

# IRENA MEDŇANSKÁ AND HER CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SLOVAK MUSIC EDUCATION

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## Abstract

In Slovak musical life and academic environment Irena Medňanská (1950–2020) represented a personality whose tireless organizational, project, music-making, legislative and advisory activities left a permanent and lasting mark in music education, music schooling, and cognitive reflections of music pedagogy. The stratification of areas of interest and breadth of scope was a characteristic feature of her personality and dynamism. The study evaluates the professional activities and academic life and research studies of Irena Medňanská. It is designed based on standard research methods in the humanities, i.e., heuristics, collection, analysis, interpretation, and comparison of sources.

## Keywords

Irena Medňanská (1950–2020) – Music and singing – Music education – Music pedagogy – Teacher training – University of Prešov

## Introduction

The life work of prof. Mgr. art. Irena Medňanská, PhD., a musicologist, music teacher, and university professor, the doyenne of contemporary Slovak music education in the new millennium, has been closed. This fact leads the author to analyze deliberations about her life work and responsibilities in the era she lived. Her primary professional interest was to detect and solve a discrepancy between the support of music education, children's choral singing, and the aesthetic education of young people in the past and the present. With great interest, sometimes with disappointment yet always with substantial personal involvement, she was pointing out the current disinterest of technocratically oriented societies in the values of art, the increase in consumerism and snobbery, and the decline of interest in aesthetic education. She pointed to the need for much more state support for the processes of improving the quality of music schooling, music education, and primary and secondary music education (increasing in quantity, but not always in quality).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In 2020, at the end of her professional career, Irena Medňanská evaluated the situation in the following words: "Today, [...], the need and duty to convey music to children, youth, and students have intensified. We need to teach them to perceive music intrinsically, to increase their perceptual experience, and to minimize music as sound wallpaper. In these contexts, I see it as my lifelong mission to pass on musical values to young people." Slávka Kopčáková & Irena Medňanská, *Profesorka Irena Medňanská oslávila životné jubileum* [Professor Irena Medňanská celebrated her life anniversary] (Prešov: Prešovská univerzita, 2020), p. 68.



Irena Medňanská (1950–2020). Photo archive.

In her understanding, music education was inherently social and moral. She gradually taught students how to discover values, overcome obstacles, and contribute to the ever-changing social and musical world around them.<sup>2</sup> The education of future music teachers and future musicians from the 1980s until the current digital age of 2020s are the stages in which Irena Medňanská's professional activities took place. Her outstanding pedagogical and organizational skills predestined her to gradually become one of the leaders who followed educational trends and strived to implement them in the educational process of future music teachers in Slovakia.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Paul G. Woodfort, *Democracy and Music Education. Liberalism, Ethics, and the Politics of Practice* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 51. Woodfort sets the goal of music education to help a young person understand music and its role in civilization, to overcome competitive and routine consciousness: "Art gives children a vision that takes on the depth, meaning and moral purpose of their experience."

## The life path of musician, musicologist, and music teacher in one person

Irena Medňanská's life path was that with music and towards music, which had its foundations in a stimulating family environment and the overall social atmosphere of the 1950s–1960s when the social climate was inclined to the needs of music education, even though it imposed certain political-ideological yokes and demands on it. A childhood filled with musical activities was the upshot of the post-war atmosphere of building the institutional foundations for the artistic cultivation of the young generation.<sup>3</sup> Arts education (accordion performance) at the Conservatory in Žilina (1965–1971) influenced Irena Medňanská (an active member of the Socialist Union of Youth) in her personal development and direction; without hesitation, she seized a lifetime opportunity that was not a matter of course in totalitarian Czechoslovakia. She used the opportunity to study accordion with a focus on the didactics of its teaching in the German Democratic Republic at the renowned academy, Franz Liszt Academy of Music (1973–1977). She established an excellent foundation for her artistic development and received her first job opportunities here.

