Dr. Gusztáv Hőna: his performance and pedagogical career and contributions to the development of the Hungarian trombone school

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DR. GUSZTÁV HŐNA: HIS PERFORMANCE AND PEDAGOGICAL CAREER AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUNGARIAN TROMBONE SCHOOL

by

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An essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

May 2016

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D.M.A ESSAY

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This is to certify that the D.M.A. essay of

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the essay requirement for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree
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Hungarian trombonist Gusztáv Hőna had an extraordinary career as a brass musician and his fascinating professional path serves as a model to this day for many young musicians who aspire to greatness in the field. In 2010, the International Trombone Association presented Gusztáv Hőna the ITA “Lifetime Achievement Award” recognizing him as a highly influential member of the worldwide community of trombonists.

Hőna was appointed trombonist with the Hungarian National Radio Orchestra in 1972, becoming Principal Trombone shortly after and holding the position for thirty-eight years until his retirement in 2010. Since 1990, Hőna has been Professor of Trombone at the prestigious Liszt Ferenc Music Academy in Budapest, Hungary. His extensive solo, orchestral and chamber music career has earned him a global reputation. Hőna’s contributions to the growth of contemporary Hungarian solo trombone literature, his influence in the establishment of the modern Hungarian trombone and brass school, and his remarkable teaching career of over fifty years have had a tremendous impact on the advancement of the trombone and its literature in the world.

This essay, based primarily on interviews with Hőna, his colleagues, and his musician friends, offers a detailed account of the multi-faceted career of arguably one of the greatest living European trombonists and professors as well as information about the history and development of the Hungarian Trombone School.
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Dr. Gusztáv Hőna, a Hungarian trombone soloist, orchestral musician, and educator, gained worldwide recognition in the late 1970's as the first Hungarian musician to be allowed to travel to the “West,” specifically to the United States, to study at Florida State University. In the succeeding years Hőna returned to United States every year until the mid 1990’s to participate as a guest artist in workshops, master classes, and concert tours. During the same period, the socialist Hungarian government denied countless requests by solo artists to travel into countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain, but Hőna was granted permission to travel several times, enabling him to become a rare, unofficial ambassador of Hungarian culture in the West. Hőna also contributed enormously to the enrichment of Hungarian musical culture, especially the advancement of the brass playing tradition in his native country.

1.1 Purpose

There are numerous articles and interviews about Hőna in Hungarian newspapers and the International Trombone Association’s publications, but there is no comprehensive document detailing his extraordinary career. Hőna was a pioneer in introducing Hungarian trombone literature to the world, and he played a substantial role in establishing the modern Hungarian Trombone School, which through its wealth of extremely successful students became known as one of the best and highly respected brass schools in the world. Geopolitical and sociological
impacts were fundamental to the development and establishment of the aforementioned brass school as well. Among these factors were the influences of playing traditions from the ethnic groups living in Hungary and in surrounding countries, as well as the extensive importation of brass playing styles from various Western and Eastern European countries. Furthermore, several important Hungarian brass teachers collaborated on a method book that codified and helped to spread the Hungarian approach to brass performance, specifically trombone performance. Hőna was directly connected to this group of teachers, having studied with them during his school years. According to Hőna, the lack of a unified Hungarian brass method left a gaping hole in the comprehensive preparation of Hungarian brass instrumentalists. During my interview with Hőna in the summer of 2014, he explained early musical influences on the development of the Hungarian trombone school, alluding to the fact that in Hungary the musical culture has deep and significant roots and these will eventually factor considerably in the formation of a national brass school:

It’s important to mention that we, Hungarians, are very musically oriented and we have a tremendous legacy and tradition starting from Liszt, whose music was groundbreaking at the time, and we are proud to have him...we have Bartók and Kodály, just to mention the most important ones. We had the need to create a Hungarian method, a Hungarian brass school.1

Above Hőna refers to the strong, solid musical root Hungarian musicians had in the music of such composers as Liszt, Bartók, and Kodály. In Hungary, music is part of the everyday culture. Famed orchestral conductor Sir Georg Solti said that “music

was and is an essential part of daily life in Hungary.” In Hőna’s view, the Hungarian musician is very well educated and extremely well rounded in his mastery of theory, composition, and history. Creating a national, unified brass school for Hungarian instrumentalists, specifically trombone players, allowed such players to reach the highest levels of musicianship, a worthy continuation of the strong roots of Hungarian musical culture.

Hőna’s studies in the late 1970’s with William Cramer at Florida State University and his subsequent solo appearances in United States gave him an opportunity for substantial personal development. These experiences had a significant impact on the development and formation of the modern Hungarian trombone school.

It is fair to assume that the success of today’s Hungarian trombone and brass players, generally, is due to a mix of playing traditions from the ethnic groups living in and around Hungary who imported these traditions from their respective musical cultures, the influences of the Austrian, French, German and Slavic playing styles, the strong musical background and performance-based Hungarian music education heritage, and, last but not the least, the American style of brass playing introduced by Hőna. All these factors contributed to the forming of the Hungarian Trombone School.

This essay will present the life and professional career of Gusztáv Hőna and a description of the modern Hungarian Trombone School’s development. Hőna’s legacy as a soloist, orchestral player, chamber musician, and pedagogue have left a

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significant mark on the expansion of Hungarian trombone literature and the recognition of Hungary as being at the forefront of brass playing worldwide.

1.2 Related literature

Few detailed sources focus specifically on Hőna or on the Hungarian Trombone School’s development. The library of the Liszt Ferenc Music Academy in Budapest (hereafter referred to as Liszt Academy) has records of the earliest trombone methods, early etude books, and solos used in the academy’s trombone studio, along with records of required study materials, exam requirements, and other important documents that will inform my analysis of the early development of the Hungarian Trombone School. These accounts are mostly found in the Yearbook of the Liszt Academy, a booklet published by the Academy precisely detailing the activities within the institution. The most important primary source of information for this essay is the extended interview conducted with Hőna in the summer of 2014 in Budapest.

In addition, serving as secondary sources for this essay, a variety of interviews and journal articles are available in print and online about Hőna. These sources highlight Hőna’s importance as an extraordinary artist on both the national level in Hungary and on the international scene. Furthermore, Hőna’s status as an international artist is reflected in articles of non-Hungarian newspapers and other publications.

The *Journal of the International Trombone Association* contains several extended articles by and about Gusztáv Hőna. The content of these articles, written
across more than three decades, includes Hőna’s personal accounts of his experiences in the United States as well as biographical articles about his long-lasting and influential career. In an article published in the *ITA Journal* in 1998, Heinz Fadle wrote about the establishment of the trombone studio at the Liszt Academy and the materials used by the first students there. Fadle also discussed the original solo compositions written for Hőna and wrote a detailed account of the concert events celebrating the 100-year-old trombone studio of the Liszt Academy.³ Another article in the *ITA Journal* by Bruce Gunia talks about Hőna being awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the International Trombone Association (hereafter referred to as ITA). Gunia presents a brief biography of Hőna and quotes Ralph Sauer, former Principal Trombone of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, about his personal experience of meeting Hőna in Budapest during an Eastern European tour with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.⁴

Hőna also wrote an article for the *ITA Journal* discussing his experiences during his first visit to the United States and his studies at Florida State University.⁵ A long time friend of Hőna, Dr. Irvin Wagner, currently Professor of Trombone at the University of Oklahoma, wrote two articles in the *ITA Journal* about his experiences traveling to Hungary and meeting Hőna. In a news release for the *ITA Journal* from


1985, Wagner offers detailed accounts of the events during his stay in Hungary. Hőna is mentioned in a part of the article as one of the founding members of the newly formed Hungarian Trombone Association, a group affiliated with the ITA. In an article published in 2014, Wagner details his travels to Hungary to attend the celebration of 115 years of continuous trombone teaching at the Liszt Academy. Wagner calls Hungary a “heaven for trombones” and praises Hőna for the outstanding organization of the festival.

Another similar resource is the journal of the former Hungarian Trombone and Tuba Association, the so-called “Trombone and Tuba Merkur.” Being a central figure in the Hungarian brass world, Hőna was mentioned in nearly every journal printed by this organization, confirming his significant role in the Hungarian brass world.

Some brief accounts also exist of the many recital tours and master classes Hőna presented on college campuses and at other venues in the United States. These are mainly anecdotes related by Hőna’s hosts throughout the years.

Hőna’s own doctoral dissertation is another pertinent source consulted in the construction of this essay. Hőna’s work analyzes several of the solo and chamber compositions written for and dedicated to him. It would be redundant to include too much information from Hőna’s own dissertation in this paper, but it was a


helpful resource of first-hand details about the creative and compositional process behind the new literature written for Hôna.

A number of documents and dissertations exploring the life and careers of other important brass players were also helpful in that they provided models of research and interview procedures used in dissertations of biographical nature.

Darin Lyn Achilles’s dissertation titled *Frank Crisafulli (1916--1998): A Biographical Sketch and a Profile of His Pedagogical Approaches as Related by Former Trombone Students* looks at the biography and pedagogical approaches of longtime Chicago Symphony Orchestra member Frank Crisafulli. The author collects information from family members, former colleagues, close friends, and former students regarding Crisafulli’s early influences, his education, experience as an orchestral player, and his teaching methods. His career as a teacher is an important element of the dissertation, and Achilles described in detail the unique approach to teaching that Crisafulli implemented during his years as a Trombone Professor at Northwestern University.  


extensive performance career and compositional contribution of this important
musician and his unparalleled legacy in the trombone world.

Craig Gosnell wrote his dissertation about the master bass trombonist
George Roberts, also known as “Mr. Bass Trombone.” Gosnell presents Roberts as
the first bass trombonist to elevate the role of the trombone from the back row of a
commercial or jazz band to a more soloistic role. Gosnell’s paper is a biographical
study of the life and career of Roberts that is based on several interviews with
George Roberts.

In the dissertation titled Emory Remington (1891-1971), William Cramer
(1917-1989), and Robert Marsteller (1918-1975): A Description of Trombone
Teaching Techniques and a Discussion of their Influence upon Trombone Teaching
Methodology, John Dwight DeForest Colegrove studies the foundation of modern
American trombone playing from the perspective of the three most influential
American teachers of the twentieth century. Colegrove examines their influence,
teaching methodology, and the ideas that led these professors to pedagogical
successes through interviews with relatives and former students and historical
research of European trombone teaching traditions.


12 Colegrove, John Dwight DeForest. 1999. DMA diss., The University of North
Carolina at Greensboro. Accessed January 13, 2016. ProQuest Dissertations and
Theses.
Hudson Michael also wrote about William Cramer’s life and career in his dissertation *The life and career of William F. Cramer: Pedagogue, performer, and scholar*. The dissertation details Cramer’s professional and personal life by using archive materials and interviews with students and relatives, and includes an extended list of appendices with a wealth of information about Cramer’s performances and publications.13

In his dissertation *The Jay Friedman Legacy: An artist’s life in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra*, David Ryan Williams showcases the incredible career of Jay Friedman in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.14 According to Williams, there is much written about the other former and current members of the legendary brass section of the orchestra including Bud Herseth and Arnold Jacobs, but there is not nearly enough documentation of Friedman’s career. Based on historical data, interviews with Friedman, his family, and his colleagues, the dissertation is a comprehensive and informative work about Friedman’s stunning tenure spanning over five decades and continuing to this day.

A dissertation by David John Kassler with a similar topic details the professional career and teaching of long time Chicago Symphony Orchestra bass trombonist, Edward Kleinhammer.15 Titled *Edward Kleinhammer: His musical*


training, career, and impact, the paper discusses the pedagogical influence and teaching style of Kleinhammer. The author uses personal interviews with Kleinhammer, as well as interviews with several of his former students to highlight Kleinhammer’s successful performing and pedagogical career.

1.3 Justification

Gusztáv Hőna is a central figure in the development of the Hungarian brass playing tradition. He has become arguably one of the most important trombone players and teachers of the twentieth century. With Hőna’s significant contribution, the Hungarian brass school has gained worldwide recognition in the twentieth century. Hőna’s students at the renowned Liszt Academy have succeeded at the highest professional levels and are found in major ensembles and universities around the world. Hőna was equally influential as a solo performer with many new works commissioned or dedicated to him, some by composers as notable as Frigyes Hidas. Moreover, while a number of these compositions have become known internationally, mainly through Hőna’s influence, many valuable works remain virtually unknown outside of Hungary.

This essay will provide detailed information about the Hungarian Trombone School’s origins and historical development, as well as Gusztáv Hőna’s career as a trombone performer and pedagogue and his influence on the musical world of the late twentieth century.
1.4 Procedures

In the summer of 2014, I traveled to Budapest, Hungary where I conducted a lengthy interview with Hőna. The core of my dissertation is based on the information received directly from Hőna regarding his solo, orchestral, chamber music, and teaching career. I also interviewed Hőna’s colleagues and former students while conducting research on the development of the Hungarian Trombone School in the libraries of the Liszt Academy, The Hungarian National Library, and The National Arts Museum. I have gathered research materials to build a foundation for this essay and to prove Hőna’s significant contribution to the advancement of trombone performance techniques and literature, both in Hungary and worldwide.

1.5 Limitations

The essay focuses primarily on Hőna and his international career. To my knowledge, no other comprehensive scholarly work has been written about Hőna’s long and illustrious career. While the dissertation will include brief interviews with former colleagues of Hőna, there will be no significant discussion about other trombonists.
CHAPTER 2: CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

In 2014, at the time of my visit to Budapest, Dr. Hőna was in his twenty-fourth year as Professor of Trombone at the Liszt Academy. Hőna had recently retired from his position as Principal Trombone of the Hungarian National Radio Orchestra, a position he held for almost all of the thirty-eight years he was a member of the orchestra. Looking back on a rich and wide-ranging career, Hőna reflected on his family background and early years growing up in a suburb of Budapest:

I was born in Budapest on November 10, 1948 on a very cold, snowy day. I was the second child in my family; my older sister was born a year and a half before. My father was a sculptor and my mother worked in a clothing factory as a clerk. We lived in the rental house since my parents didn’t have a lot of money. My father had Germanic origins, he was Swabian.16

Swabia is a historic region located in Southwestern Germany. The name “Swabia” is derived from that of “Suebi.” The Suebi’s were Germanic people who, along with the Alemanni people, lived around the upper Rhine and upper Danubian regions. From the eleventh century this land became known as Swabia.17

2.1 Family history

Hőna’s mother’s family was Hungarian, from a region that is now part of Slovakia. Hőna offers geographical information regarding his family’s native lands:

16 Hőna, interview, 2014.

During the Second World War my father was in the Hungarian army. My mother, Taródy Rebeka was born in on a farm close to the city of Rimaszombat, a town north from Hungary, currently located in Slovakia. My mother was one hundred percent Hungarian; her mother, my grandmother, was born in the city of Tiszanána. My mother’s family migrated north from Tiszanána, settling around the city of Rimaszombat. Back then that region used to belong to Hungary. They had their own farm. My grandfather was Taródy Mihály, my grandmother Gerenday Eszter. They owned their own land, which was significant back then. They were basically known as *squireen*, a small noble title.18

![Figure 1. Hőna’s maternal grandparents, Gerenday Eszter and Taródy Mihály. Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.](image)

18 Hőna, interview, 2014.
Interestingly, noble titles are reflected in last names in the Hungarian language, visible in the last letters of Hungarian family names. In Hungarian both the “I” and the “Y” are pronounced as “E.” Hőna explains that it is quite common for a family name to end with either of those two letters, but he states “In Hungarian the “Y” at the end of a family’s last name portrays the noble title.”

Hőna’s parents met in the town of Rimaszombat prior to the Second World War while his father was in the Hungarian army. “My father was arrested by the partisans and put into detention,” relates Hőna. He remembers a fascinating story about how his father was looking out of the window of his detention cell when he first noticed his mother:

My father saw from the window of his detention cell my mother who walked past the front of the building daily. He told himself that if he ever were released from his detention he would look up this beautiful woman. Indeed, after his release my father managed to track down my mother who was working in a little bakery attached to the local movie theater. It was in 1944 when they finally met, and they got married a year later.

Hőna clearly has pride in his heritage. He notes that on his father’s side of the family he is the descendant of a long line of artists, including his grandfather, a decorative sculptor:

The whole family used to be decorative sculptors. My grandfather was the first to settle in Hungary, in a city called Rákosszentmihály, located right outside Budapest. He started a company called Hőna & Spillmayer and they

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19 Hőna, interview, 2014.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
were in the business of decorative sculptures. The business was pretty profitable, but when the recession hit the business folded.\textsuperscript{22}

Hőna elaborates further about his grandparents and their family background:

My grandfather met my grandmother in Rákosszentmihály. Her name was Saller Anna and she was a Swabian ethnic from the city of Tolna. She was a tailor, and she moved to Rákosszentmihály as an apprentice. That’s where she met my grandfather. They fell in love, got married and their first child was Hőna Gusztáv, who was my father. My father had two siblings Hőna Károly and Hőna Anna. That’s basically my family tree; those are my roots.\textsuperscript{23}

Hőna currently lives in the sixteenth district of Budapest in a suburb called Sashalom on the east side of the metropolitan area. He was born in the same suburb, and it has been his home his whole life. According to archeological findings and early church documents, Hungarians have occupied the area of the sixteenth district for more than 950 years. In 1950 this suburb officially became part of the city of Budapest, where it is now known as a quiet, culturally oriented district.\textsuperscript{24}

2.2 Growing up in a musical family

Hőna experienced an upbringing surrounded by music: “From a very young age I was exposed to good quality music. On my father’s side the family was very musically inclined.”\textsuperscript{25} He adds the following about his father:

My father was a sculptor apprentice working with my grandfather and my uncle. Right before the recession when the business started slowing down they started playing more and more music. My father played the trumpet, the

\textsuperscript{22} Hőna, interview, 2014.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{25} Hőna, interview, 2014.
violin, and was also a singer. My uncle played the trombone, the cello, and the saxophone.26

Hőna’s father and uncle eventually formed a band and started working part time as musicians in a local casino. The sixteenth district of Budapest was a musically alive and electrifying area with many wealthy residents. This stimulating area of the sixteenth district was called “The Gentry World.” Its citizens were powerful members of society with considerable wealth, and many ranked just below nobility.27 After the Second World War ended, Hőna’s uncle decided to immigrate to Caracas, Venezuela, and moved out of the family home. This seemingly insignificant event had important consequences on his nephew’s future. Hőna explains this further:

When I was young, I had a passion to search for things, to discover new objects and new things. In 1953, my parents moved into the family home belonging to my grandparents. This was a house with a loft, where I found a trombone one day. This is the same house where I’m living today with my family, by the way.28

Finding his uncle’s old trombone (Figure 2), turned out to be a pivotal moment in Hőna’s life. “When my uncle left he didn’t take his trombone with him, so that’s why we had it in the attic. Basically that’s how my trombone playing career started,” adds Hőna. He was twelve years old at the time and had already studied a little bit of trumpet and piano.

26 Hőna, interview, 2014.


28 Hőna, interview, 2014.
The piano was actually the first musical instrument I started on. Since I studied trumpet with my father, he was my first teacher, teaching me all the basics on the instrument. I started nagging my father to take me to Mr. Borsztrudi who was a very famous trumpet teacher back then. My father used to tell me: "you’re not quite ready yet for a private lesson, practice a little more."29

It turns out that while Hőna was learning the trumpet and the piano, his father (Figure 3) was closely monitoring his improvements. Never really convinced that his son had found the right instrument, Hőna senior hesitated to push his son into serious music making.

Figure 2. Hőna’s first trombone, a Hungarian-made Pfeifenroth model. Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.

29 Hőna, interview, 2014.
Hőna remembers the moment when his father suddenly changed his opinion, however, and started encouraging him towards his professional future:

My father never really wanted to admit that he never liked too much the way the trumpet sounded for me. So when I found the trombone in the attic, I
started playing on it in the house. I didn’t really know how to hold it, or what to do with it, but I managed to make a sound on it. My father came home one day in the afternoon and I was practicing the trombone, trying to learn it. He rushed in my room and asked me: “Who played that trombone?” I said, “I did.” He told me: “Well my son, that’s what you have to play on from now on.” My father had a really good ear; he was very talented and he recognized immediately my potential on the trombone. Basically that was the moment when it was decided that I was going to play the trombone!”

The trombone Hőna found in the attic was an old Hungarian-made horn from an instrument maker called Pfeifenroth who was active in Budapest at the beginning of the twentieth century. Hőna still has the instrument. “It was a very basic trombone, with a large, silver bell, without a main tuning slide on it,”

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30 Hőna, interview, 2014.
remembers Hőna.\textsuperscript{31} He later took the trombone to an instrument repair shop where they cut it and added a main tuning slide.

