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*Natalia Samotos-Beirle (Germany, Heidelberg)*

**PAGES FROM MYKOLA KOLESSA BIOGRAPHY:  
CHAMBER INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC –  
PERFORMING PRACTICES AND COMPOZITION  
(AFTER „MEMORIES” BY M. KOLESSA)**

The career of Mykola Kolessa – a composer, conductor and a teacher lasted for more than seven decades and can be learned from many sources. Much shorter, and sometimes episodic is his practice as instrumentalist musician, which, in fact, remains almost unknown. From "Memories" by M. Kolessa we learn about his first solo performances and songwriting attempts (piano trio), as well as performances with the orchestra and the piano trio which he organized together with plastuns in school. Kolessa was a good pianist – a soloist and akomponiatorom, as a teenager he played the horn, and as a student in Prague – the timpani and xylophone in the student orchestra.

His element was the orchestra. But in the chamber genre he created his most modern instrumental compositions being influenced by the Prague Conservatory (1924-1931) and inspired by the first contacts with teachers and fellow students.

Kolessa started his piano lessons before he went to school – he had a private teacher in Lviv first, and during the Russian occupation of Galicia (1914-1917) in Vienna, where he later attended school where Marietta Jelly taught. From 1913 to 1923 Kolessa was a student of the Lysenko-Higher Music Institute. The Institute was to train professionals, the staff was qualified top-notch musicians, however, children from families with

moderate income could attend classes too. Kolessa studied piano playing first at the family of Helena Yasenytskoyi (1913-14) and after returning from Vienna in 1917 at Maria Krynytzka's . When choosing a piano repertoire as his priority side piece was shaped. Even before the regular classes, six-year M. Kolessa gave vent to his imagination, tried the piano to express what he saw and imagined. His fantasy artwork was gratly influenced by „History of Ukraine-Rus” (1908) by Mykola Arkas. As a pianist he made his first appearance in public in the fourth grade school (second year of studies at the Institute). At school parties, apparently dedicated to Shevchenko anniversary, he performed the play „Curiose Geschichte” from the compilation „Notenbuch für Klein und Gross”. He was overwhelmed by the mood of curious adventures so characteristic for teenagers. He enthusiastically played all the pieces of the „Children's Album” by Tchaikovsky and the „Pathetique” by Beethoven (Sonata c-moll Pathetique, op.13). It was erformed at the students' concert in the Lysenko-Higher Music Institute in the winter 1919.

He continued to act as an accompanist: [...] in the seventh or sixth grade at some of the shows I accompanied student Yurkov Piasecki. He sang „Oh, Werbo, Werbo” in the interpretation of Liudkevych. Kolessa had good mentors and piano, he was encouraged by Basil Barvinsky and Stanislav Lyudkevych. Due to the lack of teachers of brass instruments, he trained to play the horn himself. He received the instrument from S.Lyudkevych, who taught at the Institute of Theoretical items. Liudkevych's ambition was to create a band of students of the Institute. Kolessa himself tried to learn to play specific instruments. In public, it took place only once, and the episode did not go unnoticed.

From 1917 to 1923 Kolessa studied in the Academic Gymnasium GG. At senior courses of high school boys sang in the chorus. They sang both with and without musical accompaniment, both folk songs and classics, such as Quartet „Tychyj witer powiwaje” by Mykhaylo Verbytskyi. Kolessa sang the bass part. In 1918, at the third course of the Gymnasium he became a reservist and organized small orchestras. mostly the performed folk songs aurally. Rehearsals were held at the former Stavropigiysky Institute, where dancing parties took place. His passion for singing is not surprising, because the choral traditions are very viable in Ukrainian art. But forming a band of amateurs was far from being an easy task. Guys were used to choral music – in church, at home, in social life, and were musically gifted. Homemade instrumental music was not an exception in Ukrainian families. Kolessa remembered his father visiting the family of John Turkevich, all members of which were very musical

In Gymnasium Kolessa organized his piano trio. Besides him, there were two more participants: amateur violinist Migal and cellist Paul Puliui (son of the famous physicist and inventor Jvan Pul'uj), who were Kolessa's fellow students. At that time Kolessa wrote his first musical composition, which was approved by Barvinskyi. It was performed at the festival of Plast. There survived a photograph of 1922, in which Kolessa, Migal, Puliui perform in trio.

In Prague Kolessa was a fourth year student of the Faculty of Philosophy (studied musicology with Zdenek Neyedli) at Charles University, visited the the Michailo Drahomanov Ukrainian Pedagogical Institute, where he took piano lessons with Theodore Akimenko. He was a student of department of conducting and composition at the conservatory, and at the advice of his uncle Alexander Kolessa attended lectures and seminars as an advanced student at the Ukrainian Free University.

Chamber music was part of his life, leisure and professional development in Prague. Arriving in Prague in September 1924, he rented a room in a house where friends gathered together every Thursday played music. In the last years of the School Conservatory Kolessa performed with a company of students who gathered in a private room in a suburb of Prague in the house of his friend and classmate Mashtalizha.

During the second year of the Conservatory Kolessa wrote Piano Quartet for violin, viola, cello and piano (d-moll op.4 Allegro risoluto - Presto - Tema con variazioni) together with highly skilled Vitezslav Novak (1929/30). At that period he, too, is gaining an experience of orchestral playing. In 1928 he voluntarily took a course of playing the kettledrum and played in a student orchestra of Prague Conservatory. Considering making conductor, which requires studying psychology musiciansn, he made a detailed acquaintance with the works performed by an orchestra, such as the ballet „Petrushka” by Igor Stravinsky (1911).

Kolessa was also taught by composer Alois Haba at the Conservatory. Of the international recognition was his theory of microinterval, which A. Gaba experimented with in his writings and in instruments designed on his own. M. Kolessa showed Gaby Scherzo his piano suite (op. 3 „Passacaglia, Scherco a Fuga” pro klavir, 1929). [...] *I played it a scherzo, he listened and approved. I do not remember what he said, I remember that he responded very well. It all comes itself for those who seek and do not need a special encouragement. He provided a competition that drew young people, that allows to reach out to a new, revolutionary .*

All his written in Prague works were performed by top-notch musicians – Piano Quartet in interpreting Ondřičkova-quartet consisting

of Alfred Holeček, Josef Peška, Drago Šojanec, Molislav Köck. „Trinkets” (in Czech, Malickosti op. 2, 25<sup>th</sup> May 1928), and piano suite (op. 3 „Passacaglia, Scherco a Fuga” pro klavir) were performed by Ian Erml (later known Czech pianist) on the 1st of June, 1929. The next day the review appeared in several different Czech weeklies: České slovo, Venkov, Demokratický střed, Česká hudba. His works received detailed analysis. The musical quality of Kolessa’s compositions caught the attention of such critics as Karel Haba, Brother Alois, Joseph Cuban and were noted for technical dexterity of a young Ukrainian composer and the value they provided for Ukrainian folklore.

**Keywords:** *children, youth and young years of Kolessa, ensemble performing, social competence.*

### Література

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