

Be worthy of the Creator

Talking with the composer György Szabados

Tamás "Kobzos" Kiss talking with György Szabados and Zoltán Bicskei In the Hungarian Arts Academy on the 19th February 2009

Tamás "Kobzos" Kiss:

I cordially welcome the composer György Szabados and Zoltán Bicskei, one of the Academy's members from beyond the borders, from Magyarokisznya (today: Serbia). I am happy to share the responsibility with him, since he knows the world of jazz much better than I, but I have been linked with György Szabados in friendship and co-operation for the last 26 years. I wanted to start with a *bon mot* because I found something today which could well characterize the oeuvre of György Szabados: "Jazz days Debrecen, 7th September 1981. Not for broadcasting, not to delete. Registration no., etc., head of department for music: Imre Kiss." This is a tag borrowed from the radio and I think, it can describe well the whole career path of György Szabados. That we know him but we rather shouldn't know him. His music cannot be broadcasted on the radio but still, is forbidden to delete. This was very typical for the political culture of those days and we could even mention with a bit of a positive slant that at least it could not have been deleted. Very good that these tapes remain at all, since many of us were convinced at the time of political change (1990) that they had disappeared for ever. Thank God, this was not the case. The first evidence in a CD was *The Wedding (Az esküvő)* published in 2002 by Hungaroton, went quite unnoticed. I couldn't even purchase it and found it only recently in the Hungaroton shop in the MOM Park. But I bought the record in those days, in 1974. The reason why I did, was maybe because of the writing of the title using the old Hungarian letters (rovás), which was quite remarkable so many years ago. It was about this time that we first met: in Transylvania, in the region Mezőség, in the village Szék, in the house of the second musician of the gipsy band, István Ádám. László Lajtha recorded the folk music played by one of his forefathers in 1941 in Szék. From this place the dance house movement began in May 1972. Could this reference be our starting point? How did you land in Transylvania? What experiences did you have during those times?

György Szabados:

I don't know where to start. One of my students, Tamás Váczi took me there. Unfortunately he died in the age of 31 years and left four children behind. He married someone in the family Áprily (*Lajos Áprily and his son, Zoltán Jékely*

were important Hungarian poets in the 20th century). The very talented young man tried somehow to serve the Hungarian culture. Earlier he had visited Transylvania with friends a few times. I didn't need much urging because our family had a vivid music life at home. This music life had a double nature – if both can be divided at all. Due to my mother, who graduated in the Music Academy as a singing teacher and choir leader, the Hungarian music tradition was kept alive, while following the line of my grandfather and mainly of my grandmother, the European musicality was represented every week in our home. I was growing up in this environment, I used to sing in a choir as a child, etc. and they tried to fit me, a child with improvisative talents, within the scope of "normal music". From time to time, I got spanking because I refused to practice and to play what I was supposed to play because I only wanted to improvise. But since the "vaccine" of Hungarian music given to me by my mother had a strong effect, it was obvious that sooner or later I should arrive in Transylvania. The more so because this was the time when the Hungarian consciousness started to awaken among the Hungarian intelligentsia, and it may be not accidental, this awakening that began through the music. The reason is not that literature shouldn't be able to take over the leading role, but rather because the young generation started to drift towards certain directions following the music's double nature. Music is halfway from this world, but rather not from this world because it is mysterious and linked to the emotional world, and through that it is probably one of the very authentic voices of the Creator. This refers to the huge responsibility which any occupation with music involves, especially in such a culture which has been struggling for centuries for her existence, and where the youth finds itself again and again due to mysterious reasons – and so it happened with this "Transylvania fashion" too. About 40 years ago, due to the wonderful bands and bandleaders still alive in those days, this music tradition started to emerge, and their music had been recorded in the last minute thanks to the help of several people. We visited the neighbourhood of Szék, Ludas, Vásárhely several times. But the truth is that I was already totally immersed in the representation and happy cultivation of this world, of the Hungarian spirituality, the Hungarian thinking in music. Because at home where such music was playing, where we used to sing, me as a child, there all this had a cult.

When you pronounced the word "jazz" – it was for me almost an offence because this expression is surrounded by problems in Hungary. And in the context of my works, the use of this word needs weighty explanations. I went to grammar school when I started to get to know the so-called world of jazz thanks to co-students who played music themselves. In the house of one of these musician friends lived Antal Bolvári, the Olympic champion in water polo, member of the famous group of Dezső Gyarmati. They had the opportunity to go around in the world; Bolvari was a jazz-fan and he brought along records from abroad. My friend borrowed them, we listened to the music – and it had a special magic. During those times the regime of Rákosi officially promoted the Hungarian folk music, which served as an instrument for political influence, while we identified jazz as the voice of the free world.