A significant experience was that she had the opportunity to work as a music teacher parallel with her studies, which enabled her to get acquainted with the complex system of contemporary German music education as a well-conceived basis for advanced performance art. While studying and working in German Democratic Republic (GDR) from 1973–1980, she worked as a music teacher and from 1975 as the head of a branch of the Music School in Bleicherod. After returning to Slovakia, in Nitra, in the academic year 1980/81, Irena Medňanská got a position of assistant professor at the Department of Music Education of the Faculty of Education. The focus of her teaching duty was teaching accordion playing. Later on, she started to teach at music departments in Prešov (1981–1988) and Žilina (2000–2003), with only a tiny interruption when she took up a high management position and worked as the director of the State Philharmonic Orchestra in Košice (1988–1991).

Irena Medňanská received her stint in culture management as a life challenge. During the 1980s, as a musicologist, she profiled herself into an important music critic. In October 1988, following a successful open competition, she became the director of the State Philharmonic in Košice. From its inception, this artistic body with a 20-year tradition was one of the leaders in the development of music culture in eastern Slovakia and had the potential to represent Slovak performing art in the world successfully. In artistic orientation, her main goal was to continuously improve the quality of interpretation (addressing the position of chief conductor, inviting foreign conductors) and to continue the tradition of spreading the music of Slovak composers at home and in the world. The beginning of the 1990s brought new opportunities to perform in Western European countries and on other continents and to collaborate with prestigious music publishers (Naxos, Marco Polo, and HNH-International Ltd.). The intensive 3-year stage in cultural management was very exhausting, and even before the end of her term of office, Irena Medňanská accepted the

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<sup>3</sup> The demands placed on music (the idiom of folk music, descriptiveness, emphasizing the non-musical program, folksiness, illustrativeness, etc.) have been directly implanted in the music education of children and youth. It was particularly evident at the textual level, identified with the song's musical content or confused as its basis. Thus, children's and pioneer songs became the carrier of the ideas of socialist realism as well as the building of new art for the new man. It was used as a "decorative item" of political events to brighten them with youth and new hopes. Through children's songs, the ideology was implanted directly into the mental world of children and youth.

challenge to return to the academic environment and lay new foundations for the training of music teachers at the university.

At the very beginning of the 1990s, new social conditions interfering with the functioning of society, culture, and the school system enabled her to return to the academic environment.<sup>4</sup> For the next three decades (1991–2020), Irena Medňanská worked at the University of Prešov and its predecessor, until 1997, the University of Pavel Jozef Šafárik (UPJŠ). In the academic year 1981/82, she started working as an assistant professor at the Department of Music Education of the Faculty of Education of the UPJŠ in Prešov (she taught accordion playing and keyboard playing at teaching training courses of primary music education). She worked at the Department of Music Education from 1991 until 1997, when the University of Prešov was founded and in the creation of which she significantly participated. An important organizational change was the later relocation of the department to the Faculty of Arts of the Prešov University in Prešov on 1st October 2010.<sup>5</sup>

Her advancement in research was not entirely straightforward due to the political events in Europe at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>6</sup> In 1987, she applied for a post-graduate course (today called doctoral studies). She was accepted to study Art Sciences at Martin Luther University in Halle under the supervision of the prominent European musicologist prof. Siegfried Bimberg.<sup>7</sup> Studying in close contact with one of the leading personalities of European music education and musical aesthetics was one of the most inspiring moments for a beginning university teacher and creative academic.<sup>8</sup> Irena Medňanská completed her post-graduate studies in Germany in 1992 (she was awarded the degree Candidate of Science in 1993, present-day Philosophiae doctor). In the year when she defended her doctoral dissertation, Czechoslovakia ceased to exist, and we became citizens of the Slovak Republic (from 1st January 1993).

<sup>4</sup> In the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in November 1989, the events of the so-called Velvet Revolution took place as a social upheaval or change in the socio-political order, which was the result of the collapse of the socialist bloc and the end of the existence of ideological regimes in those countries of Central and Eastern Europe. These became a satellite of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics due to the balance of power between the powers of the East and the West after the Second World War. The building of successor democratic states began with the transition to a capitalist economy. Irena Medňanská survived these turbulent years as director of the State Philharmonic in Košice. Her return to the academic environment was thus literally a return to new conditions, full of previously unknown possibilities (new ways of financing, grants, foreign contacts with Western democracies, and, within them, drawing on impulses and experience from the functioning of their school systems).

