

## **The Connection between Henry Cowell's New Music Society and Hungarian Composers of the Young Generation in the Twenties**

The latest research reveals, that for the young generation of composers after Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, it was a great urge to connect to the international scene of New Music and to gain recognition outside Hungary. In the earliest phase of their career in the twenties, composers Pál Kadosa, István Szelényi, Ferenc Szabó und Imre Weisshaus were looking for contacts and possibilities to perform their works abroad. Indeed, these four composers did not have to wait long before they got acknowledged by two important fora — Henry Cowell's *New Music Society (NMS)* in California, as well as by the *International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM)* in Europe — as promising young talents. Their works were integrated into the programs of the *ISCM* festivals and the concerts of the *NMS*. By the contacts that arised, opened up the possibility to network and exchange ideas with other contemporary composers. The connections abroad were maintained until the mid-thirties and signalized, that the composers and their compositions were important for contemporary developments in music.

This study aims to explore and describe the connection of the composers Pál Kadosa, István Szelényi, Ferenc Szabó and Imre Weisshaus to Henry Cowell and his ultra modern movement in the twenties and to some extent to the thirties. The contact with Henry Cowell's New Music Society was established within the barely known 'institutional' framework offered by the avant-garde Új Föld Society,<sup>1</sup> and took place during the important period from 1926 to early 1930. In that time the four composers were particularly closely associated with the Hungarian avant-garde scene. The research showed that this artistic tie was kept in evidence by Cowell at least until the fifties. Furthermore, Henry Cowell's musical aspirations had a direct impact on the younger generation of Hungarian composers, that is proven by several compositions of Szelényi and Kadosa. This latter fact deserves attention, but due to the different scope of this study, it can only provide hints to this immediate influence.

The few letters of Szelényi and Kadosa in the Henry Cowell-Collection of the New York Public Library,<sup>2</sup> which have not yet been explored by music research, suggest a lively exchange between Cowell and the composers in the years of 1926 and 1927. Besides that, another new source was evaluated, the Pál Kadosa's legacy in which there are concert dates and exact programs with the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Új Föld* [New Terrain] is known as an avant-garde Journal that was founded by Zsigmond Remenyik and Aladár Tamás. It had altogether three issues: No.1-3., February, March and April 1927. Nevertheless, *Új Föld* is mentioned in some sources as a Society, see especially the review: Iván Hevesy: *Új Föld* in *Nyugat*, [The West] 1926. vo.19. no.11. The *Új Föld* Society started its activity 1926 in the form of literary and musical performance events.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Cowell Collection, Music Research Division, New York Public Library.

Hungarian composers' works performed in California and on the east coast of the USA to be found.<sup>3</sup> Some of them are published here for the first time. In addition, the evaluation of the concert programs and press clipping preserved in the Kadosa-estate<sup>4</sup> and the letters from Kadosa and Szelényi to Henry Cowell – there are two letters from Kadosa<sup>5</sup> and nine letters from Szelényi<sup>6</sup> – will provide new insights, that allow the publications on Cowell in the twenties, as well as performances his music in Hungary to be interpreted as part of the connection between Budapest and California.

### I. The link between Henry Cowell's New Music Society and Új Föld Society

Although Henry Cowell's connection to Budapest is mentioned by Rita H. Mead<sup>7</sup> and Joel Sachs<sup>8</sup> in their studies on Cowell, it always remained outside the focus of interest. The researchers of Cowell do not attach great importance to the contact with the Hungarian composers, which could have been also due to the previously difficult access to the research materials.

The Cowell-monographs contains only occasional information on Henry Cowell's stay in Budapest in 1926. Joel Sachs, the author of the most recent Cowell monograph mentions Henry Cowell's visit to Budapest only in the context of his composer's recital end of April 1926.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand Rita H. Mead does not mention his concert, but the fact, that Cowell visited Budapest and met Imre Weissshaus there.<sup>10</sup> In the investigations of the New York-circle around Aaron Copland and Nicolas Slonimsky in Carol J. Oja's study, however, the names of the young Hungarian composers are set in the following context:

Copland and Sessions made it clear that they recognized the importance of international exposure. And in New York they featured composers who were either recent immigrants or passing visitors. A partial list of such figures included Vladimir Dukelsky (Vernon Duke), Nino Rota (then studying at the Curtis Institute), Pál Kadosa and István Szelényi (both Hungarian pupils of Kodály who had captured the interest of Henry Cowell), Nicolai Lopatnikoff (a Russian then living in Berlin), and Imre Weissshaus (a Hungarian pupil of Bartók).<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Pál Kadosa-estate in the Collection of the Musicological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, MTA-ZTI, Archives for 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>th</sup> Century Hungarian Music.

<sup>4</sup> Archives for 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>th</sup> Century Hungarian Music, MTA-ZTI [Hungarian Academy of Sciences].

<sup>5</sup> NYPL Cowell-Collection Box 10, Folder 16

<sup>6</sup> NYPL Cowell-Collection Box 15, Folder 19

<sup>7</sup> Rita H. Mead, *Henry Cowell's New Music 1925-1936*. The Society, the Music Editions, and the Recordings. (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1978)

<sup>8</sup> Joel Sachs, *Henry Cowell: A Man Made of Music*. (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2012)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 140-141.

<sup>10</sup> Rita Mead, *Henry Cowell's New Music*, 381.

<sup>11</sup> Carol J. Oja, *Celebrating the Copland-Sessions Concerts*. Online publication: [http://www.americancomposers.org/copland\\_sessions\\_oja.htm](http://www.americancomposers.org/copland_sessions_oja.htm) access: 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2019

The aspect of internationality and the importance of connections to Europe were even more significant for Cowell than for A. Copland and N. Slonimsky. Beyond that fact, Cowell's keen interest in the new generation of Hungarian composers is demonstrated by the newspaper articles he wrote about them and their music. In these written comments on their music he intended to portray the young Hungarian composers as something extraordinary.<sup>12</sup> Only a particular artistic interest in compositions of Kadosa, Szelényi und Weisshaus can explain, why Cowell invited the composers to the General Advisory Board of the *NMS* and named *Új Föld* as a partner institution of the society. In his announcement to the 1927/28 season Cowell emphasizes the importance of the exchange between the *NMS* and its partner organisations:

Each year THE NEW MUSIC SOCIETY sends a selection of compositions by Americans to the following organisations, with a view of possible production, and receives from them in turn the latest works by composers in their respective countries:<sup>13</sup>

The Hungarian journal *Új Föld*, but also the Berlin based *November Group* are listed further in the description of the aims of the society together with other five partner organisations the of *NMS* in London, Paris, Warsaw, Prague and Brno.<sup>14</sup> It deserves attention, that in this period out of seventeen members of the General Advisory Board consisting composers, five were Hungarians, among others Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály.

Henry Cowell first visited Europe in 1923 and attracted public attention by using tone clusters and direct manipulation of the piano sides.<sup>15</sup> His concert series began in Munich in the Herkules Hall and continued in London, Paris, Berlin and Vienna. On his second visit to Europe, he extended the tour to Central Europe and according to Joel Sachs, concerts took place in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.<sup>16</sup> It was proofed, that Cowell was in contact with Bartók,<sup>17</sup> who tried to discourage Cowell from travelling to Budapest and playing in front of an probably empty hall with little publicity.<sup>18</sup> But the concert was set for the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1926 in the main hall of the Academy of Music – following the concerts in Vienna on the 21<sup>th</sup> of April and in Bratislava on the

---

<sup>12</sup> *Daily Palo Alto Times* Mai 13, 1927 (vo.22. no. 122) and *Musical America* Juni 4, 1927, 11

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Rita H. Mead, *Henry Cowell's New Music 1925-1936*, 56.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* The partner organisations named by Cowell: The Society of Contemporary Music of London, The Société Indépendente of Paris, The Polish Artistic Club of Warsaw, The Modern Composer's Guild of Prague, The Moravian Composer's Society of Brun.

<sup>15</sup> Joel Sachs, *Henry Cowell*, 112 ff

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 138 ff. Henry Cowell played on March 29, 1926 in the organisation of the Polish Artistic Club in Warsaw, in Prague in the organisation of the Modern Composer's Guild of Prague, in Brno in the organisation of the Association of Moravian Composers.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 120-121

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 140

22<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>th</sup> of April. Joel Sachs believes that the concert in Budapest must have been financed by Cowell himself.<sup>19</sup> However, it cannot be ruled out that Cowell composer's evening in Budapest might have come about with the support of the Új Föld Society. Upon his return to California three other organisations — as well as the *Új Föld* —, with whose help Cowell gave his concerts in Warsaw, Prague and Brno, were appointed by him like partner organisations of the *NMS*. It is unlikely that, despite Bartók's warning, Cowell would have organized and financed a concert in Budapest himself and only came into contact with the Új Föld Society on location in Budapest. It is worth mentioning that in 1926 *Új Föld* held its presentation evenings in the premises of the Academy of Music, where Cowell's concert also took place.

There is very little known about Új Föld Society and its activities and there is no information which would provide help to answer the open questions about Henry Cowell's first interest on it. The journal *Új Föld* [New Terrain], published the first time in February 1927, is known for concentrating a certain intellectual circle of the avant-garde around itself. The subtitle of the journal reveals, that it intended to embrace new all-encompassing concepts of different art genres and modern life: „New Terrain. The achievements of the new spirit in the works of literature, music, theatre, technology and industry.“<sup>20</sup> As it will be specified later on, at the presentation evenings of the society, that took place already in April 1926, compositions were shown with other avant-garde performances, up to pure musical events.

The only documentation of the Új Föld Society and its activities are the published issues of the journal *Új Föld* and the programs of its presentation evenings. One learns solely from a review by Sándor Jemnitz in the newspaper *Népszava*, that Imre Weissshaus and István Szelényi were considered to be the “musical directors” of the *Új Föld*.<sup>21</sup> The other two composers, Pál Kadosa and Ferenc Szabó were regularly represented at the *Új Föld*-evenings with their compositions.<sup>22</sup> Sándor Jemnitz welcomed this endeavor in his critique and took a stand alongside the composers around *Új Föld*, who in his opinion were completely on their own as interpreters of foreign contemporary music in Hungary: "Only this enthusiastic, young circle of musicians gathering around the Journal

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Front page of *Új Föld*, February 1927, vo.1., no.1.