Of course, it was more than that and I could mention Bartók as an example. The biographies of Bartók and the analysis always mention that Bartók was interested in jazz but nobody revealed what was behind it. In all his activities as a music scientist, Bartók tried to find out in which phase of man's social evolution the history of music had its starting point. Several times he stated that once a primordial music existed, and therefore he studied the musics in the Carpathian basin in the course of this primordial music. He tried to collect the identity marks of this music. So, when he heard jazz for the first time – which was not yet a real jazz, it was rather spiritual gospel surfacing in Western Europe at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries, thus the music of the blacks being an absolutely sacral music - he realized that it was a direct musical effect with primordial force and a sound somehow very near to Creation. He was deeply touched by it. This part of jazz, which later became worldly and the music of the catering industry, interested him and actually me too because its main characteristic is that it always depicts the human suffering. Even then when it brightens up to a huge joy, and carries away the listener like a whirl, and he thinks it is like taking part in good entertainment. For the blacks this is the music of life's resiliency, of the praise of existence, and through that it is the music of the praise of the Creator. During the regime of Rákosi this was for us not only that we wanted to "hear" freedom, but at least I could hear and realize that freedom has its limits and they are defined by the Creator. Today I make the clear commitment that there is only one real and true freedom: the God-freedom. All the rest is a jester's licence serving interests, other matters, other tendencies. When we came together with the boys to play music, there were conflicts. Normally we listened to and imitated the records, we improvised on the basis of these records, or often we imitated even the improvisations, or I composed the music differently, included some Hungarian tunes, which the others didn't like. It was an interesting phenomenon, which got out of hand after a while but these symptoms have existed already and it is obvious for those reasons.

This is how it started, and now, forty years later I can say that jazz music was for me such a "touch", which I suppose, every composer who tried to think about the world has experienced. I refer to those who didn't exercise composing as a profession, but those who lived as a thinking creator in music. The special attitude emerging in these musics had touched me, which was prohibited during those times, and today almost extinct: the improvisation, the phenomenon of improvisativity. I consider improvisativity as one of the most important phenomena. Because of this conviction, I had to fight a lot. At the beginning the response was disapproval by all: the official music critic, the music profession, and the family. All the while I was happy when I could stay alone or whenever I crossed this border - the border of disapproval – and one reason more to practice it. Mainly at home. In a family where sonatas had been played every Wednesday and operas had been performed by my grandmother, mother, and a couple of opera singers turning up in our home. So, when in this place I started to play what I felt, it was a tough situation. I used to improvise since my childhood and the appearance of jazz endorsed this improvisative disposition and developed it

into a practice. My grandmother (whose framed up photo is still hanging above my bed) was the only person who listened to my improvisations with interest and even took notes and talked about it. This improvisation went so far that I organized a group which used to play for a while completely boundless, and I acquiesced that that was jazz music. This lasted as long as the revolution and freedom fight of 1956 had occurred. I consider it as a sacral event. One of the revolution's consequences was a change in the mind-set of the people. My way of thinking and my life till that time were channelled in the trust of certain rules, of certain apologetics. In the world around me – including family members and friends being absolutely anti-communists - several persons have been detained and submitted to show trials, etc. These events had their depth. Everything had changed after 1956 since it became obvious that it was necessary to act categorically against this world, even to revolt. There was no chance for a revolt in the daily life, therefore I revolted in the music. A man with the name Karába was a player in the football team Fradi, and there was a saying about him because sometimes he scored a goal even from 40 meters. So it was written in the newspaper: his foot went off (like a rifle). Taking over this metaphor I used to say that one is living in a way that his brains go off sometimes like Karába's foot. We don't know why and how – but something has emerged and hits the bull's eye, it is the solution. In my case, it was nothing else than certain musicians having some special in-born capacity, and were willing to make a group and to forget everything (learnt before). To start playing what we felt. We were not aware what this was but we felt an unbelievably happy revolt. The results were impossible cacophonous salvos - in fact the resistance, this deep revolt coming from the subconscious went off. All the results of music history were wiped out: no tonality, no acoustic rules, no counterpoint – only the inner feelings were active. We all belonged to the same generation. In 1956 I was 17 years old, thus, almost of the adult generation. We became adult thanks to the revolution, since such events accelerate the spiritual-psychological maturing process enormously. We made fantastically revolting music and I learned much later that this is called free music in America– but we had no information about that. Today I know that this free music appeared first among the blacks and those days it was in the music, the equivalent of the civil rights movements, thus they also had reasons to revolt. But I was not satisfied with it because I regarded it as absolutely boundless and in a certain sense, not serious.

