

KATALIN INCZE G.: PORTRAIT OF A COMPOSER

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SUMMARY. The aim of our study is to examine a complex issue, namely, the scarcity of female composers as a phenomenon, highlighting several historical and social factors that have led to the peculiar situation of our present time: women's social role has been discriminated against, and they have been excluded from the artistic world. For the longest time in history, art was the privilege of men. This situation has in some ways improved and changed, but to this day, when we talk about composers, we almost certainly think of men. This study analyses the biography and work of Katalin Incze Gergely, a prominent figure in Cluj's musical life, a composer, conductor, and music director, while also highlighting the fate and role of contemporary women composers in the musical field. The important stages and milestones of her career are mentioned; her relationship with music gives us an insight into what it means to be a woman composer today in a world that once prevented women from pursuing their creative aspirations.

Keywords: Katalin Gergely Incze, female composer, composing, contemporary music

Motto:

Katalin Incze G.:

“Music instantly creates an atmosphere on stage.”

Introduction

The world of composers has always been shrouded in secrets and mystery; thus, musicologists have been confronted with countless questions regarding their lives and work throughout history. Where did their inspiration come from? What made them compose music? What are the experiences or tragedies that have played a major role in the creation of such grandiose works as Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 5* or Johannes Brahms's *A German*

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Requiem? Answering these questions has become a matter of course, as the greatest musicologists of our time continue to uncover new and valuable insights in their persistent and painstaking work. But they all had one thing in common: all these composers were men.

If we look at the diverse periods in the history of music, we can conclude that few women have grabbed pencil and paper, or that only a few names have remained part in the public consciousness: Fanny Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann, Alma Mahler, Nadia Boulanger, Germaine Tailleferre or the contemporary British film composer Rachel Portman are among the most representative female composers. The rarity of women composers is due to several reasons, as it has long been assumed that women are not capable of writing music, that they lack the ability to create. The role of women was thought to be different, which is why social and political circumstances may have contributed to the absence of the concept of women composers as such in today's public and cultural memory.

The marginalization of women's creativity has been and, unfortunately, still is present everywhere, hence, the number of women composers in Europe is also much lower. Those who have stood up for their rights, who have worked hard to be among the best, have had to fight social discrimination and various cultural judgments. Men have always been dominant in the arts and it has been difficult to make a breakthrough: the cult of genius has favored men almost exclusively.

Despite these negative statistics, it is worth mentioning that in Germany there is a publishing house, Furore Verlag, which has been promoting exclusively the publication of works by women composers for over 30 years, since its foundation in 1986. Many events are organized around the world to promote women composers and their works, including festivals in Hartford, Melbourne, and Switzerland, and in our country, the Oradea Women Composers Festival, which has already had twelve editions.

If we look at the composing scene in Cluj-Napoca, we can say that it has always been rich, but here too the balance is tipped in favor of men. The names of composers such as György Ruzitska, Sigismund Toduță, Albert Márkos and Ede Terényi all ring a familiar bell. Cluj-Napoca had a serious school of composing, of which Sigismund Toduță was one of the most important innovators. The composer from Cluj-Napoca took the teaching of composition to a new level and, as a teacher of composition from 1949 to 1973, passed on extraordinary intellectual principles to new generations.

One of the most important milestones of his academic career was the establishment of doctoral studies, thanks to him a serious school of musicology could operate in Cluj-Napoca. Under the tutelage of Sigismund Toduță, several important composers were formed, including Cornel Țăranu, Vasile Herman, Dan Voiculescu, Constantin Rîpă, Péter Vermesy, and Ede Terényi.

Table 1

NAME	DATE OF BIRTH – DATE OF DEATH
Ruzitska György	1768-1869
Gheorghe Dima	1847-1925
Farkas Ödön	1851-1912
Augustin Bena	1880-1962
Delly-Szabó Géza	1883-1961
Csíki Endre	1888-1949
Marțian Negrea	1893-1973
Farkas Ferenc	1905-2000
Viski János	1906-1961
Veress Sándor	1907-1992
Sigismund Toduță	1908-1991
Max Eisikovits	1908-1983
Jodál Gábor	1913-1989
Márkos Albert	1914-1981
Harry Maiorovici	1918-2000
Liviu Comes	1918-2004
Szóllósi András	1921-2007
Tudor Jarda	1922-2007
Ligeti György	1923-2006
Zoltán Aladár	1929-1978
Vasile Herman	1929-2010
Kiskamoni Szalay Miklós	1930-2003
Junger Ervin	1931
Cornel Țăranu	1934
Hary Béla	1934-2011
Terényi Ede	1935-2020
Szabó Csaba	1936-2003
Emil Simon	1936-2014
Csiky Boldizsár, Sr.	1937
Constantin Rîpă	1938