<sup>21</sup> Sándor Jemnitz, „Review of the II. Music evening of the Új Föld“, *Népszava* March 9., 1927 (vo.55. no.55.), 7

<sup>22</sup> Ferenc Szabó's *Serenade* shows its time-related character especially when it is associated with the performance framework. The *Serenade*, or one of its draft, was first performed on the Új Föld-evening on the 23th of October 1926 as music to accompany Aladár Tamás' poem *Üveglábakon jár a szél* [The Wind Goes on Glass Legs], in which a chorus and the movement artist Magda Förstner took part in the artistic multilayered production. Productions based on the combination of poetry and the movement-art were very common in avant-garde performances. Their combination with a contemporary composition, however, was rare.

ensures the international exchange."<sup>23</sup>

The weight the musical contributions had at the presentation evenings and in the printed issues of *Új Föld* is notable. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1926 for example, István Szelényi offered a piano recital during the first musical evening in the great hall of the Academy of Music. The announced program "The Fruits of Jazz"<sup>24</sup> presented compositions combining elements of jazz and new music, as well as piano works by C. Debussy, F. Poulenc, P. Hindemith, E. Toch, A. Schönberg, P.A. Pisk, E. Welles, L. Gruenberg, E. Bloch, K. Szymanovszky, A.N. Skrjabin and A. Casella. The concert was complemented by introduction of the music aesthete Antal Molnár. Sándor Jemnitz again praised Szelényi in his critique, this time as a pianist: he is an enthusiastic "propagator" and presents a program with the "enlightening" intention of bridging Hungary's fifteen-year delay in the reception of contemporary music.<sup>25</sup>

Soon after this concert, in its January edition in 1927, *Zenei Szemle* [Musical Review] announced Szelényi's intention to begin a series of performances of modern chamber music.<sup>26</sup> On page 99. of the same issue of the journal, a review of Arnold Bax's *Five Irish Songs* was also published, which was included in the program of the first and unfortunately at the same time last concert of the planned performance series. The realization of the chamber music concert was once again connected with the *Új Föld*, as it was scheduled as its 'Second Musical Evening' on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 1927.

Another indication of musical background of the journal *Új Föld* is the publication of an open letter to the Ministry of Culture in the interest of modern music in Hungary in its first programmatic number,<sup>27</sup> written by the Preparatory Committee of the Association of Modern Hungarian Musicians [Modern Magyar Muzsikusok], whose founders became later Szelényi, Kadosa and Szabó. But the fact alone, that *Új Föld* was named as the NMS's point of contact, greatly enhances the role of this Hungarian avant-garde Journal for the musicology, as it was previously only known for its literary activities.

The circumstances under which Cowell and the circle of the composers around *Új Föld* got to know each other remains in the hidden. According to a newspaper report, published after Weissshaus' first tour in the U.S.A., Cowell and his patron, Mrs. E.F. Walton met Imre Weissshaus in

---

<sup>23</sup> Sándor Jemnitz, "Review of the II. Music Evening of the Új Föld" *Népszava* March 9, 1927. [csak ez az *Új Föld* köré gyülekező, lelkes, fiatal zenésztábor látja majd el a nemzetközi összekötő szolgálatot]

<sup>24</sup> *Népszava* November 10, 1926 (vo.54. no.255.), 9.

<sup>25</sup> Sándor Jemnitz, "Review" *Népszava* November 14, 1926 (vo.54. no.259.), 9.

<sup>26</sup> *Zenei Szemle* [Musical Review] Januar 1927 (vo.11. no.3.), 98.

<sup>27</sup> "Nyílt levél a kultuszminisztériumhoz, a "Rózsavölgyi és Tsa" és a "Rozsnyai K." zeneműkiadó cégekhez". *Új Föld* February 1927 (vo.1.no1), 30-31.

Budapest in 1926,<sup>28</sup> and invited him to a concert tour already during his stay. Rita H. Mead refers just only to an incomplete newspaper quotation in this question.<sup>29</sup> A further assumption is, that a connecting link between Cowell and Weissshaus may have been Bartók himself, who was in contact with both composers, and both of them enjoyed Bartók's support. Bartók provided Weissshaus a letter of recommendation, that Weissshaus used in the following developments and handed in to Mrs. E.F. Walton, the "personal representative" for the tour:

"I hereby certify that Mr Imre Weissshaus, who has been a pupil of mine, is a most excellent pianist, and, as such, I most highly recommend him."

BELA BARTOK<sup>30</sup>

Another possible link between Weissshaus and Cowell could be the city Berlin with its avant-garde artistic circles. Weissshaus made a name with his concerts in Berlin in advanced musical circles since 1925. His career began at the performances of *Sturm*<sup>31</sup> and the *November Group*,<sup>32</sup> where he presented — barely twenty years old — compositions by György Kósa, Pál Kadosa and István Szelényi. Cowell was also in closer contact with the *November Group*, and it could have happened that the artists' association was an intermediary medium that supported Cowell in his quest to explore interesting musical developments in Europe.

It is therefore impossible to determine exactly, what connections led Cowell to Weissshaus, or to *Új Föld* to Budapest. Weissshaus mediated between Cowell and the other composers for a longer time. As a pianist he remained devoted to Kadosa, Szelényi and Szabó as well as to Cowell and his circle and kept their compositions in his repertoire, while he mainly performed abroad and made a career as an interpreter of modern music until into the thirties. Szelényi considered Weissshaus later on as the representative of the Hungarian composers' group on this occasion. When Weissshaus accepted Cowell's invitation to the USA, Szelényi commented on his guest appearance Cowell as follows: "And I'm sure that he will do his best for us Hungarians in America".<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> *Újság* (January 17, 1928) The newspaper article also reports about Weissshaus's concerts in the USA and their great success. The author of the articles quotes Dane Rudhyer's article on critique of neoclassicism and on the Hungarian composers as the hope bearers "in the wasteland of European music". Weissshaus' specially conceived musical scale will also be published here.

<sup>29</sup> Rita H. Mead, *Henry Cowell's New Music* 1925-36, 57.

<sup>30</sup> Flyer from Mrs. E.F. Walton's agency. Bartók's recommendation is dated November 1926, see Kadosa-estate

<sup>31</sup> A program of the art exhibition *Sturm* has been preserved in the Kadosa-estate. At his piano recital March 6., 1925, Weissshaus played works by Bartók, Kodály, Szelényi, Kósa and Kadosa.

<sup>32</sup> Rudolf Kastner, "Review on a second *Sturm* concert *Berliner Morgenpost*, April 12, 1925. Kasnter announces that in autumn 1925 Weissshaus will again be performing compositions by Kadosa, Szelényi, Kósa and Weissshaus in Berlin as a guest of the *November Group*. The newspaper clipping in Kadosa-estate refers to an IGNM invitation from Weissshaus to Berlin and talks about "a series of concerts" there, see: *Muzsika*, February 18, 1926.

<sup>33</sup> Letter, István Szelényi's to Henry Cowell, December 9, 1927. NYPL Henry Cowell Collection, Box 15. Folder 19.

### **I.1.Meeting in Budapest**

However, it was not only Imre Weissshaus who had the opportunity to meet and get to know Henry Cowell personally in Budapest, as the above-mentioned newspaper article shows. The other composers were able to make use of his presence in Budapest at the time of establishing personal contact as well. Rita H. Mead could only make one assumption to justify, why these composers were listed in the Season of 1926/27 in the General Advisory Board of the New Music Society: "Kadosa, Kodaly, Georges Migot, Szelényi, Weissshaus were of composers whom Cowell had undoubtedly met during his European tour the previous year."<sup>34</sup>

The evaluated correspondence between Cowell and the composers brings clear results in this question and proves Rita H. Mead's assumption that István Szelényi and Pál Kadosa also met Cowell in Budapest. Cowell's various statements in his articles, which will be the subject of this study, also testify about the personal confrontation with the individuality of the circle of young composers.

The earliest letter from Szelényi to Cowell in the Cowell Collection of New York Public Library is dated the 28th of September 1926 and was signed by István Szelényi also in the name of Pál Kadosa and Imre Weissshaus: „We all three send you our greetings and hope you to have a good success to a good work.“<sup>35</sup> Further letters were also signed in the names of all three composers, as was the letter of 9<sup>th</sup> of February 1927.<sup>36</sup> Szelényi's phrasing in a letter dated much later indicates, that the composers even might had used Cowell's stay in Budapest for several days of consultation. In 1959, Szelényi in his reply to Cowell express himself as follows: "It was very kind of you, to remember me and the days we spent together so many years ago".<sup>37</sup> This fact proves that Kadosa, Szelényi and Weissshaus made personal contact with Cowell at the same time in Budapest and probably had the possibility for joint discussions.

### **I.2. Musical exchange**

Other dated and undated letters document the correspondence that served to produce several newspaper articles and publications both for Henry Cowell and about him in Hungary. Performances of Cowell's works in Budapest were also planned, prepared and communicated in writing. The letters testify about a mutual interest in new compositions and organisational activity between California and Budapest.

---

<sup>34</sup> Rita H. Mead, *Henry Cowell's New Music 1925-36*, 55.

<sup>35</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, September 28, 1926.

<sup>36</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, February 9, 1927.

<sup>37</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, 1959.

In his letter, dated 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1926, Szelényi informs Cowell about musical news and about the compositional progress he had made.<sup>38</sup> He reports on his completed Duo for violin and cello and “small works for piano”.<sup>39</sup> The letter reveals, that Szelényi intended to send manuscripts of Kadosa’s piano sonata<sup>40</sup> and his own II. Symphony in the following week to Cowell. Szelényi, who was an excellent pianist – similarly to Kadosa and Weissshaus - asks for Cowell’s permission in this letter to include his composition for piano *Dynamic Motion* in his repertoire. Szelényi doesn't write it explicitly, but probably this request was to interpret as an inquire for Cowell's sheet music for this work. One learns that Szelényi has already played the piano piece *What's this* and was practicing *Advertising*. This fact clearly proves Szelényi's interest in Cowell's works for piano. In Szelényi’s opinion it is more difficult to play these pieces than the challenging compositions of Weissshaus.<sup>41</sup> The letter also contains a concrete reference to the personal meeting of Cowell and Szelényi in Budapest in 1926. At the point where Szelényi reports that he had completed composing his II. Symphony for symphony orchestra,<sup>42</sup> he recalls having previously shown it to Cowell in Budapest.