<sup>5</sup> A new department was renamed the Institute of Music and Visual Arts. Irena Medňanská became its director in the years 2012–2016. Since 2012, she has been the guarantor of teachers' programs for musical art and supervisor of doctoral students, although not at her own workplace, but at several teaching faculties in Slovakia (Nitra, Ružomberok, Banská Bystrica), in the Czech Republic (Ostrava, Olomouc) and Poland (Rzeszów).

<sup>6</sup> The collapse of the socialist bloc and the end of the existence of ideological regimes of Central and Eastern Europe resulted in German reunification as a world-wide important geo-political event on 3rd October 1990. By that, the German Democratic Republic (GDR as previous East Germany) was dissolved. Its area became part of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG as former West Germany) to form present-day Germany.

<sup>7</sup> Professor Bimberg was not only a renowned scientist, but at the same time, he was also a music composer designated in the field of vocal creation, specifically children's songs (at that time called mainly pioneer songs) and choral compositions for various types of choirs. From 1969 until his retirement in 1992, prof. S. Bimberg worked as head of the Institute of Music Education at Martin Luther University in Halle.

<sup>8</sup> Information about the life work of her supervisor S. Bimberg, his pedagogical methods, his academic career in the former GDR, his research studies and works of arts, and about her post-graduate studies Irena Medňanská brought closer in an extensive paper. See more Irena Medňanská, Musikunterricht und Musiklehrerausbildung in der Slowakei [Music education and education of music teachers in Slovakia]. In: José A. Rodrigues-Quiles, ed. *Internationale Perspektiven zur Musik(lehre) ausbildung in Europa*. Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam, 2017), p. 74. The author mentions him in these words: "Prof. S. Bimberg opened my contacts to the Polyesthetic Education Centre in Salzburg that time lead by prof. To Wolfgang Roscher, as well as to the German music-pedagogical environment, he taught me to conceptualize and methodologically master scholar works."

Based on the study focus and professional development, Medňanská gradually formed and outlined her pedagogical strategies. She paid intensive attention mainly to future music teachers' instrumental competencies and the systematic acquisition of their theoretical erudition in selected application disciplines. She was one of the inspiring teachers who always motivated and enthused students to study. She organized the successful completion of their activities, constantly pushing them forward and broadening their horizons with the full support of their artistic creativity.

Based on her post-graduate studies in Germany (1987-1993) under the influence of an excellent tutor, her professional focus on choral singing and choral works by Slovak composers (primarily music works for children's choirs) arose, which later formed into her strong interest about the academic choir movement. The result of her research was a monograph *Kinderchormusik aus dem Schaffen slowakischer Komponisten nach 1945* (1993) [Children's choral work by Slovak composers after 1945].<sup>9</sup> The book is the first concentrated look at children's choral compositions by Slovak composers. In addition to its heuristic contribution, it also contains the first analytical perspectives on crucial pieces of music. It also provides the first more comprehensive outline of a solution to the axiological issues related to composing for children in the defined area of developing their vocal abilities in the context of collaborative interpretation and child socialization. As an inspiration and the first research task, choral singing grew into a broader theoretical interest in more general methodological and systematic issues of making music accessible. At that time, she gradually focused on the theoretical issues of music education as a scholarly discipline and in practice.

## **Organization-centered and research-centered activities for the benefit of Slovak education and music culture**

Irena Medňanská performed her extensive organization-centered and music-centered activities as a lifelong program in concrete implementing institutional activities that, as a unifying and supporting base, accompanied the development of music education in Slovakia after 1989. The establishment of Slovakia as a new politically emancipated state entity on the map of Europe was inevitably reflected in need to constitute domestic trade, professional, and interest-based organizations, and their penetration, in coordination with Slovak academic institutions, into European organizations. The most important achievements can be considered the formation of the Association of Music Teachers of Slovakia in 1993 and its subsequent admission to the European Association for Music in Schools (EAS) based on individual membership of Irena Medňanská.

