

Bárdos Lajos - The Musicologist

Fábián Imre

Thirty Essays is a modest title that reflects its author, Bárdos Lajos, and there are two dates next to it: 1929-1969. This volume is Bárdos' studies on musicology, a summary of the last four decades of his life's work.

The book was published by EMB Zeneműkiadó as part of the Hungarian Musicologists series, and marked the seventieth birthday of the great composer, scholar and teacher. The significance of these writings goes beyond the framework of this article. For me, his studies revive my personal experiences at the Music Academy, where I was fortunate to be Bárdos' student.

My review of this volume is subjective, a statement of my appreciation for this esteemed teacher. I am thankful that I learned to understand and appreciate music from Bárdos Lajos at the Academy.

In international literature at this time, musical analysis was already booming. With Bárdos, we learned directly from a renowned composer how to get closer to the secrets of the masterpieces.

Bárdos was always organized, precise, and clear, without ever being over-scrupulous. His lectures were famous at the Music Academy - he had a full house at all times, regardless of the subject of his lecture.

Bárdos, a former student of Kodály, creatively unfolded his master's teachings. He had a comfortable, bantering relationship with the musicians and particularly with the chorus members (with whom he worked the most).

Bárdos' teachings were clear and concise, even when the subject matter was extremely theoretical. One reason why he packed lecture rooms was because he made great efforts to make potentially dry subject matter interesting and even amusing. Unlike scholars who lecture in abstract blurs, Bárdos was a master in bringing theory "down to earth".

Thirty Essays is a collection of Bárdos' written works: short articles, musical analysis, pedagogical writings, studies on prosody - work that is monumental in subject as well as significance.

Bárdos' most important studies were written in the last two decades. He wrote Liszt analyses, a thorough thesis on Kodály's music, and an original academic approach to understanding the great composers of music history (from Palestrina, through Mozart, to the modern musicians).

"I did not intend to write an eleventh book from the existing ten" Bárdos said.

Being original was a characteristic of his research method. He analyzed "the creators" from the standpoint of someone on the same level, as Bárdos was a creator himself. His theory was always substantiated by actually playing the music. But the music would not have been possible without his theory.

Some of Bárdos' articles became well known due to papers published by the Music Academy and by Hungarian Music (e.g. "The Modal Harmony in Liszt's Work" or the "Heptatonia Secunda," the best study of Kodály in musical literature).

When the first essay of the volume *Folk Rhythm in Bartók's Music* was published, it inspired a younger generation into further Bartók research. Bárdos took pride in what he hoped would be inspiring work: "I hope my grandchildren will be grateful for what I set forth in my studies and also that they will appreciate what I consciously left out, so they can go ahead and invent things for themselves."

All of Bárdos' essays are greatly inspirational, and that is a mark of any outstanding theoretical work. Writing that is to last must have a mission to carry ideas into the future, rather than to turn them into stone. Bárdos' work will always provoke a point of view - and inspire.