

**UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS FACULTY OF MUSIC AND VISUAL ARTS**

**DOCTORAL SCHOOL**

**TÍMEA NAGYNE FÁBIÁN**

**THE SIGNIFICANCE  
OF ZOLTÁN JENEY'S LEGACY  
IN HUNGARIAN MUSIC**

**PROPOSITIONS OF DLA THESIS  
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**2018**

# 1 Antecedents

There comes a time in everyone's life when one's identity becomes crucial from a certain point of view, and I am no exception. In my case, the inner need manifested in searching for my roots as a flutist, driving me on and not letting me rest until the recent moment this thesis was born.

Approximately 15 years ago, I began having an important question on the brain: to what extent are today's young flutists aware of their instrumental past, are they familiar with the spiritual legacy their famous predecessors left behind, often at the high cost of hard work and severe ordeals? The answer came as a rather disappointing realization, after which I began my quest for the legacy of the great wind instrumentalists of the last century, focussing particularly on the oeuvre of one outstanding figure of flute education, Zoltán Jeney. I decided to collect and publish my findings.

Throughout my career, I have participated in similar research on several occasions, and experience and achievements gained there were among the reasons for writing this dissertation. The final push was given by a festive event created from an idea of my own: on 17 October 2015, the Parnasszus Alapítvány (*Parnasszus Foundation*) of Pécel organized a memorial concert in the Ráday Castle of Pécel to celebrate Zoltán Jeney's 100th birthday. I took part in compiling the programme both as a founder and as a program coordinator. The collection process started in summer 2015, and the memorial evening served several purposes: firstly, I intended to record all the knowledge I had gathered about Jeney during the three years of my research; secondly, I wished to commemorate worthily the excellent instrumental soloist the Hungarian woodwind profession owes so much.

## 2 Research methods, phases of collecting materials

From the very start, I strived to gather unquestionable, objective information, which, for obvious reasons, was not always easy to do. I was hindered by many incorrect data, such as factual errors in press-materials, or the vague memories of those helping me with their spoken accounts. Coming to the end of collecting materials, I tried to assess every event and situation regarding Jeney in the light of these pieces of information. I needed to examine the data and spoken or written statements from several aspects, which

was an important expectation of authenticity not only towards the public, but also towards myself. Not having Jeney's direct colleagues with us anymore was another hardship; I therefore needed to find indirect methods of gaining personal information. I collected written and spoken accounts (the latter also on tape) from students and relatives, moving from frame to frame like a film director.

The most important source of material help was the personal documentation (letters, pictures, posters and sheet music) collected by the heirs, which was available for me without restraint. Still, having catalogued the family archives, there remained questions and uncertain points, which had not been clearly answered, so I had to try another way. Due to the complexity and diversity of the subject, I managed to find the missing answers in different written diaries and personal accounts from the given period – which constitute the most interesting and most valuable parts of the thesis. (For example, in Part 4, which presents newly found, heretofore unknown data, Jeney's artistic and other activities during World War II are presented in a different light.) Another significant side of collecting materials was the examination of written publications (books, studies and articles) available in different collections and libraries, which may have consumed a vast amount of time, but proved to be rather useful during the nearly three-year-long work process. In possession of the acquired knowledge, I started to create the structure of the thesis, and then I began the final and probably most exciting phase: writing itself.

My intention was that Zoltán Jeney's performing skills and flute playing – about which all the national and international reviews I had found were of a unanimously positive and appreciative opinion – should be evaluated without subjective overtones and examined according to the performing style of his age. However, one should not forget that by today, taste and performance habits have changed considerably. Therefore, I strived to collect as many of his radio recordings and albums as possible to be able to form an independent idea of his artistic manifestations, free of any opinion or prejudice. To this end, I selected recordings by contemporary foreign flutists as well, and I can safely say that Zoltán Jeney's performance was not one bit behind his foreign colleagues', often even standing out from among them, with respect to vocal skills and musical representation of character.