An accompanying note to a postal item<sup>43</sup> gives information about that Szelényi sent Kadosa's I. Piano Sonata Op.7 to Cowell in fact. Szelényi writes again about some compositional progress, as he is about just to finish work on his III. Piano Sonata.<sup>44</sup> Szelényi’s topic is about the usage of dissonances in this note and in this sense, he declares Kadosa’s Sonata<sup>45</sup> a "very remarkable" composition. He tells in detail about his own efforts in the composition of the III. Piano Sonata to arrive at a "pure style" through the regular use of the sound images of the dissonances. Szelényi mentions a new compositional method which he intends to realize in this piece and wants to present similar results in several compositions in the future. Even more attention should be paid to the fact, that the first performance of Kadosa’s I. Piano Sonate Op.7 took place in California later end of 1927. This composition in its original form of 1926 indicates the connection to Cowell and his influence on the composer using the composition theory of dissonant counterpoint. Szelényi wrote:

“Here I send you the sonata of mine, what I promised and a very remarkable sonata of

---

<sup>38</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, September 28, 1926.

<sup>39</sup> II. Duo for violin and cello (1926), MS, 23 pp.

<sup>40</sup> It is about the I. Piano Sonata Op.7, that was performed during the first tour of Imre Weissshaus in California.

<sup>41</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, September 28, 1926.

<sup>42</sup> Szelényi hoped that the Budapest Philharmonic will play two parts of his *II. Symphony* in February 1927.

<sup>43</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, end of January 1927.

<sup>44</sup> The MS of the III. piano sonata is considered lost.

<sup>45</sup> Pál Kadosa’s I. Piano Sonata op.7 dated with 1926.

Kadosa. Now I begun to work in a more pure (sic!) style, as I try now the sonorities of the dissonances regularly. Very soon will I send you some of the compositions, especially my III. Sonata for the piano.

I. Sz.<sup>46</sup>

It is also possible to gain meaningful information about organisational processes from Szelényi's letters. At the beginning of the year 1927, Szelényi began to plan the chamber music concert mentioned earlier for the Hungarian *Zenei Szemle* [Musical Review], which took place finally as an event of *Új Föld* on 6<sup>th</sup> of March.<sup>47</sup> On this occasion Szelényi asks Cowell – the postmark could be read as 22<sup>th</sup> of January 1927 – to send urgently chamber music works:

If you can send me some composition of yours or of your friends, I would be very glad to place it on the program. The works can be written for strings, wood or bras instruments, but nor more then 7-8 can be used. Songs also. If I get them until the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, I can certainly use them. Also perhaps a little later. Send them immediately please!<sup>48</sup>

It seems from the letter, that Szelényi had again sent some unknown compositions of his and that of Kadosa to Cowell: “I have sent the manuscripts from myself and Kadosa [...]”.<sup>49</sup>

The next letter from Szelényi reveals that Cowell's shipment arrived in Budapest somewhat late. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of February, Szelényi answer to Cowell, that he can no longer include the works in the program in March. At the same time, he offers a substitute date for a performance, the 9<sup>th</sup> of April.<sup>50</sup> He assures Cowell that outstanding musicians will be available for the concerts.

The first announcement of the concert program originated from Antal Molnár music aesthete in the March edition of *Új Föld*.<sup>51</sup> His compilation of works does not include any composition of Cowell.<sup>52</sup> A review of Sándor Jemnitz in *Népszava* about the *Új Föld*-concert on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March documents, however, that a piece by Cowell was set to the program. Jemnitz emphasizes in his article that all compositions of the chamber music evening could not be heard anywhere else and mentions that a piece by Henry Cowell was inserted at the end of the program. He criticizes the composition as an insignificant attempt and whose title was not worth mentioning.<sup>53</sup> Only a concert program preserved in the Szelényi-estate provides exact information about the Cowell work in question.<sup>54</sup> In addition to F. Poulenc's *Rhapsody Negre*, A. Berg's *Two Pieces for Clarinet and*

---

<sup>46</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, end of January 1927.

<sup>47</sup> Antal Molnár, Concert announcement, *Új Föld* (March 1927) vo.1. no.2., 53.

<sup>48</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Cowell on the 22-29<sup>th</sup> of January 1927 Cowell-Collection NYPL

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, 9. February 1927.

<sup>51</sup> Antal Molnár, “Concert announcement”, *Új Föld*, März 1927, (vo.1. no.2.), 53.

<sup>52</sup> Sándor Jemnitz, “Review of the II. Musical Event of *Új Föld*”, März 9, 1927 (vo.55. no.55.), 7.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Henry Cowell, Andante from the String quartet no.1.(Pedantic) 1916. See Szelényi-estate in possession of Cornelia Szelenyi

*Piano*, I. Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for String Quartet*, A. Honegger's F-Major Rhapsody, A.v. Webern's *Three Pieces for Violin and Piano*,<sup>55</sup> E.Bloch's Piano Quintet No.1. and two songs each by A. Schönberg, I. Stravinsky<sup>56</sup> and A. Bax, Henry Cowell's Andante, the second movement of his String quartet No.1 was performed. István Szelényi and Imre Weisshaus<sup>57</sup> both played the piano that evening.

## Publications

In his letter from 9<sup>th</sup> of February, Szelényi mentions for the first-time publications concerning Henry Cowell. The first publication on Henry Cowell in Hungary appeared in February 1927 in the first number of *Új Föld*.<sup>58</sup> The unknown author of the article rates Henry Cowell as one of the most progressive composers of his time. It also explains the novel use of the piano, caused by "such natural changes in musical style that occur from time to time in the history of music".<sup>59</sup> According to the author, Cowell places increased demands on the instrument, which are reflected in the sound effects, new possibilities for sound development are discovered, and new colours enrich the expressiveness of the instrument. In the compositions Cowell's, brilliant overtone combinations alternate with shrill, "barbaric" "half-arm chords", musically, however, Cowell's results can not be considered one hundred percent convincing, says the author. At this point, the compositions *Dynamic Motion* and *What's this* are rated as particularly valuable.<sup>60</sup>

Almost simultaneously with the article in *Új Föld* Szelényi published a review in the February/March 1927 edition of *Zenei Szemle*<sup>61</sup> [Musical Review] on Cowell's piano piece *Dynamic Motion* on the occasion of its edition by Breitkopf&Härtel. This article of Szelényi documents his preoccupation with *Dynamic motion*. He describes the piece as very demanding: "it would, however, be worth the effort sitting together with it":<sup>62</sup>

The composition is one of the absolute values of the modern music and it is a pity for us, that it is made much more for reading as for playing, as the lower arm-technic gives an immense task to the performers. But it is true, that this composition deserves all labor.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> From A.v.Webern: Four Pieces for Violin and Piano Op.7.

<sup>56</sup> Bence Szabolcsi, "Modern külföldi kamarazene" [Modern foreign Chamber Music] *Pesti Napló*, März 8, 1927 (vo.78. no.54), 14. The program included two Schönberg songs after Stefan George from the song cycle *Das hängende Garten* op. 15.

<sup>57</sup> Sándor Jemnitz, "Review of the II. Musical Event of *Új Föld*", 7.

<sup>58</sup> (-Ó-c.), "Henry Cowell", *Új Föld*, February 1927 (vo.1. no.1), 18.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> István Szelényi, "Dynamic Motion" *Zenei Szeme*, February-March 1927 (vo. IX. no. IV-V.), 147.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

In the same number of the journal *Zenei Szemle* the "foundation" of the New Music Society is announced. Although the Society had existed since 1925, Cowell's return from Europe brought a new impetus to international cooperation.<sup>64</sup> The occasion for Szelényi's announcement was probably the establishment of a Non Resident Advisory Board of the *NMS*,<sup>65</sup> in which the names Bartók, Kodály, Kadosa, Szelényi and Weissshaus were named as members – as mentioned earlier.<sup>66</sup> In this article, Szelényi describes the Californian society's goal of presenting and performing compositions with the most progressive tendencies and spreading the concept of new music. The date of the first concert of the *NMS* in the 1926/27 season on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1926 with compositions by Cowell, Ruggles and Casella is also noticed here retrospectively. The printed program announcement of the *NMS*,<sup>67</sup> that contains already the 15 names mentioned in the "Non Resident Advisory Board" is remained likewise preserved in the Kadosa-estate. It can be assumed that it was personally sent by Cowell to make the concert public in Budapest.

István Szelényi personally translated both publications in *Új Föld* and *Zenei Szemle* about Cowell's works and about the *NMS* and, at Cowell's request, sent them to California, together with six copies of *Új Föld*<sup>68</sup>. Szelényi mentions, that Cowell sent money for the issues in advance, which “would not have been necessary”.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> From then on, Cowell's New Music Society was regarded as a co-organisation of ISCM.

<sup>65</sup> The Flyer of the NMS sent out during early summer 1927 announced the same names under General advisory board, see Rita H. Mead, Henry Cowell's New Music, 55.

