

DLA doctoral thesis

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The Role of the Violin in the First Half of the 20th Century in the Aspect of the  
Violin Concertos of Igor Stravinsky, Alban Berg and Béla Bartók

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## I. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

There are only a few scientific works in Hungarian about the violin concertos of Berg and Stravinsky and those of the publications including these two pieces are mostly guides.

Texts given in the bibliography concerned with the circumstances of creating the Violin Concerto of Stravinsky are presented in the majority of the sources but the ones involving the analysis of the piece are difficult to be found. In this aspect a few pages from the book of Boris Jarustowsky (*Igor Sztravinszkij*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1968.) and the work of József Szabó („Igor Stravisky: Hegedűverseny.” In: Kroó György (ed.): *A hét zeneműve 1979/2 április-június*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1979. 97-105.) are relevant in which the most important structural parts are mentioned. About the musical texture of Stravinsky’s concerto one can find the most details in *Stravinsky and Balanchine: A Journey of Invention* of Charles M. Joseph (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.)

Concerning the *Violin Concerto* of Berg the most useful book is *Berg: Violin Concerto* by Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.) which is scanning the piece extensively based on the researches of Willi Reich and Douglas Jarman besides adumbrating the musical life and style of the 30’s. In the book of Willi Reich (*The Life and Work of Alban Berg*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1965.) can be read the guide text of the concerto written in 1935 on the request of Berg; the analytical part was written in the spring of 1936 based upon the guidance of Webern. We can find Theodor W. Adorno’s thoughts about the Violin Concerto by Berg in his book titled *Der getreue Korrepetitor: Lehrschriften zur musikalischen Praxis* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag GmbH, 1963.)

The Hungarian literature about Bartók in opposition with the other two composers is enormous, however, in the aspect of the *Violin Concerto* the researchers preferred to concentrate on special parts rather than creating an overview. The work of Vera Lampert írása („Bartók Béla: Hegedűverseny.” In: Kroó György (ed.): *A hét zeneműve 1974/4*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó. 1974. 56-66.) can be considered as the most complex one, but this material written in 1974 was later revised following the achievements of the Bartók research and was set in a book of studies in English („Second Violin Concerto.” In: Malcolm Gillies (ed.): *The Bartók Companion*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 1994. 515-525.). Ernő Lendvai’s work titled „Great sonata form. Violin Concerto” is giving us a detailed formal analysis (In: *Bartók költői világa*. Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó 1971.). László Somfai’s studies „Három vázlat 1936/37-ből a Hegedűversenyhez” and „Variációs stratégia a Hegedűverseny II. tételében” (In: *Tizennyolc Bartók tanulmány*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1981.) have got fundamental importance. In connection with the Violin Concerto we can find numerous useful facts in his book „The compositional method of B. B. (Budapest: Akkord, 2000.) The work of György Orbán („A Hegedűverseny és a dodekafónia.” In: László Ferenc (ed.): *Bartók dolgozatok*. Bukarest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1974. 85-102.) also focuses on a special aspect of the piece. The guides of all the three concertos can be found in the the book of Michael Steinberg (*The Concerto: A Listener’s Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.)

In my Thesis the primary source among the violin concertos of Bartók was the one composed in the 1930’s, however, I cannot pass by ignoring his posthumus concerto. Researching this piece I found one writing only that examines it in itself and not trying to

investigate its complicated relation with the Two Portraits: „The Lost” Violin Concerto” (In: Malcolm Gillies (ed.): *The Bartók Companion*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 1994. 468-476.)

## II. SOURCES

The first book in Hungarian by László Fábán (*Igor Sztavinszkij*. Budapest: Gondolat Könyvkiadó, 1963.) introducing the life and works of Stravinsky and the conversation between the composer and Robert Craft (*Beszélgetések*. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1987.) and the book by Stravinsky *The Chronicle of my Life (Életem)*. Budapest: Gondolat, 1969.) helped me to learn more about his life during the analysis of the *Violin Concerto*. Beyond the primary sources mentioned in the session „Antecedents of the Research” the book *Stravinsky. A zeneszerző és művei* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó vállalat, 1976.) of Eric Walter White was very useful to me. During the writing of the chapter about how the concerto became a ballet the video recording (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BaWNHJiL1o> last seen: 26.06.2017.) made in 1978 of the performance *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* set on stage by the New York City Ballet helped me a lot. I also take use of the books *Igor Stravinsky* by Edwin Corle (New York: Duell Sloan and Pearce, 1949.) and *Stravinsky Inside Out* by Charles M. Joseph (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.) The base for the analysis of the piece was provided by the short score edited by Manfred Karallus published by Edition Eulenburg and the solo violin part together with the piano reduction noted by Samuel Dushkin and published by Schott.

During writing the part about Alban Berg’s *Violin Concerto* the biggest help was given by Anthony Pople’s *Berg: Violin Concerto*. My own work is based on the achievements of Pople’s research. Essays published in *The Musical Times* such as Jarman, Douglas: „Alban Berg, Wilhelm Fliess and the Secret Programme of the Violin Concerto” (*MT* 124/1682. (1983. April): 218-223.), Herwig Knaus: „Berg’s Carinthian folk tune.” (*MT* 117/1600. (1976. June): 487.), and Max Rostal, Hans Keller: „Berg’s Violin Concerto: A Revision” (*MT* 95/1332 (1954. February): 87-88.) provided a lot of interesting and useful information. Karen Monson’s *Alban Berg* (London; Sydney: Macdonald & Co. Ltd., 1980.) was helping me through introducing the circumstances of creating the piece in detail. I could get acquainted with the composer and his oeuvre. I read with use the above mentioned Willi Reich’s book about Berg’s biography. Investigating the bars copied from the particella to the short score without any fail incorrectly by Berg besides the specialized literature focusing on this area the short score published by Universal Edition in 1936 and the critical edition published in 1996 helped me the most. The newest edition of the concerto by Henle Verlag in 2009 strengthened me about the possibility of differences in explanation of the mistakes.