2.3 Education

Impressed by his son’s natural ability on the trombone, Hőna’s father took him to take lessons with Prof. György Zilcz who was the trombone professor at the School of Music in Kőbánya, the tenth district of Budapest, located southeast of the heart of the city. Hőna had already been studying music in school; he was learning theory, harmony, and music history while also taking piano lessons. “My musical studies started at the age of nine,” Hőna recalls. He remembers fondly his musical learning experiences while studying with Zilcz:\textsuperscript{32}

I had a great relationship with Prof. Zilcz. He had a very significant influence on me. He was the first meaningful influence on me and he stayed throughout my career. He ended up being my Chamber Music coach in college as well, so basically until he passed away he was with me in my career. Later when I got older and started working professionally he used to call me to sub in with his orchestra, the Erkel Theater Opera Orchestra, so I got a chance to play next to him many times. That was a wonderful experience for me. I can say that he was my musical hero at the time.\textsuperscript{33}

Zilcz was an accomplished player; he was the first player to perform the Alto Trombone Concerto by Johann Georg Albrechtsberger in Hungary. Albrechtsberger was an eighteenth-century Austrian composer, teacher, theorist and organist who had resided for several years in Győr, a city located in the Northwestern part of

\textsuperscript{31} Hőna, interview, 2014.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
Hungary. He was a prolific composer who wrote hundreds of church compositions, keyboard works, and instrumental pieces. According to his friend Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and contemporary music critics, Albrechtsberger was “perhaps the greatest organist in the World.”\(^{34}\) According to Hőna, for long time there was a debate in Hungary regarding the exact location in which the trombone concerto was written. Some people believe it is possible the work was composed while Albrechtsberger still lived in Győr.

Regardless of where it was composed, the Hungarian music publishing company Editio Musica actually discovered the original scores of Albrechtsberger’s Concerto in the archives of the Hungarian National Museum; they asked Zilcz to premiere the piece in Hungary. For this project, Zilcz used a vintage tenor trombone from the 1800’s owned by the Hungarian National Museum. The chief editor of the Editio Musica Budapest publishing company, Hungarian composer and musicologist Gábor Darvas, composed a cadenza for the piece.\(^{35}\) Hőna remembers hearing Zilcz working on the piece during the time he was taking lessons with him and the impression this composition had on him:

> After Zilcz agreed in the early 60’s to premiere the concerto in Hungary on the trombone belonging to the National Museum, he used to practice it all the time. I heard him a lot when I went to see him for lessons and I remember that I really liked his style, his tone, and his accuracy. I decided that if I was ever going to become a “real” professional trombonist I would have to learn

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It. This concerto became very special to me and I would say for all of us Hungarian trombonists. I think we have a special connection to this concerto since we discovered it, we printed it and we published it. It’s still up for debate whether he composed it in Hungary or in Vienna, but I consider it a little bit belonging to Hungarians as well.36

While continuing to study trombone with Prof. Zilcz in Kőbánya, Hőna was admitted to continue his studies in 1963 at age fourteen at the Veres Pálné Gymnasium in Budapest. Wanting to keep studying music seriously, he decided to audition to enter a specialized junior high school that is called a music conservatory in Hungary.

I studied at Veres Pálné Gymnasium for four years between 1963 and 1967. In 1964, basically one year after I started the Gymnasium I auditioned for the music conservatory and I got accepted. I was attending the Gymnasium that is basically a general high school and I was studying in the same time at the music conservatory, which is the equivalent of a high school age student music conservatory.37

Concurrently attending two different schools was very demanding on Hőna, but it worked out well for him. The Veres Pálné Gymnasium was one of the best schools in Budapest, with a very strong emphasis on liberal arts and languages. Hőna had six hours of English language classes every week. The intensive English study would become very useful for Hőna later in his career. He talks about learning English in school:

We had English lessons every day which back then was a very strong curriculum. Ultimately it was my choice to stay in both schools and study in parallel. I liked the fact that I was getting a really solid education in liberal arts and general classes while I was studying very seriously music in a music conservatory setting.38

36 Hőna, interview, 2014.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
In spite of being a busy young student, Hőna remembers those years as ones filled with a tremendous amount of practicing. “I was practicing every single day very honestly and diligently, and I would say it was a sacred habit for me at the time,” adding that “everything my teacher assigned me I worked on without exceptions, therefore I was getting better on the instrument at a very fast pace, so by the time I was eighteen and ready to graduate from the Gymnasium, I think I became a pretty solid player on the trombone.”  

In the Music Conservatory, Hőna had two teachers. He first studied with Prof. László Perlaki, a retired member of the Hungarian National Radio Orchestra. After Perlaki retired from the Conservatory, Hőna studied with Prof. András Péhl. Of the two, Péhl was more influential in his development:

I would say perhaps the least I learned was from Prof. Perlaki, since by the time I got to study with him he was pretty old, so he wouldn’t say too much in lessons. On the other hand, Prof. Péhl became another influential teacher for me. He was especially great with teaching rhythm and accuracy as well as precise intonation. I owe him a lot.

Following graduation from the Music Conservatory, Hőna auditioned for the Liszt Academy in Budapest. At the time, the Liszt Academy was called the Liszt Ferenc College of Music, since it did not yet have university rank. The history of the Liszt Academy goes back into the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1873, Buda and Pest, the two cities divided by the Danube river, united to form the new capital city called Budapest. This was an important moment in the cultural and

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
sociological development of the city. The new city quickly became Hungary's new cultural capital. When in the late 1860's and early 1870's Franz Liszt, the famous Hungarian composer and pianist, started spending more time in Budapest, momentum grew to create a higher education music school.

According to the history page on the official website of the Liszt Academy, Franz Liszt rented a flat in Budapest in 1871 and started spending a lot of time in the city, giving concerts and inviting notable composers to visit. Among these were Leo Delibes, Camille Saint-Saëns, Pablo de Sarasate, and Richard Wagner. Many important political figures recognized the value of Liszt's presence in the city, and on December 8th, 1873, during a discussion in the Hungarian Parliament, the idea of establishing a music academy was initiated. After a rocky start from the lack of funding and resources, the newly established Music Academy opened its doors on November 14, 1875.

At age eighteen, after graduating from the Music Conservatory, Hőna auditioned for both Music Performance and Music Education Degrees at the Liszt Academy, but was admitted as a music education major. According to Hőna, “for the Music Performance degree they only admitted one person per year and

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44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.
Unfortunately I came out second, in a very close race I must say, therefore I started as a Music Education major.\textsuperscript{46}

At the time, Hőna’s professor from the Music Conservatory, András Péhl was in charge of teaching the Music Education majors at the Liszt Academy as well, so Hőna was able to continue his studies with Péhl and then reaudit successfully for the Music Performance degree:

I graduated as a Music Education major in 1971, and I auditioned for the Music Performance degree again, and this time I got in. I started taking lessons with Dr. László Ujfalusi for two more years, eventually graduating in 1973 as a Music Performance major. Basically, it was five years of studying, three years as a Music Education major and two years as a Music Performance major. I graduated both programs.\textsuperscript{47}

Dr. László Ujfalusi, Hőna’s second teacher at the Liszt Academy, was a prominent figure in the Hungarian brass world. He was an active performer, teacher, and author. His long and distinguished tenure at the Liszt Academy as the trombone and tuba professor helped direct the careers of many young students. He was certainly very influential teacher for Hőna, as he details below:

From Prof. Ujfalusi, I learned a lot about music in general. The musical culture, the approach to music and interpretation, the performing of music, what is the right approach in style, how to communicate musical ideas. I got a very well rounded musical and technical education from my previous teachers, however Prof. Ujfalusi had a more general, big-picture-like approach. His wife was a singer, so he always suggested that we listen to great singers, listen to how they use their vibrato, legato and articulations and model that approach on our instruments.”\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{46} Hőna, interview, 2014.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
Being a student at the Liszt Academy was a privilege that came with a plethora of learning opportunities. Just being around the busy professional environment and being surrounded by performances had a great impact on students. In order to gain experience and knowledge of the repertoire, the students of the Liszt Academy frequently attended concerts in the main concert hall of the Academy, which was one of the most popular concert halls in Budapest. Hőna recalls his experiences:

We used to go to a lot of concerts with my colleagues from the Liszt Academy. There was no Internet back then and we didn’t own almost any recordings. We just went to listen to as many live concerts as we could. So, that was another opportunity to learn the repertoire for me. There was a very intense musical life in Budapest and at the Liszt Academy there was a concert every single night. So, we took full advantage of it.49

2.4 Pre-professional performance experiences

During his undergraduate years at the Liszt Academy, Hőna had many opportunities to perform in a variety of musical styles and genres in and around Budapest. First, the Liszt Academy had a very strong orchestra in which Hőna performed throughout his studies there. The ensemble’s level was comparable to professional orchestras, even today, the Liszt Academy’s orchestra is considered one of the top student orchestras in Eastern Europe and performs numerous concerts every year. Besides playing in the student orchestra, Hőna remembers other positive free-lancing opportunities as well:

There was a small orchestra, which was sponsored by the city hall in Budapest. They used to call me and a couple of my friends from the Liszt Academy to play there all the time. When the program didn’t require

49 Hőna, interview, 2014.
trombones I used to ask the conductor to let me read the bassoon part just for fun and for gaining experience. He always agreed, so that was always an exciting experience.  

During the late 60’s and early 70’s, Budapest, like many European and American cities, was struck by Beatle fever. Young students formed many local rock bands and these were opportunities a young musician could not miss. Hőna talks about his experiences with local bands:

I started playing with pop bands. They used to hire wind players for certain songs. As young students, we used to play these gigs with friends who were pop musicians. A friend of mine started a group called the Schokk band. We used to play in this place called “Chamber Variety,” a club similar to a Broadway show type of music. There was this show that I played called “Mini or Maxi.” Back in the 60’s it was a big deal to be able to play a show like this. First of all because it was socialism and you could almost never get permission to play something like that. We played this show every night there and Sundays we played two shows. That was my first professional gig and as a student I made pretty good money. We played it 750 times.

After getting the job in the Hungarian National Radio Orchestra in 1972, Hőna played mostly classical symphonic music at his workplace, but his previous work playing in a brass band during summers and playing Broadway-style pop gigs contributed to his well-rounded musical development.

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50 Hőna, interview, 2014

51 Ibid.
Throughout his long orchestral career, Hőna worked in only one orchestra, the Hungarian National Radio Orchestra (hereafter referred to as Radio Orchestra). He started as a section player in a student practitioner position on February 1, 1972 and played there for thirty-eight years until his retirement in 2010. During his time in the orchestra, Hőna had the opportunity to perform as a soloist, to record professionally, and to participate in numerous international concert tours.

The idea for organizing the Radio Orchestra belonged to Ernő Dohnányi, known in the West as Ernst von Dohnanyi. He was a Hungarian composer, pianist, teacher, and administrator who is often considered the creator of Hungarian classical musical life in the twentieth century.\(^{52}\) When he was appointed as Director of the Hungarian National Radio in 1931, Dohnányi was considered a visionary because of his plan to combine the new radio technology with music.\(^{53}\) Dohnányi founded a small chamber orchestra at first in 1936, later expanding the group to a full size symphony orchestra. Dohnányi himself conducted the first concert of the full Radio Orchestra on October 7, 1943.\(^{54}\) According to local newspapers, “The audience didn’t just witness the first measures of any concert, tonight in the Concert Hall.”


\(^{54}\) Ibid.
Hall of the National Cultural Centre they were witnessing a carefully crafted plan of the Hungarian National Radio come to realization to great success, along with the possibility for hundreds of thousands to hear the concert through their radio machines...”\(^{55}\)

Rehearsing, recording, and performing most of its concerts in the famous Studio Six of the Hungarian National Radio, the Radio Orchestra was devoted to the mission of promoting contemporary Hungarian composers. Hőna describes the recording sessions as very efficient and with few mistakes:

> We used to record a lot, also because the record company knew that our orchestra is used to the recording sessions. When the “red light” came on we started playing and usually it was very solid. We were just used to that process, and we didn't make many mistakes. We learned to focus so much that it was always pretty solid and without mistakes, anything we played.\(^{56}\)

The orchestra made hundreds of recordings over the years, many of them kept in the archives of the Radio. A number of them were eventually released as commercial recordings. “I never counted exactly how many albums I have recorded with the Orchestra, but I am sure it is easily over twenty,” remembers Hőna.\(^{57}\) The Radio Orchestra established itself quickly as one of the top orchestras in the country, performing and recording hundreds of concerts every year.


\(^{56}\) Hőna, interview, 2014.

\(^{57}\) Ibid.
3.1 A life in the Hungarian National Radio Orchestra

Hőna won the orchestral job he had dreamed of while still a student at the Liszt Academy. He describes the path that led to his successful audition:

At the time I was still a student at the Liszt Academy and a very good friend of mine won a full time position in the Radio Orchestra during his freshman year. I went to the audition and I played the Frank Martin “Ballade.” I had to play about five orchestral excerpts as well. One of the excerpts they wanted to hear was the excerpt from Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra. But I didn’t have that part. I remember that my audition went really well until the very end when I had to play the excerpt from Bartók and since I was basically sight-reading it, I played the wrong rhythm.58

That was Hőna’s first audition for the Radio Orchestra. Because of his mistake in the Bartók excerpt he failed to get the job, but being a young trombonist with great potential, he was noticed by the committee. He reports what happened:

The person who won the audition eventually decided to quit and they organized the second audition. I must have impressed them during the first audition because they invited me back and I was the only one invited to audition at that point. I was really prepared this time and I won the audition. That is how my career with the Radio Orchestra started.59

Orchestral auditions in Europe in the 1960-70's were much different from such auditions in the United States in the twenty-first century. First of all, those who auditioned were almost always students of the members of the orchestra, i.e. they were known figures. Secondly, people did not tend to travel very far for jobs. Usually, only the best local players took these auditions, though performance expectations remained high, especially in top tier orchestras. This local focus is still

58 Hőna, interview, 2014.

59 Ibid.
a somewhat common practice in Europe, in spite of the global “modernization” of the orchestral audition process.

Hőna recalls his kind welcome in the Radio Orchestra by the low brass section. His first day on the job was February 1, 1972, when he officially became second trombonist. “I was welcomed very warmly by my new colleagues and I had to make sure that I was always very well prepared and well behaved and tried to fit in as best as I could,” remembers Hőna.60 He describes his diligent daily preparation for rehearsals and concerts:

I used to go to the library of the orchestra and get the music in advance so I was always really prepared for the rehearsals. My colleagues used to do me a favor and come in a little early just so I got a chance to play through some excerpts with them before the rehearsal started. As I mentioned, they were extremely helpful and welcoming. I was very fortunate. I learned a lot during those days about orchestra etiquette and the do’s and don’ts of the job. I always tried to be early; many times I got to the orchestra hall an hour before the downbeat.61

Hőna states he was always very careful to play without making any mistakes, and if he missed a note in a concert or something went a little bit wrong, he became dejected and it affected him a lot. “Nowadays it’s a different mentality; sometimes the young players will miss a note and laugh about it, like nothing happened. I’m not fond of this kind of mentality, this kind of approach. I think it’s a matter of respect to the audience and the composer,” remarks Hőna.62

Ferenc Tóth was Principal Trombonist of the Radio Orchestra low brass section (Figure 5) when Hőna started in 1972. Hőna remembers Tóth as “a very

60 Hőna, interview, 2014.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
intelligent musician with a degree in composition, a great arranger.” Jenő Reincs and Márton Cejtler were the other two trombonists in the section, with Cejtler playing bass trombone. Vilmos Szabó, a close personal friend of Hőna, was the tuba player. Later, bass trombonist Sándor Balogh and tenor trombonist Ferenc Kocziás joined the section after Cejtler and Tóth retired. By this time, Hőna had become principal trombonist of the orchestra. After Balogh and Kocziás left the section to take on positions with the Budapest Festival Orchestra, Csaba Erdei, a student of Hőna, won a position in the section, followed by another two former students of Hőna from the Liszt Academy, Robert Káip on tenor and Miklós Csáthi on bass. Currently the trombone section members of the Radio Orchestra are all former students of Hőna.

Figure 5. Hungarian National Radio Orchestra Trombone section (ca. 1980). Hőna pictured second from the left. Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.

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63 Hőna, interview, 2014.
The schedule of the Radio Orchestra involved about six services per week. The concerts were scheduled for Friday night with some weeks when the concert was repeated for a Sunday matinee. Hőna recalls some highlights working with some of the most important conductors of the time:

We played with many famous conductors such as Abbado, Markevics, and Matacich. One of my most memorable concerts was with Matacich. We played the Wagner Funeral March and it had such a tremendous impact on everyone that I will never forget that concert for the rest of my life. We also played with Hungarian guest conductors a lot, the ones who were world famous already and living in the United States, Antal Doráti and Georg Solti for example.64

Georg Solti, one of the most important conductors of the twentieth century, was the Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for twenty-two years, starting his tenure in September of 1969.65 Under his leadership, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra was elevated to worldwide fame, with the many tours to Europe. Antal Doráti conducted the Dallas Symphony Orchestra for four years between 1945-1949 and became Music Director of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra in 1949, staying for eleven years.66

In Hungary, György Lehel was appointed principal conductor of the Radio Orchestra in 1964, after working for the Orchestra in a variety of functions starting

64 Hőna, interview, 2014.
in 1947.\textsuperscript{67} Between 1950 and 1988 with Lehel, a champion of contemporary Hungarian music on the podium, the Radio Orchestra premiered 219 new compositions from fifty-eight Hungarian Composers.\textsuperscript{68} Hőna remembers working with Lehel and the repertoire scheduling system used at the Radio Orchestra at the time:

He was a conductor with a very clear technique and he worked for the Radio Orchestra for many years before he became principal conductor. At the National Radio’s institution where we belonged, there was a committee who was in charge of music scheduling. They, along with the Music Director, were deciding the repertoire.\textsuperscript{69}

Under Lehel’s leadership, the Radio Orchestra became the first Hungarian orchestra to be allowed by the socialist government to travel to the United States for a twenty-six-concert tour in the early 1970’s.\textsuperscript{70} Hőna describes that experience:

When things started to ease up a little bit on the political scene, every time we went to the West side of the iron curtain, we were treated as a curiosity. In the West, and especially in United States, the audiences were always very curious to hear how an orchestra from the Eastern bloc would sound. It was a pretty rare event for them.\textsuperscript{71}

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\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{69} Hőna, interview, 2014.


\textsuperscript{71} Hőna, interview, 2014.
\end{flushleft}
The soloists on that groundbreaking tour were Zoltán Kocsis (piano), Dezső Ránki (piano,) and Ferenc Tarjáni (horn).72 Harold C. Schonberg, Pulitzer-prize-winning Music Critic for the New York Times, wrote about the Radio Orchestra’s performance in Carnegie Hall: "The Orchestra from Budapest is a first class orchestra up to the standards anywhere. It is a supple and homogenous group, with proficient first chair players, smooth ensemble, and rich sound."73 Hőna recalls the orchestra’s effect:

We were always really successful in the United States, because I feel that we had a somewhat unique style, deeply rooted in our musical and cultural heritage. We always played Hungarian music such as Liszt and Bartók on these tours and they were always very well received. I can say that pretty much after every concert in the States we got a standing ovation.74

After the performances, it was common for the orchestra members to be invited for dinner by local American Hungarians, many of whom were refugees of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, but who still felt a strong connection to the mother country.

Hőna recalls András Ligeti, the music director who came after Lehel's retirement in 1988:

I remember that he had a great memory and he used to conduct everything without a score, whether it was a concerto or a whole symphony. He had a very good technique as well and we played really good concerts with him.75


74 Hőna, interview, 2014.

75 Ibid.
Ligeti was a violinist who was formerly concertmaster of the Hungarian National Opera Orchestra. He remained music director of the Radio Orchestra for a few years, followed by Tamás Vásári, world-renowned pianist and conductor. Vásári started conducting the orchestra in 1992 and remained for twelve years, touring internationally to critical acclaim in countries such as Great Britain, France, Spain, Germany, Japan, and Thailand.76 Hőna recalls working under the baton of Vásári:

He was a fantastic musician and an amazing piano player. He was the same as Ligeti; had a great mind and conducted everything by memory with a great energy, and we played really great concerts with him. We used to have a subscription series named after him called the Vásári concerts where he used to sit and play the piano and conduct the orchestra at the same time. He had a very popular TV show called “Beyond Music” where he used to invite contemporary composers and talk about music, present new pieces. We used to play parts of these new compositions and talk about them a little more.77

With an orchestral career spanning more than thirty-eight years, Hőna has performed the entire core symphonic orchestral repertoire. He talks about some of his favorite compositions and trombone excerpts:

I love Bartók’s Concerto. I would say that’s my favorite orchestral piece. I played it so many times that I know the whole piece by memory. I incorporated the Bartók excerpts in my daily routine. Mozart’s Requiem, the R. Strauss tone poems, Brahms and Schumann symphonies, and all the twentieth century pieces, Stravinsky especially, were really close to my heart as well.78

Interestingly, although the Bartók Concerto, prevented him from winning his first orchestral audition in 1972, the work became his favorite piece to perform.


