

English

Szerző Administrator
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ENGLISH

Some of Kati Szvorák's albums can be freely downloaded by clicking Letöltés / Download (on the left side, bottom), and some individual songs can be listened to by clicking on Albumok és zene / Albums and music (left side, top), and choosing the album and the song.

CAREER IN A NUTSHELL

For more than three decades of a folk singer's career, Kati Szvorák has always followed her own independent way. Winner at several international contests, she owns a great variety of important and distinguishing titles. Not belonging to any particular group, she is also an entirely self-managed artist, nevertheless a beloved guest everywhere, warmly welcome by small rural (and urban) communities in Hungary as well as abroad. In the past 30 years she gave more than 3000 concerts in 33 countries on three continents. Her 27th independent production is a CD entitled A Teremtő dicsérete (The Praise of the Creator), which contains religious hymns and is expected to come out in May, 2010.

LIFE MOSAIC

Born in Losonc /Lucenec, Slovakia/
Her ancestors: peasants and shepherds
Childhood years in a magically folktale land: the Ipoly region
Playing the violin, singing modern light music, folk dance
Wins twice the Slovakian Hungarians' Folk Song Competition
ELTE University, Budapest, specializing in Hungarian Literature and Library Studies
Title of Young Master of Folk Art (1980)
First Prize both at Röpülj páva folk singing competition (1981) and Lajtha Memorial Contest (1988)
Employed as a soloist of Honvéd Ensemble (1983 - 2005)
Soros Grant (1990-92)
Given the freedom of the town of Fülek (Filakovo) in 1996, and of the village of Pinc (Pinciná) in 2006
Liszt Prize (2000)
Hungaroton Prize (2001)
Kodály Prize (2002)
Bartók Memorial Prize (2007)
Béres Ferenc Prize (2009)
Alternative Kossuth Prize (2010)
Head of Folk Song Department at the Szentendre School of Music
Guest professor of the Folk Music Department at Liszt Ferenc Music Academy (Budapest)
Working with several folk music groups (Vízöntő, Bekecs, Csámborgó, Kőfaragók, Etnofon, Odessa Klezmer Band, etc.)
Main roles in dance suites and rock operas
Over 3000 live concerts and 27 individual recordings

REMINISCENCES FROM ABROAD

Concerts in Bavarian "underground" pubs
in Finnish and Occitan churches
in Skandinavian jazz clubs
in Cervantes's homeland
in Norwegian nursery schools
in front of thousands of Chinese people
at a French cattle-market
in German hospitals and French old peoples' homes
singing in Siria with shooting going on in Bekaa Valley, Israel
at the Sevilla EXPO
in Italian pizzerias
performances in Hungarian Cultural Institutes abroad (Helsinki, Sofia, Paris, Prague, Moscow, etc.)
singing in an András Schiff TV show
at festivals (Mundus Cantat, Santa Cruz, Bonn, Rudolstadt, Fete de la viole, Jerez de la Frontiera Bath, Edinburgh etc.)
Liszt and Bartók Concerts on ORF and Austrian schools

Csángó-Hungarian song accompanied by a Polish group
Chinese song accompanied by a Chinese group
Day-of-the-Earth concert in Kyoto
singing for German nuns who took the oath of silence
one-month tour in the USA
singing for the Parliament of Sao Paulo, at the Brazilian National Radio and in Salvador da Bahia
at the Kurtág Festival in Bavaria
The Concert of the Monarchy - at the Vienna Academy of Music
Jewish festival in Italy with the Odessa Klezmer Band
Concerts in barns and stables of Washington State
Wiener Advent with Herz-Kestranek
television and radio recordings
Numerous VIP events where you are expected to take your most charming smile

PRESS

Kati Szvorák possesses the extraordinary talent of a remarkable musician whose repertoire embodies several histories of cultural change and multicultural interaction in Eastern Europe. She is at once a musician's musician and a scholar's musician, but most remarkable of all, she communicates the message behind her music with a gentleness and strength that resonates audiences of all kinds... Her songs build bridges, between the past and present, and between different ethnic folk music...

