ABSTRACT


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This study presents a historical overview, analysis, and performance guide for three compositions for flute by Slovak composer Pavol Šimai, specifically his Sonatina for Flute and Piano, Duo for Flute and Violoncello, and Pezzo da Concerto for Flute and Guitar. Šimai is considered one of the most prominent Slovak composers of the 20th century. His music was broadly performed and publicized in Slovakia until his emigration in the 1960s. Since then, his music has been well-received in his new home, Sweden, and Western Europe, but neither Šimai nor his music have received widespread acknowledgement in Slovakia, other Eastern European countries, or in the United States. Indeed, his music, and consequently his life, was affected by the socio-political change that characterized the late 1960s in Slovakia.

The historical overviews of the three compositions relied on interviews with the composer and a firm understanding of music history, and are offered to provide greater understanding of Šimai’s flute repertoire and the opportunity for better interpretation and performance of his music. Analysis revealed that Šimai employed specific styles and performance practices for each composition, ranging from folklorism to serialism, and each composition varied significantly from the others. Analysis also revealed that Šimai used tonal
centrality, atonality, classical forms, and free form in the specific compositions for flute. Šimai’s sense for long, phrased melodies, large intervallic leaps, complex rhythms, and varying tonality were determined to be the most prominent aspects of the three selected compositions, and the source of their overarching diversity.

Considering aesthetics, Šimai indicated that he had always enjoyed the sound of the flute, and consequently sought to create music that was light, pleasing, and very challenging. The suggested grading of each piece, when compared to other graded guides of standard literature, supports the belief that the selected pieces are on par with other pieces already considered “standards” and should be considered for greater performance. And, the suggested practice guides, complete with exercises and performance suggestions, will enable future performers of these pieces to overcome the technical challenges presented in each.