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NAME	DATE OF BIRTH – DATE OF DEATH
Vermesy Péter	1939-1989
Hans Peter Türk	1940
Dan-Alexandru Voiculescu	1940-2009
Valentin Timaru	1940
Czakó Ádám	1940-2013
Hencz József	1942
Cristian Misievici	1943-2020
Irányi Gábor	1946
Orbán György	1947
Adrian Pop	1951
Selmeczi György	1952
Szegő Péter	1954
Demény Attila	1955-2021
Könczei Árpád	1959
Szalay Zoltán	1959
Nicolae Teodoreanu	1962
Adrian Borza	1967
Ioan Pop	1967
Lászlóffy Zsolt	1973
Gyöngyösi Levente	1975
Tudor Feraru	1976
Ciprian Pop	1977
Șerban Marcu	1977
Răzvan Metea	1978-2021
Cristian Bence-Muk	1978
Matei Pop	1980
Dan Variu	1983
Țună Sebastian	1987
Török-Gyurkó Áron	1989
Alexandru Murariu	1989

Selection of male composers connected to Cluj-Napoca

Table 2

NAME	DATE OF BIRTH
Alma Cornea-Ionescu	1900-1977
András Enikő	1945-2016
Sofia Gelman-Kiss	1948
Incze G. Katalin	1952
Makkai Gyöngyvér	1953
Gabriela Aștileanu	1954
Dora Cojocaru	1963
Magyari Zita	1965
Iulia Cibișescu-Duran	1966
Naina Jinga	1967
Laura Ana Mânzat	1969
Anca-Mona Mariaș	1974
Murár Éva	1974
Anamaria Meza	1980
Cora Miron	1989

Selection of female composers connected to Cluj-Napoca

The list of composers was compiled based on one essential aspect or criterion: regardless of their nationality, the composers' connection to Cluj-Napoca (origin, studies in the city, life path or stage of life that connected them to Cluj). If we compare the above tables, we can conclude that, as far as female composers are concerned, there are fewer composers active in the so-called "Treasure City". The current panorama of composers in the city includes Iulia Cibișescu-Duran and Katalin Gergely Incze, exceptional composers whose works are regularly featured in the main musical venues. The attached table shows that music history sources hardly ever mention any female composers before the 20th century, which also confirms the fact that when we talk about women composers, most people cannot give a single example of such a figure.

In the following pages, we will present the women composers listed in the table, including a detailed biography of Katalin Incze G., and the important role she plays in the musical life of the city that is Cluj-Napoca.

Dora Cojocaru was born in 1963 in Baia Mare and started her studies at the local music school. After graduating her secondary school, she studied composition at the Cluj-Napoca Academy of Music with Cornel Țăranu. She began her teaching career in her hometown, four years later becoming a teaching assistant at the Cluj-Napoca Music Academy. She also perfected her skills in Cologne, before emigrating to Canada in 2002, where she continued her academic career. Dora Cojocaru is an active composer whose works have been performed in more than 160 concerts in Romania, Hungary, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Ukraine, Italy, France, Switzerland, the United States of America, etc.

Iulia Cibișescu-Duran was born in Deva in 1966. She is currently teaching score reading at the Academy of Music in Cluj-Napoca. She has composed numerous works, pertaining to chamber music, choral works, and symphonic works. During her university years, she studied composition with Cornel Țăranu. She is also active as a conductor and has conducted in Germany, France, Italy, Brazil, Bolivia, the United States, Israel, Serbia, and Australia. Her conducting skills have been honed by the greatest conductors, having studied with Petre Sbârcea and Emil Simon. Her compositions have won the approval of several prestigious juries.

