

SKOGEN, MEAGHAN ELIZABETH, D.M.A. *The Multi-Cello Ensemble Writing of Laszlo Varga: A Study of His Arrangements for Multi-Cello Ensemble of the Adagio con Variazione for Cello and Orchestra by Ottorino Respighi.* (2011) Directed by Dr. Alexander Ezerman. 112 pp.

This is a study of the process used by Laszlo Varga to arrange music for multi-cello ensembles. It details how that process was applied to both his first arrangement for Solo Cello and 8-part Cello ensemble, and his second arrangement for Solo Cello, 8-part Cello ensemble, and Harp of the Variations for Cello and Orchestra by Ottorino Respighi.

After a brief history of Varga's career, the paper discusses how he began writing for multi-cello ensembles and provides a description of his process of arranging for the genre. Next a detailed analysis of the process is provided through a study of both his first and second arrangements for multi-cello ensemble of the Variations for Cello and Orchestra by Ottorino Respighi. Musical examples are provided in support of the details examined.

The document concludes with discussion of Varga's thoughts on the Cello Celebration held by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in his honor as well as the fact that his music now resides in the university's Special Collection of Cello Music, the largest collection of cello music in the world. It finishes with a discussion of Varga's goals for the future of multi-cello ensemble writing and performance.

THE MULTI-CELLO ENSEMBLE WRITING OF LASZLO VARGA: A STUDY  
OF HIS ARRANGEMENTS FOR MULTI-CELLO ENSEMBLE OF  
THE ADAGIO CON VARIAZIONE FOR CELLO AND  
ORCHESTRA BY OTTORINO RESPIGHI

by

Meaghan Elizabeth Skogen

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of The Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Musical Arts

Greensboro  
2011

Approved by

Alexander Ezerman  
Committee Chair

© 2011 by Meaghan Elizabeth Skogen

To my wonderful husband, Scott Skogen. Thank you for all of your love, support, patience, and encouragement. I could not have accomplished this without you. Also to the memory of my grandfather, Paul Wallack, who first encouraged me to accomplish this goal.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of  
The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair     Alexander Ezerman  
Alexander Ezerman

Committee Members     Mary Ashley Barret  
Mary Ashley Barret

Sarah Dorsey  
Sarah Dorsey

Mark Engebretson  
Mark Engebretson

3-26-2011  
Date of Acceptance by Committee

3-14-2011  
Date of Final Oral Examination

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first thank Laszlo Varga for your willingness to let me write this, and for the enjoyment of getting to know you and your work. Thank you to Brooks Whitehouse for providing me with the topic of this paper, introducing me to Laszlo, and for all of your wonderful teaching. Thank you to Alexander Ezerman for your expert guidance and help in preparing and completing this document. In addition, I would like to thank my wonderful committee, Mary Ashley Barret, Sarah Dorsey, and Mark Engebretson, for your much appreciated encouragement and support.

I would like to thank each of my cello teachers, Ian McKinnell, Richard Treat, and Brooks Whitehouse, for instilling in me a love for the instrument, encouraging me to work hard, and sharing your wisdom, for which I am extremely grateful.

Finally, thank you to my family for believing in me and never letting me give up.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Purpose and Scope of Research .....	2
Justification and Related Literature .....	2
Procedures .....	3
Limitations .....	5
II. LASZLO VARGA .....	6
Transcription and Arranging .....	10
Multi-Cello Ensemble and Writing .....	11
Process of Arranging .....	14
Ottorino Respighi and the <i>Adagio con Variazione</i> .....	17
III. ARRANGEMENT OF THE <i>ADAGIO CON VARIAZIONE</i> .....	19
2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition .....	38
IV. CONCLUSION .....	57
Cello Celebration .....	58
Future of the Multi-Cello Ensemble .....	60
Recommendations for Further Research .....	61
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	63
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW WITH LASZLO VARGA .....	65

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Respighi Orchestra edition: Solo Cello mm. 1-4 in B Major .....	21
Figure 2. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello mm. 1-4 in C Major .....	21
Figure 3. Respighi Orchestra edition: Flute mm. 42-44 .....	22
Figure 4. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cello 1 mm. 42-44 .....	22
Figure 5. Respighi Orchestra edition: 1 <sup>st</sup> Bassoon mm. 6-8 .....	23
Figure 6. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 2, 3, 4, and 5 mm. 6-8.....	23
Figure 7. Respighi Orchestra edition: Clarinet, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Violin, Viola, and Cello mm. 24-28 .....	24
Figure 8. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cello 5 mm. 24-28 .....	24
Figure 9. Respighi Orchestra edition: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Violin and Viola mm. 72-73 .....	25
Figure 10. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cello lines 2, 3, 4, and 5 mm. 72-73.....	25
Figure 11. Respighi Orchestra edition: mm. 93-95.....	26
Figure 12. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cello 1 mm. 93-95 .....	26
Figure 13. Respighi Orchestra edition: Cello and Bass mm. 13-14.....	27
Figure 14. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 5 and 6 mm. 13-14.....	27
Figure 15. Respighi Orchestra edition: Flute, Oboe, 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Clarinet, 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Horn mm. 37-38.....	28
Figure 16. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 mm. 37-38.....	28
Figure 17. Respighi Orchestra edition: Viola mm. 22-24.....	29

	Page
Figure 18. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 3 and 4 mm. 22-24.....	29
Figure 19. Respighi Orchestra edition: 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Bassoon mm. 88-90.....	30
Figure 20. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 7 and 8 mm. 88-90.....	30
Figure 21. Respighi Orchestra edition: 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Horn mm. 37-38.....	31
Figure 22. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 5 and 6, mm. 37-38.....	31
Figure 23. Respighi Orchestra edition: Cello and Bass measure 16, beat 3-measure 18 .....	31
Figure 24. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 5, 6, 7, and 8 measure 16, beat 3-measure 18 .....	32
Figure 25. Respighi Orchestra edition: Piccolo mm. 30-32.....	32
Figure 26. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello mm. 30-32.....	32
Figure 27. Respighi Orchestra edition: 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Flute mm. 100-101 .....	33
Figure 28. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 2 and 3 mm. 100-101.....	33
Figure 29. Respighi Orchestra edition: Solo Cello mm. 39-40.....	34
Figure 30. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello mm. 39-40.....	34
Figure 31. Respighi Orchestra edition: Solo Cello mm. 41-44.....	35
Figure 32. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello mm. 41-44.....	35
Figure 33. Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp measure 56.....	36
Figure 34. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cello 1 measure 56 (time signature is 4/4) .....	36
Figure 35. Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp and Solo Cello measure 106.....	37
Figure 36. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello and Cello 1 measure 106.....	37

	Page
Figure 37. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello, Cellos 1 and 3 mm. 27-28.....	39
Figure 38. Varga arrangement 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition: Solo Cello, Harp, Cellos 1 and 3 mm. 27-28.....	39
Figure 39. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello, Cellos 1 and 2 mm. 30-32.....	40
Figure 40. Varga arrangement 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition: Solo Cello, Harp, Cellos 1 and 2 mm. 30-32.....	40
Figure 41. Respighi Orchestra edition: Clarinet mm. 50-51.....	41
Figure 42. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cello 2 mm. 50-51 .....	41
Figure 43. Varga arrangement 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition: Cello 2 mm. 50-51 .....	41
Figure 44. Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp mm. 56 and 61 .....	42
Figure 45. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cello 1 mm. 56 and 61(time signature for both is 4/4).....	42
Figure 46. Varga arrangement 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition: Harp and Cello 1 mm. 56 and 61 .....	43
Figure 47. Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp measure 68.....	43
Figure 48. Varga arrangement 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition: Harp measure 68 .....	44
Figure 49. Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp measure 73.....	44
Figure 50. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 1-8 measure 73 .....	45
Figure 51. Varga arrangement 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition: Harp and Cellos 1-8 measure 73.....	46
Figure 52. Respighi Orchestra edition: Flute, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Harp measure 80 .....	47
Figure 53. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 1-8 measure 80 .....	48
Figure 54. Varga arrangement 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition: Harp and Cellos 1-8 measure 80.....	49

	Page
Figure 55. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello and Cello 1 mm. 93-97 .....	50
Figure 56. Varga arrangement 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition: Solo Cello and Cello 1 mm. 93-97 .....	50
Figure 57. Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp and Solo Cello mm. 106-107.....	51
Figure 58. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello and Cello 1 mm. 106-107 .....	52
Figure 59. Varga arrangement 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition: Solo Cello, Harp, and Cello 1 mm. 106-107 .....	53
Figure 60. Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp and Solo Cello mm. 121-122 (time signature is 4/4) .....	54
Figure 61. Varga arrangement 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello and Cello 4 mm. 121-122 (time signature is 4/4) .....	54
Figure 62. Varga arrangement 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition: Solo Cello and Harp mm. 121-122 (time signature is 4/4) .....	55

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Cellist Laszlo Varga is a celebrated performer, teacher, and arranger. Varga has toured the world as a member of the Léner Quartet, as well as working with the Canadian String Quartet and Borodin Trio. He has served as principal cellist in the Budapest Symphony, the New York City Opera, and the New York Philharmonic where he played under the batons of Dimitri Mitropoulos and Leonard Bernstein.

As an educator, Varga has taught at the University of Toronto, San Francisco State University, the University of California at Santa Cruz, Stanford University, and the University of Houston. He is the recipient of the prestigious “Chevalier du violoncelle<sup>1</sup>.”

Despite his many accomplishments, Varga is most well known as a champion of the multi-cello ensemble. Having formed the first professional American cello ensemble during his tenure with the New York Philharmonic, he continued to create cello ensembles throughout his career. Recognizing a need for music in this genre, Varga set out to create arrangements from existing masterpieces. He wrote for ensembles of many sizes; from the Cello Quartet to the 8-part cello ensemble with Soloist.

His work has inspired many and paved the way for several of the multi-cello ensembles of today. Varga’s process of arranging serves as an invaluable tool for

---

<sup>1</sup> The *Chevalier du violoncelle* or *Grande Dame du violoncelle* is an award given by the Eva Janzer Memorial Cello Center at Indiana University at Bloomington once a year to cellists/teachers for their contributions to the cause of cello playing.

composers and performers alike. His legacy on this genre will survive through his many multi-cello ensemble publications.

### Purpose and Scope of Research

The purpose of this study is to provide a brief biographical overview of Laszlo Varga and more specifically focus on his work in arranging music for the multi-cello ensemble. It will take an in-depth look at his process of arranging as it applies to his arrangements of the *Adagio con Variazione* by Ottorino Respighi.

The study will be presented in two parts. The first part will provide an insight into Varga's process of arranging for the cello, focusing primarily on the multi-cello ensemble. The second part will study those methods at work in his first arrangement for Solo Cello and 8 part Cello ensemble of Ottorino Respighi's *Adagio con Variazione* for cello and orchestra. It will then study the differences between the 1<sup>st</sup> arrangement and the 2<sup>nd</sup> arrangement of the work for Solo Cello, 8 part Cello ensemble, and Harp.

The intent of this study is to provide a detailed record of Varga's process of arranging. It will serve as a resource to cellists and composers and shed light on a vast amount of work that will enrich the cello literature.

### Justification and Related Literature

Laszlo Varga has had an illustrious career. He has achieved success as both a performer and educator. Furthermore, his contribution to the genre of the multi-cello ensemble is unmatched. There currently exists no study or writings on the details of his works or process of arranging for the genre. Nor is there any definitive book on Mr.

Varga or the subject of his multi-cello ensemble writing. However, only a few sources of information are available.

Tim Janof conducted an interview with Varga entitled “Conversation with Laszlo Varga” that was published on the Internet Cello Society website in 2002<sup>2</sup>. Although it is a brief overview of Varga’s life and career, the article serves as a valuable biographical resource. Hyun Young Park wrote a dissertation that focuses on Varga’s teaching. The document *Laszlo Varga: Pedagogy, History, and Legacy: a Doctoral Essay*<sup>3</sup> was published in 2004 through the University of Miami.

Neither of these publications focuses on his multi-cello ensemble writing in great detail. Therefore, there exists a need for information on this particular aspect of Varga’s achievements. In this document, his process of arranging is examined in detail through both his 1<sup>st</sup><sup>4</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup><sup>5</sup> editions of his arrangement of the *Adagio con Variazione* for Cello and orchestra by Ottorino Respighi<sup>6</sup>.

### Procedures

The initial step of this study was to interview Laszlo Varga on his career as a performer, educator, and primarily focus on his work with and arrangements for the multi-cello ensemble. The interview was conducted at his Sarasota, Florida, residence on

---

<sup>2</sup> Janof, Tim. “Conversation with Laszlo Varga.” <www.cello.org> 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Park, Hyun Young. *Laszlo Varga: Pedagogy, History, and Legacy : a Doctoral Essay*. Thesis (D.M.A.)—University of Miami, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Respighi, Ottorino. *Adagio con Variazione*. Arranged by Laszlo Varga for Solo Cello and 8-part cello ensemble. MusiCelli Publications, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Respighi, Ottorino. *Adagio con Variazione*. Arranged by Laszlo Varga for Solo Cello, 8-part cello ensemble, and Harp. MusiCelli Publications, not yet published.

<sup>6</sup> Respighi, Ottorino. *Adagio con Variazione for Cello and Orchestra*. Bologna, Italy: F. Bongiovanni, 1932.

March 27, 2007<sup>7</sup>. The entire interview was taped and transcribed. Material from the interview serves as the primary source for this document. Tim Janof's article "Conversations with Laszlo Varga"<sup>8</sup> also serves as an additional resource for the biographical portion of the document.

The next step was to provide a detailed analysis of Varga's arrangements of the *Adagio con Variazione* by Respighi. It was necessary to first compare Respighi's own score for Cello and orchestra<sup>9</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the arrangement made by Varga for Solo cello and 8-part cello ensemble<sup>10</sup>.

Focus was placed on the following elements:

1. Tracking how Varga distributed each orchestra line among the cello ensemble
2. Making note of all changes, including, but not limited to, key, rhythm, notes, dynamics, etc.
3. Based upon material from the interview, if changes were made, how were they made and why?

Each change was documented and discussed within the document.