77 Hőna, interview, 2014.

78 Ibid.
When asked about the work environment for those in the arts in Hungary especially in the 1970’s and 80’s, Hőna responds: “The socialist party gave a lot of attention and importance to culture in general, such as literature, poetry, fine arts, theater, and of course, music, though at the time there was a lot of censorship going on in the arts. You couldn’t just perform whatever you wanted.”

The headquarters of the Radio Orchestra, located in the building of the Hungarian National Radio, became a lively environment during these years, with a continuous influx of musicians recording and performing in a variety of musical styles. Even though the government censored many forms of expression, the composition of new music was encouraged, and local musicians were celebrated. Many of Hungary’s leading composers ended up working with the Radio Orchestra. Hőna notes how much he valued this collaboration:

I can say that I got lucky to get my job in the Radio Orchestra. One of the missions of the orchestra at the time was to record the modern Hungarian music, the contemporary composer’s music. This was a program of the socialist party. We were almost the only orchestra who recorded modern Hungarian compositions.

During his tenure with the Radio Orchestra, Hőna met many of Hungary’s leading composers and started developing professional and personal relationships with them that later would result in many compositions being written for Hőna, considerably enriching the trombone repertoire. Under these circumstances, Hőna met Frigyes Hidas, who was at the time working as keyboardist of the Radio

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79 Hőna, interview, 2014.

80 Ibid.
Orchestra, Sándor Balassa, who worked as a musical advisor, and Jereb Ervin, as well as László Dubrovay, Kamillo Lendvay, and Sándor Szöllősy.

In spite of being under a socialist government, Hungary, and especially the capital city of Budapest, was booming culturally. Hőna notes that there were multiple opportunities for orchestral players at the time:

Budapest had a very active musical cultural life. We had two opera houses, the National Opera House and the Erkel Theater, both institutions having their own full time orchestra and full time choir. Then the National Philharmonic Orchestra, the oldest symphony orchestra in Hungary, the Radio Orchestra and the Hungarian Philharmonic Orchestra. These were the top ensembles in Budapest; they were considered the top category orchestras. We also had several other full time symphony orchestras operating in the city, considered second tier orchestras.81

One of the most recognized cultural institutions in Budapest is the Hungarian National Opera Theater and its Opera Building is one of the most visited landmarks in Budapest. The construction of the Opera building, based on the project of Hungarian architect Miklós Ybl, was begun in 1875 and lasted for nine years.82 On September 27, 1884, in the presence of Emperor Ferenc József (Franz Joseph I), the neoclassical Hungarian National Opera Theater opened with a concert conducted by the great Hungarian conductor and composer Ferenc Erkel.83

The numerous cultural institutions of Budapest serve a city of two million that enjoy a rich and deeply-rooted cultural conscience. Hőna explains the busy cultural life in Budapest:

81 Hőna, interview, 2014.
83 Ibid.
Imagine that both Opera houses had performances every single day of the week, except Mondays, I think. The Main Concert Hall of the Liszt Academy was one of the most popular concert halls in the city, and it was occupied continuously. There were concerts every single day. It was a very intense musical life. It was the same for the theaters as well, all over Budapest. You would think a city of Budapest’s size would have not be able to support such an active and intense cultural life, but almost all concerts were sold out on a daily basis at the time.84

Nationalistic pride has always been strong in Hungary, and composers such as Liszt, Bartók, and Kodály are part of the national heritage and considered national treasures. Hőna recounts an interesting story regarding the importance the name of Kodály had even during the socialist era:

The heritage from Liszt, Bartók, and Kodály was very strong. Zoltán Kodály was already a huge name; he was a demigod in Hungary and the socialist party took his words and wishes very seriously. Just to give you an example, they wanted to ask Kodály to write a new national anthem, since the actual anthem starts with the text “God bless the Hungarians.” The socialists didn’t care for this kind of wording much. When Kodály was asked to write a new anthem, he simply replied: “It’s just fine the way it is, there is no need to change anything.” And that was the end of it; nobody dared to touch the anthem.85

Hőna frequently mentions that he felt lucky to be in Budapest, still one of the cultural centers of Europe, and to have had the opportunities he experienced throughout his career: “Fortunately, socialism couldn’t destroy or diminish our musical heritage, it was just too strong!”86 Additionally, touring through the years, particularly after the socialist government eased up on travel restrictions and especially after socialism collapsed, Hőna was able to perform in every major

84 Hőna, interview, 2014.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
concert hall of the world, from Carnegie Hall in New York to the Musikverein in Vienna. Hőna’s conclusion about his orchestral career is that if he were to start all over, he would choose the Radio Orchestra again: “It gave me more than I could have ever wanted, it was a wonderful place to work.”87

87 Hőna, interview, 2014.
CHAPTER 4: CHAMBER MUSICIAN

Besides being an active soloist, orchestral musician, and teacher, Hőna’s career was largely defined by his chamber music activities. His professional career as a chamber musician began in the mid 1970’s and lasted for over three decades. He was a member of three different chamber groups and toured on four continents, played hundreds of concerts, recorded countless albums, performed live on television and radio, and inspired numerous composers to write new works.

4.1 The Modern Brass Ensemble

In the 1970’s, brass chamber groups started to become very popular in Europe and North America. The Philip Jones Brass Ensemble in England and the Canadian Brass were already known worldwide and became models for other brass players to follow. The Philip Jones Brass Ensemble was founded in 1951 by British trumpeter Philip Jones, a successful orchestral trumpet player with the Covent Garden Orchestra.\footnote{Cummings, Robert, “Artist Biography,” All Media Network, LLC, accessed on January 6, 2016, http://www.allmusic.com/artist/philip-jones-brass-ensemble-mn0000067481.} It took approximately a decade for the group to establish itself, but its reputation took off in the 1960’s, and for the next three decades the ensemble was the model for many other large brass ensembles. In a newspaper article following the group’s performance at Northwestern University’s Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, John von Rhein of the Chicago Tribune called the performance “lively,
brilliant, instructive and perhaps the most important, great fun,” and said “They are seemingly incapable of producing a blaring or raucous or unmusical sound.”

Using the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble as a model, Hőna, along with some of his brass colleagues, formed the Modern Brass Ensemble on January 2, 1975. The seven musicians of the Modern Brass Ensemble were good friends who wanted to play together, but they did not care much for the brass quintet sound. After a couple of rehearsals, the group decided to turn the ensemble into a serious project. The members of the group were as follows:


Under Hőna's leadership, the seven-member group started looking for performance opportunities and gave their first official concert on January 18, 1975 in Budapest. Hőna explains that the first step in looking for concert opportunities was performing on radio:

I was the main organizer of the group and I realized that we would always need concerts and we had to always have a set date of performing in order to keep the group moving ahead, so with our affiliation to the Hungarian National Radio, we had a great advantage in getting possibilities to perform there in studio concerts and live radio shows.

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90 Szabó Vilmos, email interview by Zsolt Szabó, January 17, 2016.

91 Hőna, interview, 2014.
Besides playing for the Hungarian National Radio, the ensemble started touring Hungary to perform educational concerts. These were organized in smaller cities all over Hungary as part of a program initiated by the socialist government to educate people in the arts.

In the beginning, the group focused on playing a lot of early music from composers such as Giovanni Gabrieli, Johann Christoph Pezel, and Samuel Scheidt. "We were purchasing some Philip Jones arrangements, those were already available, but we also asked a couple of colleagues, who were great arrangers, to transcribe from the brass quintet repertoire," Hőna explains. In order to expand their repertoire, however, the ensemble had to become more creative and resourceful. Hőna notes that, "one of our colleagues from the Radio Orchestra had fantastic ears. He was able to listen to anything and write it out for us. He was a great resource and we had many transcriptions written by him."92

Another path the group started exploring in order to enrich its repertoire was the commissioning of new pieces from contemporary Hungarian composers. Composers such as Frigyes Hidas, Ervin Jereb, and György Ránki, just to name a few, composed for the ensemble. Hidas wrote "Training Patterns," Ránki composed "Serenade of the Seven-Headed Dragon" and "Father Goose's Tales," and Jereb wrote "Copper Engravings."93 Other pieces by Hungarian composers commissioned by the ensemble include the following:

92 Hőna, interview, 2014.

Among brass players, Frigyes Hidas is certainly the best-known composer of
the group. Born in Budapest in 1928, Hidas was a Hungarian conductor, composer
and pianist. As a colleague of Hőna at the Radio Orchestra, he was the pianist and
celesta player for many years for the orchestra. The Hungarian government
decorated Hidas with its prestigious Erkel Prize in 1959 and 1980 and with the Béla
Bartók-Ditta Pásztory Prize in 1993.6

Hidas’s most notable compositions for trombone are “Alteba Trio” for three
trombones, the “Double Concerto” for tenor and bass trombone (also known as
“Florida Concerto”), “Meditation” for bass trombone, “Movement” for trombone and
piano, “Rhapsody” for bass trombone and concert band, and “Seven Bagatelles” for
twelve trombones, commissioned by the ITA.7

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96 Ibid.

97 “Hidas, Frigyes,” Editio Musica Budapest Ltd, accessed January 6, 2016,
After five years of concerts in Hungary the Modern Brass Ensemble was seeking to expand their concert opportunities and decided to participate in a chamber music competition in the city of Ancona, Italy in the summer of 1979. The “Premio di Ancona” competition was open to mixed chamber ensembles; the Modern Brass Ensemble won first prize (Figure 7) in the brass category and also
unanimous first prize among all participant groups – woodwind, brass and percussion. One of the requirements of the competition was that the participant chamber groups present a new commissioned piece. Ervin Jereb’s “Copper Engravings” was composed for this occasion, and after the competition, the Modern Brass Ensemble kept it in its core repertoire. Hőna remarks, “Jereb knew us personally, and he tailored the parts individually for every player in the group, showcasing everyone’s strengths.”

Figure 7. “Premio di Ancona” award. Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.

In addition to the new composition, the group’s success in Italy had a significant impact on its future as an ensemble. Immediately after the competition, an Italian artist management company contracted the ensemble for concert tours in Italy. Hőna explains, “The next year in the summer we had a three-week tour in

98 Hőna, interview, 2014.
Italy, and, for approximately five years, this management company organized a longer Italian tour every summer, so you could say we played everywhere in Italy.\textsuperscript{99}

The group’s reputation led to other travel opportunities as well, since one of the socialist government’s programs involved sending chamber music groups and orchestras to other socialist countries for concert tours. Growing to be one of the most respected chamber groups in Hungary, the Modern Brass Ensemble was a logical choice for such a tour. “We toured Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and East Germany; we called these socialist tours,” Hőna jokes.\textsuperscript{100}

The Modern Brass Ensemble’s international reputation grew even more when the New York-based Columbia Arts Management Company contacted Interkoncert music’s managerial office in Budapest to ask about the possibility of the Modern Brass Ensemble’s touring the United States (hereafter referred to as US). Hőna describes the ensemble’s experiences in the US:

We traveled to New York and played our first concert there and this was the start of a collaboration, which lasted about ten years. We toured every two years. We played all over the States. I think our third tour was the longest, we were in the US for nine weeks and we played forty-nine concerts starting in Chicago, and finishing the tour in Seattle. The Columbia Arts Management Company treated us really well.\textsuperscript{101}

The US tours turned out to be highly successful for the Modern Brass Ensemble and the group was praised everywhere they performed. The Glasgow, Montana, \textit{Glasgow Courier} newspaper noted on October 22, 1985:

\textit{\textsuperscript{99} Hőna, interview, 2014.}

\textit{\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.}

\textit{\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.}
These men who could make their horns sing delighted the concert audience with their talent and variety of musical scores. The various soloists were perfection personified. This group is so fantastic because each member in his own right is a top musician. Such sweet pure notes floating through the air prove that each is a master.102

The Alpena News in Michigan reported, “It was an enjoyable concert, made especially so by the universal appeal of the music the Hungarian Brass played and the obvious enjoyment they find playing it.”103 On October 22, 1986, after a concert in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the group was praised this way:

They were solo virtuosi, yet they were a cohesive ensemble that blended well and played with the experience the twelve years of playing together gave them. They were loud when need be, bright and bold, and they were soft and mellow too. Their varied program ranging from serious to the comical, from the unfamiliar to the very familiar, provided a fitting opening for the 1986-87 concert series of the Lancaster Community Concert Association.104

The ensemble was praised after a concert on November 12, 1987 at the L’Ermitage Foundation Concert Series in Hollywood, California: “Their sound is spectacular, their musicianship superb. The sound they create is subtle and striking, showing variances in color.”105

Even though the ensemble was contracted by Columbia Arts Management to play concerts only, Hőna mentions that at times they were asked to teach master classes as well.

I remember once we were driving through Texas on the tour bus, and I looked outside the window to the car next to us. The people sitting in that car


103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.
were Jan and Vern Kagarice, trombone professors from The University of North Texas. We were just stunned to run into each other like that. Vern immediately invited us to the university to play a short concert and teach a master class for the brass students. Another time we were in Bloomington, Indiana and Dee Stewart asked us to do a master class, so we did a couple of those, but the management company did not organize them.106

The Modern Brass Ensemble recorded its only LP album titled “The Serenade of the Seven-Headed Dragon” on the Radioton recording label. “We became pretty popular in Hungary and recorded for the radio, TV, and played many live concerts all over; however, our only regret is that we haven’t recorded more albums,” remarks Hőna.107 In the archives of the Hungarian National Television and Radio there are over 500 minutes of recorded material by the ensemble. Nationally, the ensemble was awarded the “Artisjus” Award in 1981, for their work in promoting contemporary Hungarian composers, and the “National Radio Quality” award in 1978.108

106 Hőna, interview, 2014.

107 Ibid.

Hőna states that the ensemble was very active for some twenty-five years and concludes: “We played tons of concerts and we were very successful everywhere we played as well as inspiring composers to write many new pieces for us; it was a great ride.”\textsuperscript{109} The ensemble’s last public concert was at the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall in Moscow, in 1998.\textsuperscript{110}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{109} Hőna, interview, 2014.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{110} Szabó, Vilmos, email interview by Zsolt Szabó, January 17, 2016.}
4.2 The Hőna Trombone Quartet

“The trombone quartet, to me, is the best sounding chamber group,” remarks Hőna during the introduction of the trombone quartet bearing his name. The quartet was organized for a graduate diploma recital of Hőna’s friend and colleague, bass trombonist Sándor Balogh, in 1982. “We really loved to play together, and we decided to form this group,” states Hőna. The original members of the quartet included Sándor Balogh on bass trombone and János Cserháti and Jenő Kácsik joining Hőna on tenor. At the time, Hőna was already a member of the Radio Orchestra. Following graduation, Balogh was appointed bass trombonist with the Radio Orchestra, becoming Hőna’s colleague in the low brass section. Kácsik and Cserháti were students at the Liszt Academy in 1982. Kácsik later became a member of the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra.

The process of organizing the quartet and procuring music was similar to that which the Modern Brass Ensemble was using at the time, so Hőna already had experience in these undertakings. The group reached out to trombone player friends and colleagues and invited Hungarian contemporary composers to write new quartets for them. Hőna reports, “I approached Ervin Jereb and Frigyes Hidas and

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111 Hőna, interview, 2014.

112 Ibid.

they composed for us some really outstanding pieces, Jereb composing “Quadriga”
and Hidas “Four in Hand.”114

Figure 9. Hőna Trombone Quartet (ca. 1987). Hőna pictured second from the left. Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.

By this time Hőna had established many connections in the US, so he also
made contact with Ralph Sauer, who was the Principal Trombonist of the Los
Angeles Philharmonic. Hőna remarks that Sauer was very helpful and sent a number
of quartets from a selection the Los Angeles Philharmonic trombone section had
recorded on an album. The Hőna Trombone Quartet became very active in Hungary,
and, following the path of the Modern Brass Ensemble, started playing live concerts
in Budapest and in other cities all over the country. Being affiliated with the

Hungarian National Radio, the Hőna Quartet was given the opportunity to perform live and to record at the national radio’s headquarters.

The quartet started exploring options for international tours, and, using Hőna’s connections, they were able to tour Austria and the US, where the Hőna quartet performed and taught a master class at Indiana University, in Bloomington, Indiana. In 1988, the quartet was invited to perform at the first Australian International Trombone Competition and Symposium in Brisbane. Hőna was also invited to be a member of the jury for the competition. He even secured government funding for the tour:

I made many trips to the ministry of culture, asking for funds to cover our trip and fortunately they came through and the government founded the whole trip. It was a great experience for us, especially from a group coming from Hungary.115

Unfortunately, the trip to Australia was the last one for the Hőna Quartet. After returning from the tour, the group stopped playing together. “Sándor Balogh got a job in the Budapest Festival Orchestra and left the Radio, Jenő Kácsik was already at the Hungarian National Philharmonic, and János Cserháti got a job in an orchestra outside Budapest, so it became impossible to schedule rehearsals,” explains Hőna.116

Later, in the early 1990’s, Hőna reinstituted the quartet, but this time with the members of the Radio Orchestra trombone section. At that point, the whole trombone section of the Radio Orchestra was comprised of Hőna’s former students. With group members having the same orchestral rehearsal schedule, the new Hőna Quartet was a winning combination. The members of the quartet included Hőna on

115 Hőna, interview, 2014.

116 Ibid.
trombone one, Robert Káip on trombone two, Csaba Erdei on trombone three, and Miklós Csáthi on bass trombone. “We recorded a lot for the National Radio, played all over Hungary, and in many ways, we just basically continued on the same path we had left off with the original members,” remarks Hőna. Even though the quartet recorded extensively for the National Radio, to Hőna’s great regret, they never released a full-length recording; however, the group can be heard on a couple of composer recordings.

On József Sári’s “The Mill of Time No. 2,” released by the Hungaroton label in 1997, the Hőna Quartet can be heard performing Sári’s piece called “Farewell to Glenn Gould.” Sári is an important twentieth-century Hungarian composer whose operas, chamber music, and solo pieces have received critical acclaim in Hungary and in other countries in Europe, especially Germany. Sári received the Erkel Award in 1995, the Kossuth Award in 2009, the Artisjus Award in 2004 and 2015, and the Bartók-Pásztory Award in 2005 from the Hungarian government. Another important recording is of the Hőna Quartet playing “Trombone Quartet” on László Dubrovay’s “Chamber Music for Brass and Woodwind,” released by the Hungaroton recording label in 2014. Dubrovay collaborated closely with Hőna, writing a solo

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117 Hőna, interview, 2014.


119 Ibid.


piece for him called “Solo no. 2” and composing chamber music for the Modern Brass Ensemble and the Hőna Quartet. Dubrovay, a Hungarian composer and pianist, works with twelve-tone serialism and incorporates live electronics into his works.\(^{122}\) The Hungarian government recognized Dubrovay with the Erkel Award in 1985 and the Bartók-Pásztory Award in 1996.\(^{123}\)

4.3 The Hőna Ensemble

The Hőna Ensemble started as a project of Hőna and the Hungarian National Radio with the intention of recording and broadcasting live music of a “lighter” genre. Many top jazz and pop musicians in Hungary were frequenting the Radio for live shows and recordings already, and, because he was in the Radio Orchestra, Hőna got a chance to meet and befriend many of them. A collaboration between the Hőna Quartet and many of these jazz and pop musicians was born, and the group started recording and playing live shows on the Radio. The ensemble, consisting of tuba, string bass, drums, guitar, percussion, and seven trombones recorded an album titled “Holiday for Trombones” that was released by the FonTrade music company from Budapest. The album was a limited release for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Hőna Quartet.


\(^{123}\) Ibid.
4.4 The Pro Brass Ensemble

During a tour in Austria in the early 1980’s, a local musician, Alfred Laus-Linhart, approached the musicians of Modern Brass Ensemble after a concert in the city of Linz, and proposed an idea for a collaboration in a larger brass ensemble. Laus-Linhart was a music teacher in the city of Neuhofen an der Krems, located fifteen miles south of Linz, Austria. Laus invited the Modern Brass Ensemble to teach a master class at the school where he was teaching, the Landesmusikschule Neuhofen an der Krems. Hőna recounts: “at the conclusion of the master class we played a concert; we had a huge success, they wouldn’t let us leave the stage.”

After the concert, Laus and the ensemble members discussed organizing a larger joint brass group including local music teachers from the music school where Laus was teaching, as well as the members of the Modern Brass Ensemble. “Why he wanted to do this with us, I’m not sure, but he made up his mind about this project,” recalls Hőna.

