

ABSTRACTS

Csilla Csákány

■ ***The Opera Today: Dialectics of the Stylistic and Genre History***

Keywords: *opera, contemporary opera, musical experience, vocal expression*

Of all musical genres, the opera brings the most excitement and passion. It has always been the most extraordinary, stimulating, and most faithfully depicted virtual world of its time, built on the simple idea that music can deepen, amplify or even purify the meaning of words. Browsing throughout historical ages, aesthetic categories, and musical examples drawn from masterpieces, this essay is based on personal experiences and generated by the calling of the unbroken love for the genre. After perceiving the expressive power of the musical experience, the emotional stimulation of the music and the symbolic nature of the characters in an opera, the author offers a brief historical survey of the development of vocal expression regarding this genre. This is followed by a presentation of creative adventures from contemporary creations with an outlook on coeval Hungarian works under the protection of the genius loci.

Zoltán Cseh

■ ***Give Us This Day Our Daily Belcanto: Ideas, Memos and Notes about Old-New Operas, 2017–2019***

Keywords: *opera, fandom and obsession, cognitive trap, camp sensibility*

This passionate, extravagant and provocative essay is dealing with the mysteries, status and poetical analysis of concrete opera performances and recordings. The main focus is on the eccentricities, ambivalence and the survival strategies of the genre, on the cognitive trap of the special sensibility and obsession. There is a cornucopia of precise observations, esprit, bon mots and mélanges of homage and irony at once. The author uses the genre as the source of self-recognition and life-saving, supportive hedonism, and pro-

vides a special kind of personal meditation and exuberant art-diary.

Emese Egyed

■ ***Soul Portal: Bluebeard's Castle in Cluj/Kolozsvár, Autumn 2006***

Keywords: *Béla Bartók, Bluebeard's Castle, Cluj/Kolozsvár, György Selmeczi, Hungarian Opera of Cluj*

Béla Bartók was inspired by the text of Béla Balázs when writing his opera titled *Bluebeard's Castle*, which had its premiere in 1918 in Budapest. The Hungarian Opera of Cluj presented his work in Autumn 2006, under the direction of György Selmeczi. The opera orchestra and the soloists (János Szilágyi – Bluebeard, Mária Molnár – Judit, Zsolt Bogdán – the minstrel) have given outstanding performances, and the originality of the direction was enhanced by the images of memory – the wonderful women, who seem insignificant in everyday life – and the representations of the psychological depths. After this modern rendition of the opera, Miklós Bánffy's 1918 Budapest version of *Bluebeard's Castle* has also been reconstructed in Cluj, with the singers and the orchestra of the 2016 version. This essay analyses the 2006 production in a dramatopoetic context, based on the reminiscences of the involved artists and of the author.

Bálint Horváth

■ ***"This Is Our Endgame": Kurtág György's Beckett Opera***

Keywords: *Beckett, fragments, monody, Monteverdi, La Scala of Milan, apocalypse*

György Kurtág, who was born in the Banat region of Romania, is one of the most important living composers worldwide, one of the last great survivors of the avant-garde generation of the 20s. In 2010 news got out that the 84 year old master has started to write his first opera. It took him no less than eight years to finish this work, the opera version of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*. Both the wider public and the international media had great expectations before the premiere, held on 15 November 2018, at

the Scala, and the event can be regarded as a great moment in the history of music. This essay summarizes the circumstances of its creation and offers some perspectives for the musical analysis of the opera.

József Zs. Katona

■ ***The Metamorphosis of Tosca: Birth and Transformation of a Dramatic Story***

Keywords: *Tosca, opera, Sarah Bernhardt, drama, music, music history*

The present study tracks the evolution of a dramatic story in different artistic branches – drama, opera, film, and other adaptations –, which have used a real historical event as their pretext. First, it presents the actress Sarah Bernhardt, whose fascinating and charismatic personality enchanted men and inspired the playwright Victorien Sardou to model it as the character of Tosca. With this short biography, the reader gains insight into the life and career of Sarah Bernhardt and a better understanding of Tosca's character. The essay also tracks the transformation of the dramatic text into the opera libretto with several changes and compressions, highlighting the similarities and differences between the drama and the opera score. There are also arguments suggesting a real historical adherence as an important dramaturgic element. Finally, the author presents the advantage of the film adaptation over the theatre piece and the opera, mentioning some important productions with famous singers, conductors, directors and opera companies.