### 3 Subject of the thesis

Zoltán Jeney, first child of a Swabian-Romani couple, was born on 24 October 1915, in Subotica, Bačka, where he spent his first six years. Born into a wealthy Swabian family on his mother's (Erzsébet Schmidt) side, he had the opportunity to attend the best school despite the adversities of World War I. Besides general studies, the family laid emphasis on musical education. His first music teacher was his grandfather, Pál Schmidt, who first taught him to play the piccolo. During his secondary school years in Mezőtúr and Kecskemét, he could improve his musical abilities. His educators were music teacher Artúr Vécsey and flutist János Eördögh. Following his acceptance to the Music Academy, he attended flute classes with Lajos Dömötör, and composition classes with Zoltán Kodály and Albert Siklós. He graduated with honours as a flutist in 1937. Still an academic student, Jeney became a member of the *Budapesti Hangversenyzenekar* (now: *Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra*), then from 1938 he played in the Hungarian State Opera Orchestra. In 1942, he was contracted as a solo flutist in the Munich Philharmonics, where he spent two years. Although in 1944 he returned to Hungary, the disorderly political situation and the fear of being enrolled in the army made him emigrate again, this time joined by a few of his Opera House colleagues. These 'trips' of his were not welcomed by the pro-Soviet political powers of the post-WWII era, condemning him as fascist on several occasions due to the years he had spent in Germany. A year later, in 1945 – with trumped-up slanders, probably because of professional jealousy – he was denounced. Based on the charges against him, the people's tribunal sentenced him to six months of remand, from which he was released with the intercession of his friend, Zoltán Kodály.

His life and art were characterized by elaborateness, versatility and striving for perfection. Beyond his solo and orchestral career, he played an important role in founding the national culture of wind chamber music. In 1947, with colleagues from *Fővárosi Zenekar* (Tibor Szeszler – oboe; György Balassa – clarinet; János Onozó – horn; László Hara – bassoon) Jeney co-founded the Budapest Woodwind Quintet, which had great success not only in Hungary, but also abroad. Between 1956 and 1960, they performed in the Netherlands, Belgium and France on several occasions and then gave important concerts in Japan, which they visited on a longer tour. In 1954, he was awarded the Ferenc

Liszt Prize as a member of the Budapest Woodwind Quintet, and one year later as a soloist. In 1966, he was also awarded the prize “Distinguished Artist of the Hungarian People’s Republic”.

Apart from being an active musician, he laid great emphasis on national flute education and its development. During his years as a teacher of the Bartók Music Secondary School of Budapest – where he taught from 1950 until his death – he published important works of flute methodology, most well-known of which is probably the originally three-volume collection titled *Fuvolaiskola (Flute School)*, with pieces by significant composers like Endre Szervánszky, Gyula Dávid and Pál Járdányi. Jeney, the soloist also inspired contemporary composers to write a large number of pieces, which supported flute education in Hungary, widening the repertoire of secondary and tertiary education.

Besides work, family and concert tours, he dedicated time to making audio recordings. In 1958, the American record label, Vox Records, recorded all of Johann Sebastian Bach’s flute sonatas featuring Zoltán Jeney, Paul Angerer and Johann Klicka, and in 1961, Qualiton released an album of flute concertos by Vivaldi, Boccherini and Szervánszky. In his final years, Jeney liked to prepare musical settings, which he performed with the Budapest Woodwind Quintet at educational concerts around Hungary. After a long illness, Zoltán Jeney died in Budapest on 21 October 1981, leaving an irreplaceable void behind.

## **4 Achievements**

Primarily, my thesis is the presentation of the oeuvre of an excellent Hungarian artist, but is also an important document touching upon several disciplines such as musicology, history of music and history, and, through an artist’s life, providing insight into the period from the dissolution of the Monarchy to the German and Russian occupation and the years of the so-called “mild” communism. Parallel to his life, we can observe the revolutionary changes in Hungary’s music life, most importantly the thriving of our wind music culture, in which Zoltán Jeney indisputably had great merits. Besides the musical education of the youth, further education of teachers in the country, and the organization of concerts and lectures played an important part in his work. He tried to do

his best in every field, compiling a 3-part flute methodology, which he did not stop to elaborate until he found it perfect.

## 5 Conclusions

Despite focussing on the spiritual legacy of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century flutist, my research has another important role, i.e. to strengthen the professional identity of the future generation of flutists, and to create the foundation for a relatively young, blossoming musical workshop for flutists that is becoming more and more popular with flutists of the West. The flutist who played a defining role in the boom of Hungarian wind music culture of the last century, proved his versatility in several other ways. Beyond his daily artistic activities – including musical settings, pedagogic lectures and educational work for the youth – he even took the time to elaborate the program and introductory notes for every chamber concert and educational lecture. I believe that this type of artistic work may help today's performers in many aspects, since they are to meet similar expectations if they wish to achieve outstanding results in their field. Thus, I recommend my writing to anyone having a serious interest in the evolution of this branch of our music culture, and particularly to Hungarian flutists to come, without whom there is and there can be no future.

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