In the beginning, six trumpets, four horns, four trumpets, four euphoniums, two tubas and percussion formed the group. Laus was in charge of organizing the ensemble and procuring music, and, with his dedication, the ensemble started working more and more. Laus was an arranger and composer and composed music for the ensemble, tailoring his parts to each individual player. “His music was


125 Hőna, interview, 2014.

126 Ibid.
humorous and tragic at times, with strong Austrian influences; it was pretty interesting nonetheless,” recalls Hőna.\textsuperscript{127} Hőna remembers at some point Laus made the decision to hire more local Austrian musicians and to reduce the number of Hungarians invited to perform:

> I think it was pretty tough for Laus to find the resources for such a large group, so the ensemble was reduced to ten musicians. From Hungary only two horns, the Keveházi brothers, Vilmos Szabó on Tuba, Sándor Balogh on Bass Trombone, and myself continued. The famous Austrian trumpeter Hans Gansch joined the ensemble a little later on as well.\textsuperscript{128}

Hőna recorded four albums as a member of Pro Brass. The first recording, called “A La Carte,” was released in 1986; “Firewater” was released in 1988, and “Heimatlieder” and “G’rad verkehrt,” in 1996.\textsuperscript{129} “I played in the group for little over twenty years, and it was a great experience,” concludes Hőna.\textsuperscript{130}

The Pro Brass is still an active group today, featuring musicians from top Austrian and German symphony orchestras, but all of the original members are now retired.\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{127} Hőna, interview, 2014.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{130} Hőna, interview, 2014.

CHAPTER 5: SOLOIST

5.1 Recitals at the Hungarian National Radio

A couple of years after successfully auditioning for the Radio Orchestra, Hőna started pursuing the idea of playing solo recitals and presenting the trombone as a solo instrument in Hungary. His first attempt to play and record a solo piece was in 1973 when he requested to play a test performance for the music editors at the Hungarian National Radio. “I had decided to perform the Frank Martin Ballade, and I wanted to make a recording so the Radio could use it in broadcasts,” explains Hőna. The test recording was to be reviewed by a committee of the Radio’s music executives and editors, and, if it was decided that the quality was good enough, he would receive the green light to record and air the piece live on the Radio. Hőna describes the importance of this experience:

I remember that the director of programming, who was a musically very picky person with great musical ears, told me that the committee never heard anything like this before on the trombone. Jenő Jandó, one of Hungary’s great pianists was my accompanist, which was an important element in the success of the recording. I’m very proud of that moment.133

Jenő Jandó, started a solo in Hungary career and became internationally known after winning first prize at the Hungarian National Piano competition in 1973,134 the same year he recorded the Martin Ballade with Hőna. In 1977 Jandó

132 Hőna, interview, 2014.

133 Ibid.

won first prize at the Sydney International Piano Competition. Known for his large number of recordings, Jandó is one of the top piano soloists for the Naxos recording label. The Hungarian government honored Jandó with the Liszt Ferenc award in 1980, the Bartók-Pásztory award in 1995, the Kossuth award in 1997, and the Béla Bartók award in 2006.

After the success of his first recording, Hőna was granted permission to record solo and chamber music any time he wanted for the Hungarian National Radio. He played many times with Jandó, recording and performing live from the Radio's Studio Six. These recitals were aired all over the country, since the National Radio was the official national radio station. “I was trying to elevate the trombone as a solo instrument, and I feel I was very fortunate to have performed with Jandó and to have had the opportunity to play so many concerts at the radio,” relates Hőna. According to Hőna, in Hungary during the 1970’s, some of the existing French solo literature was not allowed to be performed or recorded because of socialist censorship. For this reason, he decided to start pursuing Hungarian composers to write solo pieces for the trombone:

After I got to know several notable Hungarian composers and already being on a personal path to elevate the trombone as a solo instrument in my country, I started asking them to compose pieces for the trombone. The

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137 Ibid.

138 Hőna, interview, 2014.
existing Hungarian contemporary trombone literature was extremely limited at the time, so we needed pieces.\textsuperscript{139}

Figure 10. Gusztáv Hőna solo recording session in Studio Six of the Hungarian National Radio (ca.1979). Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.

\textsuperscript{139} Hőna, interview, 2014.
5.2 Soloist with orchestras

Hőna’s first recording as a soloist with the Radio Orchestra was in 1977 and featured the Concerto by Johann Georg Albrechtsberger. This fulfilled his dream of performing the work that was initiated when he heard Prof. Zilcz, his first teacher, play the piece:

I learned the piece pretty early on, but I kept putting it away because I felt that I needed to study it more. I realized pretty quickly that the music from the baroque era and classical era is very hard, and I don’t mean the technique is hard, I mean the music itself, and the interpretation of that style is hard. It’s hard because it’s simple, and that is what gives it its beauty. The articulation and the length of the notes need to be perfectly consistent and clear.140

The Hungarian Radio agreed to record the concerto with Music Director György Lehel conducting. The Radio’s plan was to make a recording that they could keep in their archives and broadcast anytime. For this project, unfortunately, Hőna was unable to get a subscription concert scheduled, but the fact that he was given funding to record, especially as a trombone soloist, was very significant. Standing for the first time in front of his own orchestra as a soloist was a huge responsibility according to Hőna, especially at a time when the trombone was not considered a solo instrument in Hungary. “I was really prepared and in great shape, and I also wanted to make sure that I could honor the memory of my first teacher, Prof. Zilcz, since he was the first one who introduced me and pretty much everyone else in Hungary to this concerto,” explains Hőna.141 He recorded the concerto on a Bach 42 straight tenor trombone, as his teacher Zilcz had done years earlier. In Hungary the alto trombone was not used in the 1970’s, nor did Hőna own one. He explains:

140 Hőna, interview, 2014.

141 Ibid.
It was a special task for me to try to get create a sound close to alto on the tenor. I used a straight Bach 42 with a small mouthpiece for the recording trying to imitate the alto trombone sound as much as possible. I think it came out pretty well. In the Radio Orchestra I always used a tenor for everything we played and conductors just agreed with that, they never asked for altos either.\textsuperscript{142}

Even though Hőna did not get an opportunity to play the Albrechstberger on a concert at the time, he states that this recording is the closest to his heart: "I'm very proud of this recording and if I would have to record it again after all these years, maybe I would play it a bit differently here and there since our musical taste and ideas can change throughout the years, but nevertheless, I'm very satisfied with how it came out."\textsuperscript{143}

Hőna got another opportunity to perform as a soloist with his orchestra in 1979. Frigyes Hidas, the great Hungarian composer, had completed his \textit{Concerto for Trombone}, and, since Hidas was a colleague at the Radio Orchestra with Hőna, it was a logical choice to record the concerto there. Music Director György Lehel conducted this time as well, and, after the recording was completed, Hőna was given the opportunity to perform the piece in a subscription concert, but not with his own orchestra. He instead was invited to perform with the Győr Philharmonic Orchestra in the Hungarian town of Győr, located approximately seventy-five miles northwest of the capital city of Budapest. Antal Richter founded the local Győr orchestra in 1894, and starting in 1968, the orchestra assumed full-time professional status, becoming one of the major contributors to the cultural and musical life of the

\textsuperscript{142} Hőna, interview, 2014.

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
Hőna played the Hidas in a subscription concert with the Győr Philharmonic in 1981 under the conductor Antal Jancsovics; this concert was Hőna’s official debut as a soloist with an orchestra in a subscription concert. Two years later, in 1983, Hőna was invited to perform the Hidas again, this time with the Debrecen Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Gyula Németh. Debrecen, a town located approximately 145 miles from Budapest, had its orchestra’s inaugural concert on May 13, 1923, under conductor Emil Abranyi. In 2011, after many years of being a cultural focal point in the region, the orchestra changed its name to the Kodály Philharmonic of Debrecen with the permission of Mrs. Kodály, Sarolta Peczely.

Hőna’s next performance as a soloist with an orchestra has a unique story. The Radio Orchestra had scheduled Gustav Mahler’s 3rd Symphony in a subscription concert with the great Swedish-Italian guest conductor Lamberto Gardelli; Gardelli became Music Director of the Hungarian National Opera in 1961 and conducted there for approximately thirty years. Gardelli guest conducted all the major

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145 Hőna, interview, 2014.


Hungarian orchestras and was considered one of the great Verdi conductors of his generation.\textsuperscript{148} Hőna remembers the week performing the Mahler 3\textsuperscript{rd} symphony:

I worked a lot on the solo for that concert and I was in a great shape. The concert went really well, and I think it was perhaps one of my best concerts ever. After the concert, the maestro completely forgot to ask me to stand up, to take a solo bow. I thought it was a bit strange, as well as the rest of the orchestra, but that was the situation, there was nothing I could do.\textsuperscript{149}

A few weeks later, Gardelli, realizing what had happened, called the Radio Orchestra offices trying to reach Hőna. When Hőna eventually got on the phone with him, Gardelli asked him if he knew Ernst Bloch’s \textit{Trombone Concerto}, and offered Hőna the opportunity to perform the solo with the Radio Orchestra the next time Gardelli was invited to conduct. Hőna accepted, and, on May 20, 1987, he made his debut as a soloist with the Radio Orchestra under Gardelli’s baton. Hőna recalls the significant event:

That was the first time I played as a soloist with my orchestra in a subscription concert. The concert went really well and it was broadcast live on the radio as most of the Radio Orchestra’s concerts. The concert was in the Main Hall of the Liszt Academy, arguably the most important concert hall in Hungary back then. In Hungary it was a very rare occurrence for a trombonist to play solo with an orchestra during those years.\textsuperscript{150}

Several years later, Hőna got yet another opportunity to record as soloist with the Radio Orchestra, this time again on one of Frigyes Hidas’s pieces. Hidas composed \textit{Double Concerto for Tenor and Bass Trombone}, and Hőna, along with his friend and orchestral section colleague bass trombonist Sándor Balogh, recorded the \textit{Double Concerto} in 1990 under the baton of Ádám Medveczky. Balogh and Hőna

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{}\textsuperscript{149} Hőna, interview, 2014.
\bibitem{}\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
gave the Hungarian premiere of the piece in the same year at the historic Budapest Vigadó Concert Hall. The Hall is one of the most distinctive buildings in Budapest, located on the east bank of the Danube River. Franz Liszt played many concerts in the Vigadó Hall, most notably conducting his oratorio “The Legend of Saint Elisabeth” on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Pest-Buda Conservatory. He also hosted a fundraiser concert with Richard Wagner for the funding of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus Theater construction.\textsuperscript{151} Indeed, many notable composers and conductors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries performed in the Vigadó Concert Hall, including Johann Strauss Jr., Pietro Mascagni, Antonín Dvořák, Claude Debussy, Anton Rubinstein, Herbert von Karajan, Richard Strauss, and Béla Bartók.\textsuperscript{152}

In 1991, Hőna was invited to perform the \textit{Double Concerto} at Central Florida University with trombone professor Roy Pickering, who was primarily a bass trombonist. For this occasion, at Hőna’s request, the composer Frigyes Hidas rearranged the orchestral accompaniment for wind ensemble and renamed this new version of the piece the \textit{Florida Concerto}. Hőna and Pickering premiered the \textit{Florida Concerto} at Central Florida University in 1991. In a phone conversation, Pickering recalled the time he met Hőna and the concerts they played together:

\begin{quote}
I got a phone call from my late friend Jim Croft [former Director Emeritus of Bands at Florida State University] asking me if I would like to play with Gusztáv the premiere of the “Florida” Concerto. I agreed immediately and I met Gusztáv in Tallahassee. We drove back to Orlando. I had a big red Cadillac and I remember Gusztáv loved it; he really enjoyed the ride. We
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
rehearsed for two days like “devils” and played the premiere at University of Central Florida. Gusztáv sounded really great; all I was trying to do was to keep up with him! It was a real pleasure for me to play with him; he is a wonderful player and a great person.\textsuperscript{153}

After the concert at University of Central Florida, Hőna and Pickering repeated the performance at Florida State University.

During the early 1990’s, Hőna got another opportunity to record and perform with the Radio Orchestra, this time the \textit{Fantasy for Trombone and Orchestra} by Paul Creston. “I was in the US for a tour and Joe (Alessi) gave me a cassette tape of his solo debut with the New York Philharmonic performing Creston’s \textit{Fantasy}, I believe in 1990,” recalls Hőna. Being inspired and motivated after listening to the tape, Hőna learned the Creston and performed the Hungarian premiere of the \textit{Fantasy} on January 8, 1993, with the Radio Orchestra and László Kovács conducting.\textsuperscript{154} This concert was broadcast live on the radio as well, and it was performed in the Main Hall of the Liszt Academy.

Creston’s \textit{Fantasy} is considered one of the most difficult trombone solos in the literature. Born in New York to a poor Italian immigrant family, Paul Creston reached national fame in 1938 when he received the Guggenheim Fellowship. In 1941 he also received the New York Music Critics’ Circle Award for his First Symphony.\textsuperscript{155} Creston composed the \textit{Fantasy for Trombone and Orchestra} in 1947

\textsuperscript{153} Pickering, Roy, phone interview by Zsolt Szabó, January 16, 2016.

\textsuperscript{154} Hőna, interview, 2014.

and Robert Marsteller (Principal Trombone, Los Angeles Philharmonic) premiered it in 1948 during a radio broadcast with Allen Wallenstein conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestra.\textsuperscript{156}

Hőna recalls the day of the concert; he had a full dress rehearsal recorded by the National Radio in the morning, followed by the performance at night: “I had to play the Creston several times in the morning in order to get the recording done and later that day I was playing it solo with my orchestra, so I would say it wasn’t an easy day for me endurance wise.”\textsuperscript{157} One of the difficulties of the Creston \textit{Fantasy} is the high range; therefore, it is a challenge for any performer to negotiate the endurance properly leading up to the concert. Hőna recalls this experience:

In the concert I remember the conductor got a little too excited and started the first movement way too fast. I was quite surprised by it and I tried to hang on and fortunately it went well. By the second movement he calmed down, and in spite of playing all day, the movement went well, even though it is known to be in a very high range.\textsuperscript{158}

According to Hőna, one of the key elements in building confidence and endurance is performing the work multiple times. “I think you have to be able to play your solo at least twice in order to have the confidence and knowledge that you can be on stage and the confidence that everything is going to go well,” remarks Hőna.\textsuperscript{159}

\begin{flushleft}

\textsuperscript{157} Hőna, interview, 2014.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
being nervous before such an important concert, Hőna explains that concentration and preparation are the best antidote:

I was never the really nervous type; fortunately, I never had problems with this. For me the moment when I step on stage, I am very focused and I just concentrate one hundred percent on the music, so the nervousness is almost non-existent. I also learned throughout the years that if a mistake happens, you have to go on and you can’t think about what just happened. Before an important concert, I organized my practice sessions very seriously and I followed that plan no matter what.160

The last major solo project for Hőna occurred in the early 2000’s when his friend, composer and conductor Miklós Malek, composed a Trombone Concerto for him. Hőna and Malek had known each other since they were young children and their friendship continued during their studies at the Liszt Academy. Malek remembers Hőna as an outstanding young player who was always searching for new playing techniques and was always curious about new approaches regarding trombone playing.161 Malek studied trumpet at the Liszt Academy, and after graduation, he started arranging and composing in lighter, popular genres, as well as working in radio and television productions.162 Malek was the arranger and composer of the highly successful Hungarian pop band, the Expressz Ensemble. He was also a producer for many years for the legendary Hungarian comedian Géza Hofi, and he worked for the Hungarian Radio and Madách Theatre in Budapest.163

160 Hőna, interview, 2014.
161 Malek, Miklós, online interview by Zsolt Szabó, February 11, 2016.
163 Ibid.
Malek decided to compose concertos for his friends and colleagues from the Radio Orchestra, so he composed one in the late 1990’s for György Geiger, Principal Trumpet of the Radio Orchestra, another for Zoltán Varga, Principal Horn of the Radio Orchestra, and the last one for Hőna, Principal Trombone of the Radio Orchestra. Hőna remembers the compositional process as a close and quite unique collaboration between composer and performer:

He completed the Trombone Concerto in 2000, but we worked together in his studio during the composition process. He was asking me a lot of questions about the possibilities of the trombone, so at one point I told him: Miki, you are the composer; your job is to write the piece, my job is to play it. If you write something impossible we’ll talk about it later... He did end up writing a couple impossible things, so we had to fix those later.164

Leaving behind the standard concerto form, Malek composed the Trombone Concerto in a single movement with frequent meter changes, complicated rhythms, and a trombone solo line resembling, on the one hand, modern music, and on the other hand, the fanfare-like tower music motives of the brass music tradition from the past.165 According to Malek, one of the reasons many composers wanted to write for Hőna was his modern playing style and his ability to make the instrument sound effortless. Hőna gave the premiere of the twenty-three-minute concerto with the Szombathely Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the composer himself, in the far western part of Hungary. Hőna repeated the solo performance in Budapest on February 2, 2002. Interestingly, Malek also made an arrangement of the orchestral accompaniment for big band, and Hőna also premiered this version with the

164 Hőna, interview, 2014.

Budapest Jazz Orchestra, Kornél Fekete-Kovács conducting. Hőna, along with Geiger and Varga, eventually recorded Malek's concerto for trumpet, trombone, and horn with the Radio Orchestra, the composer himself conducting. The album was released in 2003 under the Hungaroton Classic record label with the title *Brass Concertos*. “This was the last time I played as a soloist with an orchestra,” explains Hőna.167

Outside the borders of Hungary, Hőna had only one opportunity to perform as a soloist. After meeting the low brass section of the Malmö Symphony Orchestra from Sweden at a brass festival, he was invited to perform the Hidas *Trombone Concerto* with the orchestra in 1988. “I didn’t have a manager or a major management company behind me, so it was pretty tough for a trombonist, especially from Eastern Europe, to get invited to play solo with Western European orchestras; however, it was a great experience,” remarks Hőna.168

For the archives of the Hungarian National Radio, Hőna has recorded several of the trombone repertoire’s standard pieces, such as Frank Martin's *Ballade*, Camille Saint-Saëns’s *Cavatine*, and Darius Milhaud’s *Concert D'Hiver*. These recordings are kept in the archives and the Radio has the right to broadcast them at any time. “I’m pretty sure that all together I made the most radio recordings out of all the Hungarian trombonists I know and I played the most as


168 Ibid.
soloist with orchestra, at least so far," states Hőna.\textsuperscript{169}

Hőna adds that his best memories from his solo career are the times when he performed as soloist with orchestras, the many recitals with Jenő Jandó at the National Radio, and the solo recital tours in the United States.

5.3 Solo pieces dedicated to Hőna

Many of Hungary’s leading composers of the second half of the twentieth century have composed pieces dedicated to Hőna. As mentioned previously, Hőna had personal connections with many composers through the Hungarian National Radio, and it was much the same group of composers who wrote pieces for the Modern Brass Ensemble, the Hőna Quartet, and solos for Hőna himself.

In 2005, under the Hungaroton Classic label, Hőna released a full album containing compositions dedicated to him with the title “Dedications.” On this recording Hőna compiled the following pieces, listed chronologically:

- Ervin Jereb’s \textit{Monography}, the first piece dedicated to Hőna (1970)
- Viktor Máté’s \textit{Viatrone} (1981)
- Endre Székely’s \textit{Rhapsody} (1982)
- József Sári’s \textit{Ananta} (1983)
- Lászlo Dubrovay’s \textit{Solo no. 2} (1983)
- György Ránki’s \textit{Father Goose’s Tales} (1985), originally for solo trombone, later arranged for solo trombone and the Modern Brass Ensemble
- Miklós Kolcsár’s \textit{Rhapsody} (1989)
- Ferenc Farkas’s \textit{Bucinata} (1990)\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{169} Hőna, interview, 2014.

This recording was part of Hõna’s own doctoral dissertation project in which he wrote in detail about the compositional process and analyzed the structure of the aforementioned compositions. A complete listing of all the works dedicated to Hõna can be found in Appendix B of this paper.

Figure 11. Hõna after performing Paul Creston’s *Fantasy* with the Radio Orchestra. Photo courtesy of Ĝusztáv Hõna
Hőna’s fascination with American brass playing started in 1976, when, through a cultural exchange program of the Hungarian Ministry of Culture, the Los Angeles Philharmonic came to Budapest for two concerts. According to Hőna, it was truly significant back in the mid 1970’s for an American orchestra to come to socialist Hungary. Hőna recalls having heard recordings of American orchestras before, but never having heard important orchestras such as the Los Angeles Philharmonic live in concert. "We had access to some recordings with American orchestras, especially the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and I really liked the way they sounded,” remembers Hőna.171 During the 1976-77 season the Los Angeles Philharmonic toured Eastern Europe between November 19 and December 10, playing fourteen concerts in eight countries, ten cities, with music director Zubin Mehta conducting.172 The Los Angeles Philharmonic performed in the Budapest Erkel Theatre on November 22 and 23, with two programs including works by Charles Ives, Béla Bartók, Gustav Mahler, Aaron Copland, and Johannes Brahms.173 According to the article titled “L.A. Philharmonic Charms Budapest” from the Los Angeles Times on November 26, 1976, the Hungarian press reviews were very

171 Hőna, interview, 2014.


positive, mentioning the enthusiastic response of the Budapest audiences. According to the Los Angeles Times, the Hungarian newspaper Népszava (Voice of the People) article titled: “Brilliant orchestra from United States,” described the concerts as a “tremendous success,” and added that “This, the first major US orchestra to perform in Budapest, has earned a rarely experienced success...they play in perfect unity and with tonal beauty.” Hőna recalls meeting the members of the low brass section for the first time at their hotel in Budapest.

