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Artistic and pedagogical work of doc. Ivan Palovič

Summary

The article deals with pedagogical and artistic work of distinguished Slovak pianist, doc. Ivan Palovič (1938–1993) on the occasion of his unaccomplished 80th birthday.

Keywords: Ivan Palovič, Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, piano, Cikker, Hummel, Martinček Ivan Palovič.

This year, we celebrate the 80th anniversary of the birth and the 25th anniversary of the premature death of the prominent Slovak pianist and pedagogue doc. Ivan Palovič. In Slovak piano art and pedagogy, he has left a significant trace, the most representative recordings of domestic performers today include concertos and solo works by Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Ján Cikker and Dušan Martinček.

Ivan Palovič was born on January 13, 1938 in Bratislava. His father, Július Palovič, was a well-known Bratislava lawyer with whom also a later President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic Gustáv Husák began as a draftsman. His mother, Oľga Palovičová, born Paulíny, graduated from the Teacher Training Institute in Prague, but she started to devote herself to the teacher's career only in the 50's. Ivan Palovič learned to play the piano under the guidance of the famous Polish-German pianist Rudolf Macudziński. After the communists expelled the family from Bratislava under the so-called B-action (directed against the bourgeoisie), Magdaléna Móryová-Szakmáry took care of his talent in Spišská Nová Ves. Prof. Móryová was a pupil of Liszt's pupil Emil von Sauer, and she

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also acted as an opera singer¹. In 1953 he was admitted to the class of Prof. Anna Kafendová at the Conservatory in Bratislava, where he graduated with honours in 1958 with Grieg's *Piano Concerto A minor* under the baton of the conductor Schimpl. Prof. Kafendová was a temperamental type of pedagogue who emphasized the emotional and content aspect of the work, and as for the technique she preferred playing by the weight of the hand². Ivan Palovič accentuated her almost mother's relationship to him. The list of her graduates was respectable, among others the leading Slovak pianists and pedagogues Silvia Čáповá-Vizváryová, Miloslav Starosta, Josef Bulva, Alexander Cattarino, Zlatica Poulová, Tatiana Fraňová, as well as the music critic Vladimír Čížik or the composers Dušan Martinček and Jozef Sixta belonged to them. As an excellent graduate, Ivan Palovič received a one-year scholarship for a study stay at the Leningrad Conservatory in the Soviet Union. Here he had the opportunity to work with Professor M.J. Chal'fin, the subsequent pedagogue of the world-famous Grigory Sokolov. After returning from Russia, he became a student at the Academy of Performing Arts in the class of Prof. Kafendová and at the same time her first graduate at the Academy of Performing Arts in 1963.



Picture no. 1: Doc. Ivan Palovič

Source: Private archive of Ivan Palovič's family.

¹ L. Urbančíková, *Život ako storočie: Magda Móryová-Szakmáry*, Hudobná spoločnosť Hemerkovcov v Košiciach, Košice 2009.

² S. Zamborský, F. Pergler, *Slovenská klavírna tvorba a História klavírnej pedagogiky na Slovensku*, Vysoká škola múzických umení, Bratislava 2001, s. 46–48.

Despite becoming one of the most prolific talents of his generation, after graduation he did not get a job at the Academy immediately. He initially worked as an accompanist at the opera of the Slovak National Theater, from where he joined military service in the Military Artistic Ensemble. With it, he presented many solo, chamber and concert pieces, including Cikker's *Concertino for piano and orchestra Op. 20*, which became his lifelong repertoire number. When Ján Cikker, one of the most famous Slovak composers, received the Herder Prize in Vienna in 1966, he recommended out of gratitude the young talented pianist Palovič to the accompanying scholarship. The young artist used the offer to study at Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna with one of the most important Austrian pedagogues Bruno Seidelhofer (for example, Martha Argerich, Rudolf Buchbinder, Friedrich Gulda studied also with him). He presented one of the most difficult pieces of piano literature *Islamey* by M.A. Balakirev on the entrance examinations.