(Philip V. Bohlman Professor of Music- Chicago)

Multi award-winning Kati Szvorák's virtuoso group plays traditional folk, jazz and world music, employing classical training and 20 original folk instruments... beautiful material...sensitive arrangements... pretty wonderful stuff... (Edinburgh Festival Guide)

She must be a very happy person, her "golden" voice is faithfully accompanied by "silver" music.
(József Utassy, poet)

A fine sense of variety prevents her style from becoming rigid, enabling her to adapt to the actual style of the accompaniment... Kati Szvorák, with her wonderful voice, produces a highly artistic quality, characterized by a delightful way of singing, always clearly pronounced words, and fine and delicate flourishes in her performance... (Katalin Fittler, music critic)

Erzsi Palotai, who was a very special and distinguished performer, once called Katalin Szvorák - her young colleague and folk singer - "the little sister of sunshine". And she still deserves that name... (András Rajk, music critic)

She has worked seriously, resolutely and with enthusiasm, and all this is based (...) on her quickly maturing talent. She not only has a keen sense for folk music styles but renders their techniques in a deeply inspired way. Despite the highly educated character of her voice, it still remains an authentic folk song voice both in its powerful and tempered modalities. She considers her mission to enrich the art of singing with research and study, and I wish her succes in creating by that a new school. Kodály would be happy to see that come true.
(Benjámín Rajeczky, musicologist)

Katalin Szvorák is another singer in Márta Sebestyén's class. But it is Katalin's voice that's the best instrument here, whether singing sweetly on a tender ballad or using that hard Balkan edge. Possibly most stunning of all is the passage where, in the midst of a medley of songs just accompanied by solo duda (bagpipe), she suddenly starts imitating the sound of the instrument itself with her vocal decorations. Neck hairs promptly stand up and salute! Pretty wonderful stuff!
(Folk Roots)

Kati Szvorák has devoted herself to the preservation of traditional ways of life that form the "bedrock" of Eastern European societies. Her performance is enhanced by the Hungarian folk songs she has gathered in Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary from the villagers who still remember them. This diverse music embraces many topics and moods...

(Folk Fire)

...the dancers were energized by the lively accompaniments of Kőfaragók and the outgoing personality of Szvorák. Gifted with a warm and earthy voice... listeners were transported to another time and place by Szvorák's expressive singing, which was embellished with microtonal inflections...
(The Plain Dealer, Cleveland)

Kati Szvorák is a Hungarian singer having lived in the shadow of her better-known colleague Márta Sebestyén... in fact, their voices are heard combined on the recent Deep Forest album... contains some beautiful material in sensitive arrangements...
(Folk Roots)

Anyone who remembers the impact of Márta Sebestyén and Muzsikás's early visits here will want to check out their fellow Hungarian Kati Szvorák and her group, the Vízöntők (Water Carriers), in this midnight splash through the Danube's folklore.

Although broadly similar to Muzsikás, this quartet's music is slightly more rustic and rougher hewn as Szvorák's schooled but earthy voice dovetails with fiddles, a gutty-sounding cousin of the loud, and a throat singing herdsman of the reed family, whose charges include that goat/bagpipe hybrid, the duda, in celebration of spring, love and the musical properties of the Jew's harp. Authentic, affecting and cheery folk music from a quartet which proves that music and humour know few language barriers.
(Rob Adams, The Herald)

Kati Szvorák's CD is a wonderful blend of pure and uncorrupted pearls from different cultures...
(Georg von Habsburg)

We are living under a darkening sky but those who approach us carrying music and poetry want to bring light and hope to human hearts. Zsóka Tóth and Kati Szvorák are two of those radiant creatures. Let them sing and talk to us.
(Sándor Csoóri, poet)

...Katalin Szvorák is the artistically most qualified interpreter of all sorts of folk music in our region - Hungarian and other peoples' folk songs as well. What you hear from her is a bunch of musical flowers collected in the course of a thousand years. Each flower deserves your love just as the bouquet as a whole...
(Árpád Göncz, President of the Hungarian Republic)

The message wandering through these songs is also a creed of all existing minorities in this border region, a creed that assumes the mission of "vox humana".
(János István Németh, critic)

...Kati's voice tells us that the Easter flowers of hope can only grow out of the soil of our own sadness...
(György Cigány, music critic)

This CD of Katalin Szvorák, composed from folk melodies and religious songs fully incorporated into Hungarian folk tradition is a real delight...
(Ferenc Mádl, President of the Hungarian Republic)

Someone who has dedicated her life to folk music and folk songs has surely found the way not only to her personal happiness but to that of a whole large community.
(Viktor Orbán, President of Fidesz, Prime Minister)

I am convinced that the due place of an artist and the value of his or her work are much more determined by the love of the audience, the respect of colleagues and professionals, and the artist's own superior ambitions - the motivation of which lies much deeper than momentary success - than by any change in the political scene. But the poet puts it in these beautifully chosen words: "...the artist loves so much that world whose essence is permanent change (...) that he can never have enough of it; he cannot content himself with what God created, he wants to go on creating."

