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LEOPOLD AUER'S INTELLECTUAL
HERITAGE

THE INFLUENCE OF HIS ART AND EDUCATIONAL
WORK THAT DEFINED AN ERA AND BEYOND -
THE AUER VIOLIN SCHOOL

Doctoral thesis

DLA

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I. The objective of my research

Leopold Auer, born in the town of Veszprém, would be 175 years old this year. He was a renowned violinist of his era and teacher of violinist legends considered the best even today. Up to this day, there has not been another teacher with comparable results. After his passing away, the memories of him have slowly faded with the changing world but in America, and especially in Russia, generations of violinists proudly bragged that they were taught along the Auer line of teachers. However, in Hungary he is practically forgotten. Thanks to the research efforts of Miklós Rakos', and Judit Szászné Réger who realized the value of Auer's violin teaching method laid out in his Graded Course of Violin Playing, and started to use it with great success, now Auer's art is starting to get recognized again in Hungary as well. With my research, through my thesis I would like to continue their efforts and investigate the influence of his educational activity on the art of violin playing and music pedagogy called contemporary, strongly perceptible even today, coupled to his unparalleled career as a performing artist. It is inevitable to know Auer's personal life history about the turn of the past century under the conditions prevailing in Hungary, then in Russia at the time, up to 1917. I have tried to review the main events of his life that predestined his fate so that we may have the background for an informed judgement of the master's activities, especially with regard to the teaching methodology and results.

The main theme of my work is Auer's school-founding effort which directly led to his Graded Course of Violin Playing I am going to analyze, which deviates a bit from his other writings. Since the Russian school and violinist tradition are rooted in Leopold Auer's work in Saint Petersburg, in turn rooted in European traditions, I found it important to investigate them and the beginnings of the Russian school, and not the least define the core of the identity of the Auer school. Numerous world-famous Auer pupils like Jascha Heifetz, Misha Elman, Efrem Zimbalist, and the list is practically endless, are considered outstanding artists even today and, in a certain sense, etalons in the violin world. In addition, by providing a brief review of the career of the great violin artist, Jenő Hubay, I tried to involve a different perspective in the research,

pointing out that Joseph Joachim's two exceptional pupils of Hungarian origin, Leopold Auer and Jenő Hubay clearly show a lot of similarities in their attitude towards the art of violin playing and their approach to music teaching on the basis of aesthetics.

By analyzing the Graded Course of Violin Playing and its Attachments, I would like to draw attention to their imprescriptible values and the validity of the system, which can provide guidance for the violinist generations of our days with respect to its structure and mental coherence, in a physical, emotional and intellectual sense, in the current music education where the tutoring of the audience is strongly highlighted apart from the artistic training.

To sum up, I felt that it was inevitable to carry out a comprehensive review covering each and every area of Auer's career and, with respect to sources, offer informative novelties to differentiate the oeuvre and expand the scope of research.

II. Important sources

Leopold Auer's life is known from the master's autobiography, published in New York in 1923 under the title *My long Life in music*. However, it does not cover the last years of his life in America. The book of the Soviet music scientist R. Raaben, published relatively late in 1962 was the first on Leopold Auer. Luckily, Raaben could talk with people who had known Auer in person. His relatives, acquaintances, pupils and friends provided valuable material Raaben could collect, which probably were lost otherwise. His work, written in Russian, must be considered an important source, translated by Éva Csillik on my request, so I could use it in manuscript form. The Russian violin teacher, Marina Akimova, member of the Russian Leopold Auer Society, published a study based on reminiscences and family correspondence from which offer a closer look at the master or Poldi as he was called at home. This study was also translated by Éva Csillik from Russian. We should note a less known writing of an Auer pupil, the American violinist and teacher Gilbert Ross, published in 1975 in the newspaper of the Michigan University. His quoter recollections of "Professzor

Auer" complement the Russian sources with regard to the parts related to teaching.

In Hungary, the music researcher and violin/viola teacher Miklós Rakos was the first who researched Auer. His book was published in 1981 under the title of "Veszprémtől Szentpétervárig" (From Veszprém to Saint Petersburg). Rakos promoted the Hungarian publication of Auer's autobiography as well. In his work, several chapters discuss the master's work. A revised and expanded version was published in the "Vár ucca negyedévkönyv" (Castle street quarterly book), and finally the best and augmented version was issued in 2015 under the title "Auer Lipót".

From the archives of the Curtis Institute and the Juilliard School I received mostly newspaper articles, while through interlibrary loan I could get the Attachments to the *Graded Course of Ensemble Playing*. The unique etude score of Auer's Op. 9 *Twelve Characteristic Preludes* could be obtained from another American library, the Chicago Public Library.

III. Research method and results

Complying my thesis I intended to ensure that the sections on Auer's biography, work, as well as the presentation of the Russian school provide a credible basis for the methodological and the so-called practical sections dealing with the Graded Course of Ensemble Playing and its Attachments not much known in Hungary. This was reinforced by Jenő Hubay and the nature of the Hungarian school established by him, including its fundamental comparison with the Auer school which, apart from the importance of tone production and sound ideal, stems from the aesthetic approach to music teaching as well. I realized the concept of the Auer paradox as a result, related to the questions raised by the contradictions of denying methodology and tradition, and the effectiveness and individual working methods.

