

## In Advance

This is a rough version of a text of a lecture I held at the Guitar Research Meeting in Bregenz in 2009. It served as a manuscript for lecturing, that is why some of the translations are not finished and not literally.

## Introduction

The first time I discovered, the name of Johann Dubez, was by chance by reading in the *Handbuch der Laute und Gitarre* from Josef Zuth. I was searching for guitar-music in a romantic- or/and virtuoso-style which could be regarded as an equivalent to the piano music of Liszt and his contemporaries. After also having acquired some scores from Dubez, I got the chance to prepare an edition of his *Fantaisie sur des themes hongrois* for Chanterelle. So I started a more detailed biographical research, initial purposes were to find a portrait for the edition and a check of the biographical informations provided by J. P. Bone and J. Zuth in their dictionaries. This was a part of the preparationwork to write the introduction to the edition mentioned above.

As the amount of information grew, Michael Macmeeken, CEO of Chanterelle, suggested to create a website, providing further informations – an idea intended as an extension to the foreword as additional informations to the edition. This led to the first version, a text with some basic information on the biography and also a compilation of sources I used.

That of course was sufficient for the purpose of editing, but by chance I received more information by getting in contact with very interesting persons. The most important contacts were Sylvia and Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Max Demeter Peyfuss and Alexander Mayer, CEO from the publishing house with the same name.

In the end, my motivation to continue researching can be explained also by the constant encouragement all these persons. In 2007 Mr. Mayer offered to publish the results as a part of a series dealing with musicians relating to Ottakring, the printed text is in fact a commission work. As a result of my website I received numerous inquiries from all over the world, for me, it is still a surprising fact, that Dubez is obviously musicians today are interested in. Beside I also received a lot of hints and valuable help by a lot of people – I hope, they will pardon me not to be named here, of course I will do so in the printed biography.

It is an remarkable fact that the process of research offered various relevances to other fields of research, some of them concerning the zither, others to the harp, the history of Serbia, the biographical details on members of the Batthyány or Esterházy families.

## Biography · A non-chronological Summary

Johann Dube(t)z was born on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1828 in Neulerchenfeld, near Vienna. Neulerchenfeld, today part of Ottakring, the 16<sup>th</sup> district of Vienna, was characterized by gastronomy. Most of the inns had stages and musical performances were common everyday. That was a

result of Neulerchendfelds situation outside the so-called *Linienwall*, a tax border for drink and food. Strauss, Lanner, the *wienerlied* and Schrammel-music were a home in Neulerchenfeld.

In the family of Dubez, music was a very important matter. Johann's sister Anna was harpist in the service of the Grand-Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, his brother Josef was bandmaster of the *Deutschmeister*, a famous military band. We do not know exactly what the first instrument was, Johann Dubez obtained, the violin or the guitar, obviously his first teacher for the guitar was C. J. Mertz. In some of the sources from the 20<sup>th</sup> century it is mentioned that Dubez also received lesson by Regondi, sometimes with an interpretation of friendship or acquaintance. I will add a list of arguments and consequences relating to this topic later.

Neulerchenfeld's economy was on a very low standard. That is the reason why Dubez had to be responsible for doing something for his living at an early age. In 1846 his first concert took place, one year later, in 1847, he was employed at the *Theater in der Josefstadt* as a violinist. More and more his name appeared in concerts mainly in the famous concert halls of Vienna such as Musikvereinssaal, Bösendorfer, Streicher, sometimes with famous participants (e. g. Henri Vieuxtemps).

Since 1840 we find a decline of public interest in the guitar especially in Vienna and Paris. No wonder that Dubez also adopted other instruments, first of all the harp. This led him to Countesse Johanna Esterházy where he was employed from about 1850 to about 1875 as the successor of the most important harpist, Parish Alvars (as a harpist he can be regarded as an equivalent to Giuliani).

Dubez also adopted the melophon which was in fact the english type of concertina, an instrument Regondi introduced to Vienna in 1940 (the term melophon is not used correctly here). Dubez' relation to Regondi is an interesting subject, I will deal with later.

Around 1850 the zither came into vogue in Vienna, a fashion comparable to that of the harp as caused by Parish Alvars or that of the guitar in connection with Giuliani at the beginning of the century. In 1875 Dubez founded the *Wiener-Zither-Club*, since 1884 this was continued as the *Österreichischer Zither-Fachverein* whose President he was until 1886. In this position he was mainly responsible for the establishment of the zither in the urban context of Vienna and furthermore for a valuable sophistication of the zither-repertory.

