

BOOK REVIEW

THE MUSICALITY OF STYLE – LÁSZLÓFFY ZSOLT'S ESSAYS ON MUSIC (LÁSZLÓFFY ZSOLT: A STÍLUS ZENEISÉGE. PARTIUM KIADÓ, NAGYVÁRAD, 2014)

As a representative of the Transylvanian composers' younger generation, Zsolt Lászlóffy marks out not only by his exciting works and intense performing activities, but also through his writings. Behind his versatile output lays a keen commitment toward the Hungarian culture of his native land, that of protecting and promoting - as a musician - our cultural heritage. Through this new opus the readers are invited to discover, along with the author, another field of his musical adventures, sounding experiences and exciting wanderings in style and aesthetics.

This volume issued by the Partium Publisher (Oradea) consists of Lászlóffy's collected essays mostly published by the Helikon Journal (Cluj) during the last years. He also follows in this respect his master, the composer Ede Terényi, a well-known figure among the readers of Utunk and later the Helikon Journals for his essay-miniatures issued in the former decades.

The title *Musicality of Style* is somehow resonant with that of another volume published a couple of years ago entitled *The Musicality of the Aesthetic*, written by the aesthete Angi István, an important personality of the Transylvanian academic environment. The metaphoric resonance of these titles may be seen as a homage gesture (also) to his former professor, and a eulogy of the musical creation that appear as a multi-faceted and exciting phenomenon whether is traditional, modern or contemporaneous.

The essays are grouped into three major topics, paradigmatic for the author's main fields of interests, both as a composer both as a writer: the birth of modern music, the initiation of a Hungarian musical style and the music culture of Transylvania. Instead of covering extensive themes of music history or style, Lászlóffy extracts a series of mosaics, though representative and interesting that poses significant questions regarding a period, style or historical moment. The topics are various too: composers, musical works, style elements, composition techniques, books and writings about music. His approach is less historical, more hermeneutical: the circumstances and reception are at least important as the phenomena or topic in question. Instead of describing, these essays pose questions and draw the reader's attention to more or less neglected aspects of music.

The first section entitled *The birth of modern music* consist of a series of writings that raise a well-known and intensely debated problem: the dialectic of old and new, ancient and modern. And, beyond that dichotomy: the postmodern and contemporaneous. Topics from the Ars Nova, Palestrina's motets, William Lawes' Fantasias to Liszt, Bartók, Schoenberg and beyond encompass the author's reading of what modern is. Further, the problem of contemporaneous that seems to exclude itself from the inherent dialectic of music history, seen before the 20th century as a permanent impulse of change.

Another major subject of this book rounds the limits and opportunities of emerging a genuine Hungarian music, and the illusion or reality of establishing a new musical style that could be able to become a universal language. The author focuses on the paradigm change occurred in the history of Hungarian music during the 19th and 20 th centuries, from a pseudo-folklore inspiration to an authentic one in the works of Bartók, Kodály, Lajtha and others. This section also embraces the political aspects of the troublous Hungarian history in the last century as a main constraining factor in the emergence of new tendencies, through the life and work of composers like Dohnányi or Lajtha.

The last section of Lászlóffy's essays concentrated around the Hungarian music culture of Transylvania is devoted to another, though a particular dichotomy: the rich musical tradition of our lands and its sorrowful present and future, at least compared to its past. This generic title is extremely suggestive: Transylvania tolls – from the deepness. It is uncommon to explain metaphors. However, there are some more or less self-evident resonances beyond the hermetic ones: the famous poem of Reményik Sándor entitled *Church and School* or the sunken church of Bözödújfalú (Bezidu Nou) as a former, though nowadays an ephemeral symbol of the Romanian communist regime's plan to abolish the rich peasant culture of the village. And of course, the deepness of Debussy's *The Sunken Cathedral* from his *Préludes*, an impressive musical evocation of the glorious past, sublime and full of piety.

But who knows, what is the future – may we ask together with the author? Our duty is to stand stock-still, and also, in the spirit of Bartók's legacy, to seek the possibility of common reconciliation and self-development.

In conclusion, varied topics, diversified reflections, original approach, and griping style – these are the main features of this book, almost warranting a consistent and refreshing lecture.

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