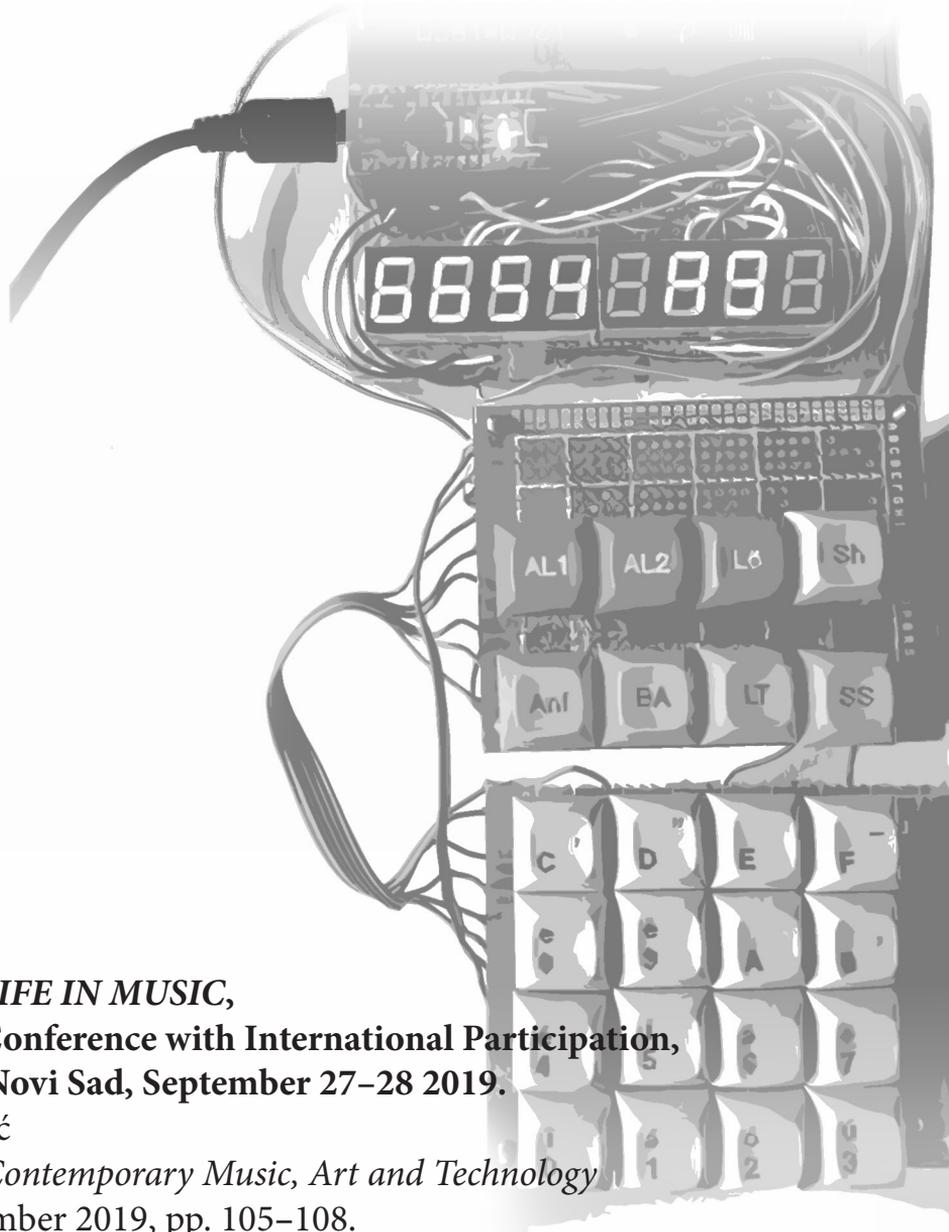


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ERNŐ KIRÁLY – LIFE IN MUSIC,
Interdisciplinary Conference with International Participation,
Academy of Arts, Novi Sad, September 27–28 2019.

