

REMEMBERING ZOLTÁN TIBAY

SEPTEMBER 6, 1910 – MAY 24, 1989



Zoltán Tibay (György Rigler)

By István Enreiter

One of the greatest Hungarian double bass players and pedagogues, Zoltán Tibay was born in Budapest (Soroksár) one hundred years ago. At the National School of Music, *Nemzeti Zenede*, he studied under Róbert Schmitz. The young musician graduated in 1932 and became a member, and later on the principal double bass player and soloist, of the Budapest Opera House and the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra. Among many other chamber music ensembles, he played with the world-famous Léner and the Waldbauer-Kerpely string quartets, and he was one of the founders of the Budapest Chamber Ensemble, with which he frequently toured in Europe.

Beginning in 1934, he gave recitals and radio-concerts regularly in Hungary. He was the very first Hungarian musician to use the double bass as a solo instrument. This event took place on August 1, 1934, live on air, with great success. Zoltán Tibay played his

debut recital in Austria in the *Brahms-Saal*, in Wien (1948), and played in the studio of the French Television in Paris (1958) as well.

He was a virtuoso, an outstanding musician, and one of the best Hungarian artists, of whom we can be very proud. In the March 14, 1939 issue of *Budapest Hírlap* we read, "Zoltán Tibay, the young double bass player of the Budapest Opera House, performed the great solo of the concert aria *Per questa bella mano* by Mozart, with brilliance and style, with the assistance of György Litassy, the singer." *Az Est* (The Evening) wrote about the same concert: "The *bravura* double bass part was played with gorgeous virtuosity and softly vibrated sound by Zoltán Tibay, shaming even the violinists. The audience made him repeat this piece." Reviewers wrote always in high terms about his performances. "Professor Tibay played an unusual instrument, the double bass. As a solo instrument it is played very rarely, and the sounds called forth by Zoltán Tibay were amazing. His virtuoso art is unique," as we invoke from the *Wiener Kurier*, on May 26, 1948.

Zoltán Tibay taught at the Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest, beginning in 1945. He was nominated to the rank of associate professor in 1960, and two years later he became full professor and led the double bass class until his death. He was an excellent, efficient educator, as his former students, more than one hundred first-class professionals in Hungary and abroad, can demonstrate. The prominent ones have played or are currently playing in prestigious orchestras. Many of them are excellent teachers as well.

Die Forelle (Trout-Quintet), Op. 32, by F. Schubert was recorded with Tibay's double bass playing on the Qualiton label (LPX 11342), with Malcolm Frager and the Bartók String Quartet.

His 75th birthday and the 40th year of his educational career was celebrated on April 17, 1985, with a gala-concert. The Great Hall of the Franz Liszt Academy was full of his students, his former students' second and third generation pupils, and the crowd of double bass lovers. Ludwig Streicher, the bass professor of the Vienna Music Academy also performed his own composition in this concert. It was the first time Professor Streicher visited Budapest. He had a great success and made the gala-concert a truly memorable event.

Zoltán Tibay passed away on May 24, 1989. Later on, the double bass lesson room of the Franz Liszt Music Academy, No. 30, was named after him. His former disciples commemorated the centenary of his birth in the Liszt Academy's Recital Hall on March 8, 2010. His students—Balázs Berkes, Norbert Duka, István Enreiter, Péter Kubina, István Lukácsné, László Nagy, István Tóth, Iván Sztankov, Zsolt Tibay—and Gergely Járdányi, as a guest, per-



Zoltán Tibay and Lajos Montag (György Rigler)

formed in the memorial concert. Balázs Berkes and Ákos Czeglényi spoke about Zoltán Tibay's wonderful personality and his greatness as a musician and a teacher, in a friendly, kind reminiscence.

Adjoining to the event, Zsolt Tibay, his son, who is guest professor of Musashino Music University, Tokyo, gave a three-day double bass master course organized by Péter Kubina, the associate professor of Franz Liszt Music Academy, at which twenty-seven double bass students participated from various universities and conservatories.

István Enreiter has served on the faculty of the Weiner School of Music in Budapest since 1992 and is a member of the Budapest Symphony Orchestra. He is the secretary of Hungarian Society of Bassists.