Dubez also appeared as a composer contributing to the *Huldigungskassette*, a compilation of compositions dedicated to the wedding of Emperor Franz-Joseph and Elisabeth in 1854. Among the other contributors we find the most esteemed composers to the period: Hellmesberger, Czerny, Hanslick, Ferdinand Schubert. Also to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the wedding, Dubez performed before the court in presence of Emperor Franz-Joseph, Elisabeth, Crownprince Rudolph (!), Stephanie (wife of Rudolph, harpiste, dedicatee of Dubez and Oberthür).

A further notable activity is also his engagement in his own stringquartett, the Dubez-Quartett. This formation only existed a few years until to the sudden death of the second violinist, Henri Clerc in 1873. Vienna at this time was a centre for stringquartett: the Joseph-Joachim Quartett, the famous Hellmesberger-Quartett and above all (it might seem unimaginable that there were more famous quartetts!) Hanslick mentions the Florentiner as the best formation among all the quartetts named above – a remarkable concurrence!

There are only two guitar compositions in print survived, published by Diabelli and Spina.

The other works for the guitar remained as manuscripts, hold in the Boije-Collection and in the private Notenlade des Herrn von Tirka.

After his employment by countesse Esterházy, from 1875, Dubez continued his solo career. Concert-tours to the Netherlands, Scandinavia, several tours to Italie (he received a decoration from the pope, and played for Duke Odescalchi), Hungary, Rumania, Serbia, and the Ottoman Empire are reported in the contemporary sources. These tours entirely are the result of Dubez' connections with members of the upper class, some of them were his pupils. To name a few: *Prince Mihailo Obrenovic* from Serbia (zither pupil), *Anna Ephrussi* (piano pupil), *Demeter Theodor Tirka* (a bankier, collector of art, also responsible for the introduction of the dinar – a skilled guitarrist) were persons with a valuable influence. His livelihood depended on these connections.

In 1882 Dubez started his Tour to the Rumania, Serbia and the Ottoman Empire, receiving a remarkable attention in public. From Sultan Abdülhamid Han he was decorated with the Mecidyde-decoration for his concerts in Constantinople. This Tournee is documented and reflected in the newspapers and magazine. Some of the sources are directly reports by Dubez himself. Remarkable that some magazines also reported many years later, this can be explained by the fascination the Orient received in Middle-Europe. Dubez gave many concerts in Constantinople, one in Pera - this is quarter of european culture in Constantinopel were many european citizens lived, mostly bankers and rich people.

He played directly for *Sultan Abdülhamid Han* and in a Harem of Prince Yussuf. There is a very interesting description of musical life at the court written by Ayse Osmanuglu, daughter from the Sultan and his concert in the Harem is reported in the newspapers and magazines many years after his death.

Dubez died in Oct., 27<sup>th</sup>, 1891 in Vienna and is buried on the Central Cementery.

## Some consideration to the Relation between Dubez and Regondi

Thalberg's Hugennotten-Fantasie: thinkable that this is identical with the piece of the same name Regondi rendered 1840/41 on his concert tour in Vienna. Bone states that Dubez played music by Regondi, that would be an explanation.

The so-called melophon, Regondi played, is an invention by Sir Charles Wheatstone, Stempnik is not correct in this (and some further) matter(s). In fact Dubez played also on a so-called melophon, but this is not the correct term, because this instrument is exactly the engl. typ of concertina, a very popular accordionlike instrument, Regondi was the most prominent virtuoso for. That Dubez also played the engl. type is a remarkable fact for the history of the concertina and underlines a relationship between the two composers.

C. M. Ziehrer states that Dubez first contact with the melophone occurred in 1849. That means, that Dubez could have met Regondi at this time in Vienna, but there were no other concertina-virtuosos on the continent. Does that mean that Regondi stayed in Vienna in 1849 – we actually do not have any hints or proofs that Regondi visited Vienna later than 1844? It is also possible that Dubez and Regondi met in 1846, this is stated by Zuth.

## The Decline

Wolf Moser states that the Guitar in Spain had a tradition beginning from the vihuela to Pujol. In other countries – he states – the guitar got forgotten.