<sup>66</sup> “Kaliforniai Új Zene-Egyesület” *Zenei Szemle*, February-March (vo. IX. no. IV-V.), 1927, 149.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> *Új Föld* is mentioned in the catalogue of Henry Cowell's works: William Lichtenwanger, The Music of Henry Cowell, A Descriptive Catalog, 76. Online publication:

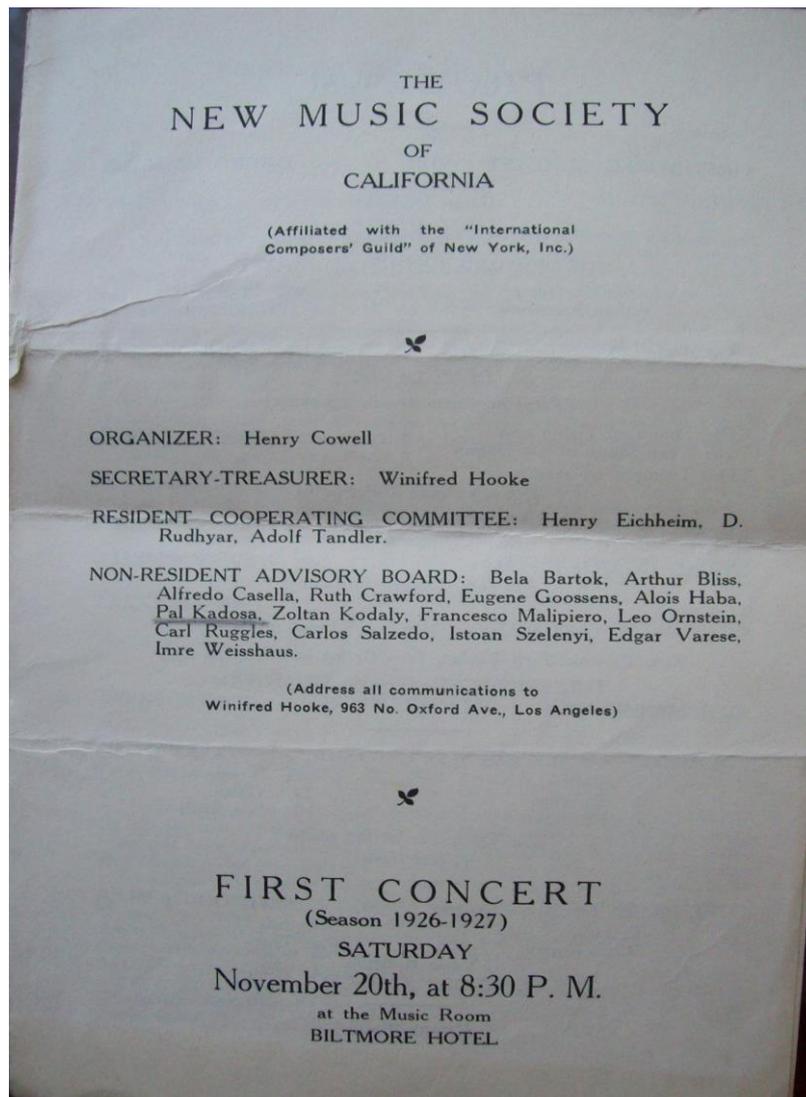
<http://www.henrycowell.org/hc/sf002/catalogNp46.cfm?CFID=1651809&CFTOKEN=1ca84ac0f14cd1ea-0A1F283E-BE9A-7D4B-76E811044D4B2D95> access: March 10, 2019

<sup>69</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, 27. September 1927.

Szerző: Andrea van der Smissen

Megjelenés helye, ideje: MTA BTK ZTI 20–21. Századi Magyar Zenei Archívum, 2019

DOI: 10.23714/mza.10010\_MZA



1.Ill.no1: The front page of the program announcement der NMS in Kadosa-estate

Very soon after the publications on Cowell, an article written by Cowell on contemporary American composers entitled *Modern American Composers* appeared in *Új Föld* on the 3rd of April 1927.<sup>70</sup> Here, Cowell not only introduces his close colleague to the Hungarian music public, but also tries to provide an overview of the American composer landscape by presenting J. P. Cadmann, John Carpenter, Ernest Bloch, Ch.M. Loeffler, Leo Ornstein, Carl Ruggles, Edgar Varese, Dane Rudhyer, Aron Copland, Ruth Crawford, Louis Gruenberg, G. Gershwin and Jose Carillo in his article.<sup>71</sup> As a summary of the efforts of American composers, Cowell emphasizes that it was the achievement of the past twenty years to bring new musical material to the surface. He sees, the time has come for someone, who could merge this great and rich 'harvest' into a musical stylistic unity. Cowell refers

<sup>70</sup> Henry Cowell, „Modern amerikai zeneszerzők“ *Új Föld* April 1927 (vo.1. no.3.), 62-62.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

to Ruggles, who is most likely to have the tendency to realize the new ideal of New Music in his compositions.

Henry Cowell's article was republished half a year later in *Crescendo* in October 1927, with minor changes and additions by Szelényi.<sup>72</sup> To illustrate this article, István Szelényi had the *Andante* for string quartet printed.<sup>73</sup> Szelényi's supplement in *Crescendo* consists of a short descriptive introduction of Cowell, where he presents him as a composer of the Californian school. Again, Cowell's piano technical innovations, which Szelényi never considers an end in itself, are thematized. Szelényi sees the achievement of his world of sound, the sound cluster, as the result of abstraction, which, in addition to its tone valence, also suggest the "primordial musical matter".<sup>74</sup> Szelényi also points to the psychological-acoustic effect of unusual instruments in Cowell's compositions, such as the "thunder stick", and considers Cowell to be a great master of the modern use of strict dissonance. Finally, the published works of Cowell are listed.

Szelényi proceeded as in the case of other publications and sent the translated article from *Crescendo* and the printed notes of the *Andante* to Cowell.<sup>75</sup> In the same letter<sup>76</sup> Szelényi informed Cowell of his intention to give a lecture entitled "Modern Music Abroad" at the Free Academy of Musicology,<sup>77</sup> where he intended to perform at least one of Cowell's works. At that time, however, he had not yet decided which piano composition Cowell was to perform. The lecture was announced like the article about Cowell also in the October issue of the magazine *Crescendo*.<sup>78</sup> It took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 1927 as part of a series of lectures on music history, music aesthetics and contemporary modern music at the Ernő Fodor Music School, at the meeting place for followers of contemporary music in Budapest.

Szelényi's intention to perform the *Andante* again is evident in his letter to Cowell of 9<sup>th</sup> of December 1927.<sup>79</sup> Szelényi obviously received the rights from Associated Music Publishers Inc. for the second movement of Cowell's Quartet pedantic, and thanks Cowell at this point. "I'll make use

---

<sup>72</sup> Henry Cowell-István Szelényi, "Modern amerikai zeneszerzők" [Modern American Composers] *Crescendo* Oktober 1927 (Vo.2. No. 3.), 9-13.

<sup>73</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, undated.

<sup>74</sup> Henry Cowell-István Szelényi, "Modern amerikai zeneszerzők" *Crescendo* October 1927, 9-12.

<sup>75</sup> There is a miniature print of *Andante* in the Cowell Collection with the recording by Sidney Robertson Cowell: "This 2nd mvmt was printed\_m Ac Hungarian periodical U "6ld[sic!] about 1926 with caption. "Is this a music of the future?" William Lichtenwenger commends the caption and says that the subtitle can only be meant ironically. However, the fact that Kadosa and Szelényi, after getting to know the piece, soon used dissonant counterpoint as a compositional method gives the impression, that for the Hungarian composers the second movement of the Pedantic Quartet (1916) had an inspiring effect. See William Lichtenwanger, *The Music of Henry Cowell, A Descriptive Catalog*, 76.

<sup>76</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, undated.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> *Crescendo* Oktober 1927 (vo. 2.no.3.), 9-12.

<sup>79</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, December 9, 1927.

of it as soon as possible," he writes.<sup>80</sup> Since Weissshaus was in California at that time and completed the concert tour organised by *NMS* and Pro Musica, Szelényi expresses his gratitude that Cowell did so much for Imre Weissshaus. At the end of the letter, Szelényi asks Cowell to inform him about his new works.

Only two letters from Pál Kadosa, who did not speak English, have been preserved in the Cowell Collection in the New York Public Library. Both letters<sup>81</sup> were written during, or immediately after Imre Weissshaus's first California tour at the end of the year 1927 and show the mutual musical interest between Kadosa and Cowell. In one of the undated letters, Kadosa inquires about Cowell's opinion of his more recent compositions, in the interpretation of Weissshaus. It is clear from his letter that Kadosa knew about the publications that Cowell had written about the Hungarian composers for the American press and expresses his gratitude that he had been mentioned in the article. Kadosa writes about his wish to get to know better certain compositions by Cowell and asks for sheet music, most of all the piece *Antinomy*: "The piano piece *Antinomy* wants (sic!) to interest me especially" he writes. From Kadosa's second letter, which is also undated, one learns that the desired compositions by Cowell had apparently arrived and Kadosa thanks him for this.<sup>82</sup> The pieces are "beautiful and interesting", he formulates simply. At the same time, it becomes clear that Pál Kadosa was the first to send his own unknown compositions to California and that Cowell had also expressed a positive opinion about them. Kadosa probably wanted to intensify further the exchange by offering Cowell various publications. He suggested translating Cowell's articles on Hungarian music and the young generation of composers<sup>83</sup> and publishing them in *Crescendo*. In addition, Kadosa wanted to write another publication about Cowell from the rich material received from Weissshaus — consisted of reviews and a list of cities in which Cowell performed in 1927 —, and hand it over to the editor of *Crescendo*. However, for an unknown reason it did not happen, Kadosa's project was not realized.

### **I.3. Concerts with Henry Cowell's Compositions in Budapest**

If one also considers the references to the numerous sheet music items and their exchanges in the preserved letters of the Cowell Collection, one gets the impression of an intensive contact between the *New Music Society* and the circle of young composers. Nevertheless, it is not clear from the researched sources, what was realized by the planned performances of Cowell's works in Budapest.

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Letter, Pál Kadosa to Henry Cowell, undated.

<sup>82</sup> Letter, Pál Kadosa to Henry Cowell, undated.

<sup>83</sup> Henry Cowell, "Interesting Composers Found Among Hungarians" *Daily Palo Alto Times*, Mai 13, 1927 (vo.22. no. 122).

The sources repeatedly point to performance dates of Cowell's works, but unfortunately documented events are hardly to find. On the other hand, it can be stated that the circle of composers around *Új Föld* knew Cowell's compositional aspirations very well and was well informed about the musical development in California despite the distance and the long mail routes in these years. The Hungarian composers and Cowell showed a similar activity potential when it came to organising performances and spreading the ideas of New Music. How far the musical public in Budapest received Cowell' music, which for new music consisted only of a handful of professionals anyway, is another question.