A comparison was then made between the 1<sup>st</sup> edition for Solo cello and 8 part cello ensemble, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the work for Solo cello, 8 part cello ensemble, and Harp<sup>11</sup>. Again focus was placed on the same elements as the first comparison. Each line

---

<sup>7</sup> Laszlo Varga. Personal Interview. 27 March 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Janof, Tim. "Conversation with Laszlo Varga." 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Respighi, Ottorino. *Adagio con Variazione for Cello and Orchestra*. Bologna, Italy: F. Bongiovanni, 1932.

<sup>10</sup> Respighi, Ottorino. *Adagio con Variazione*. Arranged by Laszlo Varga for Solo Cello and 8-part cello ensemble. MusiCelli Publications, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> Respighi, Ottorino. *Adagio con Variazione*. Arranged by Laszlo Varga for Solo Cello, 8-part cello ensemble, and Harp. MusiCelli Publications, not yet published.

from the 1<sup>st</sup> edition was tracked in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Careful attention was placed on which musical material was assigned to the harp and why. Each change was recorded and is discussed within this document. All musical examples in the document are provided from one of these three scores.

### Limitations

Since the focus of this document is to study Varga's process of arranging for multi-cello ensembles, a comprehensive biography is outside the scope of this work. This also excludes detailed discussion of his accomplishments as a performer and educator.

Due to the vast amount of compositional output by Varga, this paper is limited to examining only one of his arrangements in detail, the *Adagio con Variazione* by Ottorino Respighi for cello and orchestra.

## CHAPTER II

### LASZLO VARGA

Hungarian cellist, Laszlo Varga (1924– ) attended the Franz Liszt Royal Academy of Music in Budapest where he was a contemporary of cellist János Starker. He studied cello with Adolf Schiffer, who had been David Poppers' pupil and assistant, and is also known for having taught Starker as well as cellist Gabor Rejto. After Schiffer left the Academy, Varga continued his studies with cellists Miklós Zsámboki and Eugene Kerpely. While at the Academy, Varga studied chamber music with Leó Weiner, who is credited with training Hungarian musicians to play with accuracy and a depth of interpretation that is found in their chamber music, solo, and orchestral work.<sup>12</sup>

Varga served for a time as the principal cellist in the Budapest Symphony before joining the Léner Quartet, with whom he toured around the world. Jenó Léner needed a new cellist for the quartet, and having studied chamber music with Weiner, wanted only someone who also had been trained by Weiner. Weiner recommended Laszlo and he joined the group without ever having a formal audition in the fall of 1946, just in time to begin a European tour. Unfortunately, while touring in South America, Léner was

---

<sup>12</sup> Stevenson, Joseph. "Leó Weiner–Biography." <<http://www.answers.com/topic/le-weiner>> (accessed 12 March 2011).

diagnosed with cancer. In an effort to get to the Mayo Clinic, the group continued on to New York where Léner passed.<sup>13</sup>

Varga decided to stay in New York City, however, since it was a Unions state, he had to wait 6 months to gain residency before he could work anywhere. During that time he played chamber music at a patron's house with Isaac Stern. Stern introduced him to such musical greats as Leonard Bernstein, Lillian and Joseph Fuchs, Jascha Heifetz, Gregor Piatigorsky, and William Primrose. Soon after, Varga served as solo cellist for the New York City Opera before winning the principal cello position with the New York Philharmonic in 1951 under the batons of Dimitri Mitropoulos and Leonard Bernstein.<sup>14</sup>

It was during his tenure with the New York Philharmonic that Varga organized the first American professional cello quartet, the New York Philharmonic Cello Quartet. The ensemble performed in concert as well as recording for Decca Records. Varga began his multi-cello ensemble writing at this time, arranging many works specifically for the ensemble.

Desiring to return to solo performance, teaching, and chamber music, Varga left the New York Philharmonic in 1962 and accepted an invitation to perform with the Canadian String Quartet. While in Canada, he began his university teaching career at the University of Toronto Conservatory of Music. The following year found him teaching cello, chamber music, and directing the symphony at San Francisco State University.

---

<sup>13</sup> Janof, Tim. "Conversation with Laszlo Varga." 2002.  
<<http://www.cello.org/Newsletter/Articles/varga/varga.htm>> (accessed 31 January 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Throughout his career he has taught at Stanford University, the University of California at Santa Cruz, and the University of Houston.

A recipient of the prestigious “Chevalier du violoncelle” from Indiana University in 1991, Varga was also honored with the Outstanding Faculty Award from the University of Houston in 2003. He has recorded for several major labels, including, but not limited to, RCA, Decca, MusiCelli, and Columbia Records. Varga has been a featured soloist, teacher, and chamber musician at various summer festivals such as Chautauqua, Shreveport, and Aspen. For twenty-five years he served as conductor and director of the San Francisco State University Symphony, and has conducted other orchestras, including the San Leandro Symphony and Budapest Symphony.<sup>15</sup> Mr. Varga has also performed as a soloist with orchestras around the world, performing in the United States, Europe, South America, Australia, the former Soviet Union, and Japan.

Varga gained a reputation as the “fastest cellist in the West.”<sup>16</sup> Often, if a performer was unable to perform in concert at the last minute, Varga would be asked to fill in. Typically he would only have a day or two to learn the music before a performance. Composer Gunther Schuller dedicated his *Fantasy, Op. 19* to Varga after such an event. The work was originally to be premiered on radio by Starker, who bowed out one week before the performance. Schuller asked Varga to fill in; he agreed as long

---

<sup>15</sup> University of North Carolina at Greensboro. “Special Cello Collections: Laszlo Varga.” <<http://library.uncg.edu/info/depts/scua/collections/cello/items.aspx#lazlo>> (accessed 31 January 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Janof, Tim. “Conversation with Laszlo Varga.” 2002. <<http://www.cello.org/Newsletter/Articles/varga/varga.htm>> (accessed 31 January 2011).

as the work could be prerecorded the day before the premiere in case there were any mistakes that needed to be fixed. The performance was a success.<sup>17</sup>

In 1962 Varga was contacted by the conductor of the Honolulu Symphony, George Barati. A cello concerto that he wrote was to be premiered by the ensemble in four days yet the soloist had broken his arm while in Paris and was unable to perform. Barati wired the score to Varga, who copied the cello part on the plane ride to Honolulu. The performances were wonderful and Varga continued to perform the concerto in years to come.<sup>18</sup>

Another time, while in San Francisco, Laszlo received a call from the Borodin Quartet to play a concert that same evening in Los Angeles. Their cellist had just broken three fingers. Varga flew down and rehearsed with the group for thirty minutes before the performance. The concert received great reviews and Varga continued to tour with the quartet until their cellist had healed.<sup>19</sup> Later on, when violinist Rostislav Dubinsky left the Borodin Quartet and formed the Borodin Trio, he asked Laszlo to be the permanent cellist of the ensemble, which he was for seven years until the death of the violinist in 1998.<sup>20</sup>

Varga is well known for his multi-cello ensemble arranging. Identifying a need, he began by arranging music for cello quartets, and has since written arrangements for anywhere from two cellos up to an orchestra consisting entirely of cellists. His arrangements have been performed and recorded around the world, including a

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

performance by 1,000 cellists in Kobe, Japan. The works are published through his own MusiCelli Publications.

Most recently, Varga was celebrated for his contributions to cello music and performance by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro during the 2007 Cello Celebration honoring Laszlo Varga. Varga donated his personal collection of music to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where it now resides in the library Special Cello Collections, which houses the largest collection of cello music in the world.<sup>21</sup>

#### Transcription and Arranging

When Varga was young he tried to compose music, but felt that all of his work sounded like Hindemith or Bartók, and gave up. He recognized his strength was in arranging and transcribing the works of others. About this topic he likes to state:

I realized that I'm not a composer, but a decomposer.<sup>22</sup>

Varga arranged his first piece of music for his graduate recital in 1946. He began with a work that he quickly lost interest in and did not finish. With only six weeks before his recital date, he had heard a performance of Ravel's *Tzigane Rapsodie de Concert* for Violin and Piano. Inspired, he quickly arranged the work for cello, learned, and performed it at his graduate recital six weeks later.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> University of North Carolina at Greensboro. "Special Cello Collections: Laszlo Varga." <<http://library.uncg.edu/info/depts/scua/collections/cello/items.aspx#lazo>> (accessed 31 January 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Laszlo Varga. Personal Interview. 27 March 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Varga had always been interested in arranging and transcribing works for cello. He was drawn to beautiful and well-known works written for other instruments. As he stated:

I wanted to enrich the literature for cello. I always considered it was less varied, less available, and less rich than, for instance, violin literature.<sup>24</sup>

He has arranged works by multiple composers, including, but not limited to, Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and Schumann. His favorite project was the three Violin Sonatas by Brahms—G Major, A Major, and D minor—transcribed for Cello and Piano. Varga was envious of the violin in these works and decided it was time for the cello to have a turn. He retained the original key and only published the cello part, so that pianists could perform the same accompaniment whether they were performing with a violinist or cellist.

#### Multi-Cello Ensemble and Writing

It was during his tenure with the New York Philharmonic that the opportunity to arrange for a cello ensemble presented itself. Always a chamber musician, Varga favored the quartet as an ensemble. He formed the first professional American cello quartet, along with fellow New York Philharmonic cellists Nathan Stutch, Martin Ormandy, and Anthony Sophos. What initially began as a fun activity became the New York Philharmonic Cello Quartet. When asked whose idea it was to start the ensemble, Varga jokingly replied:

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Mine. Because I'm the only crazy one.<sup>25</sup>

While searching for music to perform, Varga found few works available for cello quartet. The ensemble found two original works to prepare, *Suite for 4 Cellos, Op. 95* by Emanuel Moor, and *Two Pieces for 4 Cellos, Op. 89* by Joseph Jongen, but needed more. Recognizing a need, Varga arranged the *Concerto Grosso in D minor, Op. 3, No. 11* by Vivaldi as well as Bartok's *Hungarian Peasant Songs, No. 7-11* for cello quartet. These four works comprised the program for the ensemble's first concert.

The quartet recorded the same program for Decca Records, for which they received a favorable review. Of Varga's arrangements, the reviewer wrote:

(Varga) has made an astonishingly successful job of transcribing both Bartok and Vivaldi.<sup>26</sup>

The medium of the cello quartet also won over the reviewer who stated:

I am now converted to the 'cello quartet as a worthwhile ensemble with something of its own to offer, and to this quartet in particular for its technical mastery and great powers of expression.<sup>27</sup>

While the New York Philharmonic Cello Quartet did not sell enough records to warrant a second album, they did continue to concertize. The significance of this

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> R.F. "Review: New York Philharmonic 'Cello Quartet.'" *Gramophone* (December 1962): 50 <<http://www.gramophone.net/Issue/Page/December%201962/50/843704/>> (accessed 31 January 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

ensemble is that it started an interest in multi-cello ensemble performance, creating a need for more music. Varga spent much of his career successfully filling that need.

Varga continued to form several other cello quartets in California, and also made recordings. Part of his professional career has been spent in building and promoting the genre of the multi-cello ensemble.

Inspired by the Moor and Jongen cello quartets, Varga was ready to try his hand at the art. What drew Varga to the thought of arranging for a multi-cello ensemble was the wide range of the instrument. It covers the range of a string orchestra, with the exception of the lowest of bass notes. To compensate, occasionally Varga would add a double bass to the cello ensemble to cover the lower register notes.

The cellist's demeanor also played a factor in his choice to write for multi-cello ensemble. He felt a group of cellists had the ability to work together well toward a group goal. Varga stated:

Cellists like to get together and play much more than violinists. I never heard of a Violin Ensemble, or very seldom.<sup>28</sup>

The need for good arrangements for multi-cello ensembles also inspired Varga to write for the genre. When researching current works for the genre, he had a difficult time finding many works that were of merit.

Most of (the works) are so incurred with difficulty, written by people who don't know anything about the cello. In order to write something for cello quartet or group, you really have to have at least as much knowledge as (Zoltán) Kodály had of cello. By the

---

<sup>28</sup> Laszlo Varga. Personal Interview. 27 March 2007.

way he was a cellist, not a professional, but he played cello. He couldn't have written his Solo Sonata without it.<sup>29</sup>

### Process of Arranging

In order to properly disperse orchestra parts among cellos, Varga needed to develop a process of arranging. He had noticed that other works for multi-cello ensemble were too difficult—that the arranger had not taken the idiom of the cello and its capabilities into consideration.

The first aspect of his process was to extend the cello technique. He did this by developing an approach that allowed a cellist to navigate the instrument in a way that could successfully imitate other instruments.

The left hand pinky is rarely used once a cellist has shifted high enough on the fingerboard. In fact, once in thumb position, the pinky is left out all together. Some cellists, when in thumb position, will lean the left hand back toward the scroll, rendering the left pinky useless. Varga, however, is able to occasionally incorporate his pinky into his playing by leaning his hand forward, toward the bridge. This extends his range on the instrument and lessens the amount of shifting he would need to make.<sup>30</sup>

His method for choosing works to arrange distills to one simple rule: he must love it. When Varga hears a work he loves, it begins to come together in his mind. At times he wakes in the night with a song in mind. That does not always mean that works were immediately arranged; sometimes it would be a few years between the initial thought of a

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

potential arrangement and the actual writing of it. Yet if a piece of music could attract him musically and stylistically, it was soon arranged for cello or a cello ensemble.

Varga tended to arrange music from the Classical and Romantic eras. He felt modern works did not lend themselves well to the genre. Often he will pick shorter works. Sometimes a work is chosen from other instrumental repertoire, as stated earlier, in an effort to enrich the cello repertoire. Due to his efforts in arranging, Varga has gained a reputation of which he is quite fond.

Well, I have achieved a certain reputation as ‘The Lone Arranger.’<sup>31</sup>

When starting a work, Varga is able to hear the music in his mind. He will often sit at the piano to write the melody and find the appropriate harmonies. It is not until an arrangement is well sketched out that he will play through it on the cello to make sure it is playable on the instrument.

