

FERENC LISZT UNIVERSITY OF MUSIC
POSTGRADUATE DEPARTMENT

ZSOLT JÓZSEF SZEFCSIK'S

**THESIS FOR THE DOCTOR'S DEGREE
ENTITLED**

**ORCHESTRAL CULTURE IN HUNGARY
AT THE TURN OF THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES
(1790–1813)**

BUDAPEST, 2008

The dating of the era significant regarding the development of Hungary's musical life, still little examined so far

The second half of the 18th century was a flourishing period of the aristocratic musical culture, including orchestral life, all over Europe, thus in Hungary, as well. Numerous studies are concerned in detail with the front-rank orchestras supported by the local aristocracy – the Esterházy orchestra led by Joseph Haydn, Batthyány Duke Primate's first ensemble in Pozsony, or the operatic orchestra of Erdődy working also in Pozsony.

However, concerning that quarter of a century between the dissolution of most of the elite ensembles up to the end of the 1780s and the formation of orchestras fundamentally established on civil basis from the second decade of the 19th century, there are particular points which have not been highlighted in detail up to now, namely the happenings of the period, the processes generating the change and the repertoire of the orchestras working in Hungary at the time.

That is why the writer has chosen 1790 — the year of the death of Prince Nikolaus I Esterházy and simultaneously of the dissolution of the Esterházy orchestra led by Joseph Haydn — as the starting point of the period in question, which undoubtedly marks the end of the previous significant era and at the same time the beginning of a development differing in direction from the earlier currents in the Hungarian history of music. As an end point, 1813 has been opted for, which was the year of the break-up of Nikolaus II Esterházy's orchestra in Kismarton,

and thus put an end to the history of the last representative of Hungary's large ensembles supported by the aristocracy. The period between the two dates brought about the development and change of Hungary's orchestral life.

Historical antecedents

The dissertation in its overview of the historical antecedents first gives full particulars about the aspects of the earliest Hungarian orchestras' actual operation as well as about the ways of defining the number of their instrumentalists, and second, based on the sources available, it systematizes

- the Hungarian instrumental ensembles working before 1686,
- the Hungarian orchestras from the end of the 17th century to 1790.

The detailed research of the Hungarian orchestral culture at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries

The ensemble definitely best-documented and at the same time the only internationally known Hungarian orchestra in the period under inspection was Nikolaus II Esterházy's orchestra in Kismarton. Uniquely enough among the Hungarian orchestras, we can gain information from the sources extant about the ensemble's constitution, repertoire, the range of instruments used, even about its order of rehearsals. Moreover — apart from a few exceptions such as

Georg Druschetzky in Buda or Georg Lickl in Pécs —, the most important composers of the time working in Hungary, like Joseph Haydn and Hummel, gathered around this orchestra. Nevertheless, the attention of the specialist literature has been oriented much rather towards the first orchestra of Eszterháza conducted by Haydn, which was in its prime in the 1770s and 1780s, whereas the significant happenings of the later years in Kismarton, for instance the forming of the extremely modern operatic repertoire — which, with certain performances, outran even Vienna considered as the general standard —, and the details of the stirring orchestral life associated with this remained in the shade.

The treatise analyses in detail the development of the orchestral life in Pest-Buda, which, because of the changes in the era's internal politics, got the initiative in culture and took over the leading role not only in administration but also in the musical life from Pozsony. Mainly through highlighting the interrelations between the theatrical and the orchestral life and through presenting the illustrious musical academies, the spreading of civil initiatives is also discussed profoundly.

The dissertation presents all the other Hungarian towns which had a significant orchestral life in the period, bringing to the limelight those musical centres where development took a special direction differing from the average — like the peculiar repertoire of the ecclesiastical orchestra in Veszprém enriched with secular elements — or where the work of an extraordinary personality raised the orchestral life of the town above average, like the four-decade activity of Georg Lickl in Pécs.

The practical aspects of the period's orchestral life examinable based on the sources: seating and range of instruments used

While local sources did not at all report on some of the practical aspects of the era's orchestral life — such as tuning or intonation —, we still have the opportunity to draw conclusions about certain seating specialties on the basis of some existing representations. Also, we may get a more complete – though still limited - picture of the instruments used in the orchestras of the time through some inventories and, not neglectably, through the instruments still existing today.

Summary

Based on the systematized overview of the large number of sources touching either directly or indirectly on the orchestral life of Hungary at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, the writer considers the following statements as proved:

1. The centre of the Hungarian orchestral life at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries was transferred from Pozsony and its vicinities to Pest-Buda.
2. Instead of the aristocracy, circles of civil organizations took over the leading role in support of the orchestral life during the given period.
3. The repertoire of the period's Hungarian orchestras kept pace in point of modernity with the Viennese regarded as the etalon.

The writer's further publications in the topic:

Georg Druschetzky: Symphony in F-Major

CD booklet

Buda Records BUV-001 Budapest, 1997

Johann Nepomuk Hummel: Missa Solemnis in D, Te Deum

CD booklet

Hungaroton HCD 32004 Budapest, 2001

Johann Nepomuk Hummel egyházzeneje

(Johann Nepomuk Hummel's ecclesiastical music)

in: Magyar Egyházzene VIII (2000/2001) 353-360.

Magyar Egyházzenei Társaság, Budapest

Johannes Matthias Sperger's works composed for horn and orchestra

CD booklet

Hungaroton HCD 32145 Budapest, 2003

Georg Druschetzky's works for the timpani

with orchestral accompaniment

CD and DVD booklet

Hungaroton HCD /HDVD 32236 Budapest, 2005

Georg Druschetzky: Oboe quartets

CD booklet

Hungaroton HCD 32491 Budapest, 2007

(English Translation by Erika Melegh)