

Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music
Doctoral School (7.6 Art of Music)

Zsigmondné Pap Éva

„The Musical Life in Szeged between 1945 and 1960”

DLA Thesis Abstract

Budapest
2008

Szeged survived the Second World War relatively undamaged so the reorganisation of regular cultural life could soon start again. The establishment of the State College of Music and the rebirth of the Szeged National Theatre were events of the utmost importance in this process. The establishment of the State School of Music was due to the ambitious plans of the town councillors.

At the beginning the school had to cope with serious personnel problems. Written records of this period are rather insufficient therefore the recollections of those elderly teachers who are still alive, and are able to and willing to talk about this period, are of crucial importance. Apart from the relevant documents of the Public Record Office of Csongrád County and the Ministry of Religion and Education, the first yearbook of the College of Music was also vital. These documents provide us with an overall picture of the pedagogical programme, its structure, and the teachers of the school. Personal recollections helped to give an idea of what the school's daily routine, the concerts, and the personality of the teachers were like. Although the changes in the political system did not make it possible for the school to develop any further at that time, the fact that the institution took a prominent role within the region is in a great part due to its industrious teachers and artists.

Later, the introduction of the secondary music school education noticeably devalued the teacher's degree, which was easy to get anyway. It was the state music school, the practising school, and the private teaching organised by musician groups that ensured the system of primary education in music. Enjoying the support of the town and the council, the young and dedicated teaching staff of the music school (given the name Liszt Ferenc School of Music – today named after Király-König Péter) grew stronger. Having measured up to its objectives, it then created a strong basis for the musical life in Szeged.

During the time after the war choral singing gathered new momentum as well. The choral movement frequently entertained hundreds of people, on significant events even thousands. The quality of the teaching was also good, being represented by some nationally acknowledged semi-professional ensembles. The leaders of these groups were in most cases connected to the teacher training college.

The theatre is traditionally the most popular institution of cultural life in Szeged. From the early forties, the state, mainly for prestige reasons, strongly supported the theatre in Kolozsvár. The theatre was modern even by the standards of the most advanced theatres in Europe. The outstanding professional standard was guaranteed by Viktor Vaszy himself. The accomplished company of the theatre, many of whom had fled to Szeged to avoid the war in Budapest, settled down in Szeged together with Vaszy. Some of the precious scene stock, costume stock, score collections were taken to Romania, while the rest stayed in Szeged. The documentation of the late forties is also incomplete. Even so, we have a fairly precise picture of the operation, the singers of the theatre and of the primary role of Viktor Vaszy himself. The whole musical life was deeply shattered by the dissolution of the theatre, usually put down to political reasons. Temporarily the musical education also got into a difficult situation as many musician-teachers from the orchestra left the town. After some years of strenuous hard work (1949-1957) Vaszy returned to Szeged, and with his excellent administrative power and company-building work he laid the foundations of the high quality operatic performances that have been built on since.

From the early fifties the systematic organisation of concerts became regular. This is when Gyula Lippóy began his 25-year-long post as the local deputy of the National Philharmonia. Besides a number of foreign artists, a lot of Hungarian nobles (famous people) appeared on the stages of Szeged with such frequency that some of them were considered as permanent participants in the local musical scene.

The reconstruction of the Open Air Theatre raised the rank of Szeged within the cultural life of Hungary. The Open Air Theatre Festival, which had already existed before the war, was meant to be a special meeting point of East and West. The producers of the performances always tried to maintain a balance between light and more serious pieces in the programme while taking advantage of the facilities of the Dóm Square. On a number of occasions the audience could see world-famous ensembles, singers and conductors on stage. The programmes of the Open Air Theatre Festival were not only adapted to the facilities of the square itself but to the spirit of the time as well, as a result of which they have kept their popularity, and are still the most frequented programmes of Szeged.

The 1958 beginning of this programme series and the review of the first years are the matter of my thesis. In my dissertation I used some family records and documents as well.