Once something happened, I think in Balatonberény where we spent our yearly holiday. I learned later on that even Bartók collected folk music in the region; the women used to wear national costume even in the seventies. Our family being churchgoers I listened to the old women "pulling" the songs. Endlessly, without measure, without time. I told to myself: this is wonderful, as if we were flying! This was the moment when I started to deal with that layer of the Hungarian music tradition, which was most easily accessible. Thanks to my mother's profession, we had on the bookshelf two volumes of song collections for elementary schools composed by Zoltán Kodály. While travelling in the country, I recommended that the music teachers take out

these books – the last time they were edited was before the war – what a brilliant work! Everything is included from the Gregorian music up to the music of the Tchuvash people – but the first volume is only about the Hungarian music.

So, this was the foundation upon which I could base two themes, which led to the composition of the piece with the title "Axe psalm", which later brought a lot of acknowledgement and also much sorrow.

During those times several festivals had been organized in San Sebastian: film, theatre, and music festivals. It is an interesting place; the Spanish government was operating there during the summers, although it is a Basque town. I talked a lot with the director of the festival of San Sebastian. He was a self-conscious Basque. He even wrote a book in four volumes about the history of the Basque people and he always insisted that Hungarians and Basques are related. I was invited to the music competition organized within the festival, where it was stated that one had to apply to participate, and the performed music must be composed for this occasion, having a duration of less than 20 minutes.

But twice I was not able to take part with my musicians because the Hungarian authorities made the invitations disappear. These events represent important features of that period and of that conspiracy, which we are experiencing until today. Upon arrival of the third invitation I didn't lose time and went to the "White House" in No. 1 Balassi Bálint Street and rang the bell of the main entrance. There a comrade looked out without greeting. I told him: "I am outraged". A popular film was played during those times "I go to the minister" – which gave me the idea. Comrade Garamvölgyi – if I remember well – came down. He was the leader of the chief department for culture in the central committee. He said: "Comrade, write it down briefly, and send the letter to my address". He would investigate the matter. I did so and got the answer two weeks later: "you are completely right, but now we cannot do anything anymore." We needed a visa for Spain and transit visa for France, Germany, and Austria, and to obtain them took about a half year. I informed the Spanish organisers accordingly and they invited me again for the next year. I didn't show this letter to anybody but went immediately to the international concert board and told them that I was invited again. "Oh, Comrade Szabados, we will do the necessary". It took so long that at the beginning of July they no longer knew where they kept the invitation. The competition was at the end of July. Then I went to the ministry to see Comrade Mrs. Barna, the leader of the music department, and told her that for several years, etc. etc. But I didn't show her the letter. "Well, let us call comrade Orosz." But comrade Orosz is on leave. „Well, in this case, we cannot do anything." Upon that I produced the letter. Half of comrade Mrs. Barna's face became white, the other one red. She started to scream to call a locksmith and the door of comrade Orosz' office was forced open. The invitation was in his desk. I had to go over to Interconcert immediately to settle everything. There they seated me and I heard them talking on the phone to comrade Zsigó that I was some important person because the ministry would take care of my direct flight to Madrid, and from there to San

Sebastian for 45 000 Forint. On the day of the trip I had received nothing yet. We were five of us, and they were all seated on the plane when I arrived running with the passports which had just been handed over to me. Due to the excitement, I had not eaten anything the whole day and became sick in the plane. There was nobody else in the plane, just the five of us. The stewardesses noticed my bad state and offered me sweet white wine and the tablet Deadalon. The plane landed in Zurich for refuelling and everybody had to get off the plane. Due to the wine and the pill I felt asleep. When the passengers boarded, they noticed that one of them was missing. They found me sleeping in the transit hall. So we arrived in Madrid and flew to San Sebastian on a domestic flight. The competition took place and we won the grand prix. With the hardest Hungarian music!