Prof. Franz Niermann, former President of EAS and former professor at The University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, describes the work she has done with these words: "Irena has helped shape the development of our association from the very beginning. She has been an EAS board member for over a decade and an EAS honorary member since 2016. She participated in nearly all EAS conferences and organized the EAS conference in 1996 at the University of Prešov. Irena has achieved special merits by strengthening Eastern

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<sup>9</sup> See Irena Medňanská, *Kinderchormusik aus dem Schaffen slowakischer Komponisten nach 1945* [Children's choral work by Slovak composers after 1945] (Prešov: Kušnír, 1993).

European countries' presence in the international music education discourse. [...] From an early stage, she was a member of the international working group Music Education of the Southern Countries of Europe (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Musikpädagogik der südlichen Länder Europas, ArGeSüd*), which played a pivotal role in establishing the EAS. In particular, she has strengthened the cooperation between colleagues from the so-called Visegrád countries as an informal sub-group of the EAS<sup>10</sup>. The result of these efforts was the establishment of the Slovak Orff Society (SOS) in 1999 that Irena Medňanská helped to establish too.

The "Bridge to Cooperation" (1995–2001) is the most important project, which still represents the Central European model of effective and meaningful cooperation. It has brought significant developmental and dynamic impulses for all Slovak universities educating future teachers of music (or, more generally, aesthetics). Its ideological and human core was the intensive cooperation on the Prague-Prešov axis between the Faculties of Education of Charles University and the University of Prešov, represented by Irena Medňanská and Miloš Kodejška. The project (initiated in 1994) was of fundamental importance for joining European and world music organizations and led to the event of international significance when the EAS International Congress was held in Prešov, Slovakia, as the first of the former socialist bloc countries.<sup>11</sup>

The "Bridge to Cooperation" project, in a new form in 2007, laid a solid foundation for trade union cooperation in education between the V4 countries (universities in Poland and Hungary joined gradually). The Visegrád Music Team, composed of academics from the V4 countries, has since begun to jointly promote the interests of this group within the European structures of music teachers and music education theorists.<sup>12</sup> The Visegrád seminars were primarily aimed at improving music education and building a new academic generation of music education theorists.<sup>13</sup> At the regional level, with overlap into the national context, the Prešov Pedagogical Forum (implemented in 2004–2011) was a significant event. It created a network for the cooperation of Slovak teacher-training universities, primary schools, and schools providing for after-class arts education.<sup>14</sup>

As a professor of music pedagogy, in her research, she defended the positions of the development of the discipline using comparative methods. At the same time, she continued to carry out theoretical research through a systematic combination of research methods of musical aesthetics, sociology, and pedo-sociology, by teaching the propaedeutics of these disciplines. At the same time, she also taught practical disciplines (instrumental playing on the accordion and flute, chamber music) with an emphasis on permanently balancing between theoretical and practical training of students for their profession. Her monograph

<sup>10</sup> Franz Niermann, Irena Medňanská, in Slávka Kopčáková. *Irena Medňanská a slovenská hudobná pedagogika* [Irena Medňanská and Slovak music education] (Prešov: Filozofická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity, 2021), pp. 152–153.