Zita Magyari was born in 1965 in Cluj-Napoca. She started her musical studies at the Sigismund Toduță Music School, majoring in piano, and was accepted to the Gheorghe Dima Music Academy, where she studied composition with Ede Terényi. Her repertoire focuses on sacred choral works, but also includes children's operas (e.g., *Csipike lakodalma / Csipike's Wedding*, *Lyukasmarkú Tündér / The Clumsy Fairy*), piano pieces, orchestral and concert works.

Éva Murár was born in 1974 in Târgu Mures. In 1992 she was admitted to the Music Academy in Cluj, where she studied musicology with István Angi, Ferdinánd Weiss and Ede Terényi, among others. Her work is structured around choral works, including *Add me*, *Uram*, based on a poem by the Transylvanian Hungarian writer and poet Mária Berde, and the choral works entitled *Szeretnék példát venni tőle*, composed for the poem of the same title by Sándor Reményik. She composed her first choral work in 1994, with which she won a special prize at the Zilah Church Composers' Competition. She has also written music criticism, including for the daily Cluj-Napoca newspaper *Szabadság*. She dedicates her composing talents to the enrichment of Transylvanian Hungarian choral literature.

Gyöngyvér Makkai was born in 1953 in Târgu Mures. After her studies at the local Arts School, she studied at the Academy of Music in Cluj, where earned a degree in Musicology. After her pedagogical experience in Bihardiószeg and Budapest, she became a teacher of music theory and solfeggio at the Târgu Mureș Art School and the University of Arts belonging to the same city.

Katalin Incze G. – Her Triple Role



² Katalin Gergely Incze is a Hungarian composer and conductor from Romania. She is an important driving force in the musical life of Cluj-Napoca, thanks to the multiple roles she actively embodies she works tirelessly in shaping the musical talents of young actors, she is the choir master and conductor of the Hungarian Opera of Cluj, and, finally, a composer. Born in Sfântu Gheorghe on 19 April 1952, she grew up in a family of musicians: *“I didn’t choose this field, God chose it for me. I was taught to play the piano from the age of two and a half. I grew up in a music-oriented family. I learned*

*a lot from my father. Even if I hadn’t gone to school, I would still be making a living in the field from what he taught me. He played several instruments and was principal bass in the Braşov Philharmonic Orchestra.”*³ Katalin Incze Gergely began her musical studies at the Braşov Music School, majoring in piano, and was introduced to conducting at a very young age, when she learned the basics from conductor Ilarion Ionescu Galaţi. In 1970 she gave a concert at the Braşov Philharmonic under the baton of the Romanian conductor, performing Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *Piano Concerto in C minor* K.V. 491. In 1971 she was admitted to the Gheorghe Dima Music Academy in Cluj, where she studied composition with master Sigismund Toduţă. At university she studied with such renowned figures as Vasile Herman, Cornel Țăranu, and János Jagamas. She completed her music studies with a degree in musicology and a minor in piano. Her final examination work, *Symphony in Three Parts*, received the highest marks. She was very attracted to the conducting career and attended various master classes, including a professional training course with the famous Russian conductor Yuri Simonov in 1998. She obtained her doctorate in music in 2012, her thesis focusing on a topic related to musical

² Photo by István Bíró.

³ Hajnal Tóthfalusi, *A tradióióból élünk (Interjú Incze G. Katalin zeneszerzővel, karmesterrel) / We Live Based on Tradition (Interview with composer and conductor Katalin Incze G.)*, jatekter.ro (April 30, 2018).

theatre, entitled: *Retorica vocalității între declamație și cânt, fundament al expresiei muzicale teatrale/ Between Declamation and Singing - Vocal Rhetoric, the Foundation of Musical Theatrical Expression.*

She has performed several piano recitals, many of which featured her own compositions. She has collaborated with many musical institutions in Romania, including conducting orchestras in Brașov and Satu Mare, and has also conducted numerous performances abroad. She has conducted notable performances in Hungary, Sweden, Canada, and the United States of America.