As soon as we arrived at home, I had to pay a visit to Interconcert to tell them about the event. I told them that we won the grand prix and the festival was loud with the praise of the Hungarians, and that I was very happy. The comrade told me to stop with this because from this it is just empty words. I noted this exactly because this reveals the conspiracy "from this it is just empty words, good bye". Shortly after this, a concert was organized in the Erkel theatre – Ferenc Sinkovits reported about it in Magyar Hirlap, and he certainly knows better – that it was in fact a staged scandal. At the same time, this was one of the biggest experiences of my life! We played the music performed during the competition. In the middle of the concert a lot of people stood up and started to throw apples and paper balls at the stage. The concert ended in a scandal, the doors were opened and everybody was running up and down. I tried to uphold the moral of the musicians; we played the music to the end and left the stage and went to the Művész pub. All the actors came and hugged us. We didn't understand why. Why? A scandal in the communism! It was an unforgettable thing. After that for years we were forbidden to play, but young musicians started to come and wanted to participate in this musicality. Then I already felt that I didn't play jazz, but I hadn't yet formulated what it was. Later I had to define it clearly.

After 1980 I was allowed to travel abroad. I realized that this categorization applied in Hungary didn't exist in Western countries. Thus, there music is music, even if it is jazz, even if it is symphonic music or free music. The judgement is based on the spirituality transmitted by the music, to what extent the music is profound and rich in substance. In the Western world other categories exist and jazz is in this sense– if we can separate them – the name for a very traditional style. A new musicality has been born with the jazz in the whole world; developed from the contact of many kinds of music and it implies everywhere the emerging, the renaissance of the tradition.

It is one of my hobby-horses – I even wrote a paper about the subject – that music is the first to evince signs of changes in the spirituality, but we don't care. The attention for music is nowadays totally thinned out. Music is used as a pleasure article even by the lovers of classical music - respect for the

exemptions. I know very few people with whom I could talk deeply about a big musical work for longer than 10 minutes.

Slowly it came so far that the director of the "Kassák Klub", a place which became a legend today – invited me. Kassák actually used to be a liberal club but the director was open-minded enough that he accepted me too. The first one who could grow and develop there was the stage director Péter Halász, who emigrated together with his company and settled in New York. The second was Béla Tarr, the film director, whose style can be discussed but who was still a very serious person. András Jeles landed there too, and some improvisative dance workshops had been formed. I was called in 1976 and some musicians with a similar mind-set came as well, and a work then began that lasted for more than 20 years. We met every Tuesday afternoon with the intention and effort to build up such a kind of musical expression, starting from the level of the human soul's and mind's direct manifestation, which had the main purpose to play music again from the depth of our hearts. This means no lies, and every sound which we produce must be without frills, and we must be accountable for it. This came together with discussions about aesthetic subjects, for example, about the fact that in the Orient a percussion instrument is made following different criteria than implemented in the West. A cymbal in the Orient is not made so that the smelted metal is alloyed and it can play. No, there the preparation takes 10-15 years following a secret recipe. From time to time, the metals were buried in the earth with a certain acid and alkali content having the expecting impact on the metal: when the instrument is beaten, every sound will have a full value, as if only one sound would ring in the cosmos, so that the sound is worthy of the Creator. This is also a criterion for how man is supposed to create a sound. When it is about improvisativity, then it is especially important because a later correction is impossible. It is different from the case when a music work is rehearsed 600 times, until it is played perfectly. (With the exception of a few brilliant artists capable of playing their instrument following the mentioned criteria.) The improvising musician must reach such a mental-spiritual state that when he sounds a tone, the music must be of full value. In addition, when he is improvising together with other musicians, then the whole system of relations must be so that it is worthy of the perfection which is working in Nature – therefore, it must be without frills. It was a serious work. If I wasn't 70 years old, I would write a book about it, because whatever happened there during these 25 years have been quite an interesting history and a psychological journey. Several musicians became musicians on this foundation. A few examples: Róbert Benkő, Ferenc Kovács, Pista Grensó, Attila Lőrinci, and Szilárd Mezei. Things have degenerated until today, so much so that the methodology of the mentioned development becomes well praxis and fashion, however without the necessary mental preparation.