Varga is fond of sharing a melody among an ensemble. He enjoys the fact that each cello has its own unique sound and timbre. Each performer has a different style and level of virtuosity. The fact that no two performers will play a line the same way helps enrich a performance. No member of the ensemble is excluded, it does not matter if one is performing the first cello or fifth cello line; each could have moments of melody and moments of harmony. This also means that the first cellist does not automatically have the difficult part, each cellist gets a turn. As Varga said:

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

I like to distribute the parts so the other players can have a little more fun. Why should the first cello have all the fun, or all the trouble?<sup>32</sup>

Four-hand piano pieces provide great opportunity when arranging for a multi-cello ensemble. Often in such works the melody is distributed in both the upper and lower hands. It is this distribution that Varga feels lends well to the cello ensemble as the melody can be shared by more than one cellist at a time. Sometimes he might arrange such a work for two to three cellists and a pianist. When writing for four cellists, the piano lines are split evenly among each cello, eliminating the need for a pianist altogether. He jokes that in these moments he fired the pianist.<sup>33</sup>

Varga pays careful attention to the range of the cello when he writes. If he is arranging from a line that is too high or low for the cello, he will usually adjust by bringing the line up or down an octave as necessary. When it is essential to mimic rather high notes that are beyond the range of the instrument, Varga will incorporate natural and false harmonics into the line in order to achieve the desired range for a note.

When dealing with the key of a work, Varga is respectful of the natural tuning of the cello. The cello is a “C” pitched instrument, with the lowest possible note being a C. In order to be able to take advantage of all the notes the cello can play, especially its lowest note, often Varga will arrange works in the key of C Major or minor. F Major, or minor, is another key he favors as the dominant key is C, again taking advantage of the lowest note in the cello range. Of course he will use other keys as necessary.

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

When a work is complete, it is subjected to a series of proofreading and editing sessions. Varga is very thorough when it comes to checking his arrangement. He will take time to pour over each note, melody, and harmony at the piano. Then he will play through it on the cello to make sure every fingering, note, and bowing is correct. Before a piece is ever shown to anyone, it has been edited several times by Varga.

I try to edit as much as I can without my eyeballs falling out.<sup>34</sup>

While he would prefer not to have to do this step, he does not trust anyone else. As there are not many who write this type of ensemble work, he realizes that he is the most qualified to identify any necessary changes that need to be made.

Varga seldom rewrites an arrangement once it is complete. Occasionally he may revisit a work in order to change some fingerings or bowings. He may even redistribute double stops in an effort to make a part more accessible to performers. While he feels nothing is ever set in stone, and he does admit that he is never totally satisfied with anything, he feels rewriting is unproductive. It is better to let go of the work and move forward to the next arrangement. Of course there is an exception to any rule. His arrangement of the *Adagio con Variazione* by Ottorino Respighi is an example of this.

#### Ottorino Respighi and the *Adagio con Variazione*

Italian composer Ottorino Respighi (1897-1936) is best known for his Roman trilogy: *Fountains of Rome*, *Pines of Rome*, and *Roman Festivals*. He served as the Chair for Composition at the Academy of Santa Cecilia in Rome, and in 1932 was elected to

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

the Academy of Italy. Known primarily for his compositions, he was also an accomplished violinist, violist, and pianist. It was during his time performing in Russia, for both the Imperial Theater as well as the Bolshoi Theater, that he was able to study with composer Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov.

While adept at writing in the current style of his time, Respighi became known as a champion of the older style of composition. He had a great appreciation for earlier Italian musical tradition and composers, and would incorporate that style into his work. Respighi was also a talented orchestral arranger, arranging works by composers such as Bach, Vivaldi, and Rossini. In fact Rachmaninoff chose Respighi to orchestrate his own work: *Cinq Études-Tableaux*.

Respighi put his talent for arranging to use when he orchestrated his earlier work *Adagio con Variazione for cello and piano*.<sup>35</sup> Originally written for cello and piano during Respighi's early years, the *Adagio con Variazione for cello and orchestra* was transcribed by Respighi in 1921. The work is dedicated to his friend, cellist Antonio Certani, who is credited with creating the theme of the piece. It is performed and recorded today in both formats.<sup>36</sup>

Respighi's orchestration calls for double winds, harp, and strings. The exact makeup of the ensemble is as follows: solo cello, piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboe, English horn, 2 clarinets in A, 2 bassoon, 2 horns in E, harp, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> violins, viola, cello, and bass.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Heald, David. "Ottorino Respighi: A Brief Introductory Article." 1998. <<http://www.musicweb-international.com/respighi/>> (accessed 29 January 2011).

<sup>36</sup> *Naxos Music Library*. "Ottorino Respighi; Adagio con Variazione." <<http://libproxy.uncg.edu:2175/work.asp?wid=182997&cid=8.555691>> (accessed 29 January 2011).

<sup>37</sup> Respighi, Ottorino. *Adagio con Variazione for Cello and Orchestra*. Bologna, Italy: F. Bongiovanni, 1932.

### CHAPTER III

#### ARRANGEMENT OF THE *ADAGIO CON VARIAZIONE*

Varga first heard the *Adagio con Variazione* by Respighi while he was traveling with the Léner Quartet. He attended a performance by famed cellist Gaspar Cassado. One of the works Cassado performed during the concert was the *Adagio*. Varga felt the piece was beautiful and fell in love with the work. Over the years he has performed the *Adagio* several times with both piano and orchestra. He has even performed it with an organ accompaniment.<sup>38</sup>

When Varga decided to arrange the *Adagio*, he chose to rewrite Respighi's arrangement for solo cello and orchestra, for solo cello with an 8-part cello ensemble. Before he could start, there were many items he had to take into consideration such as key, instrument distribution, doubling, range, and others. In deciding which key to use in an arrangement, Varga had to consider how a key change would affect the written music. Would a part that was once simple to perform now become too difficult? This could result in notes needing to be rewritten to make them accessible to the performer.

He needed to form a method for distributing the orchestra lines among the cello ensemble. Varga had to decide if each instrument would be assigned to one cello line for the entirety of the work, or if the orchestra lines would be distributed among several cello lines. It was also necessary to determine how to handle issues of doubling between

---

<sup>38</sup> Laszlo Varga. Personal Interview. 27 March 2007.

instruments, as well as double stops within a single instrument. Would he always keep the melody in one single cello line?

It was Varga's desire to emulate the original orchestra instruments as closely as possible. How would he accomplish this task? Would every note from the original work be in the arrangement? These are just a few of the items he had to consider before he began his work. It was Varga's goal to represent each line from the orchestra as faithfully as he could, however, he did recognize the need to change some items in order to produce a work that was approachable for the cellists that would perform the piece.

The first change was the key. Respighi wrote the *Adagio* in B Major (see figure 1). This was due to the fact that the harp is naturally tuned to C-flat Major.<sup>39</sup> Respighi wrote the harp line in C-flat Major, and the rest of the ensemble, with the exception of any transposing instruments, in the enharmonic equivalent of B Major. This allowed the harp to be in its natural key and make the rest of the orchestra, as well as solo cellist, be at ease.

Since Varga would not be including a harp in his arrangement, he was more concerned about using a key that allowed him use of the full range of the cello. If he chose to stay in B Major, it would eliminate use of the lowest note available on the cello, C. By transposing the key up one half-step to C Major, he now had the full potential range of the cello at his disposal.<sup>40</sup> (See figure 2.)

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Remember to take into account all transposing instruments: English Horn, Clarinet in A, and Horn. For example, when the orchestra is in B Major the English Horn is a fifth higher in F# Major, the Clarinet is in D Major, a minor third higher, and the Horn is in C Major, a half-step higher.

Solo Violoncello

Adagio

*mp* *cresc.*

**Figure 1. Respighi Orchestra edition: Solo Cello mm. 1-4 in B Major**

Solo Violoncello

Adagio

*mp*

**Figure 2. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello mm. 1-4 in C Major**

This shift of one half-step between the keys of the two arrangements holds true for the entire work except for one brief passage. In Respighi's orchestra arrangement, measures 39 through 51 are in the key of B-flat Major (see figure 3). Varga had the choice to transpose the passage to one of two enharmonic keys, B Major or C-flat Major. Based on his earlier transpositions in the arrangement, he would have chosen the key that was a diatonic half-step above the original key, (e.g., D Major to E-flat Major). During mm. 39-51 Varga broke from his pattern and instead chose to shift the key up a chromatic half-step, from the original B-flat Major to B Major (see figure 4). A possible reason for this was for the ease of the cellists, as B Major is a more comfortable key to perform in than C-flat Major is.



**Figure 3. Respighi Orchestra edition: Flute mm 42-44**



**Figure 4. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cello 1 mm. 42-44**

When arranging a work for multi-cello ensemble, Varga prefers to distribute a line among more than one cellist. This is due to the fact that each cello has a unique sound and timbre, and every individual cellist has a unique approach to their performance, and varying levels of virtuosity. Therefore no two cellos or cellists will perform a line the same way, creating variety. For the same reason, a performance of the same work by a different cello ensemble will provide new colors, timbres, and approaches.

This variety is important to Varga. Cognizant of the fact that the ensemble of all cellists eliminates much of the variety of sound that was provided by an orchestra, he wanted to make sure the multi-cello ensemble did not sound boring.

I do not always want one cello to play the top line, or the same line. [I want to highlight] the different colors of the different cellists and different instruments. [This] is an important point for me; otherwise it becomes boring because it is all cellos. I like to show the original timbres that are different.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Laszlo Varga. Personal Interview. 27 March 2007.

Varga often distributes a line from Respighi's orchestra arrangement among several cello lines in his own arrangement. See figures 5 and 6 for an example of how he distributed the first bassoon line among the cello ensemble. In measure 6 the first bassoon line is found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cello. By beat 3 of measure 7, it is now in the 3<sup>rd</sup> cello line, only to be moved once again on beat 3 of measure 8, this time to the 5<sup>th</sup> cello line.

**Figure 5. Respighi Orchestra edition: 1<sup>st</sup> Bassoon mm. 6-8**

**Figure 6. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 2, 3, 4, and 5 mm. 6-8**

Each line in Varga's arrangement, including the solo cello, is given the opportunity to perform more than one orchestra part (see figures 7 and 8). The following example demonstrates this fact. Measures 24-28 of Cello 5 in the 1<sup>st</sup> arrangement by

Varga<sup>42</sup> contain notes from the following orchestra lines: Cello, Viola, 2<sup>nd</sup> Violin, and Clarinet.<sup>43</sup>

The measure in which each instrument occurs in Cello 5 is provided below:

Measure 24, beats 1-4 = Cello

Measure 25, beat 1-beat 2, 1<sup>st</sup> half = Viola

Measure 25, beat 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> half- beat 4, 1<sup>st</sup> half = 2<sup>nd</sup> Violin

Measure 25, beat 4, 2<sup>nd</sup> half - Measure 26, beat 3, 1<sup>st</sup> half = Viola

Measure 26, beat 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> half - beat 4 = No orchestra instrument line

Measure 27, beat 1 - Measure 28, beat 3 = Clarinet

Measure 28, beat 4 = 2<sup>nd</sup> Violin

**Figure 7. Respighi Orchestra edition: Clarinet, 2<sup>nd</sup> Violin, Viola, and Cello mm. 24-28**

**Figure 8. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cello 5 mm. 24-28**

<sup>42</sup> Respighi, Ottorino. *Adagio con Variazione*. Arranged by Laszlo Varga for Solo Cello and 8-part cello ensemble. MusiCelli Publications, 1997.

<sup>43</sup> Respighi, Ottorino. *Adagio con Variazione for Cello and Orchestra*. Bologna, Italy: F. Bongiovanni, 1932.

In the occurrence of a doubled line or double stop within an instrument, Varga would split the lines between two, or more if needed, cellists. Both the 2<sup>nd</sup> Violin and Viola have double stops in measures 72-73 (see figures 9 and 10). Varga split the 2<sup>nd</sup> Violin notes between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> cello lines, and the Viola notes between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> cello lines in the ensemble.

The image shows a musical score for Violin 2 and Viola. The Violin 2 part is in the upper staff, and the Viola part is in the lower staff. Both parts are in 4/4 time and have a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). In measure 72, both instruments play a quarter note G#4. In measure 73, both instruments play a double stop consisting of a quarter note G#4 and a quarter note B4. The dynamic marking is *mf* for both parts.

**Figure 9. Respighi Orchestra edition: 2<sup>nd</sup> Violin and Viola mm. 72-73**

The image shows a musical score for Violoncello 2, 3, 4, and 5. The Violoncello 2 part is in the upper staff, and the Violoncello 3, 4, and 5 parts are in the lower staves. All parts are in 4/4 time and have a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). In measure 72, Violoncello 2 has a whole rest, Violoncello 3 has a quarter note G#4, Violoncello 4 has a quarter note G#4, and Violoncello 5 has a quarter note G#4. In measure 73, Violoncello 2 has a double stop consisting of a quarter note G#4 and a quarter note B4, Violoncello 3 has a double stop consisting of a quarter note G#4 and a quarter note B4, Violoncello 4 has a double stop consisting of a quarter note G#4 and a quarter note B4, and Violoncello 5 has a double stop consisting of a quarter note G#4 and a quarter note B4. The dynamic marking is *mf* for Violoncello 2 and *pp* for Violoncello 3, 4, and 5.

**Figure 10. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cello lines 2, 3, 4, and 5 mm. 72-73**

Often one or more orchestra instruments share the same musical line. Varga would distribute the line in one of a few ways. The first option was to condense the lines into a single cello part. This was usually done when there was enough music from the

rest of the orchestra to fill the remaining cello lines. An example of this can be found in measures 93-95, where the 2<sup>nd</sup> Flute, 1<sup>st</sup> Oboe, and 1<sup>st</sup> Clarinet share the same melody (see figures 11 and 12). All three parts are represented in one single line in the cello ensemble, in this case Cello 1.

**Figure 11.** *Respighi Orchestra edition: mm. 93-95*

**Figure 12.** *Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cello 1 mm. 93-95*

When the texture of the orchestra was thin, Varga would not reduce the doubled or tripled musical line to one single cello line. He would instead carry the individual lines directly over into the arrangement, keeping the separate lines intact. Measures 13-14 demonstrate this technique (see figures 13 and 14). The orchestra Cello and Bass lines share the same musical material. He keeps these lines separate, placing the orchestra Cello and Bass lines into the cello ensemble Cellos 5 and 6 respectively.