As soon as they arrived in Budapest, I went to their hotel with a colleague who knew Roger Bobo, the tuba player of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. We went there to talk to Roger and just to say hello and after a brief chat we agreed to meet again with him and the rest of the low brass section a little later after they finished rehearsing in the Erkel Theater.

The members of the low brass section of the Los Angeles Philharmonic on that tour were Byron Peebles, Ralph Sauer, Sonny Ausman, Terry Cravens on bass trombone, and Roger Bobo on tuba, according to Hőna. The musicians from the orchestra quickly got acquainted with their Hungarian counterparts and a Hungarian-American friendship was born. Hőna explains his experiences meeting the American musicians:

We hung out every day during the time they stayed in Budapest. They had a day off, and I invited the whole section to teach a master class at the Liszt Academy. I distinctively remember their master class, because that was the first time for me when I realized that they were doing something different than us in a good way; they were making their instrument sound in a way that I wasn’t familiar with. When they played, they sounded effortless, with a beautiful, big sound and very clear. They impressed me a lot and I decided

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175 Ibid.

176 Hőna, interview, 2014.
that I had to figure out the way they play. I told myself that I had to learn the “American secret.”177

Looking back, Hőna decided that it was an important day in his life and future career because from that moment on he started thinking about creating opportunities for himself to learn the coveted “American secret” of playing.

In an article by Bruce Gunia in the *Journal of the International Trombone Association*, long time principal trombonist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Ralph Sauer, remembers the master class in Budapest. Sauer recalls meeting “Guszti” (Hőna’s nickname) in Budapest and getting invited to teach the master class at the Academy, where he also met Dr. László Ujfalusi, the trombone professor there at the time.178 “It was totally random, we had not prepared to teach a master class, so we borrowed a student’s duet book and played some duets with Sonny,” recalls Sauer.179

After the Los Angeles Philharmonic left Budapest, Hőna started searching for opportunities to connect with American trombone players. His first opportunity occurred very quickly in the form of the First International Brass Conference in Montreaux, Switzerland, in the summer of 1976. For Hőna, this festival was the first major event in his professional career where he could see and hear many of the top brass players in the world. Hőna and his friend, István Péter Farkas, trombonist in

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177 Hőna, interview, 2014.


179 Sauer, Ralph, phone interview by Zsolt Szabó, February 6, 2016.
the Hungarian National Opera Orchestra, were mesmerized by the quality and the level of the brass playing showcased at the festival in Switzerland:

Coming from the East we were very excited to hear many of the best brass players in the Western world all in one place. There were many fine players and teachers there, people such as Ed Kleinhammer, Roger Bobo, Per Brevig, John Marcellus, Irv Wagner, Vern Kagarice, Randy Kohlenberg, Bill Watrous, Jiggs Wingham, Carl Fontana from the US, and equally a lot of great players from Western Europe. Basically, most of the top brass players from the world were there.”

6.1 Meeting William Cramer

Being a friendly and curious person, Hőna met and talked to many of the players at the festival. His professional life changed forever the moment he met Florida State University trombone professor William “The Doc” Cramer. Cramer, Robert Marsteller, and Emory Remington are considered three of the most notable trombone teachers in US from the twentieth century. They have arguably influenced every professional American trombonist of the past century. Cramer was appointed as the first full-time trombone professor at Florida State University in 1952 and became a very active advocate for the trombone through his travels around the world, especially in Eastern Europe.

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180 Hőna, interview, 2014.


182 Ibid, 22.
Understanding the barriers and limitations established by communist governments in Eastern Europe, Cramer searched to make connections with many musicians and composers affected by socialist regimes; these connections led to important new compositions for the trombone, most notably the *Sonata* by Croatian composer Stjepan Šulek.\(^{183}\) Hőna met Cramer in Montreaux and a long lasting bond between them was born instantly. Hőna describes their meeting:

> At the festival I got the chance to meet a lot of people. At one point a gentle man walked up to me and we started talking. He asked me where I’m from and when I told him I’m from Budapest, he responded: “Great, I visited Budapest in the past.” He introduced himself as William Cramer, from Florida State University.\(^{184}\)

Through his travels to Eastern Europe, Cramer met many of the trombone professors from the countries he visited. When he visited Hungary, Cramer met Professor Ferenc Steiner who was teaching at the Liszt Academy along with the long time professor, Dr. Ujfalusi. Cramer had a natural curiosity about the composers from overseas, especially the Eastern and Central Europeans. According to Hőna, Cramer was the first American trombone professor to visit and make connections in the socialist countries in the 1960’s and 70’s:

> He did visit all the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. He used to come over every summer to the Edinburgh Music Festival. From there he used to go to the other countries. I know he went to Romania, Bulgaria, East Germany, and even to Russia. Cramer collected a bunch of music from all these countries. He was very curious about the music and especially the trombone music used in these countries. That’s how the Stjepan Šulek Sonata was born as well. He met Šulek in Europe in Zagreb. The ITA commissioned the Sonata.\(^{185}\)

\(^{183}\) Hőna, interview, 2014.  
\(^{184}\) Ibid.  
\(^{185}\) Ibid.
Hőna and Cramer ended up spending a lot of time together in Montreux during the days of the brass festival. Hőna offers details about his experience with Cramer:

I told him that after hearing the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Budapest, I made a wish to myself to find a way to study in US. Even though I was already working professionally, and I had a very good job in Hungary, I wanted to learn more. I told him: “Prof. Cramer, I want to learn the American secret of playing!” He laughed hard hearing that I’m searching for a “secret.” 186

Cramer promised Hőna that when he returned to the US he would try to find a scholarship for him at Florida State University for a short-term study abroad program. This was in 1976. “We kept in touch, and we exchanged many letters and Cramer eventually told me that he found a way to get a scholarship for me and I could study with him during a summer semester,” recalls Hőna.

The idealistic and bold plan was set in motion for Hőna to study with Cramer at Florida State University, but the realities of living in a socialist country on the East side of the Iron Curtain were intruding in Hőna’s pursuit to obtain the necessary travel permits. According to Hőna,

I know that “Doc” worked very hard to find the resources for me to be able to go study with him, but it wasn’t very simple on my end either though. In Hungary socialism was at its peak in the late 70’s, and it was almost inconceivable to think that any one person would be allowed to travel alone to the US to study. After the Montreux festival, being “armed” with all the letters from Cramer, I started going everywhere knocking on doors trying to get permission. I went to the Ministry of Culture and presented my request in front of the “National Scholarship Committee.” I had to fill out all kinds of forms and I had to explain in the smallest details why, where and when I want to study in US. I had to write down and document my whole life basically; I had to write down everything. Imagine that it took two full years of very hard work to finally be granted permission to go to the US to study. 187

186 Hőna, interview, 2014.

187 Ibid.
Obtaining the necessary permits from the Hungarian government was the first and most important hurdle Hőna had to deal with; nevertheless, it was not the last one. Hőna recalls that following the procurement of the permits, he now needed to get a visa from the American Embassy in Hungary to be able to enter the US:

I had to take a test at the Embassy, to get my visa and to be allowed to travel to the US. Fortunately, since I studied English in school intensively, I was lucky to speak the language decently so I passed the test. I made many trips to the US Embassy as well. It was very time-consuming, and every time before walking in and after walking out the Hungarian police outside would question me. They were asking me a bunch of questions regarding my business at the US Embassy. Every single time I was there! Eventually, I was granted the visa and my dream to study in US and to discover the “American Secret” became real.¹⁸⁸

Finally, Hőna was ready to cross the Atlantic. Living in an era without the Internet had its challenges in making travel plans, but being in a country from which virtually nobody travelled to the US made everything even more challenging for Hőna. Eventually, Hőna found a way to get to US, but his flight took him only to New York City. “I had a connection with some people who lived in New Jersey, and I got in touch with them, so they picked me up from the Kennedy airport; it was a dream come true,” recalls Hőna.¹⁸⁹ After spending a couple of days in New Jersey, Hőna was ready to travel south to Tallahassee. Hőna remembers that his plane ticket from New York to Tallahassee was exactly eighty-seven dollars, and he recalls the first impression after landing in Florida:

When we landed in Florida, I remember that after they opened the airplane’s doors it was so hot, I almost fell backwards. Prof. Cramer waited for me at the airport and he took me to his house. I stayed there for a couple of days before

¹⁸⁸ Hőna, interview, 2014.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.
the summer semester officially started. They lived on Oak Drive Street in a big house and I was so amazed that finally I was in US to study.\textsuperscript{190}

According to Hőna, he became the first international student to study in the School of Music at Florida State University. That fact by itself was a noteworthy event, but coming from a socialist country made his situation even more extraordinary. After moving out of Cramer's home, Hőna received room no. 202 in Cash Hall on the campus of Florida State University. “I realized really fast that in Florida you couldn’t be dressed in long pants, so immediately I had to go buy summer clothes. Therefore, in a couple days I looked like a true American student,” Hőna recalls.\textsuperscript{191}

6.2 Studying at Florida State University

During the summer semester, it was relatively easy to schedule lessons with Cramer. Hőna had three lessons a week starting at ten in the morning; he was assigned a small personal studio where he could practice any time and also store his belongings. At the beginning of his very first lesson, Cramer asked Hőna again why he wanted so much to study in the United States, and Hőna recalls the conversation:

He asked me again during the first lesson, what I would love to know, why I desired so much to come here and study with him. We talked about this in Montreaux, when I met him the first time, but I told him the whole story again, about me hearing the LA Phil in Budapest and wanting to discover the “American secret” of playing. Cramer laughed loudly again hearing my pursuit of a “Secret” and I think he just loved hearing that perception.”\textsuperscript{192}

\textsuperscript{190} Hőna, interview, 2014.

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.
The lessons during the first couple weeks were dedicated exclusively to breathing exercises and mouthpiece buzzing. Hőna remembers that it was during his very first lesson with Cramer that he heard the famous maxim “blow freely,” one of the reasons for which Cramer was and still is so well known in the trombone community. Hőna had never worked on breathing exercises, nor buzzed the mouthpiece before, and it was very challenging for him to even get a sound out of the mouthpiece. “It was all new to me, and I was struggling, so I got a little concerned, wondering if I would be able to learn these new techniques during only a short summer semester,” recalls Hőna. Cramer was quick to reassure Hőna that he needed to trust the process and change for the better would follow very soon. Indeed, soon Hőna was able to get a sound out of the mouthpiece and his breathing started becoming conscious and relaxed. Hőna stresses the fact that becoming conscious about the basic techniques of playing the instrument was a very important step forward for him, since most of the techniques he had used before were instinctive. He explains that Cramer was emphasizing that breathing must be purposeful and that it has to become a natural, silent, conscious, and relaxed act.

Hőna remembers the first exercises practicing only with the mouthpiece:

Basically my first couple lessons I barely played my horn. With the mouthpiece he asked me to play with air attack only, without using the tongue. He said we need to use the tongue, but we have to know how to use it. We use it to articulate and to establish the rhythm, but he cautioned that the tongue can add tension and it can be an inhibitor in making the instrument speak. He asked to hold the mouthpiece in my left hand with two fingers. Cramer was saying non-stop: rely on the air only, don’t get tense, and just use your air to make a sound, nothing else. Eventually I started getting a sound on the mouthpiece. That was a breakthrough for me. He was very persistent and he didn’t let me play on unless I did everything the way he

193 Hőna, interview, 2014.
wanted. I think by this time we spent about a week or so, without touching the instrument at all. He repeated a thousand times the “blow freely” concept.194

Once Hőna started getting a good grip on the basic ideas of breathing and mouthpiece buzzing, the transition to the instrument was the next natural step. Starting with long tones from Emory Remington’s Daily Routine book, followed by the articulation exercises and later the Bordogni Legato etudes, Hőna slowly developed his technique according to Cramer’s method. It was a long and grueling process for Hőna, who felt that he was basically starting trombone playing all over again, after already being a leader in his field back home in Hungary. “Let’s remember that at this point in my life, I was already Principal Trombonist of the Radio Orchestra for several years and I had recorded the Albrechtsberger Concerto as a soloist with my orchestra, yet I was now working on the most basic exercises with Cramer,” recalls Hőna.195

According to Hőna, Cramer really liked Hőna’s Albrechtsberger recording, and he generally appreciated the level of Hőna’s playing; however, Cramer felt that Hőna would be able to play with a more resonant and more relaxed sound after relearning and consciously applying many of the new basic technical approaches he was shown. Cramer stressed the importance of always pursuing the most beautiful sound on the horn, an idea Hőna had pursued for many years already, but now hearing it from Cramer just reconfirmed his ideas. “I always believed that there is no music without a beautiful sound and the music is alive only if the musician is able to

194 Hőna, interview, 2014.

195 Ibid.
connect one beautiful sound to the next, and studying with Cramer just reinforced this belief,” mentions Hőna.196

Focusing only on basics and working on Bordogni Etudes, Hőna was building up his confidence and ease of production using the new techniques. Soon he was ready to work on solo repertoire as well, but being alone most of the day, not having any friends or family around him and just spending hours in the practice room, started to take a toll on Hőna’s general disposition. He remembers that this was the first time in his life that he was not around his family and friends on a daily basis. Everything changed for the better for him when one day a student reporter and photographer approached him in order to ask for an interview. “Since I was the first international student in the history of the School of Music at Florida State University, they decided to have an interview with me after Cramer contacted the Florida Flambeau (Figure 12) newspaper about me,” recalls Hőna.197 Later, toward the end of the summer semester, a second article (Figure 13) about Hőna appeared in the Tallahassee Democrat.

Hőna recalls that on the day after the article in the Florida Flambeau appeared, several students immediately recognized him and asked him questions about his journey to the US:

After I was featured in the newspaper [Figure 12] everything changed. The next morning when I went to breakfast at the cafeteria of the dorm, everyone knew about me. Up until that point I always ate by myself, and all of a sudden I was surrounded by a bunch of people. They were asking me where I’m from and I used to tell them stories about Hungary and about Budapest and about

196 Hőna, interview, 2014.

197 Ibid.
how life is in a Socialist country. I became friends with a guy and we started going to the gym together every morning and I started hanging out with other students from the music department also. We started hanging out on the weekends and that really helped me feel better and have more liveliness.¹⁹⁸

Figure 12. Newspaper article from the Florida Flambeau (1978).

¹⁹⁸ Hőna, interview, 2014.
Hőna remembers meeting other trombone players from Florida State University with whom he became friends and started playing chamber music.

Christian Dickinson, Jeff Thomas, Randy Campora, and Jeannie Little were some of the fellow trombone students there at the time; all of them went on to professional success. Christian Dickinson, currently the Trombone Professor at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, remembers Hőna as “a soft-spoken and unassuming person, who was a strong presence with or without his trombone.”

Dickinson describes Hőna as a powerful player who commanded the stage with his playing and, he states, as Hőna continued his studies with Dr. Cramer, his sound became

positively electric. "Having the opportunity to play and learn from Gusztáv was one of the highlights of my college career," concludes Dickinson.\textsuperscript{200} Another student in Cramer’s studio at that time was Jeff Thomas, currently Principal Trombone of the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra. Thomas remembers Hőna as a “very friendly and outgoing person and a very accomplished player.”\textsuperscript{201} Thomas continues with an extraordinary story about the way Hőna brought to the US a brand new composition from Hungary written for trombone quartet by Frigyes Hidas:

One of my most memorable experiences involving Gusztáv revolved around the Hungarian composer Frigyes Hidas. Of course this was back in 1978, well before the fall of the “iron curtain” and the end of the soviet era. My teacher, Dr. Cramer approached me and asked if I would like to play a composition that Gusztáv had brought over from Hungary written by a man named Hidas. I was eager to do so and couldn’t wait to see the composition. I was even more fascinated when I learned that Gusztáv had “smuggled” the composition out of Hungary and into the US on a roll of microfilm, taped to the inside of the tuning slide of his trombone. The piece was of an unusual format. The first movement was titled Fantasia for solo trombone. Movement two was a duet for tenor and bass trombone, very much in the style of Shostakovich. Movement three was a ballade/lament for two tenors and a bass trombone. The fourth movement was a Chorale and (mixed meter) Scherzo. We performed this work on my senior recital to enthusiastic reviews for the piece. It was a really fun composition to play and to listen to. I didn’t realize at the time that Gusztáv passed the privilege of playing this remarkable piece to me because he had reservations about performing this work for fear of reprisals by his government at home. It certainly gave me an opportunity to have a chance to perform a work by a composer, who would become a well-known name in this country and around the world. Later that year, I saw that I had been mentioned in a Hungarian publication as the person who had premiered the Hidas quartet.\textsuperscript{202}

\textsuperscript{200} Dickinson, interview, 2016.

\textsuperscript{201} Thomas, Jeff, phone interview by Zsolt Szabó, February 1, 2016.

\textsuperscript{202} Ibid.
Hőna talks about Hidas’s idea behind the composition of this new quartet, and his
goal in showcasing the quartet and the friendship among its players:

Hidas just finished the four short pieces, which he basically composed to
celebrate the trombone quartet as a chamber group. It starts with the
*Fantasy for Trombone* solo followed by the duet, then the trio and finally the
quartet. These are all separate pieces and Hidas’s goal was to recreate the
idea of starting a chamber group among friends. Hidas thought that it starts
with one player playing, who will at some point ask a friend to join in for a
duet, so he added the duet. Then the two of them eventually will ask another
player to join so Hidas composed the trio and finally a fourth player would
join for the quartet. It was an interesting and original idea from Hidas, one
that works really well in a recital. “\(^{203}\)

Thomas concludes the interview with mentioning that some of his best
experiences as a student at Florida State University were the times he spent with
Hőna both musically and socially.\(^{204}\) Hőna has become close friends with Brian Goff,
Trumpet Professor at Florida State University, as well. They were approximately the
same age and had another thing in common; Hőna reports about a Hungarian
connection with Goff’s wife, Nancy:

I started getting invited to Brian’s house and we played tennis on the
weekends. We discovered that his wife, Nancy had Hungarian origins. Her
last name was Hunyady. She didn’t speak Hungarian, but she was in the
music as well. Nancy was a great cook; they fed me all the time. We spent
almost every weekend together. I cooked for them as well; I made Hungarian
“gulyás” a couple times.\(^{205}\)

Hőna’s morale was very high at this point; he was enjoying his time at Florida
State University and was working very hard every day. Incorporating more and
more solo repertoire was the next step for him, but he was always careful to follow

\(^{203}\) Hőna, interview, 2014.

\(^{204}\) Thomas, interview, 2016.

\(^{205}\) Hőna, interview, 2014.
the “new way” of playing Cramer was teaching him. Hőna recalls a moment in a lesson with Cramer about six or seven weeks into his studies: “I played a solo and at one point Cramer stopped me and with a loud voice he told me, You got it!” recalls Hőna.206 At this point Hőna found that he was becoming able to listen actively to himself and execute things consciously. “I started being able to stay in control, to recognize a great resonating sound, to execute things consciously and not from instinct like before, and this was a very important step forward for me,” mentions Hőna.207 Being an accomplished artist with a life in music helped Hőna make rapid improvement on the trombone. His strong musical background, and his trained musical taste and musical ears made his development and learning of the new approach to the instrument much more effective and time efficient. Hőna feels that one of the main reasons why he became successful was the strong musical foundation he learned in Hungary, coupled with the correct and conscious way of playing the trombone he learned from Cramer:

I eventually absorbed the “blow freely” technique and I was able to play as naturally and relaxed as possible. Finally, I was really able to connect this new technique with my strong musical background. I feel that was really the reason of my successes and the reason why I became successful in the following years.208

The summer semester was going by fast and lessons were going well for Hőna. Cramer decided that it would be a good idea for Hőna to play a recital at the end of the semester before he traveled back to Hungary. One of the solos Hőna performed

206 Hőna, interview, 2014.

207 Ibid.

208 Ibid.
on the recital was the *Sinfonia for trombone and piano* by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, a solo he had received as a gift from Ralph Sauer, Principal Trombonist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. At the end of the program, Hőna teamed up with his new friends and fellow trombone students from Florida State University and performed several chamber music works, among them the new quartet by Frigyes Hidas. After the recital, Cramer told Hőna again that “he finally got it,” and he reassured Hőna that upon his return to Hungary everyone would notice how much his sound improved.

After finishing the summer semester, and before returning to Hungary, Hőna flew to Salt Lake City where, upon Cramer’s recommendation, he attended the Western Trombone Workshop. For Hőna this was the first major trombone event in the US, and he remembers the workshop as a perfect ending to his summer long study in the US.

