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Losonczi, Ágnes: A Zene Életének Szociológiája Zeneműkiadó, 1969

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Introduction- Agnes Losonczi's book, 'The Sociology of Musical Life' (*A zene életének szociológiája - hun.)* studies the role music fills in our society. The reader might find themselves puzzled as the research is so extensive, it is hard to decide which area of expertise the author originates from. History and sociological issues are discussed as well as folk music, classical music and popular music. The wording is rather academic, yet easy to read although for the aforementioned reasons, a basic understanding of history and music may be necessary.

This publication is rather peculiar because sociological studies were only allowed to be conducted from the 1960's in Hungary under the Socialist regime as the system finally recognized this field of science - although it was kept under surveillance (Losonczi. 2020). This period clearly left a mark on the study, however the author cleverly integrated the mandatory steps and only makes this work more authentic.

The author was born in 1929, in Debrecen, Hungary. She had been awarded multiple times for her active work until 2005, such as the Academy Award (2004), Middle Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary (2007), Príma Prize (2007), Széchenyi Prize (2017) and Hazám Prize (2019).

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Introduction

Agnes Losonczi's book, 'The Sociology of Musical Life' (*A zene életének szociológiája - hun.)* studies the role music fills in our society. The reader might find themselves puzzled as the research is so extensive, it is hard to decide which area of expertise the author originates from. History and sociological issues are discussed as well as folk music, classical music and popular music. The wording is rather academic, yet easy to read although for the aforementioned reasons, a basic understanding of history and music may be necessary.

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The publication processes the results of three studies. The first study was conducted in 1962 on 500 factory workers in MÁVAG (Hungarian Royal and State Iron- Steel and Machine Manufacture - *Magyar Királyi Állami Vas-, Acél- és Gépgyárak - hun.*), the second study was done in 1964 along with the Hungarian Scientific Academy's Sociological Research Group on three villages surrounding Gyöngyös, one of which was an industrial village (Gyöngyössolymos), another was an agricultural village (Gyöngyöstarján) and compared these settlements. The third and final study consists of 150 case studies with the participation of music savvy persons.

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The book is divided into three chapters. The Introduction highlights certain results from the upcoming chapters. Our review's aim is not to describe the entire material as we are certain that only by reading the entire publication can one gain its intended value.

The first chapter, titled 'A Need for Art - without Art' (*A művészet igénye - művészet nélkül - hun.*) tells the reader about the rural people's musical needs which are heavily influenced by environmental sounds. The musical function in question in this case is based on needs and traditions. According to Losonczi's observations, the perception of sounds are determined by the perceptual capacity of a person and the working conditions. The importance of a certain sound is based on vital interests instead of aesthetic segments. That is, the people's relation to a certain sound determines whether it is pleasant for them. Unfamiliar sounds are usually unpleasant. A fine example of this is when the author recounts the statements of rural women (p. 37). Many of them resented the sound a tractor made which was, to their accord, a negative influence on rural life. On the other hand, a woman found a bus, a sound that is connected to city life, pleasant because her husband used to take the bus to travel home. Therefore, the experience determines whether a sound is pleasant or not.

Rural people consider music as an essential part of life and identified it as life itself, while its absence was associated with captivity. According to the study, music can be invigorating (renews and strengthens a person), cheers people up, entertains and relaxes the listener and provides a moment of escape.

The second chapter is The Social Nature of Musical Choice (*A zenei választás társadalmi természete - hun.*) in which the author attempts to observe the musical contents of these musical needs. The most common for of singing was in the occasional singing at social events. People seldom sang in choirs and instrumental music was uncommon, although many wished to learn to play instruments or had their children enrolled for musical studies. A characteristic instrument of the era, the harmonica was the most widespread instrument and the zither suffered a remarkable loss in popularity. The prevalent genres were Hungarian melodies and folk songs, since the participants had little idea of the difference between the two. Classical music was usually at the end of the popularity list, along with jazz which was indifferent or unknown to them. Rural

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society regarded classical music as a genre which required an educational privilege to enjoy and as a symbol of high social stature.

Not all aspects of the cultural revolution favored the advancement of musical literacy. While the first 'revolutionary enthusiasm' stage increased the number of art lovers, the second stage made culture a mandatory part of a political program. Enforced cultural education did not bring in desired results, so a more mild, third stage allowed eventually for previously oppressed genres, authors, works and musical functions, such as entertainment to enter people's mundane lives.

The musical preferences observed in the workers of MÁVAG were similar to the rural populace, however, the preference for symphonic and opera music was higher. This may be due to the fact that classical music was more available to them, the operas' rise of popularity was helped by radio and television programmes and opera films. The greatest hindrance to understanding and appreciating symphonic music was Hungarian melodies, although Hungarian folk songs and jazz were strong factors in its rise to popularity. The factory workers' least favorite genre was folk music, since they only experienced it during their elementary studies as a part of the curriculum, in contrast to the older generations since it evoked their time as a revolutionary youth after their liberation. Dominant genres were changing in each generation according to the social groups' needs and ideals. Emotional identification was the key factor.

In the third chapter, Musical Connoisseur Types and the Variability of Musical Values (*A zeneértők típusai és a zenei értékek változékonysága - hun.*), the author publishes the results of her interviews with 150 music connoisseurs. An especially interesting part of this chapter is the reflection of the changes in music authors and musical eras which puts the authors' work in a sociological and historical concept, something that was seldom done before. Losonczi divided music connoisseurs into three groups which forgoes the system established by S. Borris or T. W. Adorno. The author pointed out that in order to enjoy music, one must put in a certain investment, this is also underlined by László Stachó (2005). Losonczi categorizes musical understanding into five groups, from singable tunes all the way to atonal music, the latter is dominated by the assertion of compositional principles. By regularly listening to music, one can go from the first to the third level, however, the fourth and fifth level requires complex knowledge and focused attention, hence authors that fall into this category are less popular. When observing modern popular music we can easily conclude that it does not require a higher level of understanding, nor attention, hence their popularity (Gönczy, 2015).

Another result stated in this chapter points out that art and the outlook on life are not always in unison. A person may listen to musical conflicts to relieve their internal struggles, while a revolutionary may choose to ease their mood by listening to music while doing his daily activities.

The publication reveals multiple aspects of the social circumstances of musical taste and musical need. The author suggests that people's needs are in constant interaction with the changes and needs that arise in a society. Losonczy published her results in 1969 but her work still possesses value to musicians today, not only in the faculties of history and sociology, but it also helps them find their place in modern society. Even though there were radical changes in how rural and urban people have been living since the 1970's and Hungarian melodies were replaced by popular music, classical music is still preferred mostly by members of high society and is often rejected by the majority (Kristóf et Kmetty, 2018). This is exactly the reason why it is crucial to provide concerts in non-formal settings to educate the community and help them embrace musical experiences (Váradi, 2016).

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