

I am 25 years old. I studied voice in Budapest and now in Vienna I continue my voice studies at the Academy of Music.

Besides studying I had to work. I was secretary from 1953 to 1956 at the Vidám Színház which was the most famous comedy theater of Budapest featuring political skits and songs.

The artists had been paid relatively well. Their basic salary at the theater was not high but they had many appearances and thus even a mediocre actor could make 5,000 to 8,000 frts monthly. If there was a privileged class in the system then the artists have belonged to that.

In general if somebody was really talented he had the opportunity for a career. In fact nobody dared to touch the real great talents, the really famous artists. The actors often spoke in such a manner that people had been astonished and afraid for them.

The privileged position of the artists was most tangible with regard to their material situation. On the spiritual, intellectual field there was a suppression even with regard to the artists. For example, the actors had to play in Soviet pieces whether they liked it or not. They had to participate in Party meetings and had to support different Communist movements by their appearance and participation etc.

The opinion which I have expressed above, namely that real talents had the way open for a career I can illustrate the best with my own example. Since I was the daughter of a highranking former officer I couldn't get any job after my matura examination for three quarters of a year. (I have to mention here that finally I got a job with a Russian firm in Budapest in 1951. This shows you that the Russians cared less for my background than my own fellow countrymen.) My application for the university was rejected as a matter of course, however, when I applied to the music conservatory I was admitted there without any trouble after the first rehearsal.

Later when I got my job in the theater there they did not care much about my origin either. Since my childhood I was very much in the company of artists and I had many friends among the actors and singers. The artists felt instinctively that they had more freedom than the ordinary citizens had and they learned how to use this freedom for the kindling the fire of resistance and keeping it alive against the regime.

For example, at our theater the program was prepared with a wild list of anti-imperialist items but the public almost died with laughter because it knew exactly that the regime was the one which was made a laughing-stock by the actors and they even knew each time who was the person at whom they poked fun.

At the Academy of Dramatic Arts the director was Zeuzsa Simon a wild Communist woman and she made admission there a more difficult thing than it was in our Conservatory of Music. There they have investigated the applicant's background and also examined him in ideology.

Of course, into music one could not bring so much politics as into the theater. At the most the musician could be forced to play from Russian composers. In the play-bill of the theaters the proportion of Russian plays which they were obliged to perform was exactly prescribed by the Ministry for People's Education. However, because the public just did not go to the Soviet pieces they had to permit a few classical plays just for the reason of profitableness of the theater.

They did not dare to prescribe for Kodály and Szer-vánszky what they should compose. Of course, there had been composers who wrote Stalin Cantata and Lenin Odes but at the same time Kodály has set to music Petöfi's "Nemzeti Dal" (National Song) and Zrinyi's "Intelem" (Warning) from Zrinyi's "A Török Áfium Elleni Orv^oosság" (Medicine against the Turkish Opium). Both compositions achieved a thundering success. (The first performance of each of these pieces was delayed by the regime for months. Finally they had to give in and grant the permission because writers and journalists had made already a propaganda in the newspapers and the eager public be-

came more and more impatient the longer they had to wait to hear it. At the first performance of the Zrinyi coral of which the refrain is a powerful out-cry "Ne bántsd a magyart!" (Don't hurt the Hungarian). ~~The~~^t public simply went wild and did not want to stop the applause. Seeing this Révai, mad with anger, jumped up from his seat in his box and ran out of the concert hall.)

Similarly Szervánszky put to music two poems of Petöfi. This fact alone wouldn't mean a thing since Petöfi was claimed by the Communists as a progressive poet, a revolutionary poet who was actually their fore-runner hundred years ago. But Szervánszky's choice was a peculiar one from the Communists' point of view! From the hundreds of poems by Petöfi he picked exactly the "A Farkasok Dala" (Song of the Wolves) and "A Kuttyák Dala" (Song of the Dogs). The sharp edge of both of which is unmistakably directed against the regime. (The wolves are, of course, the oppressors and the dogs their sycophant boot-lickers.)

Another great musical event in the same vein was András Mihály's "Concerto" which was performed first time last year with a terrific success. This piece is a harrowing portrayal of a completely burned out, disillusioned human being.

It was undeniably a certain expansion and widening of theatrical culture during the last years in Hungary especially with regard to the country towns. The most

important centers of theater in the country became Szeged, Debrecen, Pécs, Győr, and Miskolc. However, the claim of the Communists that they have opened the opera, and theaters, and concert halls for the proletariat contained more myth than reality. The public of the serious theater and even more of the concerts was not the harassed and overworked working class and peasantry but came from the old and the new intelligentsia, middle class, and, of course, the students.

During the last year besides the usual Soviet plays and the classics the repertory of the theaters contained already some modern Western plays, for example Sartre, Pirandello, etc. These were played with a tremendous success.

However, the greatest popular success remained with the comedy theaters. Their^{re} political satires were shown. In these theaters, in Hungarian called "Kabaré", the master of ceremonies and the actors have made full use of their relative freedom permitted by the Communists and exercised merciless critic and self-criticism in the spirit of true Communism.

Each theater had a Party organization and also a union. But this was not serious since artists just could not be expected to take seriously such things.