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25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FACULTY OF PERFORMING ARTS AT THE ACADEMY OF ARTS IN BANSKA BYSTRICA (SLOVAKIA)

The Faculty of Performing Arts (FPA) has been an integral part of the Academy of Arts (AA) since its establishment in 1997. The Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica is a university with artistic focus that provides higher education in several disciplines at its three faculties: musical arts (Faculty of Performing Arts), visual arts (Faculty of Fine Arts), film and theatre arts (Faculty of Dramatic Arts). One of its main aims is to form a creative, free, innovative space for students in which they turn their talents into a concrete art form under the guidance of excellent educators.

I. Faculty of Performing arts. Initially, playing on string instruments, keyboard instruments and singing were taught. Gradually, other fields of study were added, such as woodwind instruments playing, composition and choral conducting, percussion playing, and five years ago, the doors were opened to students of

musical singing. Currently, FPA AA provides education in three degrees: Bachelor, Master and Doctoral, and also it offers a two-year Additional Pedagogical Study for those, who are interested in receiving certificates for teaching artistic subjects (Bachelor or Master graduates).

FPA AA is excellently materially equipped. It has musical instruments, which can be lend to students during their studies, if necessary. For presentation and study purposes there are specialized artistic workrooms, two concert halls (Concert Hall and Kuzmány Hall), lecture rooms (including an opera studio, a musical studio, rooms for the choir conducting department, a piano duo classroom and classrooms for teaching percussion instruments), and classrooms for individual tuition. Students can apply for accommodation in a dormitory which is directly connected to the school. Also, they can use the services of the well-equipped university library.

The educational process is provided by qualified teachers, renowned artists, performers, conductors, composers and experts in the field of music-theoretical and academic subjects.

Since 2004, FPA AA has also provided its students and staff with the opportunity to participate in mobilities within the Erasmus+ program. The Academy signed 96 active inter-institutional agreements with universities from 22 countries around the world.

II. Study at FPA AA. As part of the three-year Bachelor's and two-year Master's degree programs, students can study in the field of musical arts both, Performing Arts and Composition.

In Performing Arts, students prepare for autonomous artistic activity in solo, chamber and orchestral performance, for leading artistic groups or, after completing Additional pedagogical qualification, also for the teacher profession at primary art schools or conservatories. The graduates can work as solo performers or singers in the field of vocal interpretation and musical performance, concertmasters, leaders of instrumental groups and artistic ensembles, members of professional music orchestras, chamber ensembles, choirs. They can also become conductors, choir-masters, accompanists, staff members of cultural institutions, leaders of amateur ensembles, music dramaturges, etc.

Currently, the following profile specializations are offered in the Performing Arts: woodwind instruments – flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, saxophone; brass and percussion instruments – trumpet, french horn, trombone, tuba, percussion; bowed instruments – violin, viola, cello, double bass; string instruments – dulcimer, guitar; keyboard instruments – piano, accordion; vocal interpretation; musical singing; choir conducting.

Composition program is designed to prepare students for the profession of a composer, or a teacher of composition at conservatories and primary music schools. The graduates could be leaders of school music ensembles (after completing their pedagogical education). They have competences that will enable them to work independently in the field of music creation, as well as in the positions of music dramaturges in theatres, cultural institutions, art ensembles, festivals, etc.

Doctoral studies are offered in both full-time and part-time form in the field of musical arts. Graduates can perform in domestic and international professional artistic environment primarily as concert artists, opera soloists, professional composers, chamber musicians in professional art ensembles, choral conductors, university music art teachers, or experts in professional artistic councils, commissions and advisory bodies.

III. Artistic activities of FPA AA students and pedagogues.

The FPA AA is home to several artistic ensembles, such as the Camerata Novisoliensis Orchestra, Big Band Orchestra, Mixed Choir Canzona Neosolium Banská Bystrica, Canzona Neosolium Women, KOMPOST, Brass Quintet and others. In these ensembles, students of all study levels perform and represent the faculty at many national and international events.

Pedagogues at FPA AA are prominent personalities of musical life. In addition to teaching activities, they are active artists, performers and composers. Their names regularly appear on concert programs and posters not only in Slovakia but also abroad. Their performances are often recorded on CDs. In 2021, 235 artistic performances were registered in the Central register of artistic activity (CREUČ), while as much as 354 performances were verified.

Recently, the most productive performers are Matej Arendárik, Viktória Herencsár, Adam Marec, Eva Varhaníková, Ján Krigovský, Ivica Gabrišová and others.



Figure 1: CD cover: Cimbalomistic by Viktória Herencsár; CD released by Flaccus (2019) [6].



Figure 2: CD cover: Matej Arendárik plays Russian music; CD released by Art Air Center (2021) [1].



Figure 3: CD cover: Ivica Gabrišová/Maroš Klátik: Flute sonatas of the 20. Century; released by Pavlík Records (2022) [5].

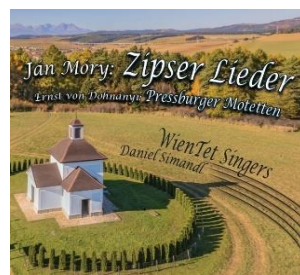


Figure 4: CD cover: Ján Móry: Zipser Lieder. Ernst von Dohnányi: Pressburger Motetten; singers: DANUBIUS OCTET

SINGERS; conductor: Daniel Simandl; released by Harmonia Seraphica (2022) [4].