The historical and methodological parts of my work provide the background to proving the fact by studying the Auer's Graded Course of Ensemble Playing from a lifelike perspective that the nearly one hundred-year-old course can be appropriate for the expectations and challenges of our age. I pointed out that owing to the systematic

and gradual structure of the course, i.e. the building of technical elements on one another, it can accommodate practically anything, meaning as an example that it may be compatible with the curriculum of a contemporary violin training course.

The same applies to the Attachments that had to be reviewed because it is very complicated to get the scores. The six-volume precise work draws attention to the importance of chamber music right from the early music instrument teaching period. Its merit lies in that even the very beginners can play a role, while it is easy to follow the materials that correspond to the technical level of the players in parallel with the Graded Course of Ensemble Playing. With the exception of a duet booklet we talk about four violin pieces, the precious transcriptions contribute to the player's musical, emotional and intellectual development, providing an experience of playing together in a string quartet or violin choir setting. These all are the most important stages of musical development.

Scale playing as a crucial part of a violinist's daily practice offers a great opportunity to demonstrate the systematic thinking of the Course through one of its most important segments by various bow strokes. The scale study presented is an extract of the advanced bowing technique level of the Course from a practical aspect, which helps with instrument in hand, i.e. in practice, to build bow strokes as technical elements intentionally one upon the other as part of the daily routine scale playing.

Finally, dilemmas that emerged during my studying the Graded Course of Ensemble Playing could not be left out of my thesis. It is impossible to ignore them. May Auer's pupil, Maia Bang's course have given the idea to Auer to write the Course? What was Gustav Saenger's contribution to writing the eight-volume Course? nevertheless, we can be grateful to Leopold Auer to have been involved in the huge work, for taking part and giving his name to promoting it.

1. Extract

I. Study of the roots of the Russian school

- A representative of the German school, Joseph Joachim was Leopold Auer's teacher, this is the link between the Russian and German schools.
- Auer carried Joachim's spirit to Russia where it's evolution continued
- through Auer's teacher predecessors, the Russian school is rooted in the French-German school and German traditions.

II. Paradoxes

- From the aspect of tradition, tradition is the opposite of individuality: Auer could maintain an ideal balance between the creative freedom of the individual and the respect of tradition.
- From the aspect of methodology, there is a contradiction: Auer has no methodology, as the master himself stated, nevertheless his approach to music education - music pedagogy that relied on aesthetic foundations was planned, methodic and individual.

III. Identity of the Course

- Tone production – the common denominator of the Auer Course is the tone
- The natural talents among Auer's pupils played an important role in creating a school. He steered the Russian school towards a new sound ideal which is a characteristic of the Russian school even today: an expressive sound on violin.
- Artistic school.

IV. The pedagogue

- Auer had an extraordinary pedagogical sense, an excellent insight into human nature and psychological capabilities.
- Auer was a dedicated pedagogue, and a role model
- The master's charisma, magnetism
- The goal is to train ambitious, multifaceted and accomplished musicians.

- Apart from technical skills, he promoted the development of personality and individuality.
- He had excellent assistants from outstanding Auer pupils.

V. Repertoire

- Most of the pieces in his repertoire are played even today.

VI. Intersections of the schools of Jenő Hubay and Leopold Auer

- They were the representatives of the “old” values: they represented romanticism as opposed to the *Fin de siècle* mood of their era.
- They continued Joachim’s tradition.
- Joachim’s inheritance: Auer’s and Hubay’s activities in the field of string quartets are significant.
- Aesthetic approach: they have no method as such.
- Individual coaching and conscious working methods to promote development.
- Technical skill is a must, scale playing is important.
- Idea of tone production: singing, clearly ringing sound.
- Both masters selected their pupils (Joachim as well).
- The undisputable authority of the masters: keeping distance and maximal attention.
- Both Auer and Hubay were inspiring teaching personalities: good insight into human nature, aura, setting an example.
- Personality development, training ambitious and educated musicians, group classes, artistic creative work at both schools.
- When it was necessary, both masters performed the pieces to their pupils at a high standard.
- Piano playing: they could accompany their pupils on the piano, both Hubay and Auer read and played scores without problem.
- Training their pupils, they emphasized culture, literacy and language study.

2. Extract

I. Graded Course of Ensemble Playing

- Methodological study of practical nature.
- The Course was written not for pupils but definitely for pedagogues.
- Acceptance system.
- Based on physical, mental and spiritual factors.
- As for the content of the booklets, at the beginner level simple, easily comprehensible songs or song-like compositions help learning. This remains the same later on, but with etudes and exercises added.
- The baroque, classical and romantic styles are introduced at the early learning stage.
- Tasks for the right and for the left hand are introduced separately.
- Careful preparations for the teaching of new technical elements.
- The first year/volume introduces the basic bow styles: the basics of legato, détaché, matelé and spiccato bow strokes. Rhythmic preparation, demonstrating the basics of tone preparation and intonation - the sound.
- Scales: technical groundwork for the right and left hands, practicing double stops.
- Scales remain a uniformly important part of the learning process at the proper difficulty level and in proportion to the technical requirements all along the course.

II. Chamber music attachments

- They follow the progressivity of the Course.
- Proof of the importance of learning chamber music.
- They contain transcripts for four violins with the exception of Volume two, which was written in duet form.
- Variable apparatus: plus viola and cello parts are enclosed - transcripts can

be played in string quartet format.

- Materials written primarily for playing in violin choirs.
- The piano part has a supporting function, otherwise it would not be necessary.
- The transcripts are good to introduce well comprehensible and variable characters, well-known or catchy melodies, and various styles.

Selected literature

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