

Theses of the DLA dissertation

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Sándor Veress:

Concerto for string quartet and orchestra.

New attempts to synthesize traditional and new
modes of expression.

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I. Antecedents to the research

My first encounter with the music of Sándor Veress is linked to the Lockenhaus Kammermusikfesten where Vilde Frang, Lawrence Power and Nicolas Altstaedt performed his *String trio* in 2015. In addition to the trio, Veress's phantasy titled *Hommage à Paul Klee* was performed at that festival under the baton of a former Veress pupil, Heinz Holliger. I strongly associate my intense interest in Veress's art with that event.

Back home from the festival, I settled to exploring the creative work of the composer: besides available scores and audio recordings, I immersed in the literature about his oeuvre. It was a shock to realize that there is hardly any analysis of his *Concerto for quartet and orchestra*, nor any critical elaborations of its sound recordings. This recognition, as well as my constant involvement in chamber music and quartet playing, motivated me to dig more deeply into Veress's *Quartet concerto*, which eventually became the central theme of my dissertation.

The most important starting points were the first volume of studies in Hungarian by Melinda Berlász, János

Demény and Ede Terényi (*Veress Sándor*, 1983) and István Csicsery-Rónay's *Veress Sándor. Tanulmányok, cikkek, beszédek* /Studies, articles, talks (2007)/, the former including a list of the composer's works in chronological order. Csicsery-Rónay's book carries Ferenc Bónis's interview with Veress, which provides first-hand information about the events of Veress's life and his attitude to music.

II. Sources

The primary source of my dissertation, apart from the mentioned literature, was the sheet music of Sándor Veress's *Concerto for quartet and orchestra* issued by Editio Suvini Zerboni (Milan) in 1964.

In the closing chapter of the dissertation I put the accessible two records of the concerto to scrutiny: one is a BMC Records publication (performers: Végh Quartet, Basler Kammerorchester conducted by Paul Sacher), the other is on Toccata Classic label (Basel String Quartet, Hungarian Symphony Orchestra, conductor Jan Schultsz).

Secondary sources to consult for my work were Melinda Berlász's study titled *Szerzői és előadóművészi*

összetalálkozások Veress Sándor és Végh Sándor pályáútján (1935–1962) /Encounters of composer and performing artist in the careers of Sándor Veress and Sándor Végh (1935–1962)/, and Dániel Löwenberg's book *Végh Sándor*, with much information on the friendship and professional collaboration between Sándor Végh and Sándor Veress.

For the microanalysis of the form and motivated of the Quartet concerto in the centre of the dissertation I relied principally on the analytic viewpoints of Ede Terényi.

III. Method

In the first chapter I discuss the inspiration that Veress received from the performing musicians Sándor Végh and the Végh Quartet, and from Paul Sacher's invitation. The artistic-creative collaboration between Sándor Végh and Sándor Veress - known in the concert life under the name the Veress – Végh piano-violin duo – has inevitable significance, evidenced by the compositions they performed jointly and by others premiered or performed by Végh. Then I discuss the role of Paul Sacher in supporting and inspiring contemporary west European

composers, focusing on the histories of Veress work composed upon Sacher's request.

In chapter 2 my aim is to present a comprehensive picture of Veress's *Quartet concerto*. After the story of the genesis and a survey of contemporary reviews of the piece, I embark on the microanalysis of the concerto. The main aspects to be highlighted are the building of the form and motivic construction. In the last chapter I describe the audio records of the work's performances, paying distinguished attention to the recording of the premiere.

IV. Conclusions

The guiding thread of the dissertation – *the Concerto for string quartet and orchestra* – offered Veress the opportunity to put into practice his new stylistic ideas matured over many years, to create a synthesis of the new composition-technical elements and specific procedures reflecting his personal stance. Tradition and a fresh approach jointly characterize the composition dated 1961.

During the analysis my aim was, on the one hand, to insert the stylistic turning point of the Veress oeuvre into the web of correlations of the entire oeuvre, and on the

other hand, to provide guidelines for future performers of the piece about its organization, formal-motivic interpretation.

I examined the work with the method of microanalysis and illustrated my observations with music examples. I also put the two available recordings of the concerto to painstaking analysis bases on up-to-date criteria, focusing on the sound material of the premiere and the idiosyncrasy of Végh's manner of performing.

My research findings have confirmed that no attempt was made earlier in the Veress literature to analyse the *Concerto for quartet and orchestra* and to examine the sound recordings, and hence my dual inquiry has added new facets to the interpretation of the concerto.

