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THE LEMBERG PIANIST MORIZ ROSENTHAL IN THE CONTEXT OF PIANISTIC SCHOOLS

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The focus of my paper is the discussion about “pianistic schools”. The pianist Moriz Rosenthal, who was born in Lemberg, is particularly suitable for this discussion, as on the one hand he reflected on this topic himself (in his essay “The Old and the New School of Piano Playing”) and on the other hand through his biography which rises the discussion to what pianistic “school/s” he belongs to.

This leads to fundamental questions: To what extent can a musician, despite his personal style, be assigned to a school? How can musical schools or national schools be defined in the instrumental area? Do these depend on the artist's national affiliation?

Biographical notes on Moriz Rosenthal

Moriz Rosenthal was born on 17 December in 1862 in Lemberg (at this time it belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire). At the age of seven his father bought a piano and arranged for a local music teacher from the Lemberg Theater, Mr. Wenzel Galath. Rosenthal progressed so fast that he could study from 1872 with the famous Karol Mikuli, a pupil of Frédéric Chopin and at this time the Director of the Lemberg Conservatory. At the age of twelve he went with his father to Vienna to continue his studies with Rafael Joseffy – a pupil of Franz Liszt and Carl Tausig, who was himself a pupil of Liszt. Besides being a student in the Liszt-tradition, Joseffy was also an editor of Chopin's works. So Joseffy was familiar with the Liszt- and the Chopin-tradition.

When Rosenthal made his concert debut in 1876 in Vienna he played works of Chopin, Beethoven and Liszt (Chopin's Piano Concerto in F minor with Joseffy at the second piano, other Chopin solo works, Beethovens Variations in C minor [31, p. 19], and Liszt's etude “La Campanella”).

In the same year – 1876 – Rosenthal met in Vienna for the first time Franz Liszt in person and he played for him pieces from this concert program, as we can read in the Vienna newspaper “Neue freie Presse” on 11 November 1876 (p. 7):

The court piano manufacturer Mr. Bösendorfer introduced the young pianist Moriz Rosenthal, a twelve-year-old boy who attracted the attention of the Viennese artistic circles due to his rare talent, to the famous piano hero [Franz Liszt]. The latter had the “Campanella” and the first movement from Chopin's C minor Concerto played to him, repeatedly interrupted the boy's performance with joyful

exclamations, kissed the young artist several times [...]. Franz Liszt invited the boy, like that often he comes to Vienna, to convince him of his progress.

During a concert-tour through Poland and Romania the fourteen-year-old Rosenthal impressed the Romanian royal family so much that he was appointed “Court Pianist”.

In summer and autumn of the years 1876 until 1878 Rosenthal studied with Liszt in Weimar and Rome, and again from 1884 until 1886. Sometimes he was Liszt’s only student, whereby he benefited from his full attention. From 1880 on he inscribed at the Vienna University to study aesthetics (with Eduard Hanslick) and philosophy (with Franz Brentano).

After returning to the concert stage in 1886 (with concerts in the whole Europe including Russia) Rosenthal’s playing was enthusiastically celebrated for its stupendous technique and intellectual insight. His playing was admired in the same way in Amerika (where he played regularly from 1888 on); he provoked the same reactions at his debut in London and during his Great Britain-tour in 1895. One review from his concert in Edinburgh [26]:

To all who had not previously heard him, Herr Rosenthal’s playing was a revelation. As a virtuoso he knows no rival. His powers of execution are simply marvellous, and there seems nothing that his fingers cannot do on the keys of a pianoforte. His position in this respect is now granted on all sides, but there are not many of those present on Saturday who will venture to deny his claim to the title of artist as well as virtuoso. In the music of Beethoven, Henselt, Schubert, Chopin, where a depth of poetical feeling is required, Herr Rosenthal is as much at home as in the amazing technical difficulties of Brahms and Liszt.

In 1912 Rosenthal was awarded from the Austrian Emperor with the title “K. und K. Kammervirtuose [Imperial and Royal Chamber Virtuoso]”. Rosenthal increasingly gave concerts and taught in the United States; finally, in 1938, he moved to New York with his wife Hedwig. In 1944 they both became American citizens. Although there is no statement from Rosenthal himself about his and his wife’s Judaism, it can be assumed that it played a role for their emigration.

Moriz Rosenthal died on 3 September 1946 in New York. His pianistic legacy is preserved in numerous recordings made from 1927 onwards.

What are pianistic “schools”?

When does a pianistic tradition, such as the Liszt tradition heard on Rosenthal’s recordings, become a pianistic school?