Bojana Radovanović

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Bojana Radovanović*
Institute of Musicology SASA
Belgrade, Serbia

ERNŐ KIRÁLY – LIFE IN MUSIC Interdisciplinary Conference with International Participation, Academy of Arts, Novi Sad, September 27–28, 2019.

In the last weekend of September 2019, an interesting conference was held at the Multimedia Center of the Academy of Arts, University of Novi Sad. Titled *Ernő Király – Life in Music*, this relatively small and unpretentious event, which was organized around the idea of commemorating 100 years since Király's birth, included two full days of paper presentations, as well as a photography exhibition and concert. The interdisciplinary nature of the conference, as well as its international participation, drew a small group of enthusiastic researchers and musicians, determined to start working on the puzzle that is Király's life and work.

Ernő Király (1919–2007) was a composer, ethnomusicologist, performer, and inventor of musical instruments, whose unusually rich and diverse body of work was highly influential in the music scene of Novi Sad. Also, his interest in contemporary experimental music practices and performance, improvisation, and interdisciplinary collaborations, opened up a scene of like-minded musicians in other cities of former Yugoslavia, in particular with ensemble ACEZANTEZ from Zagreb. As the organizers of the conference pointed out, he spent his most fruitful years in Novi Sad, tying himself to Radio Novi Sad, where he started working in the fields of radiophony, tape music, and electronic instruments (during the sixties). Here, Király also began his voyage on the path of discovering collective and solo improvisation and musical performance. He also started working with graphic notation, and invented new instruments such as the citraphone and tablophone. Király's ethnomusicological work exploring and collecting folk music was especially influential for his interest in extended performing techniques, improvisational and social character, and the specific sort of intuitive guidance in the performing of

* Author's contact information: br.muzikolog@gmail.com

music.

Given that Király's life and work has not been the focus of a great number of scientific papers, let alone an event such as this, the assemblage of this conference was able to tackle some of the key questions that hover above his activities. Musicologists, ethnomusicologists, performers, composers, and archivists from Serbia, Hungary, Croatia, and Switzerland revealed the abundance of themes that the study of Király's life and opus encompasses. In the pleasant and intellectually stimulating atmosphere of the conference, compelling presentations were complemented with spontaneous and valuable comments from Király's son, composer Dávid Zsolt Király, and Katalin Ladik, a famous actress, vocal artist, poet, and Király's professional collaborator and second wife.

Following the welcome speech from the Dean of the Academy of Arts, Siniša Bokan, and the Head of the Department of Musicology and Ethnomusicology, Dr. Ira Prodanov, three papers were presented in the first session of the conference. Musicologist Dr. Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman presented the paper, "When is a Gladiolus Truly a Gladiolus? Ontological-Phenomenological Aspects of Certain Musical Graphics by Ernő Király", focusing on certain works of Király which are notated in musical graphics. As Veselinović-Hofman emphasized, the paper focuses "on the conception of his cycle titled *Flora*, which Király began to realize in 1978, that is, in the time of his most extreme avant-garde undertakings, especially in the field of improvisational freedoms, and, in direct connection to them, multimedia coexistence." The second paper, "Synaesthetic Abstract Proto Psychedelic Music: The Role of Electroacoustic Free Improvisation in Ernő Király's Last Era" was presented by sound artist, sound ecologist, performance and conceptual artist Zsolt Sörös. Sörös talked about folk music as Király's inspiration in the process of discovering the world of intuitive compositions and live performance, as well as instrument building and his "flower- and plant-based synaesthetic abstract proto-psychedelic music." Musicologist and trombonist Nemanja Sovtić, in his paper, "Artistic Research in Space (Between) Composition, Improvisation and Sound Experiment – Reflections about Ernő Király," explored the "nonconformism of Király's artistic nature" through the lens of composition, improvisation, and sound experiments, which were inseparable in Király's work.