Since 1981, she has been a piano accompanist and conductor of the Hungarian State Opera in Cluj-Napoca. Initially, she worked as a ballet piano accompanist at the institution, then accompanied the soloists and over the years she has also appeared before audiences as a conductor. She enjoys conducting works by contemporary composers, as she considers it important to support 20th century and contemporary



composers, as evidenced by her musical direction of the premieres of several stage works, such as the 1992 premieres of the one-act operas *Parafarm* by Attila Demény, and László Vidovszky's *Narcis and Echo*, which she conducted in celebration of the Bicentennial of Drama and Music in Cluj. She also works frequently with composer György Selmeczi, whose works she has conducted throughout her career. In 1991-1992, she was invited by the Csíky Gergely Theatre in Kaposvár to conduct *The Nutcracker* musical (written by Péter Gothár, Zsuzsa Kapecz and composed by György Selmeczi), which was performed in Strasbourg in 1993, and was also broadcast several times on Hungarian MTV. *“For me, every task is equally precious, and the harder it is, the more challenging it is, because the more I can prove myself. I prefer to conduct contemporary works that are meticulously composed, cathartic and ennobling in their artistic message. I can ennoble myself through these, and I feel that this is when I am at my best, alongside the musicians, the company, and the audience. It’s also what the critics appreciate.”*⁴

In addition to her artistic career, she also plays an important role as a teacher, teaching at the Hungarian Drama Department of the Faculty of Arts of the Babeș-Bolyai University since 1993, where she trains young

⁴ Idem.

acting students. The actors who have graduated from Cluj-Napoca in the last quarter of a century have studied and formed under her guidance, under her highly temperamental and consistent leadership. As an educator, she considers educating the new generation to be important and a matter close to her heart, as she does her utmost to pass on her knowledge to her students. They receive not only a musical education from her, but also valuable advice that is valid for mastering their profession: discipline, humility, and respect for the arts.



During her musical career, she has also received ample recognition as a composer. Her ambition to be a composer was evident from an early age, when she wrote a piece for her father's birthday as a child, and it was clear from that time onward that she had a remarkable

sense of musicality and talent. Her refined and unique style is reflected in the extraordinary triple role she plays in her profession. She has composed the music for famous Hungarian TV films such as *Az elhagyott szemüveg* (*The Lost Glasses*, directed by László Cselényi), *Fülemüle* (based on the short story of the same title by Dezső Kosztolányi, directed by László Cselényi), *The Secrets of the Veil* (based on Vörösmarty-Görgey), *New Buda* (directed by Zoltán Horváth G.). In addition, she has also composed accompanying music for theatre productions such as *Don Quixote* (2004, written by László Gyurkó, directed by István Kövesdy), *The Imaginary Invalid* (1999, written by: Jean-Baptiste Molière, directed by Attila Keresztes), *Master Chandelier* (2009, by Mária Kozma, directed by Attila Keresztes), *Leánder and Lenszirom* (1993, by Andor Szilágyi, directed by Attila Keresztes), and Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Cabal of Hypocrites* (1995), directed by Gábor Tompa.

She has composed music to the poems of János Arany, Sándor Petőfi, Mihály Vörösmarty, Pál Gyulai and Endre Ady. She has composed more than 100 musical pieces: stage works, chamber music, orchestral works, and TV film soundtracks.

“We live based on tradition and train ourselves within modernity. If the musical world didn’t embrace traditionalism, I don’t know if they would still be selling staff paper sheets at all. From the great composers of old, we learn the stylistic elements, where that chord comes from, the melodic line, those musical passages. All of this inspires the next chord progression, something that births something new.”⁵

In her triple professional capacity, she cultivates a dynamic and highly demanding musical approach to her profession, whether it is a composer’s recital, or a highly complex opera performance, in preparation for which she leads the rehearsal process in various roles.

“A musical coordinator can be a piano accompanist, who is responsible for training the soloists, or a choir master, if the choir needs musical training alongside the soloists. And finally, the real musical coordinator is the conductor, who brings all this work together and brings it to the stage, and that’s how the performance is born musically. I do all three.”⁶

Her exceptional musical talent and her humbleness towards the profession make her one of the outstanding figures of Cluj’s musical life, as she is not only a leading figure in classical music events, but also a valuable teacher of the next generation.

Translated from Hungarian by Juliánna Köpeczi

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⁵ Ibidem

⁶ „Fontos a technika, de játék nélkül meghal az egész” /” Technique is important, but without play everything collapses” – interview with Katalin Incze G. (by: Keresztes Franciska), színhaz.org (February 6, 2017).

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