Filled with immense energy and enthusiasm as a result of his transformative experience in the US, Hőna decided upon returning to Hungary that he would try to return for a longer period to the US to study with Cramer, perhaps for a whole school year in order to deepen his understanding and knowledge of the new techniques he had just learned. “Everyone was asking me questions when I got home and my colleagues immediately noticed my improvement and they were asking me to teach them what I had just learned,” Hőna recalls of the days upon his return to Hungary. Because he was the first student from Hungary to be allowed

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Hőna, interview, 2014.
to study in the US, he was looked at as some sort of a wonder upon his return to Hungary. He reports being very proud and fully motivated by this accomplishment. Soon after his return, Hőna started developing a plan to find a way to go back to the US and study with Cramer again. Hőna’s plan was to get permission from the Radio Orchestra’s administration to take a one-year leave from his job. He put his plan in motion by receiving the backing from the Radio Orchestra’s Music Director, György Lehel, who signed a paper indicating his full support for Hőna’s one-year potential absence.

In spite of a promising start to his campaign, though, the Chief Administrator of the Radio Orchestra, András Sebestyén, put a swift stop to it. “I went to his office to get his approval and he told me that I’m a great asset to the orchestra and the institution itself has no interest in granting me a one year leave of absence; therefore, he would override Lehel’s signature of approval and deny my request,” remembers Hőna regretfully.210 In spite of Hőna’s arguments and attempts to convince the administrator to change his mind, the decision was made and there was no way Hőna would be able to study with Cramer for a whole year. The only option left was to study with Cramer for another summer semester the following year. Going back to the US for a second time proved a little easier, but Hőna had to go through all the hurdles again in order to obtain the travel permit and the student visa. Hőna went back to Tallahassee to study with Cramer again in the summer of 1979, but this time he was not enrolled officially as a student. He states:

210 Hőna, interview, 2014.
I went back to Prof. Cramer, but this time he was basically teaching me for free, giving me private lessons. I stayed at his place for about a month and a half. He was extremely generous to me, but I felt perhaps it was too much to stay all summer. We worked on Frigyes Hidas’s “Concerto for Trombone” a lot and we didn’t spend that much time on basics anymore. I can say that during my second year in the US studying with Cramer we became very close; I considered him as my second father. I called him and Dottie “my American parents.” I think Cramer was always moved by me calling him “dad.” I decided to leave early and visit my friends in New Jersey for the rest of the summer before returning to Hungary.211

Hőna has definitely earned a special place in Dr. William Cramer’s heart, and this became very apparent to the rest of the students as well. Christian Dickinson remarks that “Dr. Cramer was extremely proud of all of Hőna’s accomplishments,”212 while Jeff Thomas concludes: “Doc (William Cramer) adored the guy.”213

211 Hőna, interview, 2014.

212 Dickinson, interview, 2016.

213 Thomas, interview, 2016.
Figure 14. Cover page photo of Hōna and William Cramer from the *Florida Music Director* (1978).
6.3 Landing on the International Stage

In 1979, upon his second return to Hungary, Hőna’s career began to soar, and from that moment, his professional life moved to the international stage. Upon Cramer’s recommendation, Hőna was invited to major brass festivals and trombone workshops in the US. The first workshop to which Hőna was invited in the US as a guest artist was a four-day event at Belmont College in Nashville in 1980. Hőna went to the workshop accompanied by Cramer, who introduced him to everyone. “It was fantastic, I was very excited to be there and I remember that many of the top American and European trombonists were there,” recalls Hőna.214 One of Hőna’s unique contributions on the international stage was the fact that he started presenting the works of Hidas and other important Hungarian composers. After a while, it became expected that Hőna would always have a new piece to perform. Cramer was a very important supporter of contemporary Hungarian composers as well, and he continuously looked for opportunities to commission new pieces from them. According to Hőna, Cramer would tell everyone during the trombone festivals and workshops that if someone wanted to commission a great new piece for the trombone, they needed to look to the Hungarian composers.

Upon Cramer’s recommendation, the ITA commissioned the composer Frigyes Hidas to write a piece for trombone choir. During the annual meeting of the ITA Board held on Wednesday, May 28, 1980 at Belmont College in Nashville, Tennessee, the board decided to commission Hidas to write a piece for twelve

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214 Hőna, interview, 2014.
trombones. Hidas got to be known in the states by the efforts of Cramer and myself; we promoted his music a lot," remarks Hőna. Hidas dedicated his piece Movement to Bill Cramer, Meditation to Tom Everett, Baroque Concerto to Carsten Svandberg and Rhapsody to Donald Knaub, just to name a few of his pieces written for American and other non-Hungarian players.

From 1980 onward, Hőna was invited every year to the US for the ITA Workshops, and he won much admiration for his promotion of new Hungarian trombone literature. During these years, Hőna became a well-known and highly respected figure and made many important connections with the top American and international musicians. Hőna explains:

I got many invitations everywhere and in the early 1980’s I would say my career path was going up quickly. That was the time when my fellow Hungarian composers wrote many of the pieces for me. I could say that basically every year I was able to bring a brand new piece, and that was really cool, they liked that a lot.

Assisted by Cramer’s promotion, Hőna considers himself the pioneer of Hungarian trombone literature in the US. He believes that the reason he was granted permission to leave Hungary and travel to US in the subsequent years was that he made a case for introducing American audiences to Hungarian contemporary music, thereby promoting Hungarian musical culture in the States. “This was my “magic”


216 Hőna, interview, 2014.


218 Hőna, interview, 2014.
slogan when summoned by the Hungarian authorities, so usually they granted me permission to travel right away," explains Hőna.\textsuperscript{219} Hőna stresses the fact that being allowed to go to the US every year was still very unusual in Hungary, even though in the 1980’s the socialist grip had loosened up considerably.

Besides participating in ITA festivals and workshops, Hőna played solo recitals and taught master classes at various universities in the US. Hőna had, in total, six tours in the US to various universities. “Once I went to Western Illinois University, invited by Hugo Magliocco, and I played [Ránki] as soloist with their Wind Ensemble; however, most of my tours were organized by my friend, Nancy McCracken whom I met in Brisbane, Australia, in 1988” recalls Hőna.\textsuperscript{220} Hugo Magliocco was appointed Trombone Professor at Western Illinois University in 1963 and held the position for thirty-six years until his retirement in 1999.\textsuperscript{221} He became an important member of the American trombone scene and was elected President of the ITA in 1992, leading the world’s largest organization of trombonists for two years.\textsuperscript{222}

Nancy McCracken organized solo tours for Hőna by reaching out to her university contacts, mainly on the East Coast of the continental US.

\textsuperscript{219} Hőna, interview, 2014.

\textsuperscript{220} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{222} Ibid.
Tom Everett, long time Director of Bands and Trombone Professor at Harvard University, invited Hőna to Harvard, and they performed together in the Boston area. In a personal letter dated on December 8, 1990, Everett praises Hőna:

On behalf of the students, teachers, professionals and audience who attended your programs in Boston, please allow me to thank you and congratulate you on your exceptional presentation. Thanks to your unique combination of historical information, early music, orchestral excerpts, solo performance, new music and teaching, your master classes were of value to general musicians and composers as well as brass performers. We were all impressed with your incredible command of the trombone and musicality.223

Figure 15. Hőna with Tom Everett. Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.

223 Everett, Tom, correspondence to Gusztáv Hőna, personal collection, December 8, 1990.
Another time, Hőna visited his old friend Christian Dickinson from Cramer’s studio at Florida State University. Dickinson remembers Hőna as someone who had not changed, except that he was even more generous and humble, and that he had a sound that was expressive and beautiful.224 “He was a fierce champion of contemporary Hungarian music and he made an indelible impression on me,” recalls Dickinson.225

Altogether, between 1978 and 1992, Hőna traveled to the US at least once every year performing as soloist, playing chamber music, or on tour with the Radio Orchestra.

Figure 16. Hőna, pictured first from the right, teaching a master class at Indiana University (1984). Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.

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224 Dickinson, interview, 2016.

225 Ibid.
Hőna gained a remarkable reputation not only in the US, but in Europe as well. In 1992, he was invited by Heinz Fadle to be a guest artist and jury member at the ITA Workshop organized in Detmold, Germany. Fadle was the Trombone Professor at the Detmold School of Music at the time of the festival, and also past president of the ITA between 1996-1998.226

The workshop was called the “21st International Trombone Workshop,” and was organized during September 20-24, 1992, at the Detmold “Hochshule fur Musik” in Germany.227 Hőna performed a recital titled “Hungarian Compositions” on Monday, September 21, at eleven in the morning.”228 He remembers the event as a fantastic experience:

That was a sensational festival. I was a member of the jury for a competition; Ray Premru was head of the jury. All the major European players were there. I also played a solo recital, of course including a bunch of Hungarian pieces, as it was expected from me pretty much everywhere I played. We played a chamber music piece, can’t remember the title, but Michel Becquet played the solo, I played the first part. It was an international chamber group Ray Premru conducted. I can’t remember all the names in the group, but it was great.229

Clearly, the 1979-2000 period was the busiest era in Hőna’s performing career. He toured not only in US but in Europe as well on a yearly basis.


228 Ibid.

229 Hőna, interview, 2014.
Figure 17. Hőna, with Abbie Conant, Michel Becquet, Ingemar Roos, Jacques Mauger, Andrea Bandini and Artistic Director Giampaolo Doro as a jury member of the “Citta di Porcia” International Trombone Competition (2008). Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.
CHAPTER 7: TEACHING AT THE LISZT FERENC MUSIC ACADEMY

7.1 Appointment

In 1989, Prof. László Ujfalusi, the long-time trombone professor at the Liszt Academy, decided to retire. At the time, the Liszt Academy had two full time trombone professors, Prof. Ferenc Steiner being the other professor. Hőna, who was at the height of his career and had studied at the Liszt Academy with Ujfalusi, decided to apply for the position. After his application had been accepted, Hőna was invited to audition. “I had to perform a solo recital and I had to teach in front of the committee, and fortunately, after all the interviews were done, I got the job offer,” recalls Hőna.230 He started teaching a few lessons during Ujfalusi’s last semester, and in the fall of 1990, began as a full-time professor. For several years, the studio was split between Hőna and Steiner. Steiner retired in 2001, after being in the position since 1977.231 The Liszt Academy, on Hőna’s recommendation, hired András Fejér, a celebrated Hungarian trombonist and Principal Trombone of the Deutsches Symphony Orchestra in Berlin, to replace Steiner. Due to family reasons, Fejér had to resign in 2007, after teaching at the Liszt Academy for only six years. “I hope that when I decide to retire, he will be able to come back,” remarks Hőna, adding that Fejér did a wonderful job during his years at the Academy.232

230 Hőna, interview, 2014.

231 “The Trombone and Tuba Faculty of the Liszt Music Academy since 1897,” Exhibit Plaque, Liszt Ferenc Music Academy, Budapest, July 23, 2014.

232 Hőna, interview, 2014.
Academy briefly hired Prof. Tivadar Sztán and Prof. István Péter Farkas to teach Fejér’s students, but after only four years, in 2011 they had to cut both positions, leaving Hőna as the only trombone professor. Hőna gives more detail:

During the early 2000’s the Liszt Academy went through some serious financial problems, so we needed to let some professors go. I continued as the sole trombone teacher and I had to take on all the students so my workload instantly doubled. The studio usually had between eleven and thirteen students split between two professors, so from this point on I was teaching by myself approximately twenty-six hours every week.233

Trombone Performance majors at the Liszt Academy receive two instrumental lessons every week, each lesson being fifty minutes long. One lesson is spent with technical issues, scales and etudes mainly, the other one is solo literature with an accompanist always present. It is very common for music academies in Europe to hire a full time accompanist for every studio.

In 2001, Hőna was elected Head of the Wind Area at the Liszt Academy, an important and busy administrative position, which he held until 2013, when at age sixty-five he had to retire from administration because in Hungary the law requires retirement at that age from certain positions. The administrative position required Hőna to oversee the activities of the woodwind, brass, and percussion areas, adding a significant workload to an already busy professional schedule. Hőna talks about his experience as an administrator:

I always liked organization and details, so for me it just kind of came naturally to apply for the position. I also wanted to introduce some changes in the curriculum, in regards to juries and the study of orchestral excerpts, which I was able to make, fortunately. It was a great experience for me, and I

233 Hőna, interview, 2014.
always felt appreciated and respected for my administrative work by my colleagues.\textsuperscript{234}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{Hőna as the new trombone professor of the Liszt Academy (1992). Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{234} Hőna, interview, 2014.
7.2 Studying with Hőna at the Liszt Academy

7.2.1 Curriculum

The Liszt Academy uses a system of six semesters for the bachelor’s degree and four semesters for master’s. Most commonly, students earn degrees back-to-back, studying at Liszt Academy for ten semesters. The trombone studio is usually made up of anywhere between eleven and thirteen students, depending on the positions available every year. In Hungary, the government subsidizes tuition for a number of students each year. Based on the yearly available budget, the Ministry of Education decides how many students are able to study free of charge. The Liszt Academy receives a block number of subsidized spaces, which they divide between the studios. In some years, the trombone studio has two openings for bachelor’s and two for master’s, in other years it can grow to three. “It changes every year,” said Hőna.235 The Liszt Academy accepts students who are willing to pay tuition as well, but these are usually international students. The most common practice among the top senior high school students wanting to study music in college is to audition for the Liszt Academy and some of the other music conservatories in Hungary. Wherever they are admitted for a state-funded place, they choose to go. The goal is to study tuition-free, and this is usually attainable for the students who work hard and are among the best players of their generation.

235 Hőna, interview, 2014.
7.2.2 The audition process – entrance requirements

Students seeking admission to the Liszt Academy must audition on their instruments first. The instrumental audition constitutes seventy-five percent of the audition grade. If they are accepted based on their instrumental audition, the candidates are allowed to continue their audition with tests on piano, folk music, music theory, and harmony. There is a minimum grade expectation for these tests, and sometimes a student passes the instrumental audition but is not accepted into the Academy due to a low evaluation from these additional examinations. For many years, the audition requirement for the Liszt Academy’s trombone studio has not changed. Prof. Ujfalusi established the repertoire, and when Hőna stepped in, he decided to keep it exactly the same. For tenor trombone, it is required that the candidates play the Georg Kopprasch etude no. 35 by memory and another piece in a contrasting style, such as a Vladeslav Blazhevich etude or a Bordogni vocalise. Candidates must further play a solo in an early style and a solo from the Romantic or later period, usually chosen from the standard repertoire.236 “Typically they will play two movements, a slow and a fast movement of a Tartini, Vivaldi, Marcello, or Telemann sonata transcription for the early music requirement. They are not required to play the solos by memory, but the committee will offer extra points if they do so,” notes Hőna.237

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237 Hőna, interview, 2014.
7.2.3 Studio expectations

As one of the top music schools in Europe, the Liszt Academy has very high expectations. This should not come as a surprise at an institution both founded by the great Franz Liszt and where Kodály and Bartók used to teach. Hőna likes to spend time with the incoming freshman students in order to assess their needs properly and to make a plan for the next semesters for each student. “I would say that here in Hungary, unfortunately, often the breathing technique of the incoming students is not very refined, so quite often most of the first semester is spent with working on breathing,” mentions Hőna.238

Since every student receives two lessons every week, theoretically the technical and musical workload is clearly differentiated. The first lesson of the week is spent with etudes. Hőna elaborates about his preferences for lesson repertoire:

I like them to play two etudes of two different styles per week; for the technical etudes, I like the Vobaron etudes, I feel they are quite complex and useful. On the lyrical side, I like the Bordogni etudes. These are great for practicing phrasing and legato. Other etude books that I like are the Couillaud 30 Etudes, the Doms Etudes, Lafosse Complete Methods and the Blazhevich’s Clef Studies. These are all great books.239

There are some Hungarian etude books as well which students use quite often. Prof. Ferenc Steiner wrote some etudes in his famous “green book,” a daily routine book Steiner published in 1983.240 Another well-liked book is the one created by Pál

238 Hőna, interview, 2014.

239 Ibid.

Makovecz, trombone professor at the St. Steven Music High School in Budapest.

Makovecz selected the most commonly used intermediate level etudes from many of the most common etude books such as the Bordogni, Muller, and Kopprasch books. He compiled these etudes in a two volume book called “Selected Studies for Trombone.”

Robert Káip, former student and Radio Orchestra colleague of Hőna, remembers his lessons:

I had an etude lesson and a solo lesson every week. He was a very intense and involved teacher. Technically very demanding, very picky. We worked on scales all the time and he was very picky about the tuning of the scales. He asked us to practice trills as well as articulation exercises and legato exercises. He also loved to sing, so the singing was an important part in his teaching. He was always thinking musically. The most important concept was always the “blow freely” idea he has learned from Cramer.

The trombone studio usually has a studio recital each semester, where every student normally performs one piece. The students are expected to participate, but it is not mandatory. Customarily, these recitals are before juries, or before important competitions, and are seen as a preparation tool. When asked about the repertoire choices for his students, Hőna mentions that he discusses this with each student separately, and, based on what the requirements are for each year, the student’s needs and level, and what the student has performed previously, they will decide on


the solos. “I don’t force solos on them, but there are some pieces which I highly recommend,” mentions Hőna.

Students have to play a jury at the end of every semester. The jury includes performing two etudes in different styles, a solo in the early music style, and another piece such as movements of a concerto or a solo piece from the basic repertoire. One of the solos must be played by memory. The students are required to study orchestral excerpts as well, but they only start with the excerpts during sophomore year. These excerpts are grouped in seven main bundles, each containing six to seven excerpts. By the time the students finish ten semesters, meaning the bachelor’s and the master’s, they need to know all seven bundles.

By the end of the bachelor’s program, students are expected to perform a full recital, including three solos in three different styles, pass an orchestral excerpt test, very similar to a real orchestral audition, and present a chamber music recital.

It is very common that students will immediately audition for the master’s degree to continue their studies. “In Hungary with a bachelor’s degree only, a graduate is not allowed to teach above middle school level; therefore, almost every student will complete the bachelor’s and master’s degree back to back,” explains Hőna.

The final and most important test for every performance major is at the conclusion of the master’s degree, when graduates are required to play a final full recital. Hőna explains:

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243 Hőna, interview, 2014.

244 Ibid.
They have to play three pieces in three different styles, an early piece, a classical concerto and another standard piece from a later time period. The concerto needs to be memorized. Sometimes our best students will get the opportunity to play with the academy’s orchestra.245

The expectation is usually very high for these final degree recitals, so it is very common for the Liszt Academy graduates to perform some of the most difficult repertoire available. “They don’t have to choose the hardest piece in the world but they can’t play “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” either, quips Hőna.246

7.3 Hőna’s teaching philosophy

When Hőna started teaching at the Liszt Academy in 1990, he was already well-acquainted with many of the playing styles and brass schools from around the world. His most significant influence, though, came from the approach of the American way of playing. He speaks of the impact of this factor:

The foundation of my approach is that the music is made out of gorgeous sounds and our goal is to create one beautiful sound followed by another. My number one goal is the creation of a beautiful sound. A lot of what I am teaching was influenced by my American experiences. I believe that if someone doesn’t have a great sound it is hard to make beautiful music.”247

Hőna credits Dr. William Cramer with many of the ideas that helped him to refine his own teaching philosophy and approach to the instrument. One of Cramer’s famous dictums to Hőna was the “blow freely” concept that has become a very common and frequently used motto among Hőna’s students. When asked about Hőna, quite often his students will just imitate Hőna’s voice saying: “blow freely,

245 Hőna, interview, 2014.

246 Ibid.

247 Ibid.
son...” Hőna adds, “Certainly there are a number of technical objectives which need to be practiced and analyzed with students such as breathing technique, study of legato and articulations, range building, mouthpiece buzzing, and so on, but I cannot stress enough the most important element, the beauty of the sound.”

While studying in Florida with Cramer, Hőna encountered many routine books such as the Remington Daily Routines, but also Cramer’s own daily routine exercises. Hőna was inspired by these to create his own version of daily routines. “I have many basic routine exercises written down, things I developed during the years, but due to lack of time, I never published them. Perhaps I will do it sometime in the future,” remarks Hőna.

Hőna feels that teachers must be patient as students absorb important concepts. Hőna states it this way, “A teacher has to say something a hundred times before the students start to get a good grasp of those concepts and accept the new ideas, but that’s just how teaching works.”

### 7.4 Practicing and playing concepts

One of the key elements in a performer’s development and advancement is learning the craft of practicing. "I was always the practicing type. Even when I was younger I practiced every day, and the consistency and diligence of daily practicing

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248 Hőna, interview, 2014.