V. Documentation of the activity connected to the topics of the dissertation

During my doctoral studies I was the beneficiary of a three-year scholarship program of the Hungarian Academy of Arts. My commitment was to perform all of Sándor Veress's solo and chamber pieces for violin and viola (including duos, trios and quartets) with my chamber

music partners. In the six concerts of the series we have also played some Béla Bartók compositions that were adequate for the given instrumental apparatus (*Contrasts*, *Sonata for violin and piano No.1*, *Rhapsody No.1.*, *Rhapsody No.2*, a selection from the *44 Violin Duos*, *String quartets No.5* and *6*).

In 2022 I also had an opportunity to perform Veress's *Violin concerto* with the Kodály Philharmonic Orchestra of Debrecen. Although the concerto is rarely performed, it played a pivotal role in Hungarian music history. We have played the violin concerto twice again: in the Palace of Art (Müpa, on 5 May 2023), and in the Kölcsey Center in Debrecen with conductor Imre Kollár (10 May 2022).

Further concerts including Veress compositions:
19 March 2021, Budapest Music Center – Library – online concert recording:

- Sándor Veress: *Sonata for violin solo*
- Sándor Veress: *Sonatina for violin and cello*
- Sándor Veress: *String trio*

Performers: Éva Osztrosits (violin), András Kurgyis (viola) and Tamás Zétényi (cello)

Movement I of Veress's *Sonata for violin solo* was also recorded in the same year and presented in the *Microcosmos* series of FUGA architecture center, Budapest.

13 June 2021, Bartók Memorial House

- Sándor Veress: *Sonatina for violin and piano*
- Sándor Veress: *Cukaszőke csárdás*

Performers: Éva Osztrosits (violin) and Mihály Berecz (piano)

7 February 2022, Budapest Music Center – ivrary

- Sándor Veress: *Piano trio*
- Sándor Veress: *Introduction and Coda*
- Sándor Veress: *Baryton trio* (version with 2 cellos)

Performers: Éva Osztrosits (violin and viola), Imre Dani (piano), Péter Szücs (clarinet), Gergely Devich (cello) and Luca Kiss (cello)

28 March 2022, Budapest Music Center – Library

- Sándor Veress: *Sonata for violin and piano* No.2
- Sándor Veress: *Nógrád verbunkos*

- Sándor Veress: *Violin concerto* (version with piano accompaniment)

Performers: Éva Osztrosits (violin) and Imre Dani (piano)

19 December 2022, 6pm, Budapest Music Center – Library

- Sándor Veress: *String quartet No.1*

- Sándor Veress: *Memento for viola and double-bass*

Performers: Éva Osztrosits (viola), Zsolt Fejérváry (double-bass) and the Korossy Quartet (Csongor Korossy-Khayll, first violin, Éva Osztrosits, 2nd violin, András Kurgyis, viola and Gergely Devich, cello)

6 May 2023, Budapest Music Center – Library

- Sándor Veress: *String quartet No.2*

Performers: The Korossy Quartet (Csongor Korossy-Khayll, first violin, Éva Osztrosits, 2nd violin, András Kurgyis, viola and Gergely Devich, cello)

With the concert series detailed above and also with some of my further concerts, my aim was to present all the compositions for strings by Sándor Veress, a

Hungarian emigré composer, the one-time pupil of Bartók and Kodály, in novel, presumably concert historical rendering as a musical- interpretive program to promote the rehabilitation of the Sándor Veress oeuvre that is almost unknown in the Hungarian concert life. The four productions of the *Violin concerto*, the two *Quartets* and the augmentation of the genre, the *Quartet concerto*, the second *Violin-piano sonata*, the *Sonatina for violin and piano*, the *Sonatina for violin and cello*, the *Memento duo* (bass, viola in commemoration of the martyrs of the 1956 revolution, and the three trios for varying instruments: the *Piano trio*, *String trio* and *Baryton trio* have never been presented in such a well-nigh complete series of Veress's compositions involving strings either during his creative period in Hungary (1927–1949) or in his life spent in Switzerland (1950–1992). It also includes the bravura hits of the Veress-Végh duo's former concert repertoire: the *Cukaszőke Csárdás* and the *Nógrádi Verbunkos*, as well as the *Violin solo sonata* in the tradition of Bartók. After the outstanding performances of Sándor Végh and Gábor Takács-Nagy, another violinist who is also committed to Veress's works, I strove to perform and acquaint the public

with as much of Veress's crop for strings as possible (2021–2023.)

My dissertation on Sándor Veress's *Quartet concerto* – a work composed in the mutually inspiring intellectual atmosphere of collaboration between an outstanding Hungarian composer of the 20th century, Sándor Veress, and a violinist of international acclaim, Sándor Végh – is dedicated to the memory of the two great musicians.