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TEACHING VIOLIN IN EVERYDAY PRACTICE— COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF METHODS FOR BEGINNERS

Theses of the doctoral dissertation

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The first task of this research project was to select a certain scope of teaching methods of violin education for in-depth investigation, considering only those satisfying certain criteria. First, they must be currently used in everyday teaching practice. To that end, data have been collected from sources deemed authentic such as violin teachers and their associations. Second, they must be justifiably considered methods as such, since a violin school or an educational lifework has not necessarily resulted in the development of a method in the strict sense. This means that (in addition to its own theoretical background and means) a method must also have well-defined aims and it must form an organic whole consisting of mutually reinforcing instrumental and educational directives. Five of the methods meeting all these criteria have been selected on the basis that they are either accomplishments of masters born in Hungary or currently being used in Hungary.

Data has been collected not only from literature but also from observation of their implementations in practice on demonstration lessons of Géza Szilvay and Kató Havas as well as on regular lessons of schools following Suzuki and Szilvay methods.

The first chapter of this thesis is devoted to the issues related to methods. It includes observations of selected masters' accomplishments in the light of the definition of method and aspects of their life influencing the development of their methods. In addition, the philosophical basis, aims and structure of the selected methods are also presented.

Subsequent chapters compare answers to certain technical questions of violin playing according to those different methods, such as: movement of the whole body, holding the instrument, special functions of right and left arm. In order to achieve maximum clarity in pointing out differences and similarities, small units of analysis were used in this process.

A more holistic approach of comparison of teaching methods and practices has yielded more interesting outcomes. The theoretical description of the Suzuki method did not entirely match its realisation during lessons observed, although differences were confined to practical techniques only, and its general educational principles and emphases were not violated. This could be explained by Suzuki's values and creed: for him the essence of the method lay in the way of teaching. He aimed at creating a method of developing the whole person, extending the boundaries of his/her potential.

A comparison of life stories of Kató Havas and Paul Rolland has pointed towards surprising results. They have had similar experiences in their studies, both being Waldbauer's students at the Budapest Academy of Music at approximately the same time. Although their aims seem similar at first sight, a more thorough analysis has revealed that there are considerable differences between their methods both in terms of underlying theory and practical instructions. In other words, despite that their lives had some parallels at their early stage, they have yielded contradictory outcomes.

In a similar way, although Kató Havas, Géza Szilvay and the authors of "Violin ABC" all consider Zoltán Kodály's thoughts as a foundation of their respective methods, the methods themselves are clearly different. One explanation is that Kodály had influenced their way of musical thinking and their general musical approach to teaching methods only; their answers to certain technical and educational questions could and did become different and distinct from each other.

From the beginning of the 20th century members of wider and wider strata of society have chosen music as an area of study for themselves or for their children. Increased numbers have necessitated not only quantitative but also qualitative changes in their education, since early and late beginners, students with talent and poor aptitude all need special approach to their training, let alone the different needs arising from their diverse family backgrounds. In order to maximise his/her efficiency, the teacher ought to know several approaches, to have a wide range of educational methods at hand, so that he/she could choose the most appropriate one for each student and for each educational situation. Having that in mind this work did not aim at declaring an order of preference of the methods examined, since any idea consistent with violin play and basic principles of education may lead to good results if applied expertly and under the right conditions.