I wanted to found a school, and I tried this and that. Mr. Földes, who used to teach music history at the Music Academy and listened to this music with interest, told me once about 20 years ago that I shouldn't try my luck with

musicians with Academy education; instead, for this music, we should train up our own "staff", which cling to this music and is engaged for it. It was wise advice. Of course, I tried my luck even with musicians with academic background – like the clarinetist Csaba Klenyán, awarded with Liszt price – because I would like this experience and music philosophy to enter into academic circles.

With a change in the subject I would say that this is the way of renewal tailored for the whole Hungarian culture: if it acts not as follower of old tracks but finds its way back to its own self-assurance; if it is able to restart from the seed, because things have to hatch and grow from there. The Hungarian world has been dismembered. There are however many such music cultures – this could be the subject of another lecture – which had been fed by this musicality, by this way of thinking. The *rubato* character itself – which we recognize in Beethoven's and Brahms's music, up to the very modern music and is regarded as a music phenomenon and as a general condition - is linked to the Hungarian music. When I dared to call myself a jazz musician, I had the idea of referring to the Hungarian musicality that it is wrong when a culture is completely closed because of the danger of inbreeding, and it wastes away just like diseases attack sooner or later a closed genetic pool. This principle may apply even more for cultures. Therefore, I investigated where the point can be identified in the Hungarian music tradition, which keeps up this closeness, and what sustains its openness. So we come to the *rubato* (phenomenon). The *giusto*, the dance music, always follows very exact and strict stylistic rules and safeguards strictly the identity of a music. The not-*giusto* music, thus *the parlando rubato*, the lament (or plaint) is totally different. Briefly, the musical rhythmic were the base, upon which I could find a satisfactory answer to my question. But this recognition opened a way towards another direction too. The idea occurred to me that according to the Vedic tradition music is vibration, and as is everything in the created world, it is simultaneously a quality category as well. And the whole system is supported by pulsation, by the rhythm. The quantum theory claims too that pulsation bears the whole creation. When music is as such double-natured, then the question arises: what about the *rubato*, the area of music which is not rhythmic, not linked to dance? I discovered it when one of my friends in the Theatre Institute offered me a video cassette showing dances from Bali. One of the dances is called *The dance of the princesses*, and I must say I don't know of any dance in the world which could be slower. Six or eight dancers in splendid dresses – the princesses – dance in a way that they float together in a barely visible, slow motion. It is the noblest dance with hardly any movement; there is only slight displacement, and still there is rhythm. I started to look for the element which makes them dance, since the music played for the dance hadn't any audible rhythm. I came to the conclusion that this is *music of the breath*. This music is not based on the drum, on the beaten rhythm, but on the *prana*, which propels the whole world; the rhythm of the sigh. Not touchable, completely spiritual, and at the same time sensual – this was the solution.

When a professional mourner is singing, there we can recognize the rhythm. On the one hand, the text has its prosody, which is the "parlando rhythm"; related to the Hungarian language, this means the rhythm of the linguistic euphony. It is simply surprising that nowadays almost no music works are composed for the Hungarian language. Hungarian composers write music for English, Russian, or German texts (again respect for the exception). At the same time, it is hard to imagine a music applied to a language which could be more stable and stronger than the Hungarian language, furthermore, with a Vedic depth. Thus, one is the prosody of the language. On the other hand, one must consider what the professional mourner (the wailer) feels, which is a musicality based on the sighs of his heart's emotions. This world is able to meet any other musicality, culture, or mind-set in the most harmonic and most god-fearing way. I remember the title of a book of Ferenc Karinthy: *Leányfalu and its surroundings* because it refers to a way of thinking, which says that I am in the centre and I can understand the world only from this point. The Hungarian culture and the Hungarian mind must be shaped accordingly; if ever there will be a Hungarian renewal, it must develop following this perspective.

The Hungarian way of thinking is an absolutely old and cosmic perspective; through this everything in the world can be captured, but also has to be integrated, otherwise it remains provincial. Today's Hungarian musicians are frightened of the provincialism, which includes a binding to things Hungarian, and this may be the reason why we rarely find a composer who could adequately deal with the Hungarian tradition, whose genius we are talking about. This genius is able to sound again and again with a new tone, however in such a way that we can feel, hear, and grasp the secret like we feel the breath. For this, we must be able to adopt an integrating attitude. A genius is always universal, infinite, and boundless – these are divine notions; our created world however is a closed, limited, and finite world. We must know that, otherwise it couldn't be materialized and wouldn't be functioning. We have to find again the genius in ourselves, and the way there is through improvisativity. Why? Because it is not chained down through those apologetics and system of rules, which carry on the Hungarian arts, and accordingly tie down the whole existential attention. Therefore, I engage myself with the improvisativity because I consider it as one of the most important aspects of viability. When someone is crossing the road without being prepared for any possible situation, then he will be hit by a car within minutes, because he came to a crossroad – in the sense of decision-making – where he won't be able to find the solution. Thus, we must be completely prepared in every moment. Improvisation in the arts can avoid boundlessness and cacophony only when the genius of the given culture, and given form of phenomenon, is living in it. I feel and conceive the future in the context of this courage. This is a bit frank and open wording, but when we start and try to follow this path, we soon realize that this is the solution. The Hungarian poet Endre Ady wrote that great things are born only to those who