Picture no. 2: With the composer Ján Cikker in his villa (currently the Museum of Ján Cikker)
Source: Private archive of Ivan Palovič's family

His repertoire contained already at that time practically all style periods. During his rich concert activity, he especially enjoyed the music of Viennese classics, Russian composers (Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev). He was one of the most important advocates of the Slovak piano literature, among others of the works by Ján Cikker, Dušan Martinček, Juraj Hatrík, Ivan Parík. He was a devo-

ted pianist of his close friend's, Dušan Martinček, work and many of the author's compositions were dedicated directly to him. Here are at least some examples of his rich solo repertoire: Bach: *Chromatic fantasy and fugue*, Händel: *Suite E minor*, Haydn: *Variations F minor*, Mozart: *Sonata in E flat major KV 282*, Beethoven: *Sonata Op. 90* and *Op. 111*, Brahms: *Variations on Schumann's theme Op. 9*, Chopin: *Ballade Op. 47*, *Scherzo Op. 39* or *Barcarolla*, Balakirev: *Islamey*, Prokofiev: *Sonata no. 4*, Scriabin: *Poème-Nocturne Op. 61*, *Sonata no. 10*, Debussy: *Masks*, selection of preludes, Suchoň: *Sonata rustica*, Hatrik: *Sonata di ciaccona*, Bokes: *Sonata for piano no. 1* and *no. 2*, Martinček: *Etudes*, *Preludes*, *Hommage à Corelli*, various sonatas.

The concerto repertoire was no less varied; we can find there e.g. Beethoven's *Piano Concertos no. 3* and *4* or *Fantasy C minor for piano, choir and orchestra*, Liszt's *Piano Concerto no. 1 in E flat major*, Grieg's *Piano Concerto A minor*, *Piano Concerto no. 2 D minor* by F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Schumann's *Konzertstück Op. 92 – Introduzione ed Allegro appassionato*. From the music of the 20th century, he used to play Glazunov's *Piano Concerto no. 1 F minor*, Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto no. 4*, Strauss's *Burlesque for piano and orchestra D minor*. An extraordinary act was Palovič's performance of the *Piano Concerto no. 2* by Béla Bartók. Vladimír Čížik, in his 1966 review in the *Slovak music magazine*, was very enthusiastic:

Bartók's 2nd Piano Concerto found an ideal performer in the nature of Ivan Palovič. Great technical possibilities, brilliant, even in the fastest tempo not failing playing of octaves, chords ... shone in the interpretation of Bartók in the best light. However, the pianist drew the attention also in the deep, mannish simple Adagio...³.

The orchestras also invited Ivan Palovič to perform works with an important piano part, e.g. Jurovský's *Symphony no. 1 "Peace" for piano and string* or Orff's *Carmina Burana*, respectively *Catuli Carmina for solo, chorus, for 4 pianos and drums*. An extraordinary response met his recording and regular interpretation of the *Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 85* by Johann Nepomuk Hummel and, of course, the already mentioned *Concertino* by Ján Cikker. On the LP from 1981, we can find the *Dialogues in the form of variations for the piano and orchestra* by Dušan Martinček with the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra in Bratislava and conductor Ondrej Lenárd as well as Martinček's solo compositions: *Sonata no. 4 "Toccata" for piano*, *Sonata no. 6 "Meditation B-A-C-H" for piano*, *Invention – Concert etude for piano, Op. 4* and *Prelude for piano no. 12*. In 1993 and 2001, CD's with the works of Vladimír Bokes, where also Ivan Palovič is participating, were published, namely *Sonata for viola and piano* with Jozef Hošek, respectively *Sonata for piano no. 2*. In 2010, the Music Fund released a recording with selected works by Dušan Martinček. Ivan Palovič is represented by the interpretation of *Sonata no. 6 "Meditation B-A-C-H"* and by perfectly interpreted

³ V. Čížik, *Slovenskí koncertní umelci*, SHF, Bratislava 1974, s. 81–83.

selection of *Seven concert etudes Op. 4 for piano*. Numerous recordings can also be found in the RTVS (Radio and TV of Slovakia) archive, which would be worth publishing on CD media.