Using material facts such as printed sheet music, memoirs from teachers and students, letters, written documents (textbooks, music-aesthetic or music-theoretical publications, etc.) or recordings, a musical aesthetic can be passed on to future generations. But there is always a rest that is transmitted orally. For example, when a teacher passes on technical or interpretive instructions to the student such as tempo, phrasing or articulation.

The significant criteria between several instrumental schools are becoming smaller and smaller. While until the middle of the 20th century it was relatively easy to hear whether a musician received his training at a German, American or Russian institution, today it is almost impossible to distinguish pianists by schools: teachers and Students are constantly changing educational institutions all over the world.

Therefore, it is no longer meaningful which national school a musician represents: Nowadays a musician's national identity is usually made up of several traditional lines.

The question also arises: How long can an instrumental school last? Usually, after the second generation of students the distance is so big, that the reference to the teacher's teacher can no longer define the musical and artistic position of a musician belonging to a "grand teacher".

Konstantin Zenkin is of the opinion, that schools last at most two generations of students, because then other influences and schools take effect:

On the other hand, is it not often the case that students seek to detach themselves, in one way or another, from the school that brought them up, to develop and enrich the tradition by interacting with other traditions? Thus, the influence of pedagogical principles and traditions is not limited to passing one's experience to one's pupils, and usually involves the influences of other schools and traditions. This is the reason why pedagogical schools are as a rule not very long-lived, and their influence does not last longer than the life of one or two generations [27, p. 93].

In this context it is most interesting, that Moriz Rosenthal links in his essay "The Old and New School of Piano Playing" the term "school" to specific pianist personalities. The aesthetics of piano-playing represented by these personalities are passed on by their students to the next generation. When Rosenthal wrote this article (in 1924), the second generation of students of the "new school" was just developing. Rosenthal defines the playing of Hummel and Beethoven as the "old school"; the "new school" is represented by the "triumvirate of Liszt-Chopin-Rubinstein":

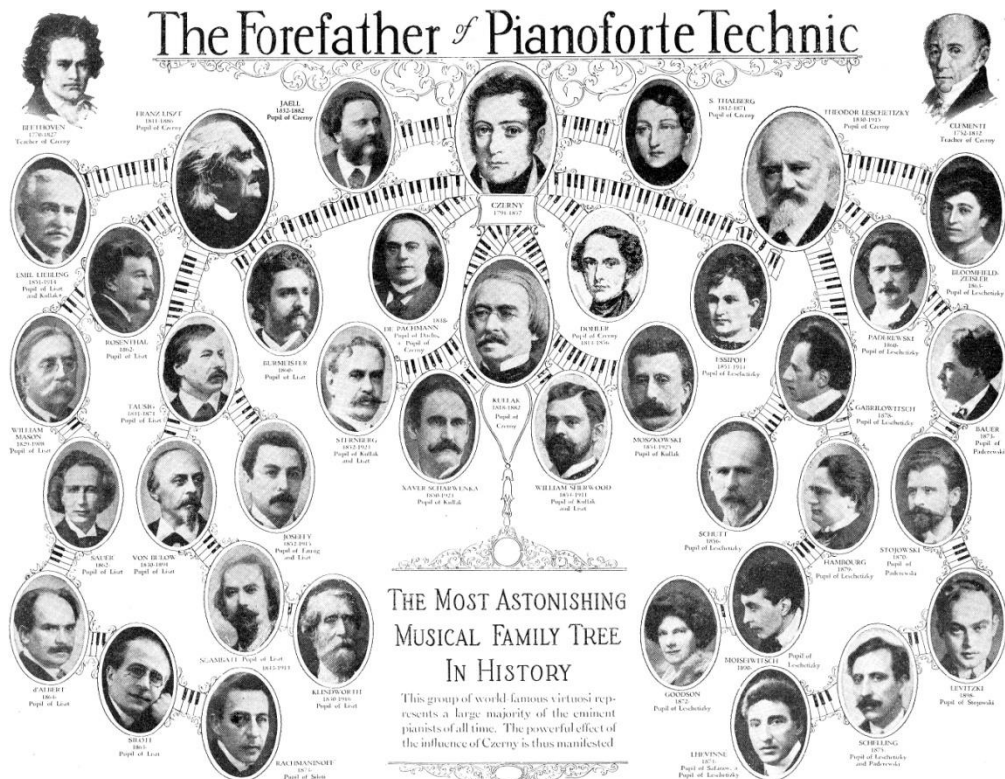
There is no such thing in existence as a 'new school of piano playing'. The mere fact that one has not studied with Liszt, that one has not heard the Chopin school, and that one has never been privileged to listen to Rubinstein is a colossal drawback and can never constitute in its helpless negativity any claim to distinction or greatness. Having missed the great Triumvirat Liszt-Chopin-Rubinstein, the pianists of the younger generation are bound to learn from those of us who had the privilege to study directly or indirectly with these pianistic and musical giants. If they choose to turn away from us they will not harm us, but themselves [23].