**Figure 13. Respighi Orchestra edition: Cello and Bass mm. 13-14**

**Figure 14. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 5 and 6 mm. 13-14**

Respighi wrote his orchestra edition for eighteen instruments plus solo cello. Varga only used eight cellos plus solo cello. This meant that, at times, some orchestra lines would need to be omitted as there are simply not enough performers to cover each line at all times. In these moments, Varga would combine any double or triple parts into one cello line as stated earlier. However this could still result in more orchestra lines than what could be covered by the cello ensemble.

At these moments, Varga had to choose which notes could be dropped and which should stay in the arrangement. Measures 37-38 demonstrate this occurrence (see figures 15 and 16). The Oboe and the Flute contain the same melodic material separated by one octave. The Flute is omitted from the cello arrangement, while the notes are represented an octave lower in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cello line, derived from the Oboe. The half note from the 1<sup>st</sup> Clarinet line in measure 37, beats 1-2, was also omitted. However the note is represented

one octave lower in the Cello 6 line, taken from the orchestra 2<sup>nd</sup> Horn. In each case the notes are covered in the ensemble, they are just derived from a different orchestra instrumental line.

This musical score shows four staves for measures 37 and 38. The top staff is for Flute, the second for Oboe, the third for Clarinet 1 & 2, and the bottom for Horn 1 & 2. All staves are in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The Flute and Oboe parts feature melodic lines with slurs and accents, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Clarinet and Horn parts provide harmonic support with chords and some melodic fragments, also marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

**Figure 15.** *Respighi Orchestra edition: Flute, Oboe, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Clarinet, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Horn mm. 37-38*

This musical score shows five staves for measures 37 and 38, labeled Violoncello 2 through 6. The top four staves (Violoncello 2, 3, 4, and 5) are in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb). The bottom staff (Violoncello 6) is in 12/4 time with a key signature of two flats. All parts are marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The staves show various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines, with some staves having rests in measure 37.

**Figure 16.** *Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 mm. 37-38*





**Figure 19. Respighi Orchestra edition: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Bassoon mm. 88-90**

**Figure 20. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 7 and 8 mm. 88-90**

Varga changed articulations and dynamics when he felt it was needed, in order to bring out individual lines or phrases. In the example below, phrasing, dynamics, and the rhythm has been written differently (see figures 21 and 22).

The phrasing has been changed in order to provide the best bowing possible. Due to fewer performers in the cello ensemble than the orchestra, the piano in measure 37 of the orchestra has been changed to a mezzo-piano in order to emulate the strength of the orchestra line at this point. Varga did not change the rhythmic durations in beats 2 and 3 of measure 38; however he did change the way they were written. This was done to provide ease for the performer in visually identifying where the beat lies.

**Figure 21. Respighi Orchestra edition: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Horn, mm. 37-38**

**Figure 22. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 5 and 6, mm. 37-38**

When needed, Varga would raise or lower an orchestra line by an octave in order to increase the range of the cello ensemble. He does this in measure 17 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> beat of measure 18 (see figures 23 and 24). At this point, he lowers the orchestra Cello and Bass lines one octave to take advantage of the lower range of the instrument.

**Figure 23. Respighi Orchestra edition: Cello and Bass measure 16, beat 3-measure 18**

**Figure 24.** *Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 5, 6, 7, and 8 measure 16, beat 3-measure 18*

For higher orchestra instruments, such as the Piccolo and Flute, Varga incorporated natural and false harmonics to properly achieve a correct imitation of the instrument range. The first example demonstrates this method while imitating the Piccolo line (see figures 25 and 26). The second is an example of an imitation of the Flute (see figures 27 and 28).

**Figure 25.** *Respighi Orchestra edition: Piccolo mm. 30-32*

**Figure 26.** *Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello mm. 30-32*

Flute 1

Flute 2

*pp*

*pp*

**Figure 27. Respighi Orchestra edition: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Flute mm. 100-101**

Violoncello 2

Violoncello 3

*pp*

*pp*

**Figure 28. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 2 and 3 mm. 100-101**

Due to the change in key, some passages were no longer accessible on the cello. Whenever this occurred, Varga changed the notes within the passage. All the while he was careful to remain true to the original melodic structure and harmonies established by Respighi.

Measure 39 begins one such passage. In the original orchestration, the ensemble is in G minor. The solo cello line is presented with quick arpeggios that always include an open G string, allowing the performer to concentrate on the upper notes of the passage. Once this passage was placed in G-sharp minor in the cello ensemble arrangement, it became too difficult to perform. The low note of G-sharp required an amount of shifting that was not easily accessible at such a quick tempo. Varga reconfigured the notes of the arpeggios in order to remain true to the intent and

harmonies established by Respighi, yet allowed the part to be approachable (see figures 29 and 30).

**Figure 29. Respighi Orchestra edition: Solo Cello mm. 39-40**

**Figure 30. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello mm. 39-40**

Within that same orchestra passage is a series of double stops that also have the low G string in between each note pairing. Again, due to the key change, this passage had to be modified. Varga chose to drop the low G-sharp and split the double stop into two separate notes, as demonstrated in the example below (see figures 31 and 32).

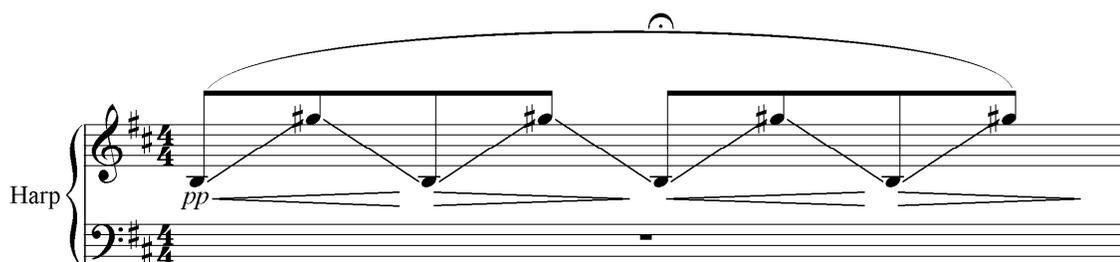
**Figure 31. Respighi Orchestra edition: Solo Cello mm. 41-44**

**Figure 32. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello mm. 41-44**

Deciding how to distribute the harp line into the cello ensemble proved to be a challenge. Given the difference in idioms, Varga knew he had to rewrite the harp lines for the cello. It was his goal to emulate the instrument as best he could.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Laszlo Varga. Personal Interview. 27 March 2007.

The harp first appears in Respighi's orchestration in measure 56, performing a repeated, wide range, ascending and descending glissando. Varga assigned this line to the 1<sup>st</sup> Cello in the ensemble (see figures 33 and 34). He rewrote for a slightly smaller range, a one octave ascending and descending scale that is repeated four times.



**Figure 35. Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp and Solo Cello measure 106**

**Figure 36. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello and Cello 1 measure 106**

When writing the first arrangement, Varga did not use the harp, aiming instead for a pure cello sound. However he soon realized that the new solo cello line, derived from the original harp, was unplayable. Cellists were not performing the work. Varga had himself performed the work but was able to recognize the difficulty of the piece.

When I saw that this was beyond anybody's possibility...I wasn't convinced that anybody else is going to even attempt it.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Laszlo Varga. Personal Interview. 27 March 2007.

Desiring for the work to survive and be performed, Varga chose to ignore his aversion of rewriting an arrangement and got to work on a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the *Adagio con Variazione*. This time he arranged it for Solo Cello, 8-part cello ensemble, and harp.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

Only a few changes exist between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the arrangements. Most of the changes involve restoring the original harp lines to the instrument. The remaining changes expand upon Varga's intent to move melodic and harmonic lines among more than one instrument in order to highlight the variations of sound within the ensemble. He even adds music to the harp part in addition to its restored lines. In total, there are ten major changes, all of which are outlined below.

The first change occurs in measures 27 and 28. In the 1<sup>st</sup> edition, the original solo cello line was placed in Cello 1, while the Solo Cello performed the piccolo part, and Cello 3 performed the flute line (see figure 37). In the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition the orchestra solo cello line is restored to the ensemble solo cellist (see figure 38). The piccolo and flute lines are covered in the harp, which also doubles the solo cellist, one octave higher. Cellos 1 and 3 now have rests.

**Figure 37.** *Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello, Cellos 1 and 3 mm. 27-28*

**Figure 38.** *Varga arrangement 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: Solo Cello, Harp, Cellos 1 and 3 mm. 27-28*

Measure 30 beat 3 through measure 32 beat 2 is the next change. In the 1<sup>st</sup> edition, the solo cellist again performs the piccolo line. The flute line is in Cello 1, and the solo cello line can be found in Cello 2 (see figure 39). In the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, the orchestra solo cello line is restored to the solo cellist. The piccolo and flute parts are placed in the harp line, which also doubles the solo cellist one octave higher. Cellos 1 and 2 have rests during this passage (see figure 40).

**Figure 39.** *Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello, Cellos 1 and 2 mm. 30-32*

**Figure 40.** *Varga arrangement 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: Solo Cello, Harp, Cellos 1 and 2 mm. 30-32*

In the 1<sup>st</sup> edition at measure 51, Cello 2 was assigned material from the 1<sup>st</sup> Clarinet. However, instead of transposing the notes from the orchestra line, Varga instead chose to repeat the notes found in measure 50 of the clarinet. The notes and

rhythm were different from what was in measure 51 (see figures 41 and 42). In the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Varga fixed this spot. Measure 51 is now exactly as it should have been if it were a direct transposition from the orchestra clarinet line (see figure 43).

Clarinet 1

**Figure 41. Respighi Orchestra edition: Clarinet mm. 50-51**

Violoncello 2

**Figure 42. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cello 2 mm. 50-51**

Violoncello 2

**Figure 43. Varga arrangement 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: Cello 2 mm. 50-51**

The original orchestra harp line is restored to the harp in measures 56 and 61 (see figures 44 and 45). Cello 1, which in the 1<sup>st</sup> edition contained a rewritten version of the harp, now contains rests (see figure 46).

Harp

m. 56

Harp

m. 61

**Figure 44.** *Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp mm. 56 and 61*

Violoncello 1

m. 56

Violoncello 1

m. 61

**Figure 45.** *Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cello 1 mm. 56 and 61 (time signature for both is 4/4)*

Harp

*pp*

Violoncello 1

m. 56

Harp

*pp*

Violoncello 1

m. 61

**Figure 46.** *Varga arrangement 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: Harp and Cello 1 mm. 56 and 61*

The orchestra harp, which was omitted from the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of Varga's arrangement, is restored in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in measure 68 (see figures 47 and 48).

Harp

*pp*

**Figure 47.** *Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp measure 68*



**Figure 48. Varga arrangement 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: Harp measure 68**

Varga utilized harmonics in beat four of measure 73 in the 1<sup>st</sup> edition in an effort to emulate the correct pitch class of the notes, which were taken from the orchestra harp line (see figures 49 and 50). With the instrument restored in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, the notes at this section are also restored to the harp (see figure 51). The cellists in the ensemble are assigned new notes in a wider, lower range that support the harmonic structure.



**Figure 49. Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp measure 73**

The image shows a musical score for eight cellos, labeled Violoncello 1 through Violoncello 8. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking. The notation is as follows:

- Violoncello 1:** Treble clef, quarter note G4, quarter note F#4.
- Violoncello 2:** Treble clef, quarter note G4, quarter note E4.
- Violoncello 3:** Treble clef, quarter note G4, quarter note F#4.
- Violoncello 4:** Treble clef, quarter note G4, quarter note E4.
- Violoncello 5:** Bass clef, quarter note G2, quarter note G2.
- Violoncello 6:** Bass clef, quarter note G2, quarter note F#2.
- Violoncello 7:** Bass clef, quarter note G2, quarter note G2.
- Violoncello 8:** Bass clef, quarter note G2, quarter note F#2.

**Figure 50.** *Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 1-8 measure 73*

The musical score for Figure 51 shows the Harp and Cello ensemble in measure 73. The Harp part is in the upper system, and the Cello ensemble consists of eight staves in the lower system. The notes are: Harp (F#4, G4, A4, Bb4), Violoncello 1 (G4), Violoncello 2 (F#4), Violoncello 3 (A4), Violoncello 4 (G4), Violoncello 5 (F#3), Violoncello 6 (A3), Violoncello 7 (G3), and Violoncello 8 (F#3). The dynamic is *pp*.

**Figure 51. Varga arrangement 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: Harp and Cellos 1-8 measure 73**

Measure 80 of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition found the orchestra harp notes, dispersed among the cello ensemble, doubling the notes from the orchestra winds (see figures 52 and 53). Once again the notes are restored to the harp in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (see figure 54).

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Flute, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Harp, in measure 80. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The Flute, Clarinet, and Bassoon parts are in treble, alto, and bass clefs respectively, and each plays a half note chord. The Harp part is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and plays a half note chord. The dynamics are *pp* for the Flute, Clarinet, and Bassoon, and *p* for the Harp.

Flute

Clarinet

Bassoon

Harp

**Figure 52.** *Respighi Orchestra edition: Flute, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Harp measure 80*

The image displays a musical score for eight cellos, labeled Violoncello 1 through Violoncello 8. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a descending chromatic line across the eight instruments. Violoncello 1 and 2 are in the treble clef, while Violoncello 3 through 8 are in the bass clef. Each instrument plays a single note with a fermata, and the notes descend from G4 in the first staff to G2 in the eighth staff. The dynamic marking *pp* (pianissimo) is present below each staff.

Violoncello	Clef	Note	Dynamic
Violoncello 1	Treble	G4	<i>pp</i>
Violoncello 2	Treble	F#4	<i>pp</i>
Violoncello 3	Treble	F4	<i>pp</i>
Violoncello 4	Treble	E4	<i>pp</i>
Violoncello 5	Bass	D4	<i>pp</i>
Violoncello 6	Bass	C4	<i>pp</i>
Violoncello 7	Bass	B3	<i>pp</i>
Violoncello 8	Bass	A3	<i>pp</i>

**Figure 53.** *Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cellos 1-8 measure 80*

The image shows a musical score for measure 80. At the top is the Harp part, consisting of two staves in 4/4 time with a treble clef and a dynamic marking of *pp*. Below this are eight staves for Violoncello 1 through Violoncello 8. Staves 1-4 are in treble clef, and staves 5-8 are in bass clef. All cello parts are in 4/4 time and marked *pp*. The notation for each part shows a single note with a fermata, indicating a sustained sound.