Few of the performances have been documented, like the concert on 6<sup>th</sup> of March 1927, even if Sándor Jemnitz criticized Cowell's *Andante* in his review. Again, in the concert announcement for *Új Föld*'s musical evening on 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1927 in the chamber hall of the Academy of Music, the name Henry Cowell can be found alongside Ferenc Szabó, Pál Kadosa and Imre Weissshaus, who was to play Cowell's unknown piece on the piano. However, the evening's flyer lacks both the name Cowell as composer and Weissshaus as interpreter. The same applies to the program of the evening on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1927, which was almost a repetition of the program of 9<sup>th</sup> of April. Another performance mentioned should be Szelényi's lecture at the Fodor Music School about 'Modern Music Abroad' in November 1927, the content of which is unfortunately not documented, and so one cannot speak concretely about a performance of Cowell's work.

However, based on the sources one can report about a concert, which would not have taken place without the described cooperation between Budapest and California. In the early thirties, Sándor Jemnitz, among others, complained in general about the spatial gain of a reactionary music aesthetic in Europa. He criticized the lack of free spirit and self-confidence in the works, which rather "serve a faithful and submissive imitation of the prescribed clichés".<sup>84</sup> In his opinion, the musical development was stopped by conservatism and "being suspicious for everything that reminds [...] of the fresh tone of the twenties and does not eradicate the strong forward thrust from [our] memory".<sup>85</sup> Though, at least in one case the *II. UMZE*, the Hungarian section of the *ISCM* organized a symphonic concert of unusual large dimensions, reminiscent of the activity of the *Új Föld* in the twenties, both in the support of musical forward tendencies and in the cultivation of transatlantic connections. Especially if one informed about an existing contact between P. Kadosa, I. Szelényi and Henry Cowell and his circle, one associates the guest performance of Nicolas Slonimsky in Budapest with the previous activities of the young composers around *Új Föld*. The

---

<sup>84</sup> Sándor Jemnitz, "UMZE-Hangverseny" [Concert of the Hungarian New Music Society] *Népszava* April 22, 1933 (vo.61. no.91.), 4.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

concert took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1932, in the Great Hall of the Academy of Music, in the organisation of the *II. UMZE* [II. Hungarian New Music Society] and the *Pan American Association of Composers* under the direction of Nicolas Slonimsky, in the sign of ultra modern music in America and Mexico.<sup>86</sup> This guest performance was part of a concert series that took place in Berlin and Paris in 1931, in Budapest in 1932 und in Havana in 1933. Those concerts in Berlin, Paris and in Havana are mentioned by Carol J. Oja in his study about the Copland-Sessions Concerts.<sup>87</sup> The concert in Budapest has not been discovered for the research. The program in Budapest was similar to the other concerts conducted by Slonimsky, as for example in Paris and Berlin,<sup>88</sup> consisting of pieces of the composer of the ultra modern movement around Henry Cowell. In Budapest the compositions were played in the following order: A.Weiss: *American life*, Ch.Ives: II. Suite, A.Roldan: *La rebambaramba*, C.Ruggles: *Men and the Mountain*, H. Cowell: *Synchrony*, C. Chavez: *Energy* and E.Varese: *Intégrales*.<sup>89</sup>

The Hungarian press overtook the term ‘ultra modern’ to describe the musical program in the USA, which was intended to draw attention to the progressive nature of the compositions.<sup>90</sup> The term has been used since the foundation of the *NMS* in relation to its concerts and marked as well the performed works of P. Kadosa, F. Szabó, I. Weisshaus and I. Szelényi in America as early as 1927. The actual ultra modern movement, which later conquered America, was founded by Henry Cowell only in 1928. The connection to Cowell's movement had further advantages for the Hungarian composers as their works could be presented at concerts of Copland-Sessions and Slonimsky on the East Coast of the USA.<sup>91</sup>

#### **I.4. Cowell's influence on Hungarian Composers**

The mutual and long-lasting interest seemed to have been particularly notable between Szelényi and Cowell. The language skills of Szelényi served the closer contact between both composers. In addition to that, his interest in Cowell's compositional technique, which the cluster compositions of Szelényi clearly prove, founded the more intensive exchange with Henry Cowell. The common

---

<sup>86</sup> With the participation of the Magyar Szimfonikus Zenekar [Hungarian Symphonic Orchestra].

<sup>87</sup> Carol J Oja, Celebrating the Coplan-Sessions Concert. [http://www.americancomposers.org/copland\\_sessions\\_oja.htm](http://www.americancomposers.org/copland_sessions_oja.htm) (accessed 26.02.2019)

<sup>88</sup> To compare the concert program: Paris, June 6, 1931: H. Cowell: *Synchrony*, Ch. Ives: *Three Places in New England*, R. Amadeo: *La rebambaramba*, C. Ruggles: *Men and the Mountains* A. White: *American Life* Paris, 11, June 1931: C. Chavez: *Energia*, R. Wallingford: *3 canons for woodwinds*, C. Salzedo: *Préambule et jeux*, E. Varese: *Integrals*, see Carol J. Oja, *Celebratin the Coplan-session Concert*.

<sup>89</sup> Online Concert Database of MTA ZTI Archives for 20th-21th Century Hungarian Music, [http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert\\_Adatlap.asp?kID=291](http://db.zti.hu/koncert/koncert_Adatlap.asp?kID=291)

<sup>90</sup> See press clipping, Kadosa-estate

<sup>91</sup> Flyer, Kadosa-estate

denominator between them was also their uncompromising attitude towards innovation in music in times when backward-looking tendencies seemed to block musical developments for decades. Szelényi was also aware that with his progressive attitude and compositions in the twenties he had taken a further-reaching path in contemporary development. When Cowell, with a great distance in time, contacted him again in spring 1959<sup>92</sup>, Szelényi not only gratefully mention the days spent together, but in his reply he recommends his works, mainly on the compositional period of the interwar period. He recommends *Simultanfonie*, a quintet for piano and string quartet (1938), – one of the first aleatoric compositions with predetermined motifs and time intervals for the individual voices – pieces for orchestra, such as *Dance of the Machines*, *Dance of the Work* (1942) and his oratorio *Virata* (1936), composed based on a text by Stefan Zweig. As the letter from 20<sup>th</sup> of March 1959 of the office confirms, he sent two compositions through the Hungarian Agency for Copy Right Artisjus to Henry Cowell.<sup>93</sup>

Szelényi also owned books by Cowell from the interwar period, such as *New Musical Resources*<sup>94</sup> and *American Composers on American Music*,<sup>95</sup> and according to the letter from 1959 was still well informed about Cowell's current activities:

Naturally I remember you and I have your excellent two books 'New Musical Ressources' and 'American Composers' on my shelf before me, and some of your music I read over time to time again. I read informations (sic!) on you often in the music-papers and J.T. Howard's an J. Lyons's (sic!) book on 'Modern music' informs me that you are working nowadays mainly on the symphonic field and very succesfully, having written already eleven or more symphonies and the last of them being very popular.<sup>96</sup>

Other composers have probably also taken up musical compositional ideas as a result of the contact, like Kadosa, who adopted Cowell's dissonant counterpoint at least in one of his compositions, I. Piano Sonate op. 7. This, however, requires further research, and currently no information is available on this point.

## **II. The Cooperation from the point of view of the New Music Society and the Reception of the Hungarian Composers in the U.S.A.**

After the personal meeting between Cowell and the composers circle around *Új Föld* had taken

---

<sup>92</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, March? 1959.

<sup>93</sup> Letter, Bureau Hongrois pour la Protection des Droits D'Auteur to H. Cowell, March 20, 1959. see H. Cowell Collection NYPL. Szelényi sent Cowell the *Sonata for Violin Solo* and *Hommage à Bartok*, Score and piano reduction.

<sup>94</sup> Letter, István Szelényi to Henry Cowell, March? 1959.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

place in Budapest, Cowell's first step was to extend the institutionalized contact of the *New Music Society* to include István Szelényi, Pál Kadosa and Imre Weissshaus on the "Non-resident Advisory Board" at the beginning of the 1926-1927 season.<sup>97</sup> Soon afterword these advisory board was expanded further, and the listed names counted 32 composers as "Honorary Members", as it already appears on the printed program of the concert, played one year later by Imre Weissshaus on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1927 in the next season. This program is also preserved in the Kadosa-estate.

The fact, that young Hungarian composers belonged to the advisory body, was the result of a comparable aesthetic approach to music, which correlated particularly well with Henry Cowell's attitude to New Music and his long-standing project in this regard. Cowell's *New Music Society* emphasized its support for 'ultra modern' tendencies<sup>98</sup> in its first announcement when it was founded in 1925 and remained true to this intention, when Henry Cowell launched the ultra modern movement throughout the USA in 1928. As is well known, he saw parallels in the music-historical situation of his time with the upheavals of the Ars Nova: "Today the change is still again in scope and deeper in its meaning than it was then " he formulated in the program of the *NMS*.

A comparable point of view, the recognition of the tendencies of a radically changing musical aesthetic, was also to be observed with the composers of the young Hungarian composers. This fact could be interpreted as an obvious trigger of the connection to Henry Cowell's society. Cowell and his circle criticized the conservative tendencies in Europe in a similar way, as it is also expressed in Szelényi's writings, for example in the article about *The most important streams of modern music* in the journal *Crescendo*: "Today, when we stand on the doorstep of a decidedly new epoch, we expect the fundamental changes of basic aesthetic and philosophical concepts".<sup>99</sup> Kadosa also formulates these progressive thoughts in his lecture text about modern musical tendencies and points to the possibility of renewal of fundamental aesthetic rules: "We stand before the shards of the law table"<sup>100</sup> Kadosa writes as follows:

I can't say for myself what I'm going to compose in two years. How then could one make predictions about the future of other composers, and say anything about the future of music in terms of those who set their own rules, but who don't even feel committed to those self-created rules?<sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup> This also applies to the beginning of the 1927/28 season.

<sup>98</sup> Rita H. Mead, *Henry Cowell's New Music 1925-1936*, 55.

