions one shall not be content with a thorough knowledge of rules, s/he will also need to have an extensive repertoire. I use the proposals, detailed in this paper, in my work both as a violin teacher and as a violin player. When writing this paper, I relied very heavily on my experience gained on the stage with the different international ensembles and with my own chamber orchestra.

### IV. Results

One of the most important results I have achieved is that I have managed to become familiar with, perform and record quite a few works written by so far unknown or undeservedly forgotten composers. It is also of great importance that I can play these pieces

on authentic instruments, an experience that allows me to apply their different sounding and technique when playing the modern violin. I have also been given the opportunity on a regular basis to pass my knowledge and expertise on to students of the baroque violin at national and international courses. During these events I became acquainted with the interests and the various novel approaches of the young, upcoming generation.

I receive invitations to conduct training courses held at music schools, where the topic of appropriate interpretation often features in the course programme. I am also involved in secondary and tertiary violin teaching, and as an acknowledgement for my successful work as a violin teacher I was awarded with the Ferenc Halász Prize in 2008.

## **V. Documentation**

### ***CD recordings with the Authentic Quartet on authentic instruments:***

- G. Lickl : String quartets / Hungaroton 2004/.
- P. Lappi: Canzone with Sonatores Pannoniae/ Hungaroton 2004/
- N.Zmeskáll: String Quartets / Hungaroton 2005/
- F. E. Fesca: String quartets / Hungaroton 2006/
- J. G. Albrechtsberger: String quartets / Hungaroton 2007/
- J. Wölfl: String quartets / Hungaroton 2008/
- C. Ph. Stamitz: Clarinet quartet with Lajos Rozmán /Hungaroton 2008/
- J.B.Vanhal: Fortepiano quintet with Miklós Spányi /Hungaroton 2008/
- F. Krommer: String quartets / Hungaroton 2009/

### ***CDs with Capella Savaria as a soloist on authentic instruments:***

- Telemann: Violin Concertos / Hungaroton 1995/
- Vivaldi: Spring / do-lá stúdió 2000/.
- J. Haydn: Violin Concerto in G major / do-lá stúdió 2002/.
- W. A. Mozart: Violin Concerto in A major / do-lá stúdió 2003/.
- W. A. Mozart: Violin Concerto in G major / do-lá stúdió 2004/.
- J. Haydn: Sinfonia Concertante / do-lá stúdió 2009/.

### ***CD recordings with other ensembles:***

- E. Walckiers: Trio with Gergely Ittész and Ditta Rohmann /Hungaroton 2007/.
- J. M. Leclair: Sonata in G major with the Quirinus Consort /do-lá stúdió 2008/.

My activities involve: performing violin concertos on authentic instruments written by G. Ph. Telemann, L. Tomasini, J. Kraus, and M. Haydn; the concerts were recorded by the Hungarian Radio; giving concerts on a regular basis in the Hungarian radio, at various musical festivals in Hungary and abroad; conducting training courses, being a member of juries, and acting as a professor at early music courses.