**Figure 54. Varga arrangement 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: Harp and Cellos 1-8 measure 80**

When it comes to distribution of the lines among the ensemble, Varga found more opportunities to share the melody. As he stated, “Why should the first cello have all the fun?”<sup>47</sup> In the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, measures 88-99, he reverses the solo cello and Cello 1 lines, so the 1<sup>st</sup> cellist has the opportunity to perform the melody (see figures 55 and 56).

<sup>47</sup> Laszlo Varga. Personal Interview. 27 March 2007.

Violoncello Solo

Violoncello 1

Vc.

Vc.

*p* *cresc.* *f*

*p* *cresc.* *f*

**Figure 55.** *Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello and Cello 1 mm. 93-97*

Violoncello Solo

Violoncello 1

Vc.

Vc.

*p* *cresc.* *f*

*p* *cresc.* *f*

**Figure 56.** *Varga arrangement 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: Solo Cello and Cello 1 mm. 93-97*

With the availability of the harp, the difficult solo cello line in measures 100-115 can be removed (see figures 57, 58, and 59). The original harp notes and rhythms are restored as they appeared in the orchestra arrangement by Respighi. This allows the solo

cello to regain its original solo material. Cello 1, no longer needing to play the melodic line, is now resting during this time.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system features a Harp part with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a Violoncello Solo part in a single staff. The Harp part is in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and contains a complex, flowing melodic line with many slurs. The Violoncello Solo part is in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and contains a simple, sustained melodic line. The second system features a Harp part (Hp.) with a grand staff and a Violoncello part (Vc.) in a single staff. The Harp part continues with the same complex melodic line, while the Violoncello part continues with the same simple melodic line. The key signature for the Violoncello part in the second system is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

**Figure 57.** *Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp and Solo Cello mm. 106-107*

The image displays a musical score for two systems of cello parts. The first system is labeled 'Violoncello Solo' and 'Violoncello 1'. The 'Violoncello Solo' part is written in the bass clef (4/4 time) and features a complex, rhythmic melody with many sixteenth notes and slurs. The 'Violoncello 1' part is written in the treble clef and consists of a few long, sustained notes. The second system is labeled 'Vc.' on both staves. The upper 'Vc.' part is in the bass clef and mirrors the complex melody of the 'Violoncello Solo' part. The lower 'Vc.' part is in the treble clef and consists of a few long, sustained notes, similar to the 'Violoncello 1' part.

**Figure 58.** *Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello and Cello 1 mm. 106-107*

The image displays two systems of musical notation for measures 106-107. The first system includes three staves: Violoncello Solo (top), Harp (middle, grand staff), and Violoncello 1 (bottom). The second system includes three staves: Vc. (top), Hp. (middle, grand staff), and Vc. (bottom). The Violoncello Solo and Vc. staves in both systems show a melodic line with a long note followed by a series of eighth notes. The Harp and Hp. staves show a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth notes. The Violoncello 1 and Vc. staves in both systems are empty, indicating a false harmonic or rest.

**Figure 59.** *Varga arrangement 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: Solo Cello, Harp, and Cello 1 mm. 106-107*

Measures 121-122 in the first edition found the orchestra harp line assigned to the solo cello, while the solo cello line was represented through the use of a false harmonic in the fourth cello (see figures 60 and 61). In the second edition the original orchestra harp line is restored to the harp allowing the solo cello to regain its original line as well (see figure 62).

Figure 60 shows a musical score for Harp and Solo Cello. The Harp part is written in two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of three flats and a 4/4 time signature. The Solo Cello part is written in a single staff with a bass clef and the same key signature and time signature. The Harp part begins with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) and a tempo marking of *molto rall.* (molto rallentando). The Solo Cello part begins with a dynamic marking of *f*. Both parts end with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano). The Harp part includes a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking and an *8va* (octave) marking. The Solo Cello part includes a *f* marking and a *p* marking.

**Figure 60. Respighi Orchestra edition: Harp and Solo Cello mm. 121-122 (time signature is 4/4)**

Figure 61 shows a musical score for Solo Cello and Cello 4. The Solo Cello part is written in a single staff with a bass clef and a key signature of three flats. The Cello 4 part is written in a single staff with a treble clef and the same key signature. Both parts begin with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte). The Solo Cello part includes a *f* marking and a *p* marking. The Cello 4 part includes a *f* marking and a *p* marking.

**Figure 61. Varga arrangement 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Solo Cello and Cello 4 mm. 121-122 (time signature is 4/4)**

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Violoncello Solo and Harp. The Violoncello Solo part is written on a single staff in treble clef, marked 'molto rallentando' with a long, horizontal line indicating a sustained note. The Harp part is written on two staves (treble and bass clefs). The treble staff has a melodic line with an '8va' marking and a dynamic marking of 'pp'. The bass staff has a lower melodic line. The score is for measures 121-122.

**Figure 62.** *Varga arrangement 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: Solo Cello and Harp mm. 121-122 (time signature is 4/4)*

The addition of the harp unburdens the solo cellist of the difficult passages at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition. Varga felt that the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition was the stronger of the two. It would be the arrangement that would survive and be performed. It is his hope that it will be performed often.

Varga recommends several adaptations for a performance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the *Adagio con Variazione*. The first allows for a piano to perform the harp line when a harp is unavailable. He also suggests an organ, if one is available, due to its ability to sustain lines. Varga himself has performed the original Respighi *Adagio* with orchestra accompaniment, a pianist, and an organ.

This work may also be performed with a larger ensemble. He suggests doubling all the parts, or even just the top four lines, so the bass lines do not overpower the work. If a larger ensemble is available, one could triple the lines.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Laszlo Varga. Personal Interview. 27 March 2007.

When rehearsing the work, Varga does recommend working with a conductor to achieve proper balance and to keep the ensemble together. He has used a conductor on past performances of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the work.

## CHAPTER IV

## CONCLUSION

When questioned if he will continue to arrange music, Varga is undecided. In his interview in March of 2007 he stated:

At the moment I'm kind of finished making arrangements, but you never know...but I'm planning to write and I plan maybe doing arrangements, yes.<sup>49</sup>

Varga created MusiCelli Publications as a venue to publish his works. He also encourages and publishes the works of other multi-cello ensemble writers. The business is run by Dr. David Garrett, member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, cello teacher at California State University at Long Beach, and former Doctoral student of Varga. Dr. Garrett recognized the value in what Varga is trying to accomplish in promoting multi-cello ensemble writing and performance, and wanted to do his part to help. When Varga finishes an arrangement, he sends it to David who then prepares it for publication, and manages all sales of the music.

Varga values Dr. Garrett's skills and time and has arranged for him to receive all profit created by the company. When asked why Varga chose not to collect on any profit from the sales of his works he stated:

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

I didn't want to. I am more interested in proliferating my arrangements so that they would be available and audible. I publish them through [David] so that they are available for whoever wants to benefit from [the music].<sup>50</sup>

### Cello Celebration

In February of 2007 Varga was honored by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with the Varga Cello Celebration organized by Dr. Brooks Whitehouse. The university houses the world's largest collection of cello music-related materials in the library's Special Collections. Varga had previously donated his collection of works, writings, and memorabilia to the collection.

The celebration was a weekend event of concerts, recitals, master-classes, and lectures attended by cellists from around the world. Among those in attendance was Mr. Varga as well as famed cellists Janos Starker and Takiyori Atsumi. The primary focus of the celebration was to highlight Varga's work in the genre of the multi-cello ensemble as a performer, organizer, promoter, and arranger.

Cellists performed his transcriptions and arrangements for solo cello, cello and piano, and multi-cello ensembles of varying sizes throughout several concerts. Varga performed a recital of his own transcriptions. The weekend culminated in a performance by 60 cellists of Varga's arrangement of *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* by Vaughan-Williams.

When asked how the celebration made him feel, Varga responded:

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

Very good. It was just delightful to be able to concentrate on...I call it proliferating my arrangements and my life's work actually, other than as a cellist and not as a composer. As I said, this is something a little bit unusual or maybe totally unusual, and I wanted to be known and embraced, if possible...I wanted to prove these [works] are playable and they are not that hard, and there is value to [them]...both in class teaching, the easier arrangements, and regular concerts with the more difficult ones...there's a choice of playing very good master works in an arrangement which is otherwise not available for cello.<sup>51</sup>

Throughout the event, Varga's works were received well by the audiences. This made Varga feel very good as well.<sup>52</sup> When questioned if the years of hard work and arranging had been worth the effort, Varga replied:

Oh yes, oh yes. We had this kind of whooping [as a reaction to his works] obviously it's an indication of liking many of them. [It] made me very happy. I'm very glad that my arrangements have been received.<sup>53</sup>

Varga is happy to have his works included in the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Special Cello Collections. It is his hope that they will be studied and used often. He has included works both published and unpublished, and is open to hearing from students and individuals as they pursue his works.

You can...see most of my arrangements in the library, whether it's in the published form or in the original form...it's there to study, to be studied...I would be curious to hear...important comments...observations about some of these, whether they are playable or not, whether [one] has an idea of arranging it differently. I'm open to comments...this is interesting.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

### Future of the Multi-Cello Ensemble

Varga is known to discuss multi-cello ensemble performance and music to all who are willing to listen, especially cellists. He has given performances as a means to share the music and promote the genre.

I am very anxious to demonstrate my arrangements...that yes, they are possible to play...I am doing this for 50 years but hardly any arrangements have been really used more than maybe once as an experiment...I would like new cellists especially to be acquainted...this is not only good music but is possible on the cello.<sup>55</sup>

His hope is to see more cello quartets in the future<sup>56</sup> and to extend the literature.

I'm sure everybody is anxious to extend the cello literature, just like me.<sup>57</sup>

In regards to the Cello Celebration and the many multi-cello ensembles that were present, Varga sees headway in the movement, to which he said:

I take pleasure and a little of the blame.<sup>58</sup>

Varga recognizes the value the Cello Celebration played in promoting this genre. He is also grateful to David Garrett for his hard work and dedication to also help promote

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

Varga's works<sup>59</sup>. It is important to Varga to expose cellists to the joys of multi-cello ensembles and he hopes that his works will find a place in the more often performed cello repertoire. The works serve as a vehicle for both performance and teaching. It is his desire that young cellists are introduced to and embrace the genre. It is his hope that the multi-cello ensemble movement will continue forward, gaining in strength and popularity, and that it will stand the test of time.

That's all. That's about all I can say. I racked my brain.<sup>60</sup>

#### Recommendations for Further Research

While this document provides a biographical overview of Laszlo Varga, there is a need for a comprehensive biography that will provide detailed discussion of his life, work, and accomplishments. A complete discography would also be of value.

Many opportunities for further research in this field are available. Since this document focused on just one of Varga's arrangements for multi-cello ensemble work, research may be completed on any number of his other works in his vast output of compositions for the genre. A complete catalogue of his writing is needed.

Several facets of his work with multi-cello ensembles can be explored. The opportunity exists to research the influence Varga has had on the genre of the multi-cello ensembles, both on composers and ensembles. A history of MusiCelli Publications and the artists they promote would be of interest. Detailed annotations of his multi-cello

---

<sup>59</sup> There are currently (2011) 31 published works for multi-cello ensembles, and many unpublished works.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

ensemble writings, aimed for the use of teaching, would be an excellent addition to cello pedagogical literature.

Varga also spent time transcribing and arranging works for Solo cello as well as Cello and Piano. Research in this area is, as yet, nonexistent. There is much that can still be completed and will be of great interest and value to the cello community.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Campbell, Margaret. *The Great Cellists*. North Pomfret: Trafalgar Square Publishing, 1988.
- Cowling, Elizabeth. *The Cello*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983.
- Heald, David. "Ottorino Respighi: A Brief Introductory Article." 1998.  
<<http://www.musicweb-international.com/respighi/>> (accessed 29 January 2011).
- Janof, Tim. "Conversation with Laszlo Varga." 2002.  
<<http://www.cello.org/Newsletter/Articles/varga/varga.htm>> (accessed 31 January 2011).
- Kepter, Peter Kyle. *Beethoven's cello sonata, op. 64: A comparative study and new edition of the sonata originally transcribed from the string trio, op. 3*. Doctoral Dissertation (D.M.A.)—University of Houston, 1998.
- Naxos Music Library*. "Ottorino Respighi: Adagio con Variazione."  
<<http://libproxy.uncg.edu:2175/work.asp?wid=182997&cid=8.555691>> (accessed 29 January 2011).
- Park, Hyun Young. *Laszlo Varga: Pedagogy, History, and Legacy: A Doctoral Essay*. Thesis (D.M.A.) – University of Miami, 2004.
- Respighi, Ottorino. *Adagio con Variazione for Cello and Orchestra*. Bologna, Italy: F. Bongiovanni, 1932.
- Respighi, Ottorino. *Adagio con Variazione*. Arranged by Laszlo Varga for Solo Cello and 8-part cello ensemble. MusiCelli Publications, 1997.
- Respighi, Ottorino. *Adagio con Variazione*. Arranged by Laszlo Varga for Solo Cello, 8-part cello ensemble, and Harp. MusiCelli Publications, not yet published.
- R.F. "Review: New York Philharmonic 'Cello Quartet.'" *Gramophone* (December 1962): 50  
<<http://www.gramophone.net/Issue/Page/December%201962/50/843704/>> (accessed 31 January 2011).

Rossman, Jefferey. "Review: Varga Cello Celebration at UNCG." *Classical Voice of North Carolina* (2007) <<http://cvnc.org/reviews/2007/022007/Varga.html>> (accessed 13 February 2011).

Stevenson, Joseph. "Leó Weiner–Biography." <<http://www.answers.com/topic/le-weiner>> (accessed 12 March 2011).

University of North Carolina at Greensboro. "Special Cello Collections: Laszlo Varga." <<http://library.uncg.edu/info/depts/scua/collections/cello/items.aspx#lazo>> (accessed 31 January 2011).

Varga, Laszlo. Personal Interview. 27 March 2007.

## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW WITH LASZLO VARGA

Live interview with Lazlo Varga (March 27, 2007)

A        So let me just be clear: exactly what do you have in mind that you want to examine, study, and so on? Describe it shortly.

Q        What I want to focus on is how you came to create the first multi-cello ensemble and the music that was available at the time. Was there anything? How did you decide to get into arranging? Then I want to talk about the process: what goes into it, how do you choose your pieces? Then focus specifically on the Respighi.

