

**Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music**

**PhD School (7.6 Art of Music)**

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**The Theses of the PhD. Dissertation Entitled**  
***The Stylistic Changes of Choir Music from Zoltán Kodály till***  
***Our Days***

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## **1. Antecedents of Research**

Being a composer I have become an active participant of Hungarian choir music life during the last couple of decades. I have had several opportunities to follow and examine the present state of Hungarian choir music, as well as the choir movement on occasions of my pieces being performed or as a guest or member of the jury at festivals, workshops, and composing courses. I was also given the opportunity to get an insight of the musical variety and branching out cavalcade of choir music in style or composing thinking, both of which make Hungarian choir music during the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century so exciting, and, at the same time, influence the taste and repertoire of professional and amateur choirs in Hungary.

For a long time I have been searching for a turning point- if there is any at all- , the manifestation of the stylistic shift from the typical Hungarian choir music formed by Zoltán Kodály, which is either imitation or alienation, is still carrying on.

The aim of my dissertation is to unveil the inner and outer influences and urges which have effect on the composers` style and way of thinking on music.

I am interested in the reflection of the Kodály-style generally regarded as a whole and complete system in choir music, and the relationship between them. Another question is what counter-trends appeared at the same time, though being present to a much smaller extent. Furthermore, I also feel find interesting what artistic trends and ideas influenced the composers.

Revising the life works of composers, the question is also raised why certain composers changed their style radically lead by some inner or outer influences turning their back on their previous parts of their oeuvres. Finally there are two other questions I would like to answer in my study: what is the stylistic variety which has been characteristic of the Hungarian choir music during the last four decades, and what different careers did composers and compositions have?

## **2. Method of Research**

According to my studies no comprehensive study has been written about Hungarian choir pieces and their stylistic changes after Zoltán Kodály up till now.

My presumptions was that these must be a set of influences originating from outside and probably some inner ignition which launched a stylistic changed, and which might have brought in operation a chain of reactions. Therefore, I made a set of criteria which, according to the experts I asked, which can serve as the basis of classification of choir pieces under examination.

These criteria are the following:

- Serialism, dodecaphony, special sound systems, accidental elements
- Folksong and folk song adaptation
- Polish school
- Extremely dramatized works
- Influences of folk art – mainly text
- Minimal art, repetitive music
- Neo-, retro-, postmodern trends
- Influence of pop music
- Electronics
- Alienations
- The unchanged
- Relation between music and text

Besides the examination of scores, audio materials, I also applied to the means of interviewing the composers as well. I had the opportunity to make 40-60-minute-long interviews with my masters, colleagues and friends. My studies on music history and ideas extracted from technical literature have been enlarged with the thoughts and ideas shared with me during the interviews by the following composers:

Sándor Balassa, Miklós Csemiczky, Levente Gyöngyösi, Máté Hollós, Miklós Kocsár, Péter Nógrádi, György Orbán, Emil Petrovics and János Vajda.

My dissertation is also enriched with scores given by the Editio Musica Budapest, composers and choir masters often with their own notes in handwriting on them. I also attached a chart showing the choir pieces written by different composers and published by the EMB during the last forty years.

### **3. Subject of Research**

My dissertation does not aim to set a list of all the choir pieces written during the period under research, or give a thorough study of individual composers' works and life. I does not intend to supply with the detailed analysis of the pieces raised as examples, either. My goal is to give an overview of a process by highlighting works and composers who are regarded as significant for my research.

Composers and their works included in or omitted from my dissertation do not reflect any kind of value-system based on which I chose them for the research. My choice was not influenced by personal feelings or stylistic similarity, but by practical reasons, that is, whether a certain piece in a whole oeuvre is affected by the stylistic influence presumed by me at the beginning of me dissertation or not.

I focused on composers and oratorical pieces which are perfect representatives of the stylistic change in choir music during the 1960s. These works can be capella pieces or ones with tune for musical instruments as well, regardless of tune, number of parts or language use.

I ignored the analysis of oratorical pieces because oratorical and choir pieces do not show significant difference written by the same composer during a certain period of his or her career as far as composing techniques, way of thinking or style are concerned.

#### **4. Results**

After having analysed hundreds of Hungarian choir pieces, I came to the conclusion that the oeuvres of Hungarian composers during the last forty years cannot be ranked into to stylistically pure groups. No matter how many separate groups one sets and then classifies choir pieces according to them, there is no composer who could not be identified as the member of at least two separate ones.

I also came to the conclusion that there is a considerable number of composers, however, who worked or have worked according to certain stylistic criteria, without changing their style during the last four decades. Of course, it does not mean that they have not followed new ideas or innovations. Another group of composers had one but very radical turning point during their composing career, meanwhile, a great number of 'omnivores' have tried all the technical and stylistic innovations of the period under research.

All this above shows that Hungarian composers -belonging to any generation or following any ideology in music- watch and reach on their own age, on international trends and each other's works as well.

This result also serves as arguments for the idea that dodecaphony, repetitive techniques, alienation or electronics – no matter if adequately or inadequately applied means of composing- are hardly the main goals of composing at all.

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