<sup>99</sup> István Szelényi, „A modern zene főbb áramlatai“ *Crescendo* January-February 1928 (vo.2. no.6-7.),3-11. [Ma, amikor egy elhatározottan új korszak küszöbén állunk, esztétikai és művészetfilozófiai alapfogalmaink is gyökeres megújulásra várnak]

<sup>100</sup> Pál Kadosa, Lecture at the Ernő Fodor Music-School. Kadosa-estate

<sup>101</sup> Pál Kadosa, A modern zene irányi [The current trends of Modern Music], Kadosa-estate. [Én magam se tudom megmondani, mit fogok két év múlva írni. Hogy lehetne így másokra vonatkozva jóslásokba bocsájtkozni, és valamit a zene jövőéről mondani azokra nézve, akik maguk alkotják törvényeiket és kiket a maguk alkotta törvény

Further goals of the *NMS*, beside the approaches of musical progression are articulated in an announcement in 1927. The Society planned not only "to present musical works embodying the most progressive tendencies of this age" but also "disseminate the new musical ideas ", to spread "the idea of changing musical esthetics as a movement". Our of this reason must therefore organize, so to be able to live true to their message and spread it." Although the few preserved letters of correspondence between Szelényi and Kadosa and Cowell respectively do not explicitly suggest an institutional exchange, one cannot doubt the seriousness of the activity of the *NMS*. The society's program announcements repeatedly declare which tasks—regarded as part of its work –, for the 1927/28 season, for example: "The New Music Society is organised to further in every possible way the interests of modern composers. It holds a yearly exchange of new works with European modern societies in seven cities."<sup>102</sup> This clearly formulated project, which also refers to the seven contact organisations of the *NMS* mentioned earlier, allows the correspondence of the composers of the Hungarian composers with Henry Cowell to appear in a different light, namely as proof of this exchange.

The international, what's more interculturally character of the *NMS* is underlined by the fact that only three of its concerts were dedicated exclusively to American music. Again, however, there were only a few concerts which were assembled exclusively from non-American works. These few concerts of the *NMS* included the aforementioned concert by Imre Weissshaus on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1927 – dedicated only to works by Hungarian composers –, and the concert on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1929, also played by Weissshaus, which included works by Matthias Hauer and Anton von Webern in addition to compositions by Kadosa, Szelényi and Weissshaus.

At the other end of the postal route in California it was also less about planned publications about the Hungarian composers than about arranging piano recitals played by Imre Weissshaus with compositions of Pál Kadosa, István Szelényi and Ferenc Szabó and placing them within the framework of the *NMS* concerts. Henry Cowell began preparing Weissshaus's tour already in May 1927 and advertised his concert series with extensive newspaper articles. He introduced in advance the music of the three composers, Pál Kadosa, Imre Weissshaus and István Szelényi in an article in the *Daily Palo Alto Times*. In his article *Interesting composers found among Hungarians*, Cowell writes about his trip to Europe, during which he "constantly searched for interesting new music and composers with authentic performances".

---

sem kötelez.]

<sup>102</sup> Quoted after Rita H. Mead, *Henry Cowell's New Music 1925-1936*, 56.

The three most interesting young composers I found, Imre Weissshaus, István Szelényi and Pál Kadosa. are all Hungarians, and are related through being in the same general group. Through the presenting of many modern concerts they have made of Budapest perhaps the greatest centre of modern music in Europe. Yet although these composers work together very harmoniously in furthering the interests of all modern music, their music is not alike, each having a most distinctive personality.<sup>103</sup>

Cowell had the corresponding impression from the forming group of the composers, which was distinguished by the project, that their members support each other in the search for new musical solutions. As Ottó Gombosi musicologist also described it in 1928, at the time of the founding of the *Association of Modern Hungarian Composers* – where Kadosa, Szelényi and Szabó were founders and members –<sup>104</sup> it was not a question of developing a stylistic or technical common ground in the sense of a school in the network of composers.<sup>105</sup> Cowell analyses each individual in his article accordingly. He sees Weissshaus as a musician, who has set up a completely new musical concept basically. In his opinion, Szelényi makes good use of large forms and finds the exceptionally individual spirit and strong personality with which he fills these forms praiseworthy.<sup>106</sup> About Kadosa he means that he uses richer harmonies than Weissshaus, that his music has an unmistakable Hungarian intensity and that it has lightness and charm.<sup>107</sup> Cowell's statement that Szelényi, Kadosa and Weissshaus were the best known composers in their homeland since Bartók's success,<sup>108</sup> clearly serves advertising purposes, since the three young composers were not even known to experts in Hungary at that time. In another article, Cowell writes in *Musical America*:

Three Leaders among modernists, Weissshaus, Szelényi and Kadosa, stand out distinctly by reason of differing personalities, yet are related in regard to National feeling - highlights of folk music utilized in preference to embodiment of whole themes in characteristic compositions.<sup>109</sup>

It should be noted that Kodály, whose composition *Seven Pieces* op.11. from 1917–18 was later partly included in the program of Weissshaus' first tour, was not mentioned either in this article by Cowell or in later announcements. Obviously, only the new ideas of the up-and-coming young generation were considered. In this article Cowell rated Weissshaus, Kadosa and Szelényi as the next generation after Kodály and Bartók:

---

<sup>103</sup> Henry Cowell, "Interesting Composers Found Among Hungarians".

<sup>104</sup> The date of the first concert of the Association in January 1928 in Budapest.

<sup>105</sup> Otto Gombosi, "Modern Magyar Muzsikusok' I. bemutatóestje" *Crescendo* January-February 1928 (vo.2. no.6-7.), 26-29, 28.

<sup>106</sup> Henry Cowell, "Interesting Composers Found Among Hungarians".

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Henry Cowell, "How Young Hungary Expresses Individuality" *Musical America* June 4, 1927, 11.

They are related through a friendly and admirable devotion to each other's interests, and through something typically Hungarian in their music; yet their music is not alike, each one expressing his own distinctive personality.<sup>110</sup>

This almost emotional description of the young composers, as well as some phrases in the correspondence, point to a deeper acquaintance and suggest a time spent together in Budapest.

In his article, Cowell repeatedly emphasizes that in the case of the young Hungarian composers it is not about a school: "It is different with them, they do not rely on their masters, like Schönberg's pupils. There are also no other influences of the great modernists. Their music is a concentrated essence of musicality without influences from Schönberg, Stravinsky and Debussy." Cowell comes to the following conclusion:

It is my prediction that this group, which numbers others those mentioned here, will be heard from more and more frequently, and give great pleasure to those interested in delving into new and individual music.<sup>111</sup>

The fact that Cowell's original plan was to present exclusively this group of young composers is also attested to by a flyer from Imre Weisshaus' "Personal Representative", Mrs. E.F. Walton. Mrs. Walton advertised Weisshaus' various concerts with press reports and planned Weisshaus' stay in America between November 1927 and January 1928: "Since his purpose in coming to this country is to make known his own and the compositions of other young Hungarians".<sup>112</sup>

But the concerts had to be sold individually and it is to be assumed that could have led Weisshaus to use well-known names such as ~~B.~~ Bartók and ~~Z.~~ Kodály and did not attach too much importance to the progressiveness of the compositions shown for the American audience in the program of his first tour.

### **The Concert Tours of Imre Weisshaus in the years 1927–1930**

The concert tours were noticed in the European New Music scene. The start of the Weisshaus concert tour was already announced in the May/June issue of the *Journal of the Universal Edition*, *Die Musikblätter des Anbruch* 1927: "Imre Weisshaus makes a tour of North America and California, during which he will premiere works by B. Bartók, Pál Kadosa, István Szelényi and his

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Flyer from Mrs. E.F. Walton's agency, see Kadosa-estate.

own compositions”.<sup>113</sup> The end of the tour was also made public, and in January 1928 a report appeared confirming the success of the concert tour.<sup>114</sup> The Hungarian newspapers also reported on Weisshaus' concerts in the USA during and after the tour.<sup>115</sup>

According to the remaining flyers and newspaper reviews, the tour began on 14 November 1927 in Kansas City, Los Angeles. The program of the tour from November 1927 to the end of January 1928 contained the same selection of works, although not as announced, István Szelényi, but suddenly Kodály's names were found on the programs alongside Béla Bartók, Pál Kadosa and Imre Weisshaus. At the exposed concerts of the *NMS* and *Pro Musica Society*,<sup>116</sup> the program was expanded with additional compositions by these composers. This was the case of the concert on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1927, which was announced as an event of *Pro Musica Society*, and at the concert couple days later, which was expressly announced as concert of the *New Music Society* and was attended by important personalities of the New Music scene. As an example the music critic Isabel Morse Jones and the composer Dane Rudhyer were present at the *Pro Musica* concert, according to newspaper articles.

In the regular concert evenings Weisshaus preformed the following works: Béla Bartók's *Ballad*, the *Three Hungarian folk songs* and *Hungarian Peasant Dances*,<sup>117</sup> Kodály's *Parlando* no.2 and *Rubato* no.7 from *7 Piano Pieces* op.11., Kadosa's *Piano Sonata* No. 1 (*Allegro Maestoso*, *Molto Allegro*, *Adagio*) - according the latest research the world premiere took place there in California-,<sup>118</sup> and Weisshaus *Piano Sonata* No.1 (*Vivo*, *Molto Quiet*) and *Prelude* (*Lento quasi Improvisando*, *Poco lento*). At the special evening of the *Pro Musica Society* on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November the following pieces were added: Bartók's *Sonatina* (*Molto Moderato-Moderato-Allegro vivace*), Kodály's *Lento* no.1 and *Tranquillo* no.5 from the *7 Piano Pieces* op.11, Kadosa's *Two Piano Pieces* (*Moderato* and *Presto*). On the evenings of the *NMS* were Bartók's *8 Improvisations for Hungarian Folk Songs* op.20, and Kadosa's *Moderato* and *Presto* were added.<sup>119</sup> Throughout the entire tour, the concert programs were compiled without exception from the above-mentioned pieces.

---

<sup>113</sup> *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, May/June 1927 (vo.9. no. 5/6.), 265.

<sup>114</sup> *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, January 1928 (vo.10. no 1).

