

Thesis of DLA Dissertation

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Barnabás Dukay:

„A kő lobogó lángja“

Analysis of the Solo Flute Sonata
and its Historical Antecedents

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I. Background to my research

The flourishing of the flute as a solo instrument goes back to the 1930s. Two significant solo pieces of the flute repertoire were published in this period: André Jolivet: *Cinq Incantations* and Edgar Varèse: *Density 21,5*. They dramatically changed the way people thought of the flute. Instead of traditional flute-playing came the punctual and advanced level of rhythmical complexity, the drive to achieve extremes in dynamics and performing methods, and the desire to be deeply familiar with structure – which posed multiple challenges to the performer. The above-mentioned characteristics gave a new, yet unknown expressive quality to the pieces and to their performances. Afterwards, more and more composers “rediscovered” the flute, and it is thanks to this renaissance that a vast library of new works has since been composed for our instrument. A category in itself is the solo flute piece, which practically has become an individual genre representing a certain style, a certain point of view of the performer. The interaction between these solo works and the innovative masters of the instrument resulted in the inevitable development of playing technique.

However, the “solo flute piece” as a genre by and large exhausted its possibilities by the 1970s. No matter how composers tried to innovate, the technical possibilities of the instrument and the composing and stylistic concepts remained within the boundaries of tradition, carrying the customs of centuries on their shoulders. Nevertheless, the 1970s proved to be a watershed decade, when many of these obstacles were overcome. Thanks to the constant searching and experimenting of artists – Istvan Matuz, among others – it becomes evident that all that had been known about the flute and flute playing needed a serious revision, a major expansion. The narrow possibilities of the instrument at once opened up, as composers and performers developed an array of new sound effects and modern, extended flute techniques.

II. Sources

The working relationship between Barnabás Dukay and István Matuz can be traced back to the 1970s. It started out as a strictly professional collaboration. However, their similar views on music and the cohesive forces of their worldview transformed it into a respectful friendship. This might be the reason why Dukay chose the flute as his medium for communication. Composed in 1969-1970 by the then 20 year old Dukay, the piece was titled $+a$ and described as a solo sonata. *A kő lobogó lángja (The flaring flame of the rock)* shows a strong connection with the solo sonatas of the baroque (especially with those of Johann Sebastian Bach), and at the same time creates an invisible yet perceptible bridge between various eras. I started my research by reviewing the solo repertoire of the given period, then providing a short overview of the significant solo pieces of major composers in later times.

In the center of the composition we can find the well known B-A-C-H motif, which arches through historical times. This sequence of notes – sometimes hidden, broken into pieces, sometimes brought to the fore in a meaningful way – ranges through the entire sonata. In many places we can find the sequence without transformation, in its original setting, in other places we can recognize its transformed format. The multiple appearances of this motif make it a signature element of this sonata.

Regarding its structure, this solo flute piece is based on a four-movement structure (*prelude, monody, fugue, postludium*), nonetheless using a novel, original viewpoint.

III. Methodology

Following the line of thought expressed above, I have had the opportunity to unveil parallels and to perform exciting analysis. Studying the structure of the solo sonata (both used in the baroque and then by Dukay in modern times) revealed rich material with regard to motive, theme, rhythm, and symbolism. Since no written analysis about this piece has been carried out before, I had a chance to prepare a comprehensive study exploring untravelled paths, making new discoveries.

IV. Results

Dukay's piece does not offer explanations about itself and is not willing to take the risk of doing the work for the listener – accurate words destroy all definitions. Since this music has its foundation not in itself but in the intellectual standpoint it reflects, it can guide us with a solid cruelty beyond itself.¹ The added semantic meaning which enriches the texture of the piece during the process of composing, the way symbolism – as an added quality – becomes an essential part of the invisible layers of the piece, are all reflections of the composer's innermost wish to achieve the whole, the most perfect, a sort of harmonious unity with nature and its Creator. To get to know the world around us, and to get to know ourselves within it – this is the deeply rooted intention in Dukay's artistic mindset. The real meaning of action lies in the spiritual quality of the forces and energy that guide the process of composing, where he leaves open the opportunity of revelation for both the listener and himself.

V. Documentation of the activities relating to the topic of the thesis

- Graphic notation of the solo sonata *A kő lobogó lángja* (2013-14)
- New Music Project, April 15, 2014 at „Bartók Béla Vocational High School for Music”; organized and participated in an evening in honor of Barnabás Dukay „... the wind blows our ashes into our eyes...”

¹ Miklós Dolinszky: *Az alázat bátorsága*. (<http://ujforras.hu/az-alazat-batorsaga-dukay-barnabas-es-gadogabor-zenejerol-es-zeneleserol/>)