

BÉLA SZILÁRD JÁVORSZKY: GYÖRGY SZABADOS – FORGOTTEN

SONGS [IN: NÉPSZABADSÁG, 22ND JULY 1996]

György Szabados– Forgotten Songs

The album cover displays a Japanese painting in the form of a winged altar. A musician is striding ahead in the moonlight while playing the flute. Aside, in a field of reeds a murderer is hiding, ready to jump. However, we feel that he won't be able to attack the musician. The spiritual duel is finished by the victory of the flute player, the music, the justice hidden in the arts. Several times, György Szabados, mentor and founder of free jazz in Hungary was also a target of "culling", the outcome being that his art was ignored. Thanks to the efforts of some dedicated allies, his almost forgotten compositions have been surfacing in the past few years. The compositions and the orchestrated form itself published on his latest CD: „[Elfelejtett énekek \(Forgotten Songs\)](#)“, are more than ten years old, still evoke a fresh spirit and remain timeless.

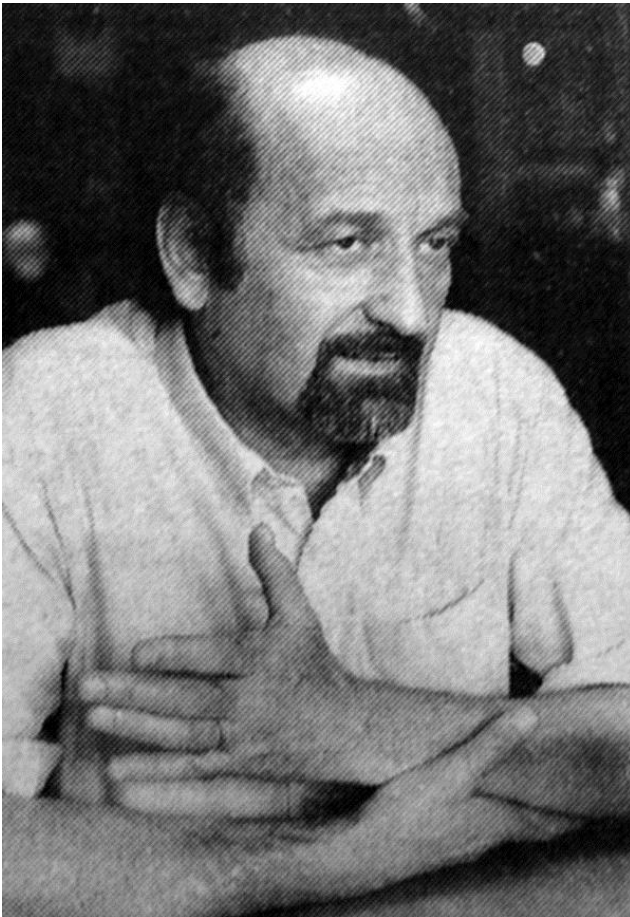


Photo: Szabó Barnabás

The standing and the role of jazz in Hungary have changed a lot in the last years – explains György Szabados. – Jazz in the „people’s democracy” was always a kind of a measuring tool for the moment’s wind direction: how strong, from which direction is it coming, to which direction is it going... Since we are living “only” in a democracy, arts have been heavily politicized even more, and are therefore permanently in an identity crisis, or better, in a deep crisis. In Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s environment, the emperor Joseph II represented the political entity who understood Mozart’s music perfectly, and he had a feeling for the style and height which this music signified. Today’s identity confusion is due to the fact that the yardstick, which arts must adjust themselves to (and unfortunately, they do so), and which finances the arts’ existence, doesn’t reach the high level and value-order of the ancient emperor; not even the mediocre standard of the past decades. Today, art has fallen to the level of everyday lecherous fashions, although it would be necessary to stand up now and become again autonomous. This masturbating state cannot be maintained for a long time.

- I mean, you cannot complain now because more albums of yours have been released in the last 5-6 years than in all your life.