Dubez biography shows that there were guitarists in that time in Vienna and that more concerts appear in the newspapers than assumed by reading Buek, Pääffgen or many other authors. Let us also take into account, that numerous guitarists, many from Germany and Austria, settled to London (Pelzer, Schulz, Neuland, Sagrini, Sidney-Pratten, Horetzky, Sokolowski) Also the amount of music should not only be derived from the number of publications as pointed out by A. Stempnik used in her Mertz-book.

On the other hand what we call decline may be the result of Hanslick's *Geschichte des Concertwesens*.

Hanslick mentions Dubez in his *Geschichte des Concertwesens . . .*, mainly as a harpist, discussing several reasons for the decline of the guitar and harp. Here we find some reasons he and his contemporaries point out:

- Lack of capability to produce a singing tone, a specific cantabile. Performance practice had changed to Legato during the Beethoven-period. Piano developed, guitar and harp did not in the same way. This is also a critical point of view meaning that the guitar / harp has a lack of balance. Czerny wrote that the balance between singing and guitar is the optimum. What happens if the guitar plays melody and accompaniment for his own?
- One of the most important reasons was that the guitar, as well as the harp did not develop a serious repertory comparable with that for the piano. Hanslick writes, that musical taste changed around 1848 as a consequence of the revolution. The so-called Vormärz or Biedermeier is characterized by music in a very simple, sometimes primitive style. Fantasias on opera arias, themes and variations, and - that is what Hanslick criticized - virtuosomusic without any musical sense.
- The guitar was regarded as an instrument better used only for accompaniment to singers.

## Guitar-style

Dubez' guitar-works contain all techniques used in the most demanding works from Regondi and Mertz. Also some influenced from other instruments can be found in his compositions.

- So-called glissando: This is a harp effect, similar in the *Invocation y Danza* by Rodrigo. The index-finger crosses the strings to create the harp-like effect.
- So-called pizzicato: There is a section where the little finger of the left hand creates tones while on the other hand harmonics occur. This derives from the violin, e. g. Paganini or Sarasate use such left-hand pizzicati.

- We all know the tremolo used by Regondi up to the forth string. In one of the Dubez mss. I discovered a tremolo using the A-string.

Maybe the decline of the guitar is to explain similar to the decline of the Viola da Gamba one hundred years earlier. The music for this instrument was developed in a degree of demanding techniques that only a few virtuosos were capable to realize. A parallel situation?

Let me add some excerpt from the sources.

Eduard Hanslick, *Geschichte des Concertwesens . . .*, adds, that the time

[. . .] *wo man Gitarre=Konzerte frequentier[e], [. . .] vorüber sei, da schon der berühmte Legnani seine Rechnung hier Wien nicht gefunden habe, dass dies dürftige Instrument gar nicht in's Konzert gehöre und nur die Mode ein Begleitungs=Instrument [. . .] zum Con- cert=Instrument erheben könne.* The period in which guitar-concertos were attended has passed . . . since the famous Legnani did not [not literally] did not find a situation to do something for a living . . .

»Zwei Instrumente, deren eines jetzt gänzlich, das andere nahezu gänzlich aus dem Concertsaal verschwunden ist, durften in den ersten Decennien dieses Jahrhunderts kaum in einer Concertsaison fehlen: die *H a r f e* und die *G u i t a r r e*.« Two instruments which were present in nearly everyday concerts in the course of the first decades of the century were the harp and the guitar. I think that statements concerning the harp could be applied to describe the situation of the guitar and vice versa.

Wiener Zither-Journal, 1883/5

»[. . .] *der erste und leider auch der letzte Autokrat der unberechtigterweise aus der „Mode“ gekommenen G u i t a r r e, die nach ihm kaum mehr einen Interpreten finden dürfte. Giuliani (sic), der Liszt der Gitarre, 1820 in Wien gestorben, ist in ihm wiedererstanden [. . .]*«

. . . first ranks and also the last autocrate of the unfashionable guitar, which hardly might not find an interpret afterwards, Giuliani, the Liszt of the guitar, died 1820 in Vienna, did resuscitate in him.