(Viktor Orbán, congratulating her on receiving the Alternative Kossuth Prize)

Katalin Szvorák opens a way to reach a layer of our culture which indirectly nourishes us but is no longer accessible for most people in its authentic form. Experiencing real art always raises us above ourselves. This is doubly true in this case since we listen to holy melodies, religious songs. We owe her thanks for this.
(László Sólyom, President of the Hungarian Republic)

QUOTES FROM CD COVERS

LET US REJOICE!

The richest national folk tradition of nearly every nation is connected with Christmas. Kati Szvorák's album celebrates the same. Christmas songs shared by all Central European peoples are sung in ten languages, well pronounced and deeply felt. Kati Szvorák, a Slovakian born Hungarian (...) was awarded the Liszt Prize in the Holy Year. She is generally considered to be one of the most talented singers to render religious content in music. Her fourteenth solo recording manifests (...) the mutual dependence of peoples in the region and the desire to live peacefully side by side. She brings out wonderfully how cultures interact, while hidden streams of Christmas melodies break from underground to the surface, also transporting recognizable structures of West European music with themselves. (...) A happy combination of good choices and gift, let us listen to it and rejoice (...) Let us all have peace and tranquillity, while invited to this special Christmas table, laid with the songs of our peoples.

Dr. Rudolf Pietsch
Institut für Volksmusikforschung
Universität für Musik
und darstellende Kunst - Wien

Dr. Bernard Garaj
Univerzita Konstantina Filozofa - Nitra
Ústav hudobnej vedy - Bratislava

On this release Kati and the Monarchia Orchestra sing and play songs from many different countries and peoples in Eastern Europe, all with a Christmas theme. The songs are from various collections including those by such people as Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály, László Lajtha (Romania), István Völgyi (Romania), Marian Jársek (Slovakia), Bartus Frantisek (Moravia) etc.

Sung in Hungarian, Slovak, Czech, Polish, Croatian, Rumanian, German and Gypsy Rom.

'I wish you a joyous Christmas,
That you may spend it in good health,
And so that you would rejoice after your death

At the place where Saint Stephen is rejoicing, too.'

Áthallások/ (eng.)

Migration of songs was the title of Kati's first recording I was the musical producer of. The present disc is similarly a migration of songs - a self-abandoned way of singing in the Carpathian Basin, a sisterly visit to different families of Hungarian melodies. (...) In the course of working with Kati I have come to know not only her ringing voice but the source of this voice as well: a character void of all kind of affectedness. It has not worn off as time went by, on the contrary. She is said to be the singing-bird of the poor, but I don't think it is true. She is the voice of the rich - of those rich in spirit.

(Levente Szörényi, composer)

On this new recording Hungarian folksong types, melodic families meet and touch upon church and early music traditions. The naturally wandering melodies cover the entire Hungarian language territory.

Éneklő egyház / Religious Hymns

Preface by Archbishop Péter Erdő, Cardinal Primate of Hungary

Music is a fundamental human experience. Every person carries within him the rhythm of the heartbeat. Music touches the spirit and elevates the heart to God, who became a man on earth and whose heart beats for us. Jesus fulfilled the work of redemption through his suffering, death and the mysteries of his resurrection and ascension at Easter. Continuation of Christ's redeeming work is carried out mainly through the liturgy. The sacred music and its texts are devoted to the holy liturgy - a display of the liturgy's story of Salvation in prayer and song. The liturgy recalls all of the events from the story of Salvation, and this is the source of its amazing richness.

The Church's musical tradition is a treasure in the lives of all peoples. The hymns on this recording are selections from a newer, reformative Hungarian Catholic hymnal entitled, 'Éneklő Egyház' (Budapest, 1986), which is the result of several decades of serious, comprehensive expert preparation. It merges three main points of view. First, according to the ancient Roman order and in compliance with the 2nd Vatican Council's Liturgical Constitution; all liturgical themes (above all, those related to the holy mass) are to be sung to Gregorian melody - the Church's own ancient, highly refined music. Secondly, it also puts into song a few characteristic themes of particular importance from the Church's own unique and valuable works from the Middle Ages - specifically from Hungary's Esztergom Gregorian tradition and ritual. And finally, there is an ample selection of folk hymns, which in addition to being old Christian treasures from the hymnody of the Middle Ages, are also examples of an ancient layer of Hungarian folk hymns - works from the hymnals of the 16th and 17th centuries.