A        Very good, all right. I started arranging more than 50 years ago. My first arrangement, whether you believe it or not, was a piece for my graduate recital in 1946. I never did finish the piece, and weeks before the concert, like six weeks before, I heard a violinist play Ravel *Tzigane* for Violin, are you familiar with it?

Q        Yes.

A        I said, 'Oh, this would be fine for cello' and I was mad enough to arrange it, learn it, and I played it.

Q        In six weeks?

A In six weeks. As far as arrangements are concerned, that was my first. I was always interested in trying to adapt beautiful music for the cello, important music, that was not [originally] written for the cello. I wanted to enrich the literature for cello, because I always considered it was less varied and less available, less rich, than for instance violin literature.

Of course the piano, that's way out. So I started to think in terms of ensembles because the range of the cello is such that it covers the lowest bass, up to way up high to beyond the soprano range. It really covers the string orchestra range, almost, except the lowest bass notes that only double basses can handle. I always thought how nice it would be to create some ensemble works that can stand just on cellos, because, you know, my experience is cello. Cellists like to get together and play much more than violinists. I never heard of a violin ensemble, or very seldom.

Q That's true, that's true.

A Cellists [generally] agree to produce a quartet or more or larger or smaller to play conjointly. So that's the general [idea]— and since I know the cello quite well, and having developed certain novel approaches to achieve certain ways to get around the cello so that it can possibly truthfully cover imitations of violin pieces or other string pieces, I made certain fingering improvements. I'm not so sure that I [did anything] new, because it might have appeared 100 years ago, there were some big virtuosos who got

around the cello quite well. But I tried to come up with either copies of those, even though I'm not perfectly aware of how they did it, and some of my own originals, my ideas. But a lot more can be used on the cello, this is what I am thinking of with arrangements.

So as I said, I started with the Ravel, but I dare to play it again. Only about five times in my whole career because I lost my courage, because that was just brutally difficult. In the Ravel, I started at the Violin range. Whenever it's possible I try to recreate the original range. And conversely, while I'm sure you agree that the range of the cello is exactly the range of the violin, if you think in terms of the string length— half, so— however, on the cello you can go high and still play semi-tones. On the violins they are so close that comparatively it's impossible, so those are really not to be used on the violin. But on the cello I can add to the cello range, compared to the violin, at least half an octave, which is quite a bit. You understand the comparison I'm making?

Q Yes.

A I'm not saying that the cello range is bigger, but it's actually as far as the string length divided by partials.

So one of my first arrangements after the Ravel was the Kodály Galánta Dances and that's in the '50s, I think 1957. I don't remember doing anything earlier, except I was

interested in just taking some Bach works and think in terms of two cellos, three cellos, and so on. This is very easy to do. Take a keyboard piece and just take it apart.

And interesting— find the right key to do it. I take liberty in choosing keys, and I'll tell you why. I'm sure you know why. Because first of all, in order to have the low range of the cello it's perhaps [best] to think in terms of C Major, a low C. Interestingly another key, F Major, is very suitable because the low C appears as a dominant, which ultimately in bass works. So I found myself quite a bit of works that I arranged in F Major, like the Schubert Fantasy that you have heard, which is F Major or minor. And there's a Mozart Sonata that I arranged, which is also in F Major, a big Piano sonata for four hands. Are you familiar with the four-hand sonatas for piano?

Q Brooks [Whitehouse] had filled me in. He had told me about that because he had seen the scores first.

A You have my scores there. [University of North Carolina at Greensboro Library Special Cello Collection— Varga Collection] You have better access to them than I have.

So, where was I? Actually the four-hand writing. I find that particularly applicable for arrangements, because, well I used to play them and I found that the arrangement of the composers is that the upper two hands and the lower two hands, they always kind of

imitate each other in playing the themes. Very often the lower hands play the theme in a Tenor range, whereas the upper play in the Soprano range. This division gives me the idea that also that arrangement would be fine for the cello. And that's how I approach arrangements, not only in the four-hand music, but in others too. So it's a variety of the time searching.

Solo Piano pieces are usually [written so] all the important things are in the treble. But in the four-hands, the piano is distributed, so I tried to imitate it between cello and piano. I'm sure it makes sense to you. It certainly makes sense to me.

Q        It does.

A        So I arranged other four-hand works, maybe two or three and I had good success with it. Some of the four-hand piano works I arranged for four cellos, so without the piano. I fired the pianist. And so this is for four hands.

Other pieces that attracted me musically and stylistically that I would have loved to play on the cello are among my other arrangements, usually shorter pieces. I have arranged quite a few Bartók and, you know, nothing more advanced, but the main work of mine exists in the classical and romantic range.

Well, I have achieved a certain reputation as the Lone Arranger.

You know I'm going to New York to play the same program [that was performed at the February 2007 University of North Carolina at Greensboro Varga Cello Celebration] next week.

Q       Where in New York will you be performing?

A       At the New York Cello Society. I am very anxious to demonstrate my arrangements, that yes, they are possible to play. Because as I mentioned, I am doing this for 50 years but hardly any arrangements have been really used more than maybe once as an experiment. I would like new cellists especially to be acquainted that this is not only good music but is possible on the cello.

And I'm sure everybody is anxious to extend the cello literature, just like me, but they might not realize that these can sound pleasingly and not just torture. It's very difficult, some of it and well, so what? Paganini didn't write any easy pieces.

I called my program 'Five Easy Pieces.' This is a general description of what I consider important to me and cellists, if they accept it.

So, I'm ready for your next question.

Q        You had mentioned techniques that you had incorporated to make it easier to get around the cello. Could you talk a little bit about those?

A        Yes. I always have developed a certain hand position in the left hand that involves an easy reach with the fourth finger. Actually, if you're familiar with it, the stance of many cellists who like to play steep, I call them steep angled, and here the fourth finger is almost useless beyond a certain level. I like to change the position so that even in a higher position, including thumb position, I occasionally can use the fourth finger. We cannot be without 20 percent of our fingers after all. So that alone adds to my range, or it helps me avoid frequent position changes. That is one important thing. I don't use it to sustain notes or very rarely. But for passage work, fast notes. That's one thing.

I have another general cardinal law when I choose fingerings, is that if I have to shift, and especially fast shifts, I prefer to do it at a half-step rather than a whole step. And just the same finger, a half-step move. On the high position that is very helpful. Sometimes even on a very high range I don't even move, I just turn the same finger, and that produces a half-step, you know, about Tenor line. And you know this step?

Q        Yes.

A        Those things help me very much. And let's see, what else, I like to think in terms of double stops, because very often I compare my position with a sustaining note just to relate and pitch-wise adjust. So 'relate,' that's the key word. I try to stay in tune, and that's not so easy. Yes, the next thing we need is frets, though I never tried frets.

I don't know whether you know about my experiments with the five-string cello.

Q        Yes, I do.

A        And, you know I have one. Have you ever seen one?

Q        I have not, no. Do you have it?

A        I'll show you. I don't use it lately but I have used it and I always thought again, when people consider playing, well, first of all, Bach's Sixth Suite. You cannot play it on a four-string equally well, equally safely, or with the number of notes that Bach wrote. Only the five-string, because he knew exactly what you can write for five-string cello but he cannot.

So [a] long time ago, I think 40, 40 years ago I got a hold of a three-quarters sized cello and I had it converted to five-string, while I was still in San Francisco. Ever since, I love to play on it occasionally and I developed quite a repertoire for it. You know what, first

of all, when you think in terms of playing the Arpeggione Sonata of Schubert, that's— Arpeggione was a six-string instrument, tuned like a guitar, a bold guitar, so to speak. And everybody tries to play it on the cello and it's extremely difficult if you want the lead note reference. Since it's already an arrangement for four strings, I tried to play it on the five-string and it's much more adaptable. It's not perfect of course, perfect as the original, but since we don't have arpeggiones that are functional, I decided to play it on the five-string and when I did [perform the work] I played it on the five-string cello.

Then I began to bear down on the violin literature and with the great temerity I arranged a Beethoven Violin Concerto for the five-string cello and I played it for the orchestra.

Q       Wow.

A       Yes. You know I'm [an] experimenter and I stick out my neck. But almost any experimenter will have to. Whether an experiment is successful or fully successful, that's a question. I try to reach in that direction. Though I wouldn't dare to play the Beethoven again, because I'm— you know how old I am? What do you think?

Q       I want to say '80s. Wait, 1924 [is when you were born] I think, right? 83 [years old].

A I am in my 83<sup>rd</sup> year. So I don't have the temerity any more, but I still occasionally take it and I enjoy just fooling around with it, but I practice on a regular cello. So what else can I do for the five-string— Beethoven Romances, Violin Romances.

Q Yes, beautiful.

A And there was something else. Anyway, so theoretically, because I have an E string I can play the violin pieces in the same position as a violinist would. And I have arranged downward by extension of the fifth, so it's the best [of both] worlds. The only problem is that [on] a five-string cello, the E string is manufactured, but it's not quite sounding as natural as the others. That's the only problem. So far I could not find any string manufacturer to find a more suitable string. People sell me gamba strings which exist in theory but I don't like the sound of it either. So that should be there for a five-string. Let's see, I cannot tell you about seven- and eight-string cellos.

Q I have a question regarding the five-string cello: Being that most people don't have access to one, or possibly the ability to play it with ease right away, do you feel your arrangements for five-string cello will ever get the amount of play time that you would like?

A I frankly doubt it. Because I'm playing on five-string now for 30 years at least occasionally, and everybody, you know, gapes about it, but I don't know anybody who is playing it, not even the Bach Suite, which would be the natural [work to perform on it].

So returning to the arrangements, as you know I have a wide range of arrangements for cello, and I'm proud of it. Some of my recent publications have it [a list of works] on the back. Are you in contact with David Garrett?

Q I am, yes.

A Yes. He has it all; I don't have any of my stuff here anymore. David published a more complete list.

Q Yes, it's several pages, I have that one.

A Yes, correct.

So returning to the cello arrangements, the story with the Respighi [Adagio with Variations for Cello and Piano/Orchestra], in the '40s I happened to go to it while I was traveling with a string quartet [Léner Quartet] all over Europe and South America. I had a chance to hear Gaspar Cassado, and unbeknownst to me, he played the Respighi and I fell in love with it. I thought it was just a beautiful piece. I bought it soon after and I've

played it ever since. In the original [cello and piano] of course there was no change; I even played it with orchestra, which is beautiful.

I have concert tapes of my playing it with orchestra, with organ. I don't have one that I played [with] piano, but I played it many times that way.

Q And the arrangements [for multi-cello ensemble] yes?

A Yes. It's interesting to hear the different versions.

Well, let me see what is still here, which arrangement [of the score] that you have. Oh this is with the harp.

Q That one [1<sup>st</sup> edition score: Solo Cello and 8-part cello ensemble] is without the harp and this one [2<sup>nd</sup> edition score: Solo Cello, 8 part-cello ensemble, and harp] is with the harp.

A Oh yes. Because this [1<sup>st</sup> edition score] is, I keep the torturous version for myself, you see, I'm playing the harp [in the solo cello line].

Q I noticed that.

A It's awful, awful difficult.

Q It's incredibly difficult. I've tried learning it.

A So David sent it to you, this [1<sup>st</sup> edition score]?

Q Actually I got this score [1<sup>st</sup> edition] out of the UNCG Library [Special Cello Collection—Varga Collection] and then David [Garrett] sent this one [2<sup>nd</sup> edition score] to me, and that's with the harp.

A Yes. Well, I'm sure you noticed that when I arranged it for cello and harp I changed the key. [The] original is in B major. Do you know why Respighi wrote it in B major?

Q I don't.

A Because of the harp. The harp is tuned in C flat major. The basic string length is C flat, diatonic. If you want to play it in C major, you push down one pedal and it raises every C flat to C, and you play the next one, every D flat to D, and so on. So that's the basic key of the harp that is preferable.

But C flat major with an orchestra's fine, and just to play the tune in B major, fine. But for a cello also for the aforementioned reason, because the lower C is on the bottom I have to raise it up a half-step. So I think I will be forgiven for it.

But I had to consult a harpist to whether it's really possible to do all the modifications through this piece the way Respighi wrote it, in C major instead of C flat major, and she assured me she tried it and so on, yes, it's possible. That's how I came to this arrangement. See this is my handwritten version of the corrections and so on. But you have [the updated 2<sup>nd</sup> edition score] even though I never saw that.

Q I can make you a copy. I got it from David [Garrett].

A Yes, he usually sends me everything to copyright, read, and I don't remember doing that.

Q I think in fact he sent me another e-mail after he sent this [2<sup>nd</sup> edition score] saying there were still some other changes that had to be made, and I got a notice where a note might be off.

A I have yet to get one of his, even though it's almost perfect, but I always find mistakes. Let me just see it.

Q        Definitely.

A        You know, in this version [2<sup>nd</sup> edition] the harp part can be played with a piano.

Q        Oh, I didn't think about that [possibility].

A        Yes.

Q        That is really nice.

A        Yes, because harpists would not always be available.

Q        Do you think it would lose some of its quality having it played on the piano versus the harp?

A        Well, it sounds like a piano. No, I don't think it's critical, but the notes are covered equally.

I'm sure you are familiar with the original line [measures 39-51], the original [orchestra score] is in G minor, and that's fine, you can play it across 3 strings. Not in G# minor, because this is now a half a tone higher also, so I had to modify the arpeggios. I'm sure you know what the original is.

Anyway these are the differences I have to make, and those are the sacrifices I had to make. But this is easily playable on the piano, as well as the harp. That's the main harp part here, this black stuff [referring to the score]. And the few tremolos that are very important, not. Glissando and things like this, you see.

Q Yes.

A Of course, but you know I would love to hear it. I never heard this version [2<sup>nd</sup> edition]. Are you planning to do the cello version, with the harp?

Q Yes.

A Good. Do you also plan to play the regular orchestration? If you could get the orchestra to accompany you, it's a small orchestra, just double winds and so on. That would be an interesting comparison.

Q It would. I would like to compare how it sounds with an orchestra and with a cello ensemble, to compare the differences.

A It's beautiful. If you have a chance to play it in a church, it's beautiful with the organ.

Q Really?

A Yes, because it sustains more and a lot can be [done with it].