249 Ibid.

250 Ibid.
was my forte,” remarks Hőna. He asserts that careful planning of practice sessions, the ability to learn about strengths and endurance, and the knowledge of when and how long to rest are all important elements to be considered on a daily basis. Hőna indicates that the real secret to growth is daily practicing. Playing through a carefully planned daily routine is very important, and it has to be done consistently. He says,

> It’s very dangerous in the long run in someone’s career to neglect a serious daily routine session. I teach my students the same thing, meaning that every day the students need to play through their routines. Even though every day the instrument might feel a bit different, sometime we are tired physically and/or mentally, a form of routine session is needed on a daily basis.

According to Hőna, one of the hardest things for players to learn is how to organize daily practice sessions. He believes that covering all the basic technical elements required in performance is what really determines the list of routine exercises to be covered. “You want to work on all the things you could encounter during your performances, whether it is solo, orchestral, or chamber music,” asserts Hőna. The length of the daily routine session is influenced by many factors, and it usually differs for every player. Hőna remarks that he likes to spend a good hour on daily routine exercises; however, that can change according to the amount of rehearsal time or concerts scheduled for the day. Hőna explains the structure of his daily routine exercises:

> I like to start the daily routine with long tones followed by articulation exercises, usually in a linear fashion first then in positions up and down.

251 Hőna, interview, 2014.

252 Ibid.

253 Ibid.
Range extensions are next, followed by lip slurs and flexibilities, interval exercises in octaves and scales. The range extension exercises are the most dangerous, I always caution my students to be careful not to “destroy” their chops for the day.²⁵⁴

Hőna does not subscribe to the idea of practicing exceedingly long hours on the trombone. “We are not pianists,” he remarks, noting that facial muscles are very fragile and sensitive. He describes the value of careful, concentrated practice:

I usually never practiced more than two to two and a half hours per day. I think any more than that can be damaging. When people say that they practice five to six hours/day, I’m a little skeptical about believing them. To me the practicing is very serious and very intense. I don’t like to be disturbed during a practice session. I even told my kids to not to interrupt me while I practice. I have known people who practice while reading a newspaper; however, I think that’s nonsense.²⁵⁵

When asked about teaching practicing, Hőna indicates that determining how long and how to practice took him a long time, so he is trying to teach his students from his experiences. He stresses the importance of students learning how to practice themselves and what to listen for while practicing. Hőna believes that it is crucial in a student’s development to listen carefully and learn from his or her own practice sessions, trying to detect any problems that need to be solved. “I learned these ideas from Professor Cramer and I am trying every day to teach my students this because the students need to learn how to be their own teacher and this is very important to me.”²⁵⁶ Hőna adds that the task of discerning how to sound our best consistently is very challenging, but as always, the solution is consistent daily practicing.

²⁵⁴ Hőna, interview, 2014.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.
7.4.1 Breathing technique

In order to create a beautiful sound, Hóna stresses the importance of a good breathing technique and proper air usage. Hóna remembers Cramer teaching him the “blow freely” concept, or the idea of free, uninterrupted and unforced airflow. “I remember Cramer took out a napkin and held it up, then he asked me to blow it away with a clear, relaxed airflow.” Hóna feels that it is essential to understand how breathing works in our body. He adds that one of the most significant aspects of great breathing technique is the development and the expansion of one’s maximum lung capacity. “I think breathing exercises are important as well as lung capacity extension exercises.” Hóna recommends an exercise that involves sitting on a chair, leaning forward all the way until touching the chest to the upper thighs and taking huge breaths in and out. He feels that this is a great exercise for improving respiratory efficiency, and he always recommends that his students practice it on a daily basis. “These exercises need to be practiced in rhythm, and we get dizzy sometimes, but that’s a good sign,” comments Hóna. He also advocates an extremely useful exercise in which students play scales in the low range very slowly and in time, gradually increasing the number of notes by one to expand the breathing capacity.

257 Hóna, interview, 2014.

258 Ibid.

259 Ibid.
7.4.2 Mouthpiece buzzing

To buzz or not to buzz, that is a question many players will ask sooner or later during their careers. Hőna weighs in on the issue by suggesting that mouthpiece buzzing is very important, and playing scales, as well as legato and staccato exercises on the mouthpiece are all extremely beneficial. He advises students to hold the mouthpiece with the left hand, since they hold the trombone in the same hand, therefore leaving the right hand free and relaxed.

When questioned about the practicing of free buzzing, the technique of creating vibration with the embouchure without the mouthpiece, Hőna responds that in his opinion it is not necessary for players to do this, and, if someone decides to give it a try, the exercise should not take a long time.

7.4.3 Tone quality

Hőna feels that one of the real challenges of teaching, especially with younger students, is creating a very strong foundation for a sound concept. To him, a beautiful sound means a sound with a many harmonics and much resonance. He stresses the idea of trying to make sure that every single note played, regardless of the range, has as many harmonics in it as possible. “In order to achieve a great, effortless, no-tension sound, the student needs to have a great breathing technique, so we work on these concepts a lot,” mentions Hőna.²⁶⁰ He advocates long tones exercises as a wonderful tool in working on breathing and sound. “Playing long tones, one has time to focus on the color of the sound, the breathing, the continuous

²⁶⁰Hőna, interview, 2014.
air speed and the keeping of a straight tone,” advises Hőna. In certain European brass schools the idea of “air attacks” is very much used throughout the daily routine exercises. The idea behind this practicing technique is the free vibration of the lips made possible with only the airflow and without any tongue involvement. Hőna subscribes to this idea, and he requires his students to practice long tones and other daily exercises as well, with only air articulations. Another important aspect of Hőna’s teaching is the constant attention to time and rhythm while working on the routine exercises. “The main goal is that, regardless of the range, the sound production and quality must be always the same, with a solid rhythmical feel and using only air attacks,” concludes Hőna.

7.4.4 Articulation

With regard to proper articulation, Hőna believes that the most important task is finding a way to use the tongue as efficiently and as naturally as possible. He ties the characteristics of the Hungarian language and the way Hungarians speak their native language into the way players articulate. “Our mother language, Hungarian, is a little bit of a heavy sounding language. We speak a little heavier and I think this influences our natural articulation abilities,” remarks Hőna. In order to counterbalance the linguistic features of Hungarian, Hőna advocates a lighter touch and a curved tongue placement in the oral cavity, avoiding a horizontal position:

When the tongue is placed horizontally and moving only front and back it can cause some articulation issues. Usually when the tongue is used in a horizontal way, it is slower and lazier, and it becomes heavy. I don’t advocate

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261 Hőna, interview, 2014.

262 Ibid.
a strong “Taah” or “Tuuh” articulation style as front of the notes, with a strong emphasis on “T”; instead I like a “Daah” stroke. I think this way we enable the tongue to be more flexible and more curved, therefore increasing its efficiency.\textsuperscript{263}

When questioned about the exercises he would recommend in practicing the “Daah” articulation, Hõna suggests a very simple, repeated note articulation exercise. He adds that the “Daah” articulation is not to be used for everything and naturally there are times when the music calls for a heavier and stronger tongue, in which case the performer has no choice but to use the “Taah” style syllable.

7.4.5 Legato

For achieving a great legato on the trombone, Hõna advises his students to use melodic singing as a model:

It’s important to try to focus on playing the music, to make a musical phrase. Thinking musically in melody is very important and naturally, the airflow needs to be uninterrupted here, just like we do it when we sing.\textsuperscript{264}

Hõna stresses that it is extremely important to have a clear rhythm for all the exercises when playing legato, and to let the interior pulse dictate the movement of the slide hand, therefore avoiding another trombone problem, the tense right hand. He continues that when players use legato tongue, they need to make sure the hand and embouchure coordination is very precise. Coordination is the key in his view, and he sings a “Laah” syllable when making a tongued slur.

\textsuperscript{263} Hõna, interview, 2014.

\textsuperscript{264} Ibid.
7.4.6 Slide technique

For a clear slide technique, Hőna finds that in addition to clear rhythm and a sense of pulse, the slide needs to be relaxed and not jerked, especially in legato playing, while remaining extremely precise. “It’s crucial to always practice in rhythm with a clear sense of time and tempo, and paying attention to a proper slide grip, while never touching the bell,” notes Hőna. Quite often students neglect the importance of keeping the slide in great working condition. Hőna feels that this can cause all kinds of problems, much more serious than students think. Hőna uses scales to practice slide technique, and he advises a slow and relaxed approach.

7.4.7 Range building and endurance

One of the most important goals for many young students is developing the range, especially the high range. “The range building takes time and needs a gradual approach,” advises Hőna.265 He cautions that pressing the high range is a huge mistake, and it is a recipe for physical and mental blockage, as well as a sure path to developing bad technique:

In the high range I like to advise the student to take a step-by-step approach, first finding the highest comfortable note, then trying to move up from that note a half step only, while keeping the same embouchure setting, airflow, and relaxation. The half approach is the most important approach and I advise my students to practice this in legato, with air attacks.266

In terms of developing the low range, Hőna advises a similar step-by-step approach, starting notes only with air attacks. “The air attack approach is very

265 Hőna, interview, 2014.

266 Ibid.
useful, even though I think in the low range it is harder to make a sound with only an air attack, but with a lot of practicing it is possible,“ comments Hőna. He adds that it is of the utmost importance to let the air do the work and to make sure to use the air properly, while avoiding the use of force and extra mouthpiece pressure.

“The real SECRET is the proper airflow and breathing technique; therefore, I always end my daily routine sessions with playing very low notes,” concludes Hőna.

Regarding endurance, Hőna thinks that it differs for every person, since everyone is unique and the human musculature and strength are a bit different for everyone. In his view, nobody should play the trombone for several hours in a row, and Hőna thinks that nobody is able to do this with great freshness and clarity.

7.4.8 Mental approach

One of the most important aspects of performance is the mental approach. Arnold Jacobs, former tuba player in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and one of the true music master teachers of the twentieth century, was an avid advocate of singing and creating the music we want to deliver in our mind first. “We must first establish a powerful mental awareness of sound,” advised Jacobs. Hőna’s approach on this matter is very similar to Jacobs’s advice:

I always tell my students that they always need to think primarily music and secondarily about the technique. It’s a simple analogy: the technique serves

267 Hőna, interview, 2014.

268 Ibid.

the music, not the other way around.\textsuperscript{270}

The practicing of the mental elements is significant for students. Hőna advises that students need to practice performing and to getting in the habit of staying focused and in control no matter what happens technically. Staying in the moment and staying very focused is the key, in Hőna’s view, and he continues by adding that when a student makes a mistake in lessons, he likes to stop them, have them wait for a little bit, then take a fresh breath and start all over again; this way they will not practice the mistakes. “It’s important to practice ‘performing’ when we play a piece from start to finish through without stopping no matter what. We practice ‘practicing’ when we stop and work on details,” concludes Hőna.\textsuperscript{271}

7.5 Orchestral excerpts

Most of the students at the Liszt Academy intend to pursue an orchestral career after graduation, therefore studying the major orchestral excerpts is a significant an important part of their course of study. This idea is very common in music programs anywhere. The Liszt Academy keeps an impressive list of brass graduates working in the top symphony orchestras around the world, such as the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra,\textsuperscript{272} the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra,\textsuperscript{273} the

\textsuperscript{270} Hőna, interview, 2014.

\textsuperscript{271} Ibid.


Deutsches Symphony Orchestra in Berlin,\textsuperscript{274} the Netherland Philharmonic Orchestra,\textsuperscript{275} and all the top orchestras in Hungary, including the National Philharmonic Orchestra, the Radio Orchestra, the Budapest Festival Orchestra and the National Opera Orchestra.

Below, Hőna gives insights on some of the most important trombone excerpts in the orchestral literature:

\subsection*{7.5.1 Mozart – Requiem}

The most important trombone excerpt from the classical period, the “Tuba Mirum” from the Mozart Requiem, is also one of Hőna’s favorite excerpts. Hőna identifies his concepts of proper style and technique for the excerpt:

The first two measures need to be absolutely crystal clear with a gorgeous sound, clear and consistent articulation, detached – \textit{portato} note lengths and great intonation. It needs to be played in one breath and I like to hear a Mozart not a Wagner forte as well \textit{tenuto} style.\textsuperscript{276}

The opening of the excerpt can seem simple, but it is a tricky section. Hőna mentions that it is common that students neglect it and their intonation is faulty in these measures. “Sometimes I spend thirty minutes in a lesson just with the first three measures,” remarks Hőna. When asked about the articulation style for the rest of the excerpt, Hőna states that it is hard to know what Mozart really intended, since he wrote no articulation in the original score. Traditionally, the rest of the excerpt is


\textsuperscript{276} Hőna, interview, 2014.
played in a legato style; however, Hőna feels that in a real orchestral situation it is the conductor who should determine the exact style. “The last time I played it, the great German conductor Helmuth Rilling,\textsuperscript{277} who is considered an expert in early music and in Johann Sebastian Bach, asked for the mid-section starting in mm. twelve, to be played with a \textit{sforzato-marcato} articulation,” remarks Hőna. As far as the phrasing style of the excerpt, Hőna feels that it should not be played too romantically as many people do nowadays. “It needs to be simple, clear and beautiful, without too much vibrato, maybe just the very end of the longer notes,” closes Hőna.\textsuperscript{278}

7.5.2 Ravel - Bolero

Since the trombone solo is the last time the repeated melody is played by a soloist in Ravel’s Bolero, Hőna asserts that there is a very big responsibility on the player’s shoulders. He humorously affirms that if the orchestra is sounding very solid and everyone is playing the solos well, then the trombonist needs to excel as well. On the other hand, if the orchestra is not shining on a particular day, and the solos preceding the trombone entrance perhaps are not sounding the best, then the trombonist must save the day; either way the solo is a big obligation for the trombonist. He explains his approach:

The solo is very playable; it fits the instrument well. The rhythm is very important; it’s a tricky one. It’s easy to be late with all the ties. The feel of the


\textsuperscript{278} Hőna, interview, 2014.
pulse needs to be solid; the internal pulse has to be solid. All the articulation markings, especially the marcatos need to be very clear.²⁷⁹

Hőna suggests practicing it with a recording and playing it many times before a concert or an audition. He feels that the hardest note is the B-flat, the very first note in the excerpt. “I used to practice it five times in the row and if I missed something I started this cycle again, but you have to be careful not to kill your chops,” concludes Hőna.

7.5.3 Berlioz - Hungarian March

This is one of the excerpts Hőna has played many times throughout his career, especially on concert tours with the Radio Orchestra. “It’s funny, everyone thinks this is a Hungarian piece, just like Brahms’s Hungarian dances, Berlioz wasn’t Hungarian, but they both succeeded in creating a good style and characteristics for their pieces,” mentions Hőna.²⁸⁰ Hőna reveals that frequently while on tour the Radio Orchestra played these pieces as an encore and audiences loved them, frequently jumping to their feet and giving standing ovations to the orchestra:

Playing this excerpt alone is pretty strange, even though it’s always asked on auditions individually. I think it’s much harder to play it alone in an audition, than playing it in the section. The excerpt needs a brisk tempo, and the rhythm has to be extremely precise. Clarity and the articulation need to be very pure and precise, and I like the note lengths to be on the shorter style. I would call it a melodic staccato style what we play here in Hungary.²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ Hőna, interview, 2014.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.
7.5.4 Wagner – Ride of the Valkyries

According to Hőna, in this excerpt the rhythm is the most difficult item to master. He adds that even important professional orchestras play the rhythm slightly wrong at times. Hőna explains his priorities in interpreting this excerpt:

It’s a tricky and a difficult rhythm. The most important thing is to not play the first dotted triplet note too long. If that’s long, it will destabilize the whole rhythm. It’s important not to play the second note in the triplet too early either. Wagner wrote *marcato* on beat one in every measure; that’s a very important articulation marking, and if done properly it will help keeping the clear rhythm throughout the whole excerpt.\(^{282}\)

Hőna states that the note lengths should be on the shorter side here as well; he shies away from recommending a long, *tenuto* style. “In an audition the candidate needs to show a clear control and execution of a perfect rhythm and needs to play out the written *marcato’s* on the downbeat of every measure; I think these two elements are the most important here, remarks Hőna.”\(^{283}\)

In a 1948 television recording of the NBC Symphony Orchestra, the great Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini makes a very distinctive gesture for every downbeat of the Valkyrie trombone solo, requesting a clear downbeat *marcato* from the players.\(^{284}\) Hőna mentions that this is exactly the way he likes to hear the excerpt played by his students and Toscanini’s recording is an exemplary version of this wonderful piece.

\(^{282}\) Hőna, interview, 2014.

\(^{283}\) Ibid.

\(^{284}\) *Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra: The Television Concerts 1948-1952*, (Testament UK, 2006), DVD.
CHAPTER 8: THE HUNGARIAN TROMBONE SCHOOL

8.1 Early years – German influences

The Hungarian trombone school flourished during the second half of the twentieth century. Traditionally, brass playing previously had not been a significant tradition in Hungary. In countries such as Germany, where centers of brass instrument making were established already in the mid-fifteenth century, the tradition of brass playing has very deep roots. Other Western European countries such as Italy, France and England, have significant brass playing traditions that go back hundreds of years as well. Hungarian brass playing was inspired by the styles and traditions found in the countries and regions surrounding Hungary during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Hőna, Hungarian brass playing in the first part of the twentieth century was influenced considerably both by the playing styles and traditions of certain ethnic groups living in Hungary and surrounding areas and by the styles “imported” from Austria, Germany and the Czech Republic. Hőna explains his view regarding the influences leading to the establishment of a Hungarian tradition:

Traditionally in Hungarian folk music there are no brass instruments; the brass instruments have no role in it. So my teachers and the other brass teachers had a pretty tough task ahead of them...the minorities, so to speak, the Svabians, the Czechs and the Slovaks have brass instruments in their folk music, so their brass bands were quite popular, but we Hungarians didn’t have brass bands, so we had no traditions to work with. We had the influences around us, so the Hungarian trombone school was built musically

on the Kodály method and technically and stylistically on the playing styles coming from these minorities and/or ethnic groups living in Hungary. Of course this is the way I see it, these are my theories about this matter.286

German authors wrote the vast majority of the method books and solos used at the Liszt Academy in the early twentieth century. During my research trip to Budapest in the summer of 2014, I was able to examine sources in the archives of the National Hungarian Royal Music Academy (the original name of the Liszt Academy) from 1898.287 With Hőna’s assistance (Figure 19) method books and other materials used in the trombone studio at the turn of the twentieth century were examined. Among the method books found at the Liszt Academy Library, the texts by Friedrich-August Belcke, Anton Slama, and Robert Muller were consulted. The Concertino by Ferdinand David was also frequently used at the time, as well as Oskar Blume’s etude book titled Werke fur Posaune. Other etude books used around the turn of the twentieth century were Robert Muller’s Studienwerke and Schule fur Posaune.288 Hőna talks about these early German influences:

The German school was also prevalent at the time. We had access to the Robert Muller, Georg Kopprasch etudes and methods. I believe we managed to put together a very serious and very musically tasteful School. I believe the Hungarian musician is intelligent and has a tremendous background and heritage from where to feed the musical side of it, so out of these elements all of a sudden we created the Hungarian brass tradition. I believe it was the same scenario for the trumpet and for horn, maybe with small differences, but basically it was the same thing and of course we can say the same thing for tuba as well. Again, it’s important to mention that this is my personal view on this issue; however, I don’t think I’m really far from the truth.

286 Hőna, interview, 2014.


288 Ibid., 28.
Basically I’m the representative of this line and I’m continuing this tradition.\textsuperscript{289}

Figure 19. The author and Hőna researching in the library of the Liszt Academy (2014).

I also discussed the Germanic influences on the Hungarian brass school in great detail with Professor Tivadar Sztán, long-time trombone professor of the music education majors from the Liszt Academy and trombonist with the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra. According to Sztán, in the 1950’s the only method books used in Hungary that he knew about were the ones imported from Germany. “To my knowledge only two to three people in the whole country had some of the

\textsuperscript{289} Hőna, interview, 2014.
German method books and these were the only books used in Hungary, nothing else,” remarks Sztán, a prominent figure in the Hungarian brass culture of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{290} Sztán continues by explaining the German influence on the playing style and its shortfalls with regard to playing efficiency:

They used to teach the “German embouchure” in Hungary. That meant that you had to smile very widely, stretch the corners horizontally and try to play the trombone like that. The result was stretched lips, very hard tongue placed really up front. Ferenc Steiner [professor of trombone at the Liszt Academy] and myself used to talk about this and we figured out that the “German embouchure” can’t be good, it’s not efficient stretching the corners horizontally. It was making the lips thin and it was actually painful to play like that. When I auditioned to the Liszt Academy my lips were bloody. It was making the playing tense. Everyone played by instinct. This so called “German Embouchure” almost ruined my playing and my career. A lot of people’s careers ended because of that.\textsuperscript{291}

Sztán mentions playing by instinct, echoing the way Hőna talked about instinct in the context of his revelatory lessons with Cramer. It seems that there was no unified style in Hungary for many years, and even though the German influence was present and it was taught in the music schools throughout the country, many players felt that it was not a style that allowed for the cultivation of efficient and healthy playing. “Everything I learned was intuitive and self-taught basically and that’s how I figured out a lot of things,” remarks Sztán.\textsuperscript{292} The solid and cultivated musical roots of the Hungarian musician were in strong contrast to the intuitive approach of learning to play a brass instrument. Hőna talks about this interesting duality between a solid music theoretical base and an instinctive technical approach:

\textsuperscript{290} Sztán, Tivadar, interview by Zsolt Szabó, Budapest, Hungary, July 2014.