The next session also contained three papers, two of which dealt with Király's ethnomusicological activity. Ethnomusicologist Juliana Bašić researched Király's engagement with the musicological section of the Ethnological department of the Museum of Vojvodina, and his contribution to their project between 1955 and 1972, with a paper titled, "Ethnomusicological Activities of Ernő Király". In her paper, "Ernő Király's Paper in Collections from the Congresses of the Alliance of Folklorists of Yugoslavia," ethnomusicologist Dr. Vesna Ivkov aimed to shed light on Király's methodological approach in these collections, while stressing the importance of the future development of ethnomusicology in Yugoslavia and Serbia. With her expertise in musicology and gender studies, Adriana Sabo delved into the artistic

relationship between Ernő Király and Katalin Ladik in her presentation, “Sound Collaborations Between Katalin Ladik and Ernő Király.” Sabo explored pieces in which Ladik and Király worked together to create the sound which was exemplary of both of their experimental tendencies.

Musicologist Dr. Ira Prodanov opened the final session of the first conference day with her presentation, “Ernő Király at Radio Television Vojvodina.” As a participant on the realization of certain recordings of a more recent date, Prodanov focused on a few RTV broadcasts about Ernő Király and livened up the spoken word of the conference with some excerpts from the shows in question. Coming from Croatia Records (formerly Jugoton) in Zagreb, Petar Pečur gave an intriguing talk: “Discographic Opus of Ernő Király: An Insight into Published Recorded Works.” Finally, Dávid Zsolt Király enriched the conference with his personal anecdotes in a presentation called, “Ernő Király: A Life in Thoughts and Questions,” which started with the question, “Was Ernő Király the ‘John Cage of Vojvodina’ of his time?”

Following this was an exhibition of photographs from Dávid Zsolt Király’s personal archive, showing some of the crucial moments of Ernő Király’s life, as well as the concert of the ensemble, “Restrictions,” and pianist Nataša Penezić. The concert program was composed of Király’s pieces, *Poem about dawn* (1960), for tape, *Sky* (1962), for tape, *Toccatà pentatonica* (1979), *Flora 1 and 2* (1978), *Dots and lines* (1972), and *Diminuzione* (1975).

The program of the second day of the conference involved two more sessions on Király’s *life in music*. Musicologist Michael Kunkel focused on the interaction and dialogs between singing voices and music-machines in Király’s work in his presentation, “Motors and Melodies. An Intermedial Concept in the Music of Ernő Király.” In her paper, “Vocal Expression in Works by Ernő Király: Voice as a Symptom and a Symbol of Avant-garde Artistic Encounters,” musicologist and art theorist Bojana Radovanović examined the nature of vocal parts in Király’s works, especially having brought out the questions of avant-garde voice, collaboration with aforementioned Katalin Ladik, and the issue of authorship in pieces made in this collaboration.

The last session of the conference was opened by Milana Zarić, a versatile musician who was involved in several workshops and concerts of Király’s music during the anniversary year. Her paper, “Ernő Király and Studio 6 Ensemble,” was dedicated precisely to this topic and included “activities and challenges the ensemble met on the road to the discovery of Király’s unique music world.” Composer Richard Barret explored “Király and Graphic Notation,” showing the “uniqueness of his contribution to them and the centrality of such ideas to his musical thinking.” At the very end of the conference program, musicologist and main organizer of the conference, Dr. Milan Milojković, spoke about electroacoustic pieces and their main characteristics, “regarding implemented technological and compositional strategies,” in his presentation titled, “Electroacoustic Works by Ernő Király – Relationship with Music Technology and an Overview of Compositional Strategies.”

Bearing in mind the positive impressions of zestful scientific curiosity which marked this event, conference *Ernő Király – Life in Music* will, hopefully, be but a beginning to the investigation of the themes touched on in Novi Sad. Király's anniversary inspired both musicians and scientists to collaborate and dive into discovering the life and work of this avant-garde personality, and we can only anticipate similarly motivating occasions in the future.

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