L. VAN BEETHOVEN

1770–1827

Sonáta c mol pre klavír op. 111
Maestoso. Allegro con brio ed
appassionato Ariette (Thema con
variazioni) Adágio molto, sem-
plice e cantabile

A. N. SKRIABIN

1872–1915

X. sonáta pre klavír op. 70
(jednočasťová)

D. MARTINČEK

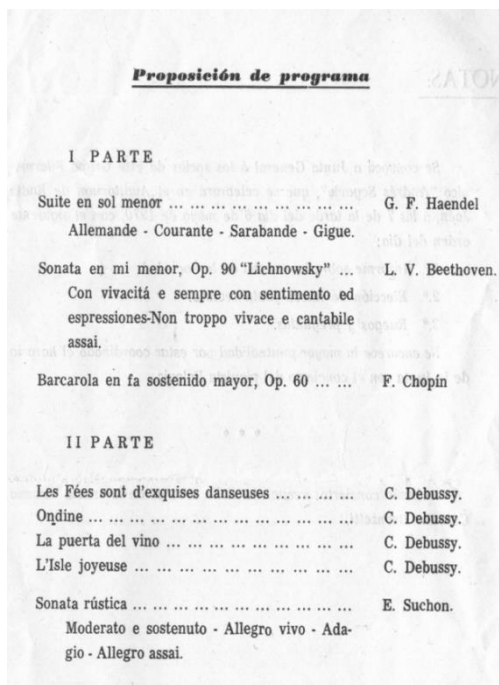
1936–

Hommage á Corelli (premiéra)

J. HATRÍK

1941–

Sonáta di ciaccona



Picture no. 3: Programs from concerts from recitals in Bratislava (May 2nd, 1972) and in Spain (May 6th1970)

Source: Private archive of Ivan Palovič's family.

He was also a sought-after chamber music player. He regularly cooperated with Slovak musicians such as violinists Peter Michalica, Jozef Toporczer, viola player Jozef Hošek, double bass player Karol Illek as well as with Russian star cellist Boris Pergamenschikow. His other partners included pianists Ľudovít Marcinger, Alexander Cattarino, Miloslav Starosta, singers Viktória Stracenská, Luba Baricová, Magdaléna Hajóssyová, Róbert Szücs, violinist Pavol Heinz, cellist Jozef Sýkora and others. Critics highlighted his emotional and profound approach to pieces, technical bravura, excellent command of chords, octaves and passages, not least a sincere relationship to Slovak creation. In his practice, he was able to rely on admirable skill in sight-reading, colleagues also highlighted his broad knowledge of the solo and chamber repertoire. Interestingly, he practiced on the old upright piano, often slowly, in piano dynamics and without a pedal, according

to the advice of his Russian pedagogue. Prof. Seidelhofer, on the other hand, taught him stylish purity, but also a respect to the composer's text. He had almost never written anything into the score, just like Seidelhofer. He asserted that everything essential was already written in the score.