IV. Publication activities of FPA AA pedagogues. The rich professional and scientific activities of the teachers include publishing activities. During 2021, 72 publications were registered in the Central register of publication activity (CREPČ).

The most productive authors are, among others, Viktória Herencsár, Mária Strenáčiková Sr., Mária Strenáčiková Jr., Jana Škvarková, and Mária Tomanová. They wrote several publications, scientific monographs, textbooks, and artistic books.

Jana Škvarková prepared a study text consisting of unpublished compositions, Piano works of composers of the Banská Bystrica region (Academy of Arts, 2015). «*The collection offers contemporary piano compositions of various difficulty levels, oriented to the child performer, to compositions for pupils and students at secondary schools and universities, as well as to compositions fulfilling high criteria of complexity and difficulty, with the ambition to be performed on concert stages*» [10, 6].

Among publications by Maria Strenáčiková Jr., the most recent are:

- 50 questions of teachers at primary art schools and conservatories (Equilibria, 2021): the publication provides «*information on the potential artists education and the problems that often accompany it*» [7, 11]. It is primarily written for performers who have decided to work as teachers and for teachers who teach music art subjects.
- Education in times of pandemic (Equilibria, 2020): the publication reflects on the situation in schools, that was a result of the constraints related to the spread of coronavirus. It captures «*the situation ... in education during the pandemic and the quarantine, and highlights the strengths and weaknesses of distance education*» [9, 12]. Also, it provides recommendation for practice in the form of suggestions addressed to authorities, school founders, teachers, pupils and their parents.
- A Slovak-English dictionary for musicians, musicologists, music teachers, and music students (Equilibria, 2022), which contains «*musical terms that cover the most frequently mentioned areas*

of musicology, from basic music theory to musical forms, music history and composition analysis to organology» [8, 7]. In addition, the appendices include frequent musical phrases, basic expressive, recitative and dynamic vocabulary, as well as a classification of musical instruments and a list of selected emotions and emotional states related to musical performance.

Mária Tomanová is the author of several publications about important Slovak singers and opera personalities. These include, for example the publication *Dagmar Rohová-Boksová – Diva of the Opera in Banská Bystrica* (FPA AA, 2014). The aim of the publication is to emphasize *«a necessary return to the artistic activity of an important personality on the smaller Slovak opera scene, as well as an important continuity in Slovak opera development»* [11, 8].

The collective of authors, which included Mária Strenáčiková Sr. and Ladislav Burlas, prepared a monograph *Zdenko Mikula (1916-2012); I Loved to Live and Create* (FPA AA, 2015), *«which will contribute to a deeper understanding of his life and work in a broader socio-cultural context»* [3, 151]

V. Conferences, symposia, courses, workshops and festivals. FPA AA hosts a number of conferences, symposia, courses, workshops and festivals where staff, lecturers, and students present their creative activities. Many of them are organized in cooperation with foreign partners. Some of them have a tradition of more than 10 years, others are in their beginnings.

- Among the oldest, are the *Bass Fest* performance courses and concerts. This year, they took place for the 12th time (the last year was held in Košice). The courses are attended not only by students, but also by teachers of FPA AA.
- The Academy of Arts provided the venue for eleven international piano festivals *Forum per tasti*. In addition to concerts and lectures, during the festivals, piano masterclasses, national and international competitions alternated at regular 3-year cycles.
- The international online scientific conference *Horizons of Art*, which provides a space for authors, performers, theoreticians and scientists, educators, and organizers, has nearly 10-year tradition. The aim of the conference is to present the views and

results of artistic, scientific research and pedagogical work in the field of mainly musical, but also dramatic, visual, literary and film arts.

- The Academy of Arts is also a co-organizer of the international competition *Flautiada*, which took place for the 7th time this year.
- The international competition in choral conducting *Meeting over a Choral Score* has a relatively long tradition – it has been organized 6 times.
- Specific conference has been created for doctoral students to present their ideas and to lead artistic discussion in the field of professional performing arts - this is the *Doctoral Students' Conference*, which will be held for the third time next year.
- The doors are also opened for international participants at the International Violin Competition *Prime Violin*, which takes place in a virtual environment. Last year, it was held for the second time, and the winners performed at a public concert at the State Opera House with the orchestra.
- The new International Music Festival *InterComp* includes a composition and piano competition. It also has the international dimension.
- The International *Flute Symposium*, which was held last year for the first time, is also becoming popular. The symposium includes a lecture colloquium, concerts and a workshop.
- For the first time, performance courses in trumpet playing were organized last year as well.

During 25 years of its existence, FPA AA has undergone a long evolution, during which it has transformed, changed, improved, matured... [2]. During this period, not only has the scope of its educational activities expanded, but also the number of artistic and publishing creative outputs has multiplied, the number of organized events, competitions, symposia etc. has increased... The ranks of teachers have grown, and the number of international collaborations, as well as artistic ensembles has increased... new methods have been introduced into education, digital technologies have become an integral part of teaching, several reforms have taken place in terms of administration and organization... All the

changes have had an impact on FPA AA, thanks to which we can today declare the faculty a successful part of the university system, which can compete with many foreign music universities of international importance.

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