Q With the Respighi, as you went from the original to your first arrangement with the cello octet, you spoke about why you had to change the key and some of the arpeggio notes. What other items did you come across that you may have had to change? Was it difficult to choose what part [from the orchestra score] stays and what part goes, as well as which cello it is assigned to? How do you make those decisions?

A Well, do you have that version, the cello octet [first arrangement for solo cello and 8-part cello ensemble]?

Q The cello octet? Yes.

A Let me see. Well, I tried to represent every line as close as I could, even in the different key, and just distribute. I don't want to always [have one] cello play the top or the same line, but hear the different colors of the different cellists and different instruments, which again is an important point for me. Otherwise it becomes boring. As it is, it made it boring because it's all cellos. But still, I like the original timbres that are different to show it that way.

I am very conscious of dynamic contrasts and I try to achieve that by single line versus doubling or tripling of the same line just to energize the sudden forte, of course, or its reverse. But here (referring to the score) you will see the distribution of this—and this is just one way. I thought this might be a good way, whether it's 'The' best way, I don't quite [know], it's close enough.

This is principally for and by cellists. When you look at the original score and the original cello part, you'll see that these harmonics are much easier to play in B Major, if it sounds. The sliding in between is hard to avoid, unless you originally go from one place to—this is arranged between two strings and it's a little bit easier to transfer one to the other, but of course, this is a half tone higher so that's why.

I'm explaining to you another reason of my madness, the reason why I do these kinds of things, but I usually have reasons. I explained why I changed this arpeggio?

Q        Yes.

A        These lines in the original orchestration are clarinets, so here the cello plays it too. But I tried to imitate the clarinet's sound—and those kinds of things, so it's really the idea. This is a hard one, this can be thrown into the garbage.

A        At first I did this and I didn't think of using the harp, so I think maybe harp-like figures should be present so I arranged it for cello, and it's madness [on performing the harp line on the cello]. That's how I played on this, and you'll hear it, it's mad. It's far from perfect, but it comes across.

I just exchanged the version which is going to the very high range with the main theme. I give that to the first cellist in the group and I play the hard part. But in the original it's simply harp and the solo cello plays that line.

Q        Yes. So when you performed it [the first arrangement] the first time and you were having to play through that difficult passage, did you ever think then that you wanted to go back and revisit that section and change it?

A        I have to be honest with you, I wasn't thinking of using a harp because I like to think in terms of a pure cello group. But then later on, when I saw this, this was beyond anybody's possibility, even though I played it credibly, but not good enough, so I wasn't convinced that anybody else is going to even attempt it. You know, I just like to stick out my neck. But then I began to think why not do harp or piano?

I think that is the last version, which is more likely to survive and be played.

Q That makes sense. I noticed one spot where the first cello and the solo cello seem to switch—

A That's changed. That is just the way I— here I'll show you. Oh, it's here. Here is a slow build up. Here I wanted to give this cello, which is the first cello of the group, the theme starts here, but I play it a third below to have a little color difference and a different cello sounds different. And then here I take over the top over the harp, so it's the same thing, see. But here I just hand it over. I didn't want to play the thing always myself, especially with other cellos available, so occasionally I try to relegate or delegate, and I think it's always welcome to have a different color, a different timbre.

Well, I think we exhaust the Respighi.

Q I was going to ask what's your favorite [between the two arrangements] so far. Now that you've done both arrangements, are you happiest with the last arrangement?

A Well, I never played it [the second arrangement for solo cello, 8-part cello ensemble, and harp]. I never heard it with a harp, this version, so I cannot say it, but I think it's the closest, the best, short of the original. Let's face it that is the best, but for a cello group, plus harp, I think it's better than minus the harp.

Now, I did [perform the work] with a conductor, I would advise you to use one, because I think it's easier for balance purposes and also to be together because I did a few daring things.

[In regards to his multi-cello ensemble arrangement of the Brahms Requiem] Actually I didn't realize that this could be played by cellos. It was only in Houston in the late 1990s that I came to this idea and that's when I arranged for the cello groups. I think I added bass to it, too, occasionally I would.

Q Yes. Do you add the bass every now and then just to get those lower notes that are just beneath the cello range?

A Occasionally, sometimes unless the cello group was very high so then I had a large range, if it is condensed that's not a variety enough, and sometimes I welcome them, a little extension below. So these are the ways I'm thinking and I'm sure it could be useful for you.

Q I have some general questions in regards to all of your arrangements. How do you choose your pieces that you arrange?

A I fall in love with them and I say 'Hey, this could be for cello too.' This slowly comes to my mind. I don't know whether you heard my Bach tape that I arranged, the

two Partitas with violin, including Chaconne Partita. That came to me a long time ago because I was always anxious to play the Chaconne.

And all the Brahms Sonatas, that was another thing that was one of my favorite projects. I was always envious of the violins in the Brahms Sonatas and I said ‘why not?’ I began to arrange it and this was the result, a recording and I published it. There again, I retained all the original keys even though you might be aware of the fact that the G Major Sonata, the violin Sonata, has been published in D Major by the European Publishers, because they claimed that in 1897 that Brahms supposedly himself arranged it for cello in D Major. Well, Brahms was busy dying that year and I doubt that he had anything to do with it, unless he gave it out to one of the lackeys to do it.

I looked at that one. János Starker publicized the existence of the D Major version, because the Viennese pianist, Rudolf Buchbinder found that version in some library in Vienna and he convinced János and others that ‘this is by Brahms.’ Well, if it was by Brahms I would be happy to accept it, but I couldn’t. First of all, [the notes] are changed in 200 places. The piano part goes way below and then it telescopes back, because in D Major, instead of G, that means that some of it is a fourth below and it rumbles down there. That’s not the only thing, the right hand of the piano and the violin part exchanges, reverses. If Brahms did it, I might expect it, but later on, about 20 years later, after this discovery, Schott, the publisher, came out with a new publication in D Major and said bearbeitet [edited] by Paul Klengel, who happens to be related to Julius Klengel, and all

right. So if he arranged it, fine, more to it then. But I don't have to accept it as Brahms [own arrangement].

I published [it] myself, and in the original key and with the original piano part. I didn't even publish the piano part, just the cello part. Pianists are so happy because they know it in G Major and to learn it in D Major is quite a task. It's a strange song. So I never played it that way and János never did it either. I didn't want to bring up the subject to him, but he came to his mind, to his senses.

Q        You write transcriptions and arrangements, do you find that one is easier to do than the other? [transcribing a work for cello versus arranging a work for cello ensemble]

A        Well, there are different problems, but interestingly, I had much easier time arranging the Violin Sonata of Brahms to cello than the Viola Sonatas. Somehow the Violin Sonatas were an octave lower and sometimes not only that, I sometimes go up to the violin range, so very important. The viola is in between, as you know, and somehow I didn't succeed. I tried, but the sound didn't please me, the cello sound. So I never did that. I love those Sonatas too, but of course that already exists for clarinet or viola, but it depends where the original key is, how to relate it. To me, that's important and I don't want to [hit] my head against something that's uncrackable. I'd rather do something that I can make a change.

Let's see, other arrangements. Mainly cello/piano works. I have some other Bartók works, which were originally piano pieces, big Romanian dance. Are you familiar with the Opus 8 Romanian Dances for Piano, just piano solos? I can't sing and I don't have it to show it to you.

There are lots of smaller pieces that are unpublished.

Q Do you think you will publish them at a future date?

A Maybe, I don't know. David [Garrett], as it is he is overwhelmed computerizing. But I added those big scores. He finished Don Quixote and he finished [the] Cello Sonata, those are very extensive works so I hate to urge him on the new ones but if he is willing, then yes, but that might have to be postponed. I'm trying to think. I made an arrangement that might interest you. Do you know the Bach Italian Concerto? I arranged that for String Trio. You have heard of the Jacques Thibaud String Trio? It's a Berlin group, excellent young group, and already are very famous in Europe and they came to study with me in Houston [Texas]. I was teaching them the Schubert Trios and other new aspects, new approaches and they are so improved ever since that. You know, this is the 10<sup>th</sup> American tour they are doing just recently and very successful here and in Europe. I arranged this Bach for them. I think I have that here and I'll show it to you. This is a wonderful piece.

Q It looks like it translated very easily.

A Yes, yes quite so. Well, the violinists complain, but I don't think it's unmanageable; it's difficult yes, but so what.

Q It looks like it is really a challenge.

A Yes, and everybody has plenty to do.

Q Yes, it looks that way. It looks at one point that everybody has something to work on as a showcase.

A This has never been played.

Q They never gave you a performance of it?

A Well, they didn't really work it up sufficiently. By the way, this group started by playing everything by heart, the whole string trio literature and it was fabulous. They would look at each other and play, beautiful. Actually they are coming to the area when they tour Florida, I think around June and they said they will bring it and play for me and for the first time I will hear it.

Q I hope it turns out beautifully.

A Well, I hope so too.

Q Do you have a list of songs that you would like to arrange? Or is it just as a work inspires you?

A A list—no. Sometimes it comes to me in the middle of the night and then of course I can't sleep and I then begin to cogitate and then maybe three years after, I get around to it. No, at the moment I'm kind of finished making arrangements, but you never know. You know I can tell you that this concert in New York next week is going to be my Swan Song. That will be it.

Q Really?

A Not that I will stop playing completely, but nothing as elaborate and as difficult as this arrangement.

Q It is quite a concert. [It is a copy of the concert he gave at the February 2007 University of North Carolina at Greensboro Varga Cello Celebration.]

A        It's a concentrated difficulty and frankly, I want to finish with these two daring projects, but I'm planning to play easier things. Even though I call this [concert] 'Five Easy Pieces,' tongue-in-cheek. But yes, I think I'm not as able to practice. It is a matter of physical energy and you need to bear down fully on the [fingerboard], especially in the high range. To me it's now more problematic than it has been all my life and I have to realize this, that the muscles don't remain equally strong and agile and I have to face it. So I'm sure that the world will get along without me on the cello recitals.

But I'm planning to write and I plan maybe doing arrangements, yes. I never was a composer, I tried when I was young and everything sounded like Hindemith or Bartók and so I gave up a long time ago. I realized that I'm not a composer, but a decomposer yes, to transform things, yes, that has been all my life.

And you can, and I'm sure you did, see most of my arrangements in the library [UNC Greensboro Library Special Cello Collections—Varga Collection] whether it's in the published form or the original form.

Q        Yes.

A        It's there to study, to be studied. I would be curious to hear from you if you have any important comments to [say about the works] – observations about some of

these [works/arrangements] whether they are playable or not, whether you have an idea of arranging it differently. I'm open to comments and, you know, this is interesting.

It will be nice to revisit some of these things which I have long forgotten. Because I played most of them, but some of them just at home, not publically. I have so many arrangements for two, three, and four cellos. Oh, cello quartets. That was one of my original plans, because I always was a string quartet player, that's how I got out of Hungary and I was travelling all over the world. I love the string quartet; I think that's the best form of any string group. But after that I began to [think] what could four cellists do having the range almost the same and I began to think in terms of cello quartet arrangements and I was already in New York at the New York Philharmonic and we formed a Cello Quartet in the Philharmonic and we made recordings there. I don't know whether you heard those.

[We performed] the Vivaldi, it was the Concerto [*Concerto Grosso in D minor, Op. 3, No. 11*]; it was one of my first arrangements. Then the other one was the Bartók Hungarian Peasant Dances [*Hungarian Peasant Songs, No. 7-11*]. Between those two arrangements we played two original works for cello Quartet. [One by] Emanuel Moor, he was a Hungarian composer and pianist who invented a double keyboard piano and a couple keyboards like a harpsichord. We used to have one of these big pianos in one of our classrooms at the Academy of Music and I always tried to play it and it was so hard action—especially when it was coupled. He was a composer and he wrote a cello

quartet, a Suite, four movement Suite for the cello sometime in the '20s [*Suite for 4 Cellos, Op. 95*]. I was glad to discover it and we played that. [The last work was *Two Pieces for 4 Cellos, Op. 89* by Joseph Jongen] and that was our first recording.

Then that prepared for the second recording, but never came to.

Q Why is that?

A The company didn't sell millions of records, obviously, so they kind of hold back.

Q How did you end up forming this group initially? Was it something where you thought it would be fun?

A Well, we started out as fun and then we began to concentrate, yeah, we played and [had] good success.

Q Whose idea was it to start the ensemble?

A Mine. Because I'm the only crazy one.

Q Inspired. Who were the other members of the ensemble?

A Nathan Stutch, Martin Ormandy, and Anthony Sophos. Fellow New York Philharmonic Members.

Q Going back to a comment you made earlier, you said you mainly arranged from the Classical and Romantic repertoire. Was there a reason for that?

A Well, the only reason is that somehow the modern pieces, I don't find it's as applicable. Although, I should mention that I commissioned personally that many contemporary composers write original works for cello quartets.

Q Really?

A Occasionally I got to compose sentimental works, but nothing that is worth looking at here. So I cannot brag about it. At least that's my opinion. But the output for cello quartets is simply lower, but they are interesting. There are some cello octets that I notice being composed. Some of them I did in some of the cello congresses, and for large cello groups. They usually would just compose for the occasion and sounded like it too. But I did them and they did the best they could do. But you know, the Berlin Octet?

Q Yes.

A        The Berlin Cello Octet has started to have composers write for them, of course some of this Beatles Music.

Q        Yes, I'm a fan of their Cello Submarine album.

A        All right, well fine if you like. Occasionally I enjoy hearing it too. I somehow am a more straight-jacket guy. I somehow don't like to play kind of close—but I encourage everybody to do it. I have no problem with it. Just I don't like to do it myself.

Q        When you formed the group with the New York Philharmonic Cellos, was there much repertoire out there? Was that the reason you had to commission and arrange [works]?

A        No, I began with those two works that I mentioned and then later on I tried to look around for some others but I didn't find anything that was really worthwhile. Some crazy modern works came across my attention, but I didn't find any merit. Most of them are so incurred with difficulty, written by people who don't know anything about the cello.

In order to write something for cello quartet or cello group, you really have to have at least as much knowledge as Kodály had of the cello. By the way he was a cellist, not a

professional, but he played the cello. He couldn't have written the Solo Sonata without it, and thank God he did.

[In regards to arrangements] I try to make the least amount of changes as far as notes are concerned. I try to do everything on the cello that's possible to get the closest note and rhythmic relations.