dared, and had the courage too. Yes, he wrote many wise phrases. We must have more courage than the courageous ones.

Zoltán Bicskei:

Now comes a musical illustration: *Ceremony music in the honour of our King, the Sun* (5 minutes). Performed by MAKUZ together with a choir from Beograd and the Liszt Ferenc chamber orchestra, in September 2005. in Magyarkanizsa. Tamás Kobzos Kiss is singing.

Tamás Kobzos Kiss:

This work had been composed in 1983 on behalf of the Spring Festival of the Hungarian Radio. The music was broadcasted live from the big hall of the Vigadó. (During those times the Hungarian Radio ordered a piece from György Szabados every year.) Later (in 2005), the music was played twice in Serbia: once in the National Theatre of Beograd and once in the Cultural Centre of Magyarkanizsa. It was typical of the situation in Hungary that this production, with the contribution of 40 people, couldn't be brought across the border to be played one more time.

Zoltán Bicskei:

According to the old moral, everything is fed by the heart's power. This production could be realised because the musicians played almost free, their hearts and souls were however engaged. Everything which can be considered today as real Hungarian culture, existing against the whole Hungarian society and the "superstructure" or parallel to them, draws its living energy from its own soul and from friends' societies. I was a student from Délvidék (today: Vojvodina in Serbia) and studied in Budapest between 1972 and 1976. When I heard for the first time Szabados' music, I knew immediately that this is the actual living Hungarian music. I supported the Hungarian situation of confinement with difficulty since I came from a province where we could breathe easier. I was looking for rebellion and everything which was contemporary, and was against this suffocating air. But in those days, as today, false things surrounded us. We were waiting for the saviour; we visited the concerts of modern Western musicians, also those of the Darmstadt composers, the concerts of the „Új Zenei Stúdió", but we got so fed up that it was a good preventive vaccination for our whole life. And when we finally bumped into this tolerated Hungarian music in a little, smoky club, it was for us a release, a real salvation. We couldn't understand, with what kind of concept they tried to lock it in drawers or home cages. I am afraid, soon there will be nobody to care for traditions with nourishing power. And then what will happen to today's music – and to us?

György Szabados:

Sometimes I listen to the music of contemporary Hungarian composers but I rarely come across something which – besides some magic tricks and curiosities – would engage itself for that sphere of experiences, in which we are living. Hamvas stated that after Beethoven's time any music which is not engaged for the essential problems of human life, is not music. We could say actually, that after WWII the world's music can be called *post-auschwitz* music. Following this, I mean in today's music I can hardly recognize the expression of the attitude of the "world of no-man's land", which is the Hungarian poet Pilinszky's world in his poesy, and Béla Tarr also articulates this world in his films. However, the whole Darmstadt school was busy with that too. By contrast, the Polish music for example: the Polish musicians didn't evoke the "nihil", however, what happened to Poland during WWII, is the horror. And still, while they were looking for a way to express their mental-emotional condition after the war, they remain god-fearing in every sound, from Penderecki to Gorecki and Szalonek; there things happened in God's tent – and whatever had happened, was made by man. I often discussed with actual composers who condemned Penderecki because – as they said – he sold himself to the Church because he fulfilled orders by the church. The person who claimed this, enjoyed I don't know how many times 10-millions forint support for the "New Music Studio" offered by the KISZ (Communist Youth Organisation) during the last 10 years of the Kádár regime. Thereupon I asked the question whether there was anybody who didn't compose his music by using the money of others. Then the company of that day vanished very fast. We have to search for a sovereign artist with magnifying glass. It is possible to compose music on mathematical basis, like the Greek Xenakis, or like the Italian Nono, who weaves the noise of factories into his music; but in my opinion one should speak about people and not about factories. Sometimes people ask me a provocative question: how the physician and the artist can be compatible within me. I use to say: when a physician is not an artist, he is not a good physician because one has to be born for healing too. And if the artist doesn't heal, he is not a good artist.