These greatly valued hymns of substantial theological content come straight from the liturgical texts and are melodies which in regard to rhythm, melodic turns and ornamentation have ripened into a 'Hungarianness' and have become strongly rooted in the spirit of the Hungarian people. The original folk versions of the melodies are found in Éneklő Egyház and on this recording; they are masterpieces that have been brought to light by virtue of Zoltán Kodály's direction and extensive collection work done in Hungary over the last decades. The origin of these uplifting folk hymns embraces the entire Hungarian language area. Gregorian chant and secular Hungarian folk song has had a great influence on the development of these hymns.

The authentic atmosphere of the hymns heard on this CD is evoked by accompaniment on folk instruments. According to the ancient religious teaching of Pope Saint Pious the 10th, liturgical song should combine three basic characteristics, they must be: sacred, artistic and universal. To that end, we offer singer Katalin Szvorák's greatly inspired performance of these religious hymns from the Hungarian language area, with masterful accompaniment on a variety of instruments.

Eclipse / Napfogyatkozás

On this her twelfth solo recording, Kati develops the Hungarian folk song resulting in a new musical experience.

Meotis

Four Hungarian musicians, each with an impressive career. Members are: Kati Szvorák - vocals and garden, Ferenc Kiss - vocals, kobo, and viola, Béla Ágoston - various wind instruments, Zsigmond Lázár - fiddle. Their music is deeply rooted in the folk tradition of Hungary and its surrounding areas, with a strong contemporary slant. They play traditional instruments. The 'MEOTIS' release contains live recordings from their successful tour of the US and Scotland (where they appeared at the Edinburgh Festival).

Ispiláng

Transylvanian, Saxon, Romanian, Slavic, Gypsy and Jewish lullabies, nursery rhymes, verses, ditties, counting out rhymes all with common roots - children's songs know no boundaries or borders. On this release Kati explores the common threads running through the folk songs so loved by children.

Télkergető / Winter Chasing

I once had the privilege of being invited to a concert Kati was giving in her home outside Szentendre. Tamás, her husband, showed us around their home which was full of stunningly beautiful folk art objects; paintings, carvings and the like. These had no doubt been gifts and purchases from the village folk where they had collected and researched the folk music that you will hear on this release and Kati's other work as well. Listening to this music now reminds me of that night, each of the songs being a beautiful work of art from those villages.

(Ian Morrison)

Winter Chasing draws from the music of the peoples of our country in the widest sense of the word. I could almost say, it embraces nearly all the peoples with a common fate during its thousand-year-old disastrous, bloody history who have influenced each other musically. Katalin Szvorák, who gives expression to this common tone, is a highly competent, artistic interpreter of the music of the Hungarians and all the peoples living with them.

May you regard the music you hear as a bunch of flowers made of the music of thousand years and love it both as a whole and each of its precious flowers separately.

And accept it with proper love from Katalin Szvorák who has gathered the bunch and presents it to you now.'
(Árpád Göncz, President of the Hungarian Republic)

Alleluja / Hallelujah

Continuing her series exploring the festivals and celebratory events in Central and Eastern Europe Kati delve into the song and customs surrounding Easter time. Again she and her partner Tamás (along with the cream of Hungarian folk music scene) research the music from Hungary, Croatia, Moravia, Germany, Slovakia, Poland etc. From this excellent series we can clearly see that good music knows no borders.

Stafírungr I. II. / Wedding Songs from Central Europe

Nothing makes for more of a celebration than a wedding! This project by Kati Szvorák, accompanied by a whole host of musicians is more than music, it is a snapshot of olden traditions and folk cultures.

Kati Szvorak's recording is a wonderful mixture of the pure genuine gems of various cultures. Her melodies radiate harmony and leave the listeners with the conviction that being different has its own right and the coexistence of the varied cultures enriches us all. This is a music and an art that will help mutual approach and understanding in the European Union as well.'

Georg von Habsburg

Sung in Hungarian, Slovak, German, Romanian, Croatian, Slovenian, Ukrainian, Polish, Czech, Gipsy, Yiddish.