<sup>11</sup> See more The editors, Prvé stránky novej kroniky [The first pages of the new chronicle], in František & Lubomír Kaliňák, eds. *Predznamenanie, študentské reflexie o hudbe. Zborník študentských prác 4* [Foreshadowing. Student reflections on music. Collection of student works 4] (Prešov: Fakulta humanitných a prírodných vied v Prešove, 1997), p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Miloš Kodejška & Petra Slavíková, eds., *Teorie a praxe hudební výchovy 6* [Theory and practice of music education 6] (Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2020), p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> See more Irena Medňanská, Súčasnité poslanie, potreby hudobnej výchovy a úlohy vysokých škôl pripravujúcich učiteľov hudby cez prizmu seminárov krajín V4 v Prahe [Current mission, needs of music education and tasks of universities preparing music teachers through the prism of seminars of V4 countries in Prague], *Višegradské semináre Praha 2008*. [Visegrad seminars in Prague 2008] (Praha: Pedagogická fakulta, Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Juraj Hatrík, Obúvanie stonožky. Na margo hudobno-pedagogických seminárov v Bratislave a v Prešove [Shoehing a centipede. On the margin of music-pedagogical seminars in Bratislava and Prešov], *Hudobný život* 36, 5, p. 5. Here, the author discusses the events of the genesis of the event in more detail.



*Systematika hudobnej pedagogiky* [Systematics of Music Education] (2010) is essential in Slovakia's music education theory. As her methodological starting point of the book, she precisely defined the different meanings of the terms very explicitly used in the Slovak language: music pedagogy, music education, and schooling music education (music in school), meaning that they are not synonymous in Slovak terminology.<sup>15</sup> In her conception, the book's first chapter defines these terms according to the German music educators W. Gieseler, W. Krütz Feldt, H. Kaiser, E. Nolte, Ch. Richter, K. H. Ehrenforth, as well as the Slovak theorist Š. Švec.

Music pedagogy is an emancipated research-based discipline (it is a cognitive reflection of music education processes), while music education is a term that came to us from the Anglophone environment and combined both music education as a theory and music education as a process of schooling. It follows that "music education" in Anglophone countries is a broader concept than Slovak or Czech terminology. Finally, schooling music education (music in school) is an appellation for the school subject.<sup>16</sup>

The author offers a research-supported reflection of the music-pedagogical process, thus drawing attention to the research-based content of music pedagogy, which has no adequate term in the Slovak language since the word "pedagogue" in our socio-cultural environment is associated with the practical profession of a teacher.<sup>17</sup> Its contribution lies mainly in adding new disciplines to the systematics of music pedagogy, which was necessitated by the changed social and educational conditions after 1990. To name but a few, the emergence of an independent discipline within music pedagogy (e.g., pedagogical music therapy) or the independence from an already existing discipline (e.g., the independence of the didactics of pop-rock music from the didactics of music).<sup>18</sup> The treatise can also be understood as a creative follow-up to the content problems and thematic areas outlined in the work *Teória hudobnej pedagogiky* [Theory of music education] (1997) published in Prešov by the pioneer of Slovak musicology and music pedagogy as its subdiscipline, music composer and scholar Ladislav Burlas.<sup>19</sup> The author does not hide the theoretical work of Ladislav Burlas as a key source of inspiration. On the contrary, she proudly claims it.<sup>20</sup>

The author introduces readers to proposals for new disciplines that present scientific knowledge gained from interdisciplinary research. She recommends that these should be understood as separate disciplines, which she argues are essential to re-examine if the aim is to contribute to the innovation of music education at different levels of formal and informal

<sup>15</sup> Irena Medňanská, *Systematika hudobnej pedagogiky* [Systematics of Music Pedagogy] (Prešov: Prešovská univerzita v Prešove, 2010), p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Renáta Beličová, *Hudobné vzdelávanie alebo hudobná výchova?* [Music schooling or music education?], in *Hudobno-teoretické interpretácie 6. Zborník katedry hudobnej výchovy* [Music theory interpretations 6. Proceedings of the Department of music education] (Nitra: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Konštantína Filozofa, Regionálne združenie Slovenskej hudobnej únie, 2001) pp. 57-69. The authoress speaks about the distinction between music education (school subject) and music schooling (i.e. professional training for musicians and scholars).

<sup>17</sup> In Slovak, there is no term such as in German Musik-Erziehungswissenschaftler, which translates as a scholar in music education.

<sup>18</sup> Eva Kráľová, *Systematika hudobnej pedagogiky* [Systematics of Music Education]. Prešov, *e-Pedagogium* 11, 3, pp. 191-192.