Today I find the presence of music and acoustic in the created world that important – even in philosophical sense – that I comprehend everything as music. When in 1983 we adapted the *The Sons turned into Stags* for the stage – it was a dance theatre referring to the revolution of 1956, in collaboration with Iván Markó - we had a dispute because I said that nothing is possible without music. Look at it, what motion can express without musical accompaniment! Of course, an Indian dancer or a pantomime artist or many dancers of high quality are capable of an artistic performance without music. But look at the majority of today's productions when music is turned off. We have tried it... Horrible! – said Iván Markó. Without music, there is no effect. Music interweaves the essence, the motion. Music articulates the beginning, the turmoil, and the death of everything, while everything which gives a sound in the world, tells of its fate. The personified sounding world fulfils the claim that I quoted from Hamvas: if a music

doesn't bear the basic problems of existence, it cannot pass for music. "I listen to as the grass is growing" – said the poet Babits. This is true but one must also know the silence. Once I wrote an essay about Hamvas' relationship to music. ([Béla Hamvas and the music](#)). He had the courage to ask such questions like, "what is the criterion of music?". He said that music has two criteria: it must contain inarticulate roaring and elementary amplitude. When we listen to Australian aborigines, or any other archaic community's expression, I can hear the inarticulate roaring in it – and this doesn't require a refined musical ear. The other criterion, the elementary amplitude, means that it is lifted above the material – an exact wording. When I am able to identify these two criteria, I can evaluate the fate of that sound. I used to give an example: when I am in this room and a cup drops in the kitchen, even if I cannot see it, I know that the cup has died. The thing, which is not china but a cup, has died. This is a level of reflection, which allows me to state that we can discuss about how Hamvas used to write, how he made use of the Hungarian language – but the culture, which during his lifetime he carried together, analysed, and set together and finally made sacred – that is an extraordinary huge treasure house.

One must be prepared for improvisation – but how? Kodály writes a whole chapter about improvisativity and properly scolds the improvising organists. He said, the organist's improvisation is good when it is fed from his soul. But they don't make the effort, they play only in accordance with the music theory's rules. This kind of improvisation is nothing other than the variation of a given theme. But I am talking about something deeper, that is why I call it free music. I distance myself from the name free jazz because it is not about jazz. It is about a very profound understanding of music. We must know that in every culture music has been born on the foundation of improvisation. This is the basis of all music. When the world acknowledges only the composed music, the written music, and beats the hand of the music student with a rod, it is equal to brainwashing, because this is the way to kill one's own musicality. The so called free music is about following: a musician sits down – there is no theme – and he is improvising, but since he is a composer, he is not frightened because he is prepared. My friend, Feri Temesi asked me once: how can you finish it? How does it happen? It was a provocative question, that I had yet to think about. If someone has the capacity of improvising, he doesn't think about something coming from his nature, he doesn't ask why and how he is doing it. But I was thinking about the question, and I came to the idea that here it is about time. When I start playing, I know already how the end will be. Because there is no time in us; time is born when we start playing, but the music exists without time, till the end. But we are living today in a world where we don't pay attention to this "timelessness" within us. We only try to adjust ourselves to the time outside, and we try to use it for our own necessities. However, our relationship to the Creator depends on it, how we keep alive this timelessness within us, and how it can nourish us. How we can remain children – to use a modern wording.

When I am improvising on the basis of a theme by Mozart, then I am obliged to evoke the world as it was in the time of the emperor Joseph II. I can make some steps right or left, but the whole event must move in the Rococo atmosphere. I don't mean this kind of improvisation. What I mean is the way that a composer begins to play (to present) a completely new world. This is the basis of every music. The fault and sin – I dare say that – of music education is that it fails to unfold the individual musicality existing in every talented person. The appropriate pedagogy for this purpose exists, and I wanted to found a school in order to change the situation where some people have the profession "music", and others sit and applaud when they are captured. My concept would be the further development of Kodály's idea and Jenő Ádám's concept, where music should belong to all. We must unfold the music in the people. And in doing so, we mustn't be either materialists or selfish. This could be a beautiful program – even for 100 years!

Translation by Marianne Tharan (September/October 2017)