A newspaper report from 1932 about Rosenthal confirms his point of view of a "pianistic turn" after Liszt and Rubinstein:

Rosenthal dates back to the time of the great piano kings who received the royal crown from Liszt at the Weimar court. It dates back to the time of a Rubinstein. That gives his playing and his attitude a certain consecration. There is no need to tell anyone or anything about him as a pianist. Everyone knows his infallible technique, the power, the elegance of his touch, his always spiritual understanding, what characterizes him and is the greatest thing about an artist: his personality, his uniqueness [32, p. 7f].

Franz Listz's strong personality meant that his students were viewed as "Liszt students" throughout their whole life. For example, a newspaper note from 1935 still characterizes the almost 73 years old Rosenthal as a "Liszt student" who guarantees an "authentic performance" of Liszt's works:

The Forefather of Pianoforte Technic



In numerous newspaper reports about Rosenthal can be read criticism of the “Liszt School” (also called “Liszt-Tausig-school” or “Weimar school”): “affected-sounding separation of the individual notes”, “too frequent use of the pedals”, “violence in fortissimo”, “hysterical tempo rubato, bright lighting of individual bars, arbitrary distortion of the rhythm, separation of the bound melody” [15, p. 2; 18, p. 8; 17, p. 7; 21, p. 4].

A further important detail of the “Liszt school” is the establishment of “masterclasses”, meaning: the master is teaching a group of instrumental students. In Liszt’s opinion, the students could learn not only from the master, but also from each other student. Furthermore, Rosenthal writes that in Liszt’s lessons questions about pianistic and technical details played a subordinate role; the focus was on structural, historical and poetical connections:

What was especially interesting in this teaching was his clarification of musical structure, his emphasis on hidden subtleties, and his explanation of the historical relation of each work to the evolution of art, for he looked at everything with the eye of a creator [1, p. 30].

The author ("E. N.") of "Musikalisches Wochenblatt" (8 October 1891) confirms this:

Liszt always warned his students against overemphasizing the technical aspects; “not pianistic” was his word of reprimand when a player tried to create an external effect. But the master became even more upset about impure, technically deficient playing – and he had the strongest expressions at hand when it was necessary to castigate unfinished performances. As far as I can remember, the master only had expressions of the highest appreciation, even admiration, about Rosenthal's playing. When Rosenthal sat down at the piano, Liszt was the excitement and attention himself [14, p. 531].

In his essay “The Old and the New School of Piano Playing” Rosenthal speaks about Liszt focusing on compositional structures:

In spite of a sometimes surprising pedantry as to pianistic cleanness and accuracy, he saw all with the eye of the composer, and made us feel the same way.

So Liszt was not interested in developing piano virtuosos, but rather in developing the artistic personalities of his students.

Nationality/National School

A personal school, such as the “Liszt School”, can no longer be clearly identified at the latest in the third generation of students; so it is more common to speak of an instrumental “schools” attached to a music center or to a nation.

This phenomenon can be observed particularly in the area of composition and musical aesthetics. In instrumental pedagogy you can find labels as “German School”, “Russian School”, also “Ukrainian School” defining technical and interpretive values; in the field of composition musical principles are established, for example through labels like “New German School” or “Second Viennese School”.

Harold C. Schonberg defines the characteristics of individual piano schools as follows:

The German school [...] was more philosophical, more serious and edgier than the French, more attentive to the musical text, represented by pianists who passed on Richard Wagner's belief that the German-speaking peoples had invented music. Their repertoire was quite one-sided and centered on German and Austrian classics. Composers like Rachmaninoff were considered frivolous. On the whole, they were more interested in the structure of music than in its color values; they researched the spiritual meaning of musical architecture. They were musical thinkers, outstanding in the interpretation of their musical heritage, sober and not extraverted, convinced of the correctness of their interpretation and, it must unfortunately be said, of a certain arrogance towards outsiders who wanted to play German music [...].

The Slavic school focused more on the Romantics than on Beethoven and Schubert [...]. They played with a healthy joy of pure virtuosity and placed greater value on color than the Germans. Rubato-like tempo nuances, such as those that had emerged around the middle of the 19th century under conductors such as Wagner and Liszt, prevailed: a nuance in which the rhythm could be flexible, but not the underlying meter. Liszt's piano playing, which had a great influence on Russians, was a good example of this style, which he passed on to his students [24, p. 73f].