<sup>19</sup> See more Ladislav Burlas, *Teória hudobnej pedagogiky* [Theory of music education]. (Prešov: Fakulta humanitných a prírodných vied Prešovskej univerzity v Prešove, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> See Irena Medňanská, Ladislav Burlas – systematik slovenskej hudobnej pedagogiky [Ladislav Burlas – systematist of Slovak music pedagogy] in Renáta Beličová, ed. *Hudobný život na Slovensku – kontinuita či diskontinuita? 1 Živá kultúra alebo skanzen?* [Musical life in Slovakia – continuity or discontinuity? 1 Living culture or an open-air museum?] (Turčianske Teplice: BEN&M, 2007).

education. The first chapter concludes by presenting a proposal for a theoretical-content approximation of formal and informal education in music education and also a proposal for a system of music education, which is tabulated. Her reflections on new subdisciplines of music pedagogy can also be considered beneficial. Let us name at least proposals for the systematic integration of disciplines such as musical andragogy, pedagogical ethnomusicology, pedagogical ethno-organology, pedagogical music therapy, musical pedo-therapy, church music pedagogy, etc.

After these research studies, she continued intensively developing systematic reflections on the European dimension of music pedagogy and the contexts of its implementation phases in a changing globalized society and innovative processes leading to effective coping with them.<sup>21</sup> Extensive scholarly work resulted in effectively organized work in academia, where education and culture have led a dialogue since time immemorial. Irena Medňanská's organizational skills and creativity were also significantly present in her musical life, both at university as well as in the broader cultural environment of the city and region. She used her potential not only in managing a professional music body of national importance (State Philharmonic Orchestra in 1988–1991) but also later in organizing scholarly or memorial events aimed at discovering and promoting regional musicians (Mikuláš Moyzes, Béla Kéler, Grešák, et al.).<sup>22</sup> As an author and editor, she contributed to musicological reflection with an important collective monograph on the East Slovak music composer Jozef Grešák<sup>23</sup> and Béla Kéler.<sup>24</sup> The accessibility and dissemination of the musical work of regional composers have grown into many live performances, primarily through contacts with the Košice State Philharmonic Orchestra, representatives of the musical life of towns in Eastern Slovakia (Košice, Prešov, Bardejov, Levoča, and Sabinov, etc.).

The region's musical life, the city of Prešov, and Prešov University were significantly enriched by concerts performed together with her husband, assoc. prof. Karol Medňanský; especially the Academic Chamber Concerts in 2004–2017 (a total of 14 successful years); or the numerous performances of the ensemble of early music *Musica Historica* and the university chamber ensemble *Camerata Academica*, both under Karol Medňanský's artistic

<sup>21</sup> See Irena Medňanská, *Hudobná pedagogika v celoeurópskom kontexte* [Music education in European context], in *Múzická umění (hudba a zpěv)* [Performing arts (music and singing)]. (Praha: Národní ústav odborného vzdělávání, 2005) and Irena Medňanská, *Európska dimenzia hudobnej pedagogiky* [European dimension of music education], in *Hudobní výchova* [Music education] 14, 2006, 1).

<sup>22</sup> See Irena Medňanská & Sylvia Fecsková, eds. *Skladateľ a pedagóg Jozef Grešák z pohľadu muzikológov a interpretov 21. storočia* [Composer and teacher Jozef Grešák from the perspective of musicologists and performers of the 21st century]. (Prešov: Bookman, s. r. o., 2019) and Irena Medňanská & Peter Bubák, *Béla Kéler – život a dielo* [Béla Kéler – life and work], Karol Medňanský, ed. *Tvorba bardejovského rodáka Bélu Kélera z pohľadu muzikológov a interpretov 21. storočia* [The work of Béla Kéler, a native of Bardejov, from the perspective of musicologists and performers of the 21st century] (Prešov: Filozofická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity v Prešove, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> Jozef Grešák (1907–1987) was a Slovak composer who taught music, composed, and worked as a musician in the region of eastern Slovakia (Bardejov, Košice). As an autodidact composer, he developed tremendous and highly original compositional thinking. He dedicated several works to the State Philharmonic Košice (the overture to *Améby*, Concert Symphonietta, the operas *Neprebudený* [The Awakened] *Zuzanka Hraškovie* [Little Susanna Pea], *S Rozárkou* [With Rozarka], etc.).