László Kolozsi

■ ***The Feeling of Ecstasy: The Sensual Aspect of Wagner's Music***

Keywords: *Richard Wagner, Joseph Campbell, myth, weird artist*

The starting point for this study is Joseph Campbell's opinion: the modern man basically lives in an age devoid of myths – and is looking for it in literature, as well as in music. The superhero movies of the younger age group are something quite similar to Wagner's

Ring for the older ones. Wagner's is still one of the most important works for anyone who wants to understand his own story through myths. According to the author, Wagner's weird, strange personality is inseparable from his works.

Pál Koudela

■ ***Emil Rombauer, the First Director of the Girl's High School from Braşov/Brassó***

Keywords: *Emil Rombauer, Braşov, high school, director, modern outlook*

The Rombauer family came from Lőcse (Levoča), where for centuries they lived their secluded, hard-working burger lives until, by the end of the 18th century and then into the 19th century, the family gradually moved away from the Saxon community of the former Upper Hungary. Among other family members, there was a well-known painter in St. Petersburg, and many came to the United States or Brazil, where they were coping well with difficult situations. However, perhaps a lesser-known family member, Emil Rombauer, was taken to Braşov, where, as the first principal of the newly founded High School, he not only had to compete with Romanian higher education, but was not welcomed by the Saxon and Hungarian communities either, being considered a stranger. Emil Rombauer did not only build a new school, but also represented a modern set of values, a pluralistic approach, and neutrality. Through his perfectionism and unyielding workmanship, he recruited a teaching staff of outstanding quality, and supported the latest teaching methods, the local press, painters, a local vocal ensemble, and many other areas of culture, often from his own resources.

Gyula Szép

■ ***Thoughts on the Hungarian Opera of Cluj/Kolozsvár***

Keywords: *opera, Hungarian minority, Cluj*

Gyula Szép is the director of the Hungarian Opera of Cluj and one of the

people with the deepest knowledge on the topic of Hungarian musical life in Romania. His account of the opera production of the Hungarian minority of Romania first presents the prestigious past of this genre in Transylvania, which obliges the artists working today to do their best. Then he also discusses in detail the problems of the present. The opera director considers it especially important that the best contemporary opera works are present in their repertoire. Szép looks forward to the future of the institution, seen as an era marked by a growing number of quality performances.

Máté Szilvay

■ ***The Opera of Freedom: Philip Glass – Robert Wilson: Einstein on the Beach***

Keywords: *opera, variation, landscape, technology, relativity*

Einstein on the Beach is one of the iconic operas of the 20th century that shaped our ideas about what an opera can be. This paper is an analysis of the visual, musical and textual structure of the work, arguing that the creators chose variation as the key method in every single layer of the theatrical experience in order to create a meditation-like experience about our age seen as the age of technology.

Rita Szűts-Novák

■ ***Educational Efforts of Jenő Vass in Berettyóújfalu in the Period of Dualism (1870-1883) in the Light of the Contemporary Press***

Keywords: *Jenő Vass, Dualism, Berettyóújfalu, history of education, culture, micro-history*

From today's perspective, it can be stated that the political changes that took place in Hungary in the second half of the 19th century had an overall positive impact on the cultural and educational

sector. The basis this micro-historical study was the discovery of how successfully Jenő Vass, the polymath (a pharmacist, a journalist, and a newspaper editor) has served in the field of education in the first decades of Dualism in Berettyóújfalu. After describing the educational situation of the Dualism era of Bihar, the author examines the way in which Vass followed his role model Ferenc Kölcsey in his work intended to "impress and create" for the sake of public education. The biography compiled for this paper gives an insight into local educational issues, the press of the era, including the functioning of the "Bihar County Bulletin", and provides a holistic view of Dualism in Bihar.

Hajnal Tóthfalusi – Gábor Tompa

■ ***"I Would Like to Direct an Opera in Each Season"***

Keywords: *public, complexity, cultural consumption, opera, theatre*

Gábor Tompa, the world renowned theatre director, is one the iconic personalities of Transylvanian Hungarian theatre. In his conversation with the theatrologist Hajnal Tóthfalusi, he reflects on the relationship between opera and the theatre, as well as on the characteristics and the importance of contemporary opera productions. Tompa emphasizes that the opera still has an authoritative role in the consumption of culture, although our school curriculum could not be thought of as especially friendly or open toward the opera. Although the public is often not sufficiently educated and motivated, the great theatre directors are increasingly turning to the opera, discovering in it the unusual aesthetic complexity of expression. Thus, Gábor Tompa himself is planning to direct new opera productions throughout the world.