Which national “piano school” does Rosenthal belong to? Rosenthal's playing cannot be assigned clearly to a school according to the criteria mentioned by Schonberg. Agreeing with Harold Schonberg's characterization of the national piano

schools, Rosenthal's playing – judged by the concert-reviews and the sound documents – tends to be assigned to the Slavic piano school.

Rosenthal was classified as Polish Person, Galician, Austrian, Ukrainian, Jewish (although Judaism is not a nationality), as well as American, also as a Germanic (“Wälsung”) and even as a Romanian [28, p. 20]. One of the reasons for the changing national attributions is that Lemberg was subject to changing rulership (Empire of Austria, Kingdom of Galicia-Lodomeria, Poland).

Although Rosenthal himself never commented on his Judaism and did not describe himself as a Jew, he was certainly perceived as a Jew. The tenor of the newspaper articles in which Rosenthal is described as a Jew encompasses all nuances from recognition and respect to criticism and open rejection:

The Jews in music [...]. But with these shining stars in the artistic sky, the list of Jewish musicians is far from exhausted; only the very greatest can be mentioned here. Everyone has probably already heard of the violin king Joseph Joachim, also by the pianist Alfred Grünfeld and his brother Heinrich Grünfeld, the master of the cello. No less by the outstanding piano virtuosos Moritz [sic] Rosenthal and Artur Schnabel [...] [10, p. 4f].

For the Galician pianist and piano teacher Teodor Leschetitzky (1830–1915), a musician's Jewishness was an indication, even a requirement, for talent and ability:

Leschetitsky always asked pianists who wanted to study with him three questions: Were you a child prodigy? Are you of Slavic descent? Are you Jewish? If all three questions were answered positively, Leschetitsky rubbed his hands in delight. (Incidentally, he was not Jewish) [24, p. 73].

Rosenthal's only statement about his national affiliation can be found in a newspaper notice: Rosenthal himself felt as a German-Austrian [19, p. 3].

Despite his lack of national self-attribution, Rosenthal's many travels through several countries and continents and, last but not least, his urbane sophistication, it is justified to classify Rosenthal as a nationally independent cosmopolitan.

Transculturation and instrumental schools

Transculturation in the field of instrumental education takes place in the interactions between different schools. These can be personal-schools or national-schools. As people get more and more mobile and geographical centers dissolve as a result of globalization, schools lose more and more of their significance, so that the relevance of instrumental schools faded away at the beginning of the 20th century.

This development can be traced through the person and work of Moriz Rosenthal. He was repeatedly confined to the “Liszt School” or the “Weimar School” and to national idioms, including Judaism, ignoring that his artistic personality could not be limited to such narrow schemes. He is the prototype of the cosmopolitan musician who knew how to use increasing mobility and globalization for his artistic work without losing his origins from the “Liszt school”. Rosenthal thought “big” enough to refrain from making statements or attributions about his own nationality or school in public.

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ЛЬВІВСЬКИЙ ПІАНІСТ МОРИЦ РОЗЕНТАЛЬ У КОНТЕКСТІ ПІАНІСТИЧНИХ ШКІЛ

Єва-Марія ДЕ ОЛІВЕЙРА ПІНТО

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Головна тема роботи – обговорення “піаністичних шкіл”. Піаніст Моріц Розенталь, уродженець Львова, особливо підходить для цього обговорення, адже, з одного боку, він сам розмірковував над цією темою (у своєму есе “Стара і нова школа гри на фортепіано”), а з іншого, – його біографія піднімає питання, до якої саме “школи/шкіл” він належить. Це веде до фундаментальних питань: наскільки музиканта, попри індивідуальний стиль, можна зачислити до певної школи? Як можна визначити музичні або національні школи в інструментальній сфері? Чи залежать вони від національної належності митця?

Транскультурація у сфері інструментальної освіти відбувається унаслідок взаємодії між різними школами, які можуть бути як особистісними, так і національними. У міру того, як люди стають дедалі мобільнішими, а географічні центри розвиваються під впливом глобалізації, значення шкіл поступово знижується, і до початку XX століття актуальність інструментальних шкіл значно ослабла.

Цей розвиток можна простежити через особистість і творчість Моріца Розенталя. Його неодноразово зачисляли до “школи Ліста” або “Веймарської школи”, а також до національних особливостей, зокрема до єврейства, ігноруючи той факт, що його мистецьку особистість не можна обмежити вузькими рамками. Він був прототипом космополітичного музиканта, який умів використовувати зростаючу мобільність і глобалізацію для своєї творчої діяльності, не втрачаючи при цьому своїх витоків зі “школи Ліста”. Розенталь мислив настільки “широко”, що утримувався від публічних заяв чи атрибутцій щодо своєї національності або належності до певної школи.

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