Q       Where do you see multi-cello ensembles going in the future?

A       Judging from my first 50 years of experience with cello ensembles, I cannot predict that it will be on my top ten choices for cellos. But we made a little headway [at the UNC Greensboro 2007 Varga Cello Celebration], and so I take pleasure [in] a little of the blame, but where we go, I don't know.

I certainly like to talk about it to all people who are willing to listen, especially cellists. I have all kinds of 'ooh's' and 'awe's' and admirers, but nothing else since.

Q       What would you like to see happen?

A       I would like to see more cello quartets. I think [the] cello quartet is a most satisfying ensemble for cellists because it's harmonized and can cover a large range. One

of my unpublished arrangements is the Haydn. Are you familiar with the Haydn String Quartets?

Q Yes.

A Opus 76, no. 5. I have that on four cellos.

I don't shy away from arrangements, I never did, even if it is somebody else's arrangement.

Q I wanted to know if there were any challenges to a cello ensemble. What do you find are the strengths and weaknesses of a cello choir?

A Well, it's the same with the ensemble, larger ensemble. With the quartet of course, I'd rather play just a single part, so there's no strength and plurality, but it's more exposed obviously. I usually have scored [a] more daring part, especially with the top line, the first cello, if it was just single players, then the whole ensemble. Actually, you know, the Respighi could be played with a larger cello group.

Q You think so?

A Yes.

Q How would you do that?

A Just double.

Q Double all of the parts?

A All of them. Even maybe double the top four lines rather than all the eight because the bass comes through. Or else double everything, triple, you know. There are acres of cellists available but I would experiment first with the single.

The problems are slightly different with the ensembles, less so, except unison playing is not that easy either. But in a cello quartet you can hear each line easier alone, distinct. The ensemble I think it's a bit murkier. So actually my choice would be a large ensemble, you know in excess of 50, or the choice of four, rather than eight or sixteen.

Oh, I arranged both of the Villa-Lobos Bachianas for four cellos because you don't always find eight cellos that are willing to play. That also is in my repertoire. But I don't shy away from them and I don't think you should. In many ways those Villa-Lobos works to only four parts anyway. So why double it and make it, you know—those are very hard to play with just two cellos, the way it was originally conceived.

Two is the hardest unison. Three, four is much easier than just two. Two is just too bare. Either one or four, exactly. So you can quote me.

Q Now, are there particular challenges when you're transcribing a piece from maybe violin to cello? Any that stands out across the board?

A Yes, well, it's not easy because I usually just drop most of it an octave, but not all. Sometimes I return to the violin range, if it's convenient, and without just evening out the differences. I hear the things, what I'm doing in advance, before I write it down and it helps. I don't like to arrange something that becomes too low or even too high for the cellos, then it becomes squeaky, only as a contrast sometimes when I find that that's workable at all.

I like to remain in the same key as I mentioned earlier, if possible, but not necessarily, not slavishly.

I like to distribute the parts so it's not only the first cello that has all the difficult lead, but there is some change of color, change of choice, and the other players have a little more fun. Why should the first cello have all the fun there or all the trouble, whichever is the same. So I try to look for variety, because each cello has a little bit different timbre and different talents, different abilities, more or less virtuosity. So I try to think of that.

But otherwise I cannot tell you anything miraculous.

Q        You stated how you hear the music in your head before you write it down. Is it that way with all of your arrangements?

A        Mostly, yes. Occasionally I do it with the piano, and of course, check the parts with the cello. But the harmonization, sometimes I do it at the piano.

Q        Do you do most of your composition literally sitting at the piano and then go back and try it out [on the cello]?

A        I usually conceive the whole thing and make a sketch of my ears or my head and then I try again and then I make changes. But yeah, I sit at the piano. It's tangible, audible, and of course actually I don't test it with the cello until I have a fairly ready sketch already. Then I see what—because I know what is also on the cello.

Sometimes I change things. I am constantly changing fingerings and bowings, that's because after 50 years I still change things. Sometimes I return to the very original that I had 50 years ago, because the first thought, sometimes that's the best.

Q        That's the one.

A But later on I keep experimenting. It keeps my mind and fingers busy.

Q Do you find that you have to rewrite a lot when you're sketching things out?

A Seldom. I have to do some rewriting as you know with this eight cello version of the Respighi, but otherwise.

Q How long does it usually take, or in the past how long would it usually take, to write out an arrangement? Was there any continuance between them or were they each different?

A Depends on the complexity. Sometimes some take longer than others, but usually I sketch out things with pencil, then when I'm ready to write it in ink on top of it, and that usually remains the final until David Garrett gets through with it. You know, he was my Doctoral student and he wrote a very good thesis, but nothing related to this kind of thing. I'm very glad that he decided to take over my whole publication, because he is doing a very fine job. And he's computerizing everything very well, as you know, and it's a big task. I don't have a financial arrangement with him except whatever it brings in is his, because it doesn't bring in too much, and his time is worth a lot of money because he may work for weeks on the same arrangement and he has a busy job with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and he's teaching at Cal State University at Long Beach, and he's

playing concerts with his wife who is a very fine pianist. He realizes there's a value in these arrangements and he wants to do his share.

Q That's wonderful. So you don't make any profit from these arrangements?

A I didn't want to. I am more interested in proliferating my arrangements so that they would be available and audible. I play them, as you know, and I publish them through David so that they are available for whoever wants to benefit from them, but that's limited so far.

Q Along those lines, we just had the UNC Greensboro Cello Celebration [February 2007] centered on you and your arrangements. How did that make you feel?

A Very good.

Q Tell me about it.

A It was just delightful to be able to concentrate on—I call it proliferating my arrangements and my life's work actually, other than as a cellist and not as a composer. As I said, this is something a little bit unusual or maybe totally unusual, and I wanted to be known and embraced, if possible. I wanted to prove these are playable and they are not that hard, and there is value to them both in class teaching, the easier arrangements,

and regular concerts with the more difficult ones, and there's a choice of playing very good master works in an arrangement which is otherwise not available for cello.

But suddenly most of the unknown as you know has an original form and not often played some of it, so this might add to the acquaintance of audience hearing some of these versions. So I think there's a reason for it, a reason for my madness. And I think that's about all I can tell.

Q        When you heard that a lot of the ensembles [at the celebration] had spent a lot of time and care into your works, when you heard them performed, what were your thoughts? How did that make you feel?

A        I was very pleasantly happy to hear the high level of playing, that they really proved that it can be done.

[Talking about the Brahms Requiem arrangement performed at the celebration] In the original version there are only two measures which are solo cello in the Brahms and I love to play that. It comes down to the 7<sup>th</sup> line.

By the way, this is not the original key, I think it's F Major, the original. This [arrangement] is B Major.

I try to imitate the sound of the chorus entrances but they don't quite come through. I should have made everybody sing, huh.

Q How does it make you feel to hear [the recordings of his works performed at the celebration]?

A Very good, very good.

Q Does it make [all of your hard work] worth it?

A Oh yes, oh yes. We had this kind of whooping, obviously it's an indication of liking many of them [the arrangements and transcriptions]. [It] made me very happy. I'm very glad that my arrangements have been received—not so much the playing, but the arrangements.

Q I'm glad it makes you glad to see the arrangements received so well.

A Oh yes.

Q It was exciting, at least as a participant, the works are so much fun to play, and to be able to go in there and really make something of them and perform them, it was

exciting and I can only imagine what it was like for you to sit there and receive that recognition, see your works performed.

For 50 years you've been doing this. Today seeing that there is a foot in the door with expanding and running with this multi-cello ensemble movement, how does it make you feel knowing that the ball is rolling forward?

A I'm very glad, because, you know, it's partially through David Garrett's efforts of having a lot of printed computerized versions of my work and—because otherwise while I have good handwriting, but lately I'm shaky, and some of it exists in my own handwriting or in somebody else's handwriting. But this is of course better, provided it's really proofread and corrected, because sometimes certain mistakes remain therein and that misleads people.

But he's doing a really exceptional job. I try to edit as much as I can without my eyeballs falling out, because editing is really a difficult thing because you have to compare the original and hear both and see if they are actually the same, and it's a major problem.

Q I could imagine it is very time-consuming.

A Yes, because I don't just do line by line, but the harmonies also. Sometimes I noticed mistakes in my own version, which I then correct. But that seldom happens, because I proofread it first before I hand it to anybody, several times.

Q Would you prefer not to have to do the editing if you didn't have to? Would that be your least favorite part?

A Yes, I would. I don't know that I trust anybody because it's a specialized thing. You know, hardly anybody is really acquainted with this kind of a cello ensemble consideration. I think I'm the best editor and certainly I can hear what I see, so in that sense, it's easier.

Q I have a question about your arrangement of the Strauss Sonata. What made you decide to write it for Solo Cello and Wind ensemble?

A Well, I'll tell you why, because to me the piano part sounded like an orchestra, it's pianistic at the same time, but it's orchestral. I felt it yearned for elaboration and different colors, and then a long time ago I thought of doing it for a double wind quartet, and I'm very glad I did it.

I played it first in Aspen, the Festival. I also arranged it for solo horn for my daughter to play.

Thinking of arrangements for the four-hand works for piano: when you hear it, it's slightly predictable, you know the split between the two pairs of hands and repeated and imitation and so on and accompanying each other. I find, because it's all the same piano, it's a little bit uni-colored. So I wanted to differentiate a little bit, so the cello/piano contrast is at least one step in the right direction, and it works. It also gives the cellists work to do. So these are my thoughts. I found the four-hand piano writing especially adaptable for these reasons.

I would have had much more difficulty transcribing fully just a piano piece. But these four hands [piano works] are already separated by range by and large, and that's easier for me to think in those terms of those two ranges. While I overlap at the center point and go with the cello quite higher than the low end would, still it's—I think it works.

Q With the cello quartet you formed with the New York Philharmonic Cellos, you talked about how you recorded, but where would you perform, what venues?

A Well, we had some concerts, some small venue concerts, nothing with big halls. We have these recordings. As I said, the second recording never materialized, but we prepared for it. And then later on I formed several other cello quartets in California when I moved away from New York. We had wonderful players there and we made some progress recordings of that.

Q        Going back, I have one more question on the Strauss [Sonata] I realized I didn't ask. How did you decide, after doing so much with multi-cello ensemble, to write this for a double wind quintet, breaking from the format you generally use?

A        Well, because I couldn't imagine the Strauss Sonata for just cellos. I mean, that piano part is too busy for cellos and still pianistic at the same time, whereas it's also orchestral, so it never occurred to me to do it that way. But wind is something else; they are able and very good with winds. Of course the Don Quixote for six instruments was another big reach. I always wanted to have a chance for cellists to play Don Quixote without being the first cellist in the New York Philharmonic. I played that several times there and it was fine but it's always the first cellist who has a chance to play it. Hardly ever do they engage an outside cellist, that's fine; however, nobody else ever has a chance to play Don Quixote, and it is a wonderful piece. So in thinking of it for years, I thought maybe I could make an arrangement and that's what I did. Just six instruments, so now it's a chamber piece, but it sounds very surprisingly full, almost like a chamber orchestra. I was very happy with this, I hope people will take interest and use it.

Q        Out of all of your arrangements, are there any that you particularly love or any that you don't like? Why?

A I have some preferences. Actually, you know, there are several other arrangements that you don't know about. You might find them among my collections [as part of the UNC Greensboro Library Special Cello Collection—Varga Collection]. I have arrangements that are not printed, but I have so many that I forget them. For instance, I have arrangements for another Mozart Four-Hand Sonata for four cellos. I arranged that in C Major and it's very good, but hardly ever played.

Q Were there any arrangements out there of yours that you don't particularly like as well?

A I forgot about those, back of my mind and they don't come to me. I consider some inferior. I did a lot of things that I made purposely easy for students to play, simple. I don't have much use for it myself, but for teaching purposes I think it might be enjoyable for some students that are not very advanced. A lot of Bach and old music, because I find that Bach has so much possibility.

Q Yes, so many lines you can work with.

A I have one arrangement that I didn't tell you. You know the Chromatic Fantasy of Bach? This is for solo cello, this is only existing, my copy. I used to learn it and practice and practice and practice and it's extremely difficult. But I used to be able to play it, when I was young and stupid. 1961. Revised 1971. I usually date things—from

my youthful mad times. It's unplayable, at least in continuity. If I was younger and I put my head to it I possibly could learn it, but it will be presentable, but never perfect. That's not enough for me, so I never performed it in public, but I learned so much from it about what to do on the cello. One of my points in trying to extend the technique of the cello is to cross over from the A string at high levels and make it sound good enough. Now I cannot do it because I don't have the energy to bear down, but 20 years ago I did. I did this about 40 years ago. So this is an antique—well 1961 is more than 40 years ago. So this is the furthest I ever went and it's impossible.

Q It will always have a place in your heart.

A Yes. I just wanted to show you. You know I didn't give this to the library because I thought—

Q We have some cellists that would love to take it on.

A Well, I'll tell you what, I'm willing to give you a Xerox of it. [to share with the library]

Q I only had one last question. Were there any composers or arrangers that inspired you or had influence in your writing style?

A        You know, my first acquaintance with both the Emanuel Moor Suite and the Joseph Jongen piece started me, because I somehow heard about those. I forgot whether that came later than when I started the Vivaldi—I think the Vivaldi was my first arrangement and it's still the best I think. I was in a little orchestra when I was 16 or 17 and I used to play that and I enjoyed it. So it remained with me and I said 'this could be done for cellos' and that was my first arrangement. It's remained intact. I did it more than 50 years ago.

But as far as inspiration from others, other than these two works, it helped me, yes. But actually I relied on my own resources and tried to do the best and I went through many corrections. I didn't consider anything engraved in stone, but I was open for new approaches, even after it was copied and so on. So it's not all, you know, frozen. But now I rarely change it, of course fingerings and bowings, but not notes. Sometimes I modify a double stop if it is a little bit uncomfortable, distributed it differently, but that's about it.

While I'm never totally satisfied with anything, still I'm not going back to rewrite everything, it's not productive. It's better to let go and think of new ideas. And I manage to find a few new ideas.

I arranged some Bach and preludes, just preludes. I did a lot of Bach—I don't think I will get through with all the 800 works.

That's all. That's about all I can say. I racked my brain.