*The last autocrate* is a similar verbalizing to the well known *Der letzte Virtuose*, attributed to Eduard Bayer in the biographical article by his son in 1919. (The origin maybe from *The last of the Mohicans* by J. Fennimore Cooper, a part of that what we call world-literature)

Decker-Schenk in his tutor from 1892 states:

»[. . .] *Es giebt zwar sehr gute Schulen für die Gitarre, von Giuliani, Carulli, Carcassi, Nava, doch sind dieselben einesteils zu lang, und andererseits zu ermüdend [. . .] Dieser Übelstand soll nun dadurch beseitigt werden, welche dem Schüler leicht begreiflich [. . .] und angenehm sein soll [. . .] seit Mitte des [19.] Jahrhunderts vernachlässigt worden sei, in letzterer Zeit wieder mit neue[r] Lust viel gespielt«*

There are a lot of tutors but these a boring [in the sense of demanding in a too high degree – similar to Sor's famous statement: . . . one has to do something for a living.]

That shows on the one hand, that what Hanslick stated: a less demanding repertory, above all in terms of musical sense. Remarkable is that Decker-Schenk states that the guitar has been neglected since the middle of the century and that this is going to change.

Hanslick in: *Aus meinem Leben*:

*ernstere Musikfreund . . . von der Herrschaft des Virtuositums und der äußerlichen Bravour übersättigt gewesen „wie die Trän' von der Zwiebel“* the serious friend of music has been disgusted from superficial bravura “like the tear from the onion”

That shows that the guitar was not part of the more demanding development in the common music history since 1850. Let us read the following text which underlines Hanslick's point of view:

Eduard Schön in der Wiener Zeitung Konzert, C. J. Mertz, 1851

»[. . . ] Ein Gitarrekonzert in unserer Zeit, wo die Musik zu massenhafter Entwicklung dränge und die rauschendsten Effekte des Pianoforte an gleichgültigen Ohren vorüberziehen, scheint uns fast ein Anachronismus. In Regondi's Glanzperiode war ein Publikum noch im Stande, sich an bloßer Kunstfertigkeit zu begeistern; allein mit Recht verlangt die vorgerückte Kunstanschauung unserer Tage in der vollendeten Form auch den unverkümmerten Gehalt des musikalischen Gedankens. Ungünstiger für den *s e l b s t s t ä n d i g e n* Ausdruck der Empfindung, des Gesanges, worin doch eben das Wesen der Musik ruht, kann kaum ein anderes Instrument erdacht sein als der „Zupfkasten“ [. . . ] Ein treffliches Begleitinstrument [. . . ]«

A guitar concerto in our time . . . that something like an anachronism . . . [an instrument] could not be more unappropriate to the needs of cantabile and espressivo than the Zupfkasten . . . a good instrument for accompaniment.

Heinrich Adami, Wiener Theater-Zeitung, who reviewed in an enthusiastic manner Regondi's concerts from 1840/41:

»[. . . ] besonders gelang es dem Concertgeber, mit seinen Vorträgen die Aufmerksamkeit auf sich zu ziehen. Das von ihm erfundene Instrument ist eine neuartige Gitarre, welche einen viel helleren und volleren Ton entwickelt, als die bisher bekannten einfachen Instrumente dieser Art. Herr D u b e z behandelt dasselbe mit vieler Technik und Gewandtheit, sein Vortrag ist rein und gefühlvoll, die Tonfärbung delicat und anmuthig, nur im Forte wäre einige Mäßigung wünschenswerth. Auch das Melophon spielte er meisterhaft, besonders rein und klar treten Piano und Crescendo hervor [. . . ]«

## Some representative Sources

Some of the sources are mentioned by Zuth in an article „Der Nachlass des Johann Dubez“ (Tjr Estate of J. D.) in: *Muse des Saitenspiels*, S. 72-78, Bad Honnef 1931 All the documents from authorities, letters such as the correspondence with the Grand Duke Fr. Fr. II of Mecklenburg-Schwerin I could check show that Zuth is a very reliable scholar. Zuth's estate is held in a cellar of the University in Vienna, Alexander Mayer explored these documents (historical sheet music, documents . . . ) but did not find documents from the estate of Dubez. Sheet music survived in the National Library in Vienna, letters survived in the State Archive of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Schwerin, a letter from Franz Liszt to Anna in the Stiftung Klassik Weimar. Letters mentioning Dubez could be found in some collections and libraries in Vienna, also further documents in some archives, e. g. in State Archive of Lower Austria.