During the analysis of the Violin Concerto of Bartók the most useful information I have found were the above mentioned works of László Somfai. Exploring the dodecaphonic parts of the concerto I followed the path of the book by György Orbán. Besides these the logical structure of the guide for the *Violin Concerto* by György Kroó (In: *Bartók kalauz*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1980.) helped me much. The collection of critics after the premiere of the piece in Amsterdam and The Hague titled *Zenatudományi tanulmányok X. Bartók Béla emlékére* (ed.: Szabolcsi Bence, Bartha Dénes Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1962.) gave me a great help. Bartók-levellek edited by János Demény (*Bartók Béla levelei*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1976.)

and writings to be found in the 3rd book of *Dokumenta Bartókiana* edited by Denijs Dille (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó 1968.) gave me an inappreciable help in learning about the circumstances of the birth of the piece and to get acquainted with the composer. During the analysis I used the pocket score and the solo violin part of the Boosey & Hawkes edition.

In the course of the research of the posthumus concerto by Bartók I found a lot of information in the book titled *Hódolat Bartóknak és Kodálynak* (Budapest: Püske Kiadó, 1992.) by Ferenc Bónis. The foresaid book written by Kroó György (*Bartók-kalauz*) and the essay of János Breuer („Adatok a két arckép keletkezéséhez” In: Bónis Ferenc (ed.): *Magyar zenei történeti tanulmányok. Mosonyi Mihály és Bartók Béla emlékére*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1973. 279-288.) were very helpful.

The essay collection of Miklós Rakos (*A magyar hegedűjáték az európai kultúrában. Fejezetek a magyar hegedűjáték történetéből*. Budapest: Hungarovox Kiadó, 2002.) which published in the *Zenekar* musical newspaper was highly arrestive. Reading the book by József Szigeti (*Beszélő húrok*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1965.) the colorful picture of the century's musical life revealed.

### III. METHODOLOGY

In the first instance I elaborated the printed and online literature in the aspect of the composers' compositional technics, inherents and the violin concertos which helped in the research and analysis of the pieces' genesis. In the course of writing the thesis I constantly investigated the similarities, the diversities and the interrelations with a special attention to the recentness of the instrumentation.

Parallel with the analysis I have been listening the recordings of the very first and the later performances of the concertos. During the investigation of the violinists' musical carriers and recordings in the first half of the 20th century I payed attention to the characteristics of the mood of the playing, the sound, the technical solutions, the style and idiom. The review of the correspondence of the composers and the contemporary critics were excessively useful and interesting.

Although the research of this three concertos is helpful to get an insight and take fundamental consequences in the role of the violin in the first half of the 20th century for a mere picture because of this period is abound in significant works need for more investigations. The present exercise is hopefully serve useful informations in the theme for the reader and inspiring to research more in the significance of the instrument's recent use from the turn of the century.

### IV. RESULTS

In the first half of the 20th century the performing practice for violinists went through a spectacular metamorphosis. The composer's claim for the instrument had been changed which among others redounded new technical executions. The style, the way of the play, the sound needs and the function of the solo violin's material have been shaped correspondently with the expectations of the actual music. My inquiry in the theme was motivated by my supervisor, Dr.

Sándor Kovács and based upon his suggestion I was starting to investigate for the violin concertos of the three above mentioned composers who represented different profile. Beside the general analysis of the compositions I cared to inspect them from the aspect of violin technic and to take attention for the instrumental innovations and I tried to find a place for the changed performing role of the violin. During my research I did not find a publication which deals with the elected theme likewise I did.

## V. DOCUMENTATION OF THE ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE SUBJECT OF THE DISSERTATION

*Violinconcerto* by Béla Bartók was played on my diploma concert with the LFZE Orchestra at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music on 25th April, 2007. The performance was conducted by Attila Szabad.

On 18th June, 2004, I played the *Violinconcerto op. posth.* by Bartók in the synagog of Miskolc at the Bartók+Csajkovszkij Opera Festival. On the National String Competition of Colleges in Miskolc I had the opportunity to perform the same piece at the Gala Concert on 26th April, 2005, with the pianist Krisztina Varga.

I participated as a soloist in the Eger Symphony Orchestra's performance of *Two Portraits* on the Eger Spring Festival at the Gárdonyi Géza Theater on 15th March, 2006. The performance was conducted by Máté Szabó Sípos. I played the same piece with the Miskolc University Symphony Orchestra on 12th September, 2006, at the season opening concert at the Miskolc University, with the conductor Géza Török.

I have been played the violin duos by Bartók several times among others with Vilmos Szabadi in the Festetics Palace, Keszthely on 31st August, 2009. and 30th May 2011.

*Romanian Folk Dances* is a stable part of my repertoire. Last time I played the transition for string quartet in the Petőfi Literary Museum with Zita Novák, Péter Kondor and Csaba Bartos on 22nd January 2018.

I played several times *The Concerto* by Bartók with the Dohnányi Symphony Orchestra. *Pastorale*, *Russian Dance*, *Russian Chanson* and *Elegia* by Stravinsky were the main part of my recital with Zhivka Pescheva's accompaniment at the Qatar Music Academy in Doha.