

Ilona Kovács:

"To conduct Beethoven-, Brahms-, Bruckner-, Mahler-symphonies for a year
and then to die!"

Contributions to Sándor Jemnitz's youthful portrait

Sándor Jemnitz (1890-1963) was one of the most respected music critics in Hungary from the 1920s. He was a composer, a conductor and a poet, as well. However, he considered composition as one of his most important activities. In addition to writing music notes and reviews, the greatest part of his works – besides his extensive correspondence – is in his diaries. He wrote diary notes on a daily bases. As if writing to his best friend, he confessed his most intimate feelings without having to fear of breaching of confidentiality.

In the 20th-21st Century Hungarian Music Archives in Budapest, there are fifteen diaries written from autumn 1910 until the composer's death. This study gives a summary of the period between 1910-1914.

After promising composition studies with Hans Koessler (Budapest) and Max Reger (Lepzig), the 23-year-old Jemnitz started his career as a conductor in little town theatres in Brema, Baden, Scheweningen, Iglau, Chernowitz and Allentsteig. His work, however, brought him neither satisfaction nor professional challenges. He wrote bitterly about his desperate wish in his diary: "*To conduct Beethoven-, Brahms-, Bruckner- and Mahler-symphonies for a year and then to die!*"

After depressing months and even years, in 1912, the young composer got an invitation from Arnold Schoenberg to study composition in Berlin. The Jemnitz diaries are accurate chroniclers of the consultations with Schoenberg.