At the end of the 1960s, Ivan Palovič himself started his pedagogical work at the Academy of Performing Arts and in 1988 he was awarded the title of Docent. Here he taught to play the piano, chamber music, sight-reading, interpretative seminar, history and literature of the piano. Students from the class of Ivan Palovič successfully applied in pedagogical and concert life. I would mention at least a few names: Tatiana Hurová-Lenková (pedagogue of the Conservatory in Bratislava), Elena Michalicová-Händler (leading chamber musician and long-time pedagogue of the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava), Stefka Kovačeva-Palovičová (long-time pedagogue of the Conservatory in Bratislava, the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, currently active at the Catholic University in Ružomberok), Helena Rajczyová-Uhlárová (pedagogue of the Conservatory in Košice), Marián Varínsky (favourite partner of singers of the Slovak National Theater for decades as an accompanist), Darina Hlinková-Andrejková (pedagogue of the Conservatory in Žilina), Viera Andočová-Sočuvková (also), Eva Ursíny-Rebrová (pedagogue of the Conservatory in Bratislava), Iveta Sukupová-Sabová (Conservatory and the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, where she also serves as the head of the department of collaborative piano) and Dana Fišerová-Hajóssy (pedagogue of the Conservatory in Bratislava). Several graduates from Ivan Palovič's class are active abroad: Eva Mazanovská-Ferguson (Illinois Wesleyan University in the USA, where she holds the position of the head of the department of piano cooperation), Stanislav Jenis (Austria), Václav Vait (Conservatory in Kroměříž, Czech Republic) or Alena Janáčková (Spain). Within the postgraduate degree, he led Valéria Kellyová, who was one of the leading chamber musicians and partners of many instrumentalists.

Doc. Palovič did not consider the training of a concert virtuoso to be the most important pedagogical goal. František Pergler, the author of a publication about Slovak pianists and pedagogues, states:

As a pedagogue and at the same time as a performer, aware of the circumstances in the Slovak concert life, he [Ivan Palovič] could really judge the application of the graduate of the piano. In addition to building a solo repertoire, he focused his students in particular on the need to gain experience in chamber playing⁴.

He summarized his pedagogue and performer's experience in his habilitation work *A few methodological and interpretative notes on important piano works by some Slovak composers* in 1988⁵. It is a valuable proof of his approach to the

⁴ F. Pergler, *Ivan Palovič (1938–1993)*, "Hudobný život" 2006, No. 6, p. 28.

⁵ I. Palovič, *Niekoľko metodických a interpretačných poznámok k významným klavírnym dielam niektorých slovenských skladateľov* (habilitačná práca), VŠMU, Bratislava 1988.

works of selected Slovak composers. He dedicates himself to Dušan Martinček, Jozef Sixt, Ivan Parík, Ivan Hrušovský, Vladimír Bokes. His pedagogical legacy was summarized by Viera Sočuvková in the words:

He left in us the desire to be enthusiastic, to think, to listen, to create, while he respected the individuality of the student⁶.

The life and artistic career of my pedagogue and husband ended too soon as a result of a serious illness in 1993. Ivan Palovič died on December 12, 1993 at the age of 55 years. His talent, however, continues through his children – Jordana Palovičová, the docent of piano playing at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava and Ivan Palovič Jr., viola pedagogue at the Conservatory and the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. In 2007, the JánCikker Foundation awarded him the “JánCikker Prize” in memoriam.

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Private archive of late Ivan Palovič’s family.

⁶ K. Molová, *Umělecký a pedagogický profil Ivana Paloviče* (diplomová práce), KU v Ružomberku, Ružomberok 2013, s. 48.

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Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia dorobek pedagogiczny i artystyczny wybitnego słowackiego pianisty, doc. Ivana Paloviča (1938–1993) z okazji 80. rocznicy jego urodzin.

Słowa kluczowe: Ivan Palovič, Akademia Sztuk Sceniczných w Bratisławie, fortepian, Cikker, Hummel, Martinček Ivan Palovič.

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Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku

Umelecká a pedagogická činnosť doc. Ivana Paloviča

Zhrnutie

V príspevku sa zaoberáme pedagogickým a umeleckým pôsobením popredného slovenského klaviristu doc. Ivana Paloviča (1938–1993) pri príležitosti nedožitého životného jubilea.

Kľúčové slová: Ivan Palovič, VŠMU v Bratislave, klavír, Cikker, Hummel, Martinček.