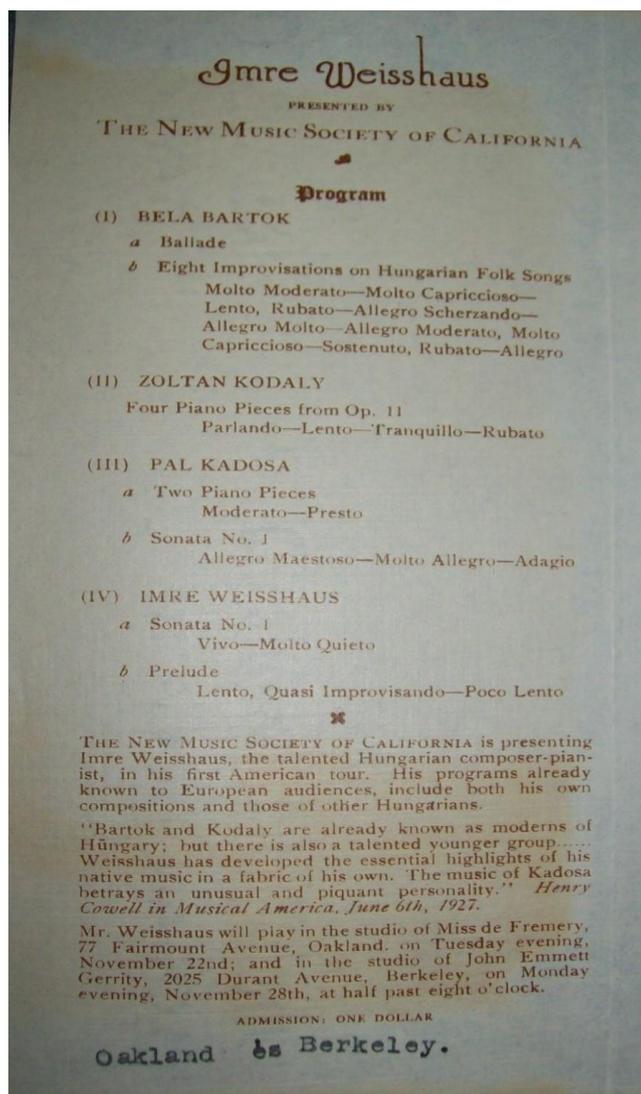
<sup>115</sup> See article files in Kadosa-estate: *Magyarország*, *Magyar Hírlap* Januar 4, 1928, *Pester Lloyd* February 9, 1928, *Pesti Napló* Január 3, 1928, *Újság* January 17, 1928.

<sup>116</sup> *Pro Musica Society* was founded in 1920 originally as the Franco-American Musical Society Incorporated. Its primary goal was to facilitate greater cultural understanding between France and the United States.

<sup>117</sup> It is not known which pieces were exactly played by Weisshaus.

<sup>118</sup> The sources date the world premiere of the *Piano Sonata* Op.7. for 21. February 1928, as a part of the II. Concert of the Association of Modern Hungarian Musicians [Modern Magyar Muzsikusok]

<sup>119</sup> As the Program - Illustration.no.2.- shows, the concert must have taken place before 22 November. This compilation of the program was also applied to November 30, and December 19, 1927.



Ill. no.2. The program of the NMS Concert am November 1927

Of all the concerts performed by Weissshaus in the 1927/28 season, Leta E. Miller and Rita H. Mead only mention the piano recital by Weissshaus on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1927. This was undoubtedly the most important concert of him, as it was considered one of the *NMS*'s three major ultra modern music concerts of the season. However, it does not correspond to the information provided by the flyers and programs of the tour in Kadosa's estate. At that date, as the concert took place at the Community Theater as part of the fifth season of Ida Gregory Scott Fortnightly's, the Cowell-Circle was with Weissshaus and its concert program already familiar. The newspaper reviews reveal, that some critics present concerts as concerts announced by the *NMS* dated before 30<sup>th</sup> of November.<sup>120</sup> Der Flyer without date – see illustration no.2.– documents one *NMS*-concert, that took place between 17<sup>th</sup> the 22<sup>th</sup> of November 1927.<sup>121</sup> Its text consists also a recommendation for two further

<sup>120</sup> Press clipping, Kadosa-estate.

<sup>121</sup> See illustration no.2

recitals, which were obviously taken note by the society.

The second half of the tour in the 1927/28 season continued on the east coast. The newspapers reported, that the concert in New York in the Engineering Auditorium (25. West 39th Street) on 19<sup>th</sup> of December 1927 seemed to be particularly interesting, as Bartók himself visited it.<sup>122</sup> According to the newspaper article in *Pester Lloyd*, Weissshaus subsequently gave three more concerts in New York and after the great success the possibility of a new concert tour to the USA was foreseen.<sup>123</sup> From the east coast the concert tour continued to Europe: to England, France, Germany and Italy.<sup>124</sup>

After the success of the first concert tour in the 1927/28 season, the original concept of the choice of compositions became more evident on the following tours, where Weissshaus presented the more current, 'ultra-modern' works of the composers Pál Kadosa, Ferenc Szabó and István Szelényi and himself with progressive composer attitude. According to the documents like flyers and article files in the Kadosa-estate, Imre Weissshaus was back in California from February to March 1929. He played one recital after the other at renowned addresses for modern art and music in Los Angeles and the surrounding area. The concerts of greater importance were those in Perris Valley on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1929 – sponsored by Artie Mason Carter, President of the Hollywood Community Sing and co-founder of the Hollywood Bowl –, in Walmsley Studio for Ultramodern Art on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 1929 and in Rudolf Schaeffer Studio on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, and 6<sup>th</sup> of March. On the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of February the critic Petterson Greene was present, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February also Isabel Morse Jones, who reported in details about Weissshaus's piano style and program.

In the 1929/30 season, the *NMS* officially announced officially only three concerts, this time at the Galerie Beaux Arts in San Francisco. The announcement promised ultra modern music again, in the order of American, Hungarian and Russian composers. Weissshaus played a solo recital as one of them on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December. Its program was preserved in Kadosa's legacy and so one can add the information to that of Rita H. Mead, where at this point Hauer's name is missing and the composition of A. v. Webern is only given as "unidentified".<sup>125</sup> Imre Weissshaus played Josef Matthias Hauer's *Seven Little Pieces* Op.3, Pál Kadosa's *Suite for violin and piano* Op.6 as premiere, István Szelényi's *Recitative*, Ferenc Szabó's *Toccata*, Anton von Webern's *3 Little Pieces* for cello and piano Op.11 and I. Weissshaus' *2 pieces* for cello and piano with the participation of the cellist Dorothy Pasmore and Imre Weissshaus' Piano Etude.

---

<sup>122</sup> Press clipping files, *Pester Lloyd* February 9, 1928 and also *Pesti Napló* Januar 3, 1928, Kadosa-estate.

<sup>123</sup> Clipping file, Kadosa-estate

<sup>124</sup> *Magyar Hírlap* 4. January 1928. Press clipping, Kadosa-estate

<sup>125</sup> Printed program, Kadosa-estate

The Weissshaus performance series in 1929 and 1930 was dedicated to atonal music. On the elaborately designed modernist flyer of the concert on January 16, 1930 in Baldwin Hall, Los Angeles, but also on the program of the concert in the Rudolph Shaeffer Studios on February 27, 1929, one reads about the concept of the program choice, which is a new allusion in the sense of Cowell's to the *Ars Nova* as an explanation for why the ultra-modern tendency and the predominance of dissonance are united in the performed works:

the development of music has come about principally through the acceptance of 'dissonants' which, through repetition, mysteriously became 'consonants'. we also know, that the essential line remains unbroken.<sup>126</sup>

Under this motto, a mixed program was performed at Baldwin Hall on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 1930, with works by Paul Hindemith, Dane Rudhyer, J.M. Hauer, I. Weissshaus, P. Kadosa, I. Szelényi, and on the 23<sup>th</sup> of January 1930, at Rudolps Schaeffer Studio, a modified program with works by P. Hindemith, D. Rudhyer, Karol Rathhaus, B. Bartók, P. Kadosa, and I. Szelényi. The reactions of the professional public and the music circles that supported new music in California were reported by the critics who came from the most important critics of Cowell's environment, such as Isabel Morse John, Alexander Fried and John Kissam, but also the composer Dane Rudhyer.

### **The reception in the newspapers and the assessments**

The newspapers often comment on a very violent, intense impression that arose as a reaction to the works played and to the interpretation of Weissshaus. The audience's perception of the compositions is regularly described by formulations such as "extremely new works from Hungarian composers" and "Astonishment caused by the componists". Isabel Morse Jones, a journalist and music critic who followed the activities of the *NMS* from the beginning and also announced the founding of the *NMS* in *Los Angeles Daily Times* in October 1925, wrote several times about the Weissshaus concerts, as well as about the Pro Musica concert on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1927. One of her article is entitled: "Weissshaus offers bewildering music".<sup>127</sup> I. Morse Jones sees the cause of the audience's astonishment in "the utterly unrelated tonality", in the preference for free inventions and parallel to this in the negation of classical forms in the works performed. She suggests, that the audience therefore needed some explanatory words. In the program the audience was asked not to applaud. It was usual at the concerts of the *NMS* to let the pieces ring out twice – which was also the case this evening – and occasionally to introduce the concert with explanatory words.

---

<sup>126</sup> Flyer to Weissshaus' recital, Kadosa-estate.

<sup>127</sup> Isabell Morse Jones, "Weissshaus offers bewildering music" *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1927.