\textsuperscript{291} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{292} Ibid.
The Kodály method was very prevalent, very significant in Hungary at the time. We used to sing solfège in lessons at school all the time. I had exams where I just had to sing random parts of a musical piece, concerto, sonata or symphony. So, again we had a very strong musical base starting from very early in school. I could say for all Hungarian musicians this solid musical base going back to Bartók and Liszt, left a mark on the solidity of our theoretical and musical basis. This is a very important aspect. The Hungarian musician is a very musically cultured artist. We just needed an effective, qualitative and unified brass school in Hungary.293

8.2 History of the Liszt Academy’s Trombone Professors

In considering the early history of trombone education in Budapest, the strong ties to the Germanic influence among teachers and students becomes very obvious. The first trombone students and teachers at the Liszt Academy were mostly from Hungarian Svabian groups who spoke German as well as Hungarian, remarks Hőna in an interview for the Friends of the Liszt Academy website.294 Hőna mentioned that most of the students were from the German-speaking Budapest suburb of Soroksár. He states this was expected somewhat since brass instruments had a major role in the folk music of the ethnic groups such as the Germans, Austrians, Svabians; therefore, these minorities were playing brass instruments from a young age.295 During the interview in 2014, Hőna had the following to add in regards to this topic:

293 Hőna, interview, 2014.


In the years before the war [First and Second World War] the majority of the orchestral musicians in Budapest and the teachers were from German origins, from German countries and actually a lot of the teaching happened in German or in Slovak languages. They mostly played in that Royal Opera Orchestra of Budapest and in the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra, and they were teaching at the Liszt Academy as well.296

The first Trombone Professor at the Liszt Academy, Albin Neuhauser was appointed in 1897.297 At that time, the director of the Liszt Academy, Ödön Mihalovich, decided that in order to expand the institution’s offerings and prestige, new instrumental studios, including trombone, needed to be created.298 Neuhauser had only one student in the inaugural year 1897-98 of the trombone studio. The student, Gyula Guttmann, he had two trombone lessons per week, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, starting at two o’clock in the afternoon.299 Both Neuhauser and Guttmann are Germanic last names, supporting Hőna’s argument regarding the Germanic origins of the first students at the Liszt Academy. Neuhauser taught at the Liszt Academy for eleven years until 1908, when the new Trombone Professor Pál Trebuss took his place. Trebuss worked at the Liszt Academy between 1909 and 1933 and was followed in position by János Hollai who taught there for eleven years until 1944, when the long time Trombone and Tuba Professor Dr. László Ujfalusi

296 Hőna, interview, 2014.

297 “The Trombone and Tuba Faculty of the Liszt Academy since 1897,” Exhibit Plaque, Budapest, Liszt Ferenc Music Academy, July 23, 2014.


was appointed.\textsuperscript{300} Born in Csikszereda, a city in the Transylvania region of Romania, on January 5, 1914, Ujfalusi studied both law and music in Budapest.\textsuperscript{301} Ujfalusi studied with Hollai at the Liszt Academy between 1939-1943. After Hollai’s retirement, he took the position of Low Brass Professor at Liszt Academy, teaching both trombone and tuba.\textsuperscript{302} Ujfalusi was a member of the Hungarian National Opera Orchestra for thirty-seven years, between 1935-1972.\textsuperscript{303} He was Hőna’s teacher at the Liszt Academy and became one of the most important figures in the establishment of the Hungarian trombone school, by co-authoring the first original Hungarian trombone method book. Ujfalusi taught all low brass for many years, but, as the student numbers increased, the administration of the Liszt Academy decided to hire a second trombone teacher and another tuba professor. Ferenc Steiner, trombonist in the Hungarian National Opera Orchestra was hired in 1977 and he was in the position until 2001.\textsuperscript{304} Steiner was a member of the Hungarian National Opera Orchestra from 1960 until 1991, previously playing with the Budapest III

\textsuperscript{300} “The Trombone and Tuba Faculty of the Liszt Academy since 1897,” Exhibit Plaque.


\textsuperscript{302} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{303} Székely, András. 1988. \textit{Ki kicsoda a magyar zeneéletben?} Budapest: Music Publisher Co.

\textsuperscript{304} “The Trombone and Tuba Faculty of the Liszt Academy since 1897,” Exhibit Plaque.
Symphony Orchestra from 1954 to 1960.\textsuperscript{305} He was a brass area consultant for the “Editio Musica” Music Publishing Company in Budapest for many years.\textsuperscript{306} The Liszt Academy hired tuba player László Szabó in 1983.\textsuperscript{307} Szabó was a colleague of Hőna in the Radio Orchestra and in the Modern Brass Ensemble. Between 1990 and 2001, Hőna and Steiner were both teaching trombone since the Liszt Academy had two full-size trombone studios. After Steiner’s retirement, the Music Academy hired András Fejér as his replacement. Fejér had been the solo trombonist with the Deutches Symphony Orchestra in Berlin, a position he held since 1997 in conjunction with working at the Liszt Academy. The continuous traveling between Germany and Hungary took a toll on Fejér, and he resigned from the Liszt Academy after only six years of teaching. Tivadar Sztán and István Péter Farkas replaced Fejér for a short time, but due to financial cut backs in the early 2010’s, several teaching positions were suspended, and Hőna remained the only trombone professor from 2011 onwards.

Today Hőna is still the sole trombone professor at the Liszt Academy, a situation unlikely to change in the future.

\textsuperscript{305} Székely, András. 1988. \textit{Kí kicsoda a magyar zeneéletben?}


\textsuperscript{307} “The Trombone and Tuba Faculty of the Liszt Academy since 1897,” Exhibit Plaque.
8.3 Creating a National School – The first Hungarian method book

Four of the leading trombone professors in Budapest are credited with creating the first original Hungarian trombone method book in the mid-twentieth century. Dr. László Ujfalusi from the Liszt Academy, András Péhl who taught at the same institution and was in charge of the music education majors, and József Perlaki from the Music Conservatory High School in Budapest; later György Zilcz joined this group as well for the third edition of this method book. Zilcz was Hőna's first teacher. All of these pedagogues were also active performers. Ujfalusi and András Péhl served as principal tuba and principal trombone of the Hungarian National Opera Orchestra, respectively, and György Zilcz was principal trombone in the second opera orchestra of the same institution. In Budapest during that time the two opera houses with orchestras, the Erkel Opera House and the National Opera House, worked separately, but belonged to the same overarching institution, The Hungarian National Opera Company. Prof. József Perlaki was a retired member of the Radio Orchestra.\textsuperscript{308}

Ujfalusi, Péhl and Perlaki wrote the first original Hungarian trombone method book. It was published in 1956 under the name “Harsonaiskola” (Trombone School). The second and third volumes written by Ujfalusi, Péhl, and Perlaki and Ujfalusi, Péhl and Zilcz respectively were published in 1960 and in 1966.\textsuperscript{309} Hőna talks about his former teachers and the gives an introduction to the

\textsuperscript{308} Hőna, interview, 2014.

“Trombone School” method books:

My very first method book I used was volume one of the Ujfalusi-Péhl-Perlaki Harsonaiskola [Trombone School]. The book was intended for beginners, with the first pages addressing basic concepts such as sound conception, posture and correct embouchure and breathing [there is a drawing of a diaphragm and oral cavity]. The book I think is very good, well-envisioned and well thought out with very useful exercises including many scales and etudes connected to scales. The trombone method was very much based on musical ideas. Ujfalusi-Péhl-Perlaki was Volume One and Two, after that Ujfalusi-Péhl-Zilcz were involved in volume Three. By the time of Volume Three, the etudes got pretty tough.310

The authors argued that a unified national trombone school was necessary to standardize the style of Hungarian trombone teaching and to elevate the level of trombone education to correspond to the ever-growing demands of the modern musician. In the foreword of the first edition of the “Trombone School,” signed on October 12, 1955, Dr. Ujfalusi remarks:

The demands of the modern orchestral writing nowadays require a high technical maturity from the trombonist. The goal of this book is to elevate the students technically and give them opportunity to connect better with live music. We use the music of pre-classical composers in our exercises as well as popular, folk music known to everyone, therefore creating a connection with the youth to attract them to musical art.311

According to Tivadar Sztán the usage of folk melodies in the new “Trombone School” method book was a very important educational element for young students since they could make a connection to the folk music easily:

It helped because as young students, we knew a lot of folk music so we were able to relate to those melodies easier. It facilitated learning correct pitch and clear intonation because we already knew these melodies. It also enhanced

310 Hőna, interview, 2014.

the clarity of the rhythm, the study of the rhythm, for the same reasons. It helped a lot. We studied a lot of folk music in school, so everyone knew these melodies. For example, as a student at the Liszt Academy we had to learn one hundred folk melodies for our folk music class.312

Several years after the first volume was published, the Ujfalusi-Péhl-Perlaki trio completed the second volume of the “Trombone School” and these two volumes became the basic trombone method books used at the Liszt Academy and in other music schools in Hungary from the mid 1950’s onwards.

Another milestone in the establishment and solidification of the Hungarian trombone school occurred in 1981 with the publishing of Ferenc Steiner’s Everyday Exercises for Trombone, also known as “The Green Book” due to its green cover. Steiner wrote this method book during the years he taught at the Liszt Academy. In the preface of the method book he notes the following:

In this book I publish my teaching experience gained over the last twenty years. The exercises in my book ensure a gradual development of instrumental technique by daily practicing. In constructing a methodological system I have aimed at a gradual increase in range, breath capacity, flexibility and endurance, the correct position of the tongue and the increase of articulation speed.313

Steiner and Tivadar Sztán have worked together extensively to find new methods to improve the quality of trombone teaching in Hungary. “Steiner and myself talked about trombone a lot and we were constantly thinking and debating about how to do things better, how to be more technically efficient on the horn,” remembers Sztán.314

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312 Sztán, interview, 2014.


314 Sztán, interview, 2014.
The “Trombone School” volumes and Steiner’s “Everyday Exercises for Trombone” are widely used today, and they have laid the foundation for a strong, unified Hungarian Method for the years to come.

8.4 Hőna and the American Trombone School’s influence

Hőna’s experiences as a student of Cramer at Florida State University and later as a guest artist in ITA workshops have had a tremendous impact on the Hungarian trombone school’s development. In 1978, upon Hőna’s first return from the US, Hungarian trombonists and brass players alike, eager to learn about the American trombone teaching methods, continuously surrounded him. Hőna was selflessly sharing his American experiences and by his elevated and hugely improved playing quality, he has given the example of American trombone playing back in his native country. “His impact on all of us was enormous through his playing and everything else he brought back from the US,” remarks Tivadar Sztán.315

The bass trombonist Sándor Balogh, a friend and colleague of Hőna’s in the Radio Orchestra and in the Hőna Trombone Quartet remarked:

We were mesmerized listening to his stories and listening to the new things he has learned in the US. He has an amazing sound and always had. His sound was the model for everyone in Hungary. He was sharing his knowledge with us.316

Robert Káip, former student of Hőna and colleague in the Radio Orchestra, comments that Hőna showed the trombonists eager to learn the new techniques he

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315 Sztán, interview, 2014.

had learned in the US. “The blow freely concept was essential for his teaching and playing and I learned a lot from him in lessons and especially by sitting next to him in the orchestra,” mentions Káip.\textsuperscript{317} According to Káip, the Liszt, Kodály, Bartók, Dohnányi and Weiner Leo tradition in the Hungarian musical culture is very strong. When it was combined with Hőna’s influence and the introduction of the American school, it created the perfect musical and technical blend to generate a world-class brass school. Péter Pálinkás, founding member of the Budapest based Corpus Trombone Quartet, said the following in regards to Hőna’s influence on brass playing in Hungary:

His playing and teaching had an enormous effect on all of us and we can also thank him a lot in regards to promoting Hungarian music and culture around the world. When Hőna was young, nobody played Hungarian trombone solos here at home [Hungary] and he was the one to really drive the local composers to start writing for us trombonists.\textsuperscript{318}

In his doctoral dissertation titled “An Analysis Of Multiple Playing Techniques”, György Givicsán, Trombone Professor the University of Szeged School of Music credits Hőna with introducing the American brass playing techniques in Hungary.\textsuperscript{319} According to Givicsán, hundreds of Hungarian brass players and trombonists have benefitted from the 1980’s onwards from Hőna’s teachings of the American brass school. Givicsán adds that in 1982, Frigyes Varasdy, Trumpet

\textsuperscript{317} Káip, Róbert, interview by Zsolt Szabó, Budapest, Hungary, July 2014.

\textsuperscript{318} Pálinkás, Péter, interview by Zsolt Szabó, Budapest, Hungary, July 2014.

Professor of the Liszt Academy, released the Hungarian translated version of Philip Farkas’s “The Art of Brass Playing” book, which also had a positive effect in the development of the Hungarian trombone and brass school.\textsuperscript{320}

Indisputably, Hőna’s influence on Hungarian brass playing was and still is unparalleled, and his contribution to the advancement of a unified Hungarian brass school is unequaled to this day. Through his exemplary playing and teaching, Hőna has elevated Hungarian brass playing to a world-class level. Today, the brass students of the Liszt Academy are consistently among the top contenders in major international competitions. Hőna summarizes the state of Hungarian brass playing:

We had to create the school ourselves from the playing styles and traditions surrounding us. We had the tremendous musical culture and background but the instrumental technical part was missing. We created our own Brass culture and style, which now we call our own Hungarian style. This is my opinion and my conviction about this matter. I consider that the Hungarian musician is intelligent and has a tremendous musical heritage to be proud of and from where to cultivate its musical development. I believe we managed to put together a very serious and very musically tasteful brass school for the present and the future generations to come.\textsuperscript{321}

8.5 Hőna’s recognitions: awards and prizes

For his extraordinary contribution to the advancement of the Hungarian musical culture, Hőna has received numerous awards in Hungary and abroad throughout his long career. In 1992, for example, Hőna was awarded the Liszt


\textsuperscript{321} Hőna, interview, 2014.
Ferenc Prize by the Hungarian government. This prize is the highest government recognition for significant contributions in the field of music.

In 2002, Hőna was awarded the Artisjus Music Association’s prize. The association established the award in 2001 with the goal of recognizing important individuals promoting contemporary Hungarian music.\textsuperscript{322}

In 2010, Hőna received the highest recognition offered by the ITA by being honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award. According to the ITA, the award (Figure 22) recognizes "people who have distinguished themselves by their
contributions to the trombone profession over a long career.”

In the article titled “Gusztáv Hőna – 2010 ITA Award Winner” from the Journal of the International Trombone Association author Bruce Gunia remarks: “When the ITA bestowed its award on Gusztáv Hőna, it recognized his influence not only on the brass traditions of Hungary but on the trombone worldwide.” In 2010, Hőna traveled to Houston where he was presented the ITA award during the annual International Trombone Association’s festival. In an interview given to the Hungarian newspaper Fidelio in 2009, Hőna reflecting back to his career declared the following: “I feel that as a trombonist I have achieved everything I wanted, therefore as a player I don’t have any unfulfilled dreams.”

In 1988 and in 2013, Hőna received the prestigious Bartók-Pásztory Award (Figure 23, 24 and 25) at the Liszt Academy. According to Hőna, the award was established by Bartók’s widow, Ditta Pásztory as recognition for outstanding contributions from individuals or ensembles to the growth of Hungarian musical culture. It is a significant achievement in any individual’s career to be recognized with such a high honor, especially twice.

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Figure 22. ITA Lifetime Achievement Award (2010). Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.
Figure 23. Bartók-Pásztory Award 1 (1988). Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.
Figure 24. Bartók-Pásztory Award 2 (2013). Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.
Figure 25. Receiving the Bartók-Pásztory Award (2013). Photo courtesy of Gusztáv Hőna.
As a solo artist, Hőna was awarded the bronze medal at the International Trombone Competition organized in Toulon, France, in 1977. He states, “It was a great experience to compete with the top European players at the time, and that’s where I met many great players, people such as my good friend Branimir Slokar.”326

In April, 2016 Hőna was inducted among the members of the Hungarian Academy of the Arts.

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326 Hőna, interview, 2014.
Hőna’s playing and teaching has influenced numerous people all around the world. He has been a student of trombone and music all his life and his teaching and performing have inspired countless musicians to dream for improvement and further advancement in their profession.

A musical ambassador of Hungarian contemporary brass music, Hőna is responsible for the introduction of the Hungarian trombone repertoire to American and worldwide audiences. This repertoire was a fresh musical language, incorporating Hungarian folk music sonorities and the traditions of Bartók and Kodály. Hőna is equally responsible for introducing Hungarian musicians to the American brass playing style, undeniably elevating the brass playing level in his home country.

A believer in destiny, Hőna feels that all the major events in his life have had a meaning in shaping the path of his life and his career’s trajectory. Finding his uncle’s trombone in the attic of his home led him to the variety of schools he attended, culminating with the Liszt Academy where he is teaching today. The great friendships he had with fellow musicians led to the formation of his chamber groups. Winning the job in the Radio Orchestra and being part of the Hungarian National Radio’s organization led him to meet many of the leading contemporary Hungarian composers, which in turn created countless solo concert opportunities. Finally, meeting and developing a deep relationship with William Cramer led to his rising to become an internationally recognized artist.
These events had a profound effect on Hőna’s life and he declares his satisfaction with everything that happened:

I feel that so far I have had a wonderful life, and I feel that I’m still in pretty good physical shape. I would like to teach till I’m seventy years old, and after that if I’m still able to do it I’m hoping to achieve the Prof. Emeritus title within the Liszt Academy. Most of all I wish to be healthy and to have strength to continue teaching. I’m proud of all these events in my life. If I would start my career again now, I wouldn’t change anything, I would do everything exactly the same.327

Now in his twenty-sixth year as Professor of Trombone at the Liszt Academy, Hőna hopes to continue inspiring and teaching the next generations of students.

Tirelessly sharing the wealth of knowledge he has gathered in a formidable career of close to fifty years, Hőna’s legacy will live on in the history of the most significant Hungarian brass musicians.

“Blow freely”

327 Hőna, interview, 2014.
Figure 26. Hőna being interviewed by the author (2014).
APPENDIX A: DISCOGRAPHY

LP discs:


CDs:


5. Gusztáv Hőna with the Pro Brass Ensemble, “A’La Carte,” recorded 1986, Atemusik, HCD 93002, CD.

7. Gusztáv Hőna with the Pro Brass Ensemble, “Heimatlieder,” Atemusik, HCD 93003, CD.


15. Over 400 minutes of recorded solo music in the archives of the Hungarian National Radio. Most notable recordings are the Frank Martin: Ballade; Darius Milhaud: Concert D’hiver; Pergolesi: Sinfonia, Johann Georg Albrechtsberger: Concerto for Alto Trombone; Ernst Block: Symphony for Trombone and Orchestra; Paul Creston: Fantasy and Hidas’s Double Concerto for tenor and bass trombone with Sándor Balogh, bass trombone and The Hungarian National Radio Orchestra with Ádám Medveczky conducting.
APPENDIX B: COMPOSITIONS DEDICATED TO GUSZTÁV HŐNA

Solo:

Anonymus; László Cidra, arr.: “Old Hungarian Dances from the XVII century.”


Chamber Music (Hőna Quartet and Hőna Ensemble):

András Szőllősy, “Quartetto per Ottoni,” score.

Endre Székely, “Quartet for trombones,” score.

Ervin Jereb, “Quadriga,” score.


Frigyes Hidas, “Signal for large brass ensemble,” score, 1981.\(^{328}\)


János Másik, “Déli Bánya,” score.

József Sári, “Bücsú Glenn Gouldtól,” (Good Bye to Glenn Gould), score.

László Dubrovay, “Quartet for trombones,” score.

Miklós Kocsár, “Quartet for Trombones,” score.

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Everett, Tom, correspondence to Gusztáv Hőna, personal collection, December 8, 1990.


Malek, Miklós, online interview by Zsolt Szabó, February 11, 2016.


Sauer, Ralph, phone interview by Zsolt Szabó, February 6, 2016.


“The Trombone and Tuba Faculty of the Liszt Music Academy since 1897,” Exhibit Plaque, Liszt Ferenc Music Academy, Budapest, July 23, 2014.

Thomas, Jeff, phone interview by Zsolt Szabó, February 1, 2016.