Indeed, but there are much more in the drawer and it is a question whether they will ever be released. A lot of recordings of MAKUZ’s concerts are preserved in the Kassák Club. There, every Tuesday, we had a few hours of music rehearsals sustained by spiritual-mental exercises. There is some very good music stuff among these recordings – even when looking back today – which should be cleaned technically and could be released. But even written in notes, I have many compositions.

- Is it true that your recordings in the Hungarian Broadcast and Television have been simply disappeared?

Unfortunately, it is true. A friend of mine checked recently, and couldn’t find any recordings. In the Hungarian Radio I searched for them systematically, and after some lame excuses it became obvious that only a few tapes are left, poor in recording quality and therefore useless. At the time, if transpired that when Radio Bern wanted to conduct an interview with me, the Hungarian Radio replied to their request that I had no recordings after 1967. I became suspicious and started to check things, and discovered with sorrow that this time the Hungarian Radio told the truth. However, the radio is owned by the state and its task should be to keep, care for, and appreciate the works of Hungarian artists, their “traces” – which furthermore were ordered by the radio itself! This negligence would be unthinkable in the more civilized part of the world. So much for the socialist culture.

- Finally, your publicity is due to the fact that some enthusiastic youngsters were amazed by you and joined to release your works...

Fortunately, there were always such youngsters having dreams and ideas and who don't feel lonely when being alone. They kept their way of thinking and energy for better causes, and joined our spiritual environment, and started to collect and to publish these musical works. And so the publishing house Adyton was found, which can be interpreted as 'Ady's voice' (*Ady was an important poet at the beginning of the 20th century*) – on the other hand, the word means the innermost sanctuary in Greek mythology, the soul's intimate environment. These young men of course never had enough money and sometimes the enthusiasm trickled away, or the taste was uncertain, but it seems that the cause continues to live and follows its own natural path. Recently we were able to replace the Kassák Club (which disappeared forever) by Fonó Budai Music House, which is an outstanding sound studio too. And it seems that a CD series could be launched by the cooperation of Adyton and Fonó: the first product is our present album. The publishing house's concept implies the philosophy of the unity of folk music, contemporary music, and improvisative music. The most important division in today's arts is not the criterion whether something is elitist or not. The dividing line is whether it is serious or not. We live in a wasteful society and this thinking entered the spiritual world too. The poetic sphere disintegrates in every field because triviality prevails here too. The true spiritual forces don't follow this way. I am happy with the work with Fonó because their music life is not determined by accurate, theorizing, intentions outside music, but it results from the nature of things.

- On the album „[Elfelejtett énekek \(Forgotten Songs\)](#)“ you play in trio with Mihály Dresch and Tamás Geröly. As ten years' ago.

In the mid-eighties we have been playing indeed for a year in this group. Dresch has been member of Makuz for fifteen years maybe, Geröly joined us later, but he absolutely acquired the necessary way of playing music and way of thinking. The trio broke up because our playing together was not polished enough – we wanted too much its mere existence. In the meantime, Dresch has matured greatly, and perfected himself so that my compositions of those days sound different. And I was thinking, why shouldn't we brush up this formation (the trio) again.

- May we expect the brushing up of more forgotten songs?

For the centenary of Béla Bartók's year of birth, I composed a piece for the string orchestra, which I dedicated to his memory. We might record this composition, which was written 15 years ago and performed only twice. We were discussing freshening up my "secret" work from about 1956, composed in a time when we couldn't speak freely about the revolution. The situation where one could speak only secretly about this story is similar to the practice of the troubadours and bards who spoke about events that happened as if somewhere else. The "historic song" *, a genre in music history was perfect for the realization. The story of 1956 is sung in my composition by using a meta-language, accompanied by prepared piano and by flutes, thus, even in the music,

everything is suppressed, buried. We had to invent such a song-language, which makes the thing perceivable due to the non-understanding of the text. We have performed it several times, the last time being on the occasion of the 30th anniversary (of 1956) in 1986, at that time behind closed doors, with candle light. Maybe, soon it will be released.

**** The historic song is a specifically Hungarian epic, resp. musical genre, born in the 16th century during Hungary's occupation by the Ottoman Turks.***

Translation by Marianne Tharan (January 2019)