An article in *Bulletin San Fransisco* also points out the astonishment in the audience that characterized the atmosphere of the concerts:

Although the modernist music of Hungary was explained, its complexities seemed to require more than the brief introduction to make it understood. Like most radical departures from established form it is either too far ahead of or too much at variance with the popular concept to be generally intelligible.<sup>128</sup>

Alexander Fried, a leading music critic of the *San Francisco Examiner*, wrote a review entitled "Pianist Shows Mastery as Representative of Modern Hungarian Spirit".<sup>129</sup> Fried praises the concert as a "venture in modernism". Kissam Johnson, an active co-creator of the cultural life of the artist community of Carmel, in her review of the recital at Denny-Watrous Studio also highlights the modern spirit of the works: "the music is all cerebral, there is nothing emotional, no joy to it (...) No doubt, that a new form of musical expression is in process of being born".<sup>130</sup> Based on a later concert at Rudolph Schaeffer Studios in February 1929, she praises Kadosas' Piano Sonata No.2 because of the "cleverly intricate rhythm" and the *Toccata* by Szabó "for its percussive mood and simple melodic significance". After the concert in Hollywood at the Studio for Ultra Modern Art on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 1929, Patterson Green also describes the modernity of the pieces: "But the works of Bartok and Kadosha (sic) stood forth as sturdy in their authority and sure of their purpose. (...) The concert was an intelligible statement of the case of sincere modernism (...)."<sup>131</sup>

Dane Rudhyer's critique of the concert on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1927 provides one of the most interesting and detailed comments on the artistic correspondences that were important for the contact between the Cowell circle and the Hungarian composer. Rudhyer does comment not only from a contemporary point of view, but primarily as a musical comrade-in-arms on ultra-modern tendencies. His astute observations as a composer concern the stylistic and tendential questions of the compositions and the peculiarities of the modern Hungarian composer generation. According to Rudhyer, the evening was received with ambivalent feelings on the part of the audience. The reactions ranged from "utmost enthusiasm to violent antagonism". However, he admits that the dissonant musical language could be seen as provocation by the conservative members of Pro Musica. Rudhyer himself welcomes the different in music, as a bearer of hope "in the desert of European music", since it would not have succumbed to the neoclassicism of the last seven years. Rudhyer sees something deeply human and archaic in the compositions of all four composers.

---

<sup>128</sup> Press clipping, Kadosa-estate

<sup>129</sup> Alexander Fried, *Weisshaus in Recital At Playhaus. Pianist shows Mastery as Representativ of Modern Hungarian Spririt*, press clipping, Kadosa-estate.

<sup>130</sup> Kissam Johnson, "Weisshaus Concert Enjoyed in Carmel", press clipping, Kadosa-estate.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

Bartók, Kadosa and Weissshaus expressed "expression of essential vitality and virility" in their music. Kodály, on the other hand, he evaluates as a Hungarian Debussy with poetic melancholy.<sup>132</sup> Rudhyer, in his role as a contemporary, does not place the two generations of the Hungarian school in a teacher-pupil relationship and sees no interrelationship. He sees Bartók as a member of an older generation that marks the starting point of modernity. Kadosas' Piano Sonata No.1 makes a great impression on him:

Kadosa has overcome such a sensibility. We are going farther away from European sentimentality, from femininity. His music is essentially masculine, strong, rugged, bare. It is almost solely melodic, but melodic in an entirely non-European sense. Dissonant, cutting, passionate melodies, which at times lash. (...) His sonata (an unfortunate term, as it has nothing of the consecrated form) is to my mind a chef-d'oeuvre which will live forever because of its definiteness; nothing is superfluous in it; it is all necessary, unavoidable, relentless.<sup>133</sup>

Referring to the composition by Imre Weissshaus Rudhyer draws a connection from the music of the young composers to the less known late Liszt: "The source of this young Hungarian music can be traced to the finest and mostly unknown pages of Liszt, from his "Pensieroso" to "The Lugubre Gondola" and "Trauer Marsch". Furthermore:

This bareness of outline, this tragic rigidity, this passionate fervor, Liszt expressed when he escaped from sentimentality and pompousness. From him to Weissshaus there is no break in the process of the freeing of the Hungarian race soul.<sup>134</sup>

Rudhyer's remark is interesting because this perspective of a direct connection between the modern Hungarian school and Liszt's late works is less used by musicology. While Cowell's comments on the compositions and the composer group focused on the national character of the music, Rudhyer's critique places it in a line of development on an intercultural level. He sees in the compositions options for new developments that lead past the dead end of neoclassicism. This reinforces the impression that between the Cowell circle and Kadosa Szelényi, Weissshaus und Szabó there was not a "national music renaissance" as Rita H. Mead wrote it in her book about *Cowell's New Music*.<sup>135</sup>

After the success in California, steps were taken with the support of Henry Cowell to leave the sphere of the immediate influence of the *NMS* and, in addition to the *Pro Musica* and *NMS* concerts, to gain a foothold in music circles for ultra-modern music on the East Coast. Carol J. Oja

---

<sup>132</sup> Patterson Green, "Presentation of Imre Weissshaus", press clipping, Kadosa-estate.

<sup>133</sup> Dane Rudhyer, "Imre Weissshaus Termed a New Revelation" *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1927.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Rita H. Mead, *Henry Cowell's New Music 1925-1936*, 57.

notes in his book *Making Music Modern* that there were all together few possibilities.<sup>136</sup> The Copland-Sessions Concerts in New York only opened up to ultra modern music from their second season in 1929 and showed compositions by Dane Rudhyer and Henry Cowell, among others. In their third season in 1930 a total of three concerts were organized, all of which took place at the President Theatre. At one of them on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1930 the Hungarian composers were involved. Carol J. Oja highlights the names of Szelényi, Kadosa and Weisshaus in this context:

There was yet another connection between the Copland-Sessions Concerts and the ultra-moderns. On April 13, 1930, the music of three young Hungarians Istvan Szelényi, Pál Kadosa and Imre Weisshaus was heard on the series. These were figures championed by Cowell.<sup>137</sup>

According to Carol J. Oja's description, this evening Mrs. Walton, the patron of the ultra modern scene, was particularly committed to attracting attention to the Hungarian composers.<sup>138</sup> Although there was only one concert with Kadosa's *Sonatina*, Szelényi's *Recitative* and Weisshaus *Piano Study* on the program,<sup>139</sup> getting to know Roger Sessions, who was involved in the European activities of the *ISCM*, might have been important for the carrier advancement of the Hungarian composers.

A contact was also established with another important participant of the ultra modern scene of the East Coast: Nicolas Slonimsky, founder of the Boston Chamber Orchestra, an ensemble dedicated to New Music. It is documented that Slonimsky showed Kadosas' Partita Op.14<sup>140</sup> at one of his concerts on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 1935<sup>141</sup> at the Women's Republican Club in Boston. He played the piano himself, Rebecca Dulfer played the violin. The newspaper *Boston Evening Transcript* announced on March 20, 1935 the concert supported by Musical Guild with the article "Memorandum about unfamiliar music" and promoted Kadosa's work as "Most representant of his non orchestral works". The review of the *Boston Herald Music* on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1935, however, did not bring a positive verdict on the music of Kadosa, where "Gypsyism" and "Geometry" were the key words of criticism.<sup>142</sup> In contrast, however, the American press already had better reviews of the Partita. The success of the few Weisshaus concerts on the East Coast was probably the reason

---

<sup>136</sup> Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern. New York in the 1920s*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Printed concert program, Kadosa-estate.

<sup>140</sup> Pál Kadosa changed his compositional goals at the beginning of the thirties, as his Partita Op. 14. has definite neoclassical characteristics.

<sup>141</sup> Printed concert program, Kadosa-estate.

<sup>142</sup> Press clipping, Kadosa-estate.

for the Associated Music Publishers, inc. to advertise two Kadosa pieces, the *III. Sonata for Piano* Op.13. and the *Partita* Op.14. and to publish them in English in New York in 1931 or 1932. The reviews published on this occasion about the *Partita* by Maurice B. Katz<sup>143</sup> do not underline the Hungarian character of the music in a negative manner:

The Hungarian idiom and sentiment predominate throughout the four movements of the suite, especially the second, *In modo rustico*, which is a wild peasant dance full of intricate rhythms and percussive effects for the piano.

The skillful instrumentalization of the piece by Kadosa convinced the critic of the quality of the composition: "A more affective handling of the two instruments would be hard to imagine, as Kadosa makes use of their distinctive characteristic and peculiarities. It also seems to have been the case with the evaluation of *III. Piano Sonata op.13.*:"

Kadosa is one of the few composers of the ultra-modern school who have a strong feeling for the peculiar resonance and the tone-color of the keyboard and do not think in terms of the orchestra when writing for the piano.<sup>144</sup>

The two reviews order Pál Kadosa in the ultra modern direction. This corresponds to Henry Cowell's assessment in his article on Kadosa and on all the other composers of *Új Föld*.

The researched material showed that the concert tours of Imre Weissshaus were an important connecting element between the *NMS* and the composers of around *Új Föld*. Weissshaus played over 30 piano recitals and soirees, most of them in the San Francisco and Los Angeles area. Based on the publicity of the concerts and according to Carol J. Oja's research, the young Hungarian composers succeeded, with the support of Cowell and the patron of the ultra-modern scene, Mrs. Walton, in entering this lively American music scene. This success was due not only to Imre Weissshaus' commitment, but also to the joint appearance of the composers of *Új Föld* and later of the Association of Modern Hungarian Musicians as a group, who were thus able to lend more weight to their musical ideas.

In the context of his European appearances, Weissshaus presented a certain proximity to the composers of the *Új Föld* and to the ultra-modern American composers, or at least he felt equally committed to their new musical concepts. After he was forced to move to Paris in 1933, he contacted Pierre Arques the founder of the Parisian "Le Triptyque", a musical association for performances of contemporary music. The association organised a concert for Weissshaus on the 21<sup>st</sup>

---

<sup>143</sup> Press clipping, Kadosa-estate.

<sup>144</sup> Press clipping, Kadosa-estate

Szerző: Andrea van der Smissen

Megjelenés helye, ideje: MTA BTK ZTI 20–21. Századi Magyar Zenei Archívum, 2019

DOI: 10.23714/mza.10010\_MZA

of March 1936 in the Salle du Conservatoire Russe. The program of the concert is also an example of the desire to preserve the idea of an American-Hungarian musical connection. On that evening, compositions by A. Weiss, Ch. Ives, H. Cowell, D. Rudhyer, Chaves, R. Green, F. Szabó, I. Szelényi, I. Weisshaus and P. Kadosa were performed, supplemented with works by the Italian Cesare Brero.<sup>145</sup>

Due to the increasingly difficult situation of the Hungarian composers this was one of the last 'joint' concerts organized abroad. As a result of racial discrimination in Germany, Austria and Hungary, the former circle of *Új Föld* had to accept more and more restrictions and the loss of cultural environment.

---

<sup>145</sup> Concert program, see Kadosa-estate. The program of the concert can also be found in the Cowell Collection.