<sup>24</sup> Béla Kéler (1820–1882) was a Hungarian composer of the romantic music period and orchestral conductor. He was born in Bártfa (present-day Bardejov, Slovakia) and died in Wiesbaden. He was active in Hungary, Austria, and Germany. He worked as a violinist in Vienna, conductor of orchestras in Vienna, Budapest, Munich, Zurich, Hamburg, London, and many others, and military bandmaster in Wiesbaden. His best-known piece *Erinnerung an Bartfeld* was (partly) mistakenly rewritten by Johannes Brahms as Hungarian Dance No. 5 because Brahms thought it was a folk song, not an original work. Kéler was very popular as a composer of orchestral and dance music and was considered one of the best writers of violin solos. His overtures and compositions for small orchestra were long famous in the United States and England.



direction (until 2018). These events enriched the musical life of the region with valuable interpretive (and premiere) performances of musical works of many Slovak composers (Jozef Podprocký, Ladislav Burlas, Milan Novák), bringing to concert stages (by Pavel Burdych, Zuzana Bérešová, Ljubov Gunder i.) the music of Mikuláš Moyzes (Prešov Music Quartet under K. Medňanský), Béla Kéler, or Jozef Grešák.

## Conclusion

Irena Medňanská dedicated a substantial part of her work effort to making music and songs a part of the future generations' lives as an expression of the aesthetic experience of life, the healing benefits of music for mental health, the move towards humanity and socialization, not only at school, in a family, but also in society. Her vision for the role of music education in 21st-century society was clearly articulated: "Music education should be seen as an active lifelong process in a person's life. I think that within school education, it should have an equal place in the aggregate of school subjects. Its content fulfills each individual's psychomotor and affective development goals, but above all, it humanizes us and gives life another dimension."<sup>25</sup>

Prof. Medňanská's tireless organizational, project, and music-creating, but also legislative and advisory activities have left a permanent and so far lasting mark on music education, music schooling, and cognitive reflections on music education. She continuously promoted her vision and lived with the unshakable conviction that the mission of music education is to expand the social and cultural horizons of children and youth, acquired by being aware of a wide range of human musical experiences. She lived her professional life knowing that these goals could not be achieved except through quality education of future generations in formal and informal education, spiced with a love of music.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Slávka Kopčáková & Irena Medňanská, Profesorka Irena Medňanská oslávila životné jubileum [Professor Irena Medňanská celebrated her life anniversary], *Na Pulze* 13, 2020, 2–3, p. 69.

<sup>26</sup> This paper is the result of the project VEGA no. 1/0065/22 *Between the past and the present of Aesthetics in Slovakia – critical reading and critical editions with regard to the historical memory and knowledge update*. Principal investigator: prof. PaedDr. Slávka Kopčáková, PhD., University of Prešov, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Aesthetics and Arts Culture.

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**Slávka Kopčáková** graduated from the Faculty of Natural and Humanity Sciences of the University of Prešov (in 1997, music pedagogy – playing the violin; in 2008 – English language and literature). In 2001 she defended her doctoral studies in the theory and history of music at the Department of Musicology of Slovak Academy of Science in Bratislava (PhD. awarded at Comenius University in Bratislava). In 2013 she became an associate professor of aesthetics, and in 2021 she was appointed as a professor in the same field.

Since 2007 she has worked at the Institute of Aesthetics and Arts Culture at the University of Prešov. She is an experienced music teacher (she taught violin and orchestra playing at Music School in Prešov, 1997–2009) and a professional musician (Theatre orchestra in Prešov, 1994–2004). Occasionally, she plays as a chamber and orchestra player (violin) and contributes to Slovak music culture reflection as a music critic.