

Zoltán RÁCZ

Born in Budapest (1960) he has begun his musical studies in 1967 first on the piano and some years later also on percussion instruments. Having finished studies at Béla Bartók Conservatory he graduated from Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music in 1983.

As a student he became more and more interested in percussion solo and chamber music repertoire. He has regularly participated in the programs of New Music Studio (Budapest) and presented several new pieces in concerts and recordings. During the Bartók Centenary Year 1981 he performed and recorded Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion with Zoltán Kocsis and Dezső Ránki.

In 1984 he has founded Amadinda Percussion Group remaining its artistic director to this day. In 1985 the group won the first prize at Gaudeamus Contemporary Music Competition in Rotterdam. During the past years Amadinda became one of the most renowned percussion groups all over the world - performing at all prestigious music festivals in Europe like Paris Autumn, Prague Spring, Zagreb Biennale, Warsaw Autumn, Tampere Biennale, Bath Festival, Huddersfield Contemporary Festival, BBC Proms, Berlin Biennale and Wiener Festwochen. Amadinda performed also at Carnegie Hall and Meyerson Hall in the USA, Japan, Mexico City, Australia, China, Lebanon, Armenia and four times in Taiwan at Taipei International Percussion Convention. Amadinda has recorded more than ten CD-s for Hungaroton, including the complete percussion works of John Cage. Additional recordings were made for TELDEC (The Ligeti Project) and for Tzadik, New York.

John Cage dedicated his 72 minutes long composition Four4 to Amadinda. The piece was premiered in Tokyo during the group's first tour in Japan in 1992. In 2000, they performed the world premiere of **György Ligeti**'s new piece *Síppal, dobbal, nádihegedűvel*, for mezzo-soprano and percussion, composed for the group as well. In 2009, **Steve Reich**, one of the greatest living composers composed and dedicated a new piece for the group - Mallet Quartet – on the occasion of Amadinda's 25th anniversary.

In 1988 Amadinda Percussion Group was awarded Franz Liszt Prize by the Hungarian government as well as the Order of the Merit of the Hungarian Republic by the President of Hungary in 1997. In 2004 Amadinda received the Kossuth Prize, the highest artistic prize of Hungary. In addition they received a very prestigious prize in 2008: the Bartók Béla – Pásztory Ditta prize

During these years Zoltán RÁCZ appeared as a soloist and conductor as well. He played and also recorded for the BIS label Peter Eötvös's percussion concerto *Triangel* - under the baton of the composer. Performance venues included Berlin, Vienna and Budapest, among others. He performed Bartók's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion with András Schiff and Bruno Canino in several European countries, e.g. in Wigmore Hall London, Berliner Festwochen, Mondsee Festival, Biennale di Venezia. Their recording of the piece was published on DECCA label. He has been the principal timpanist of the Budapest Festival Orchestra between 1992 and 1996 as well as editor of a contemporary music program for the Hungarian Television for five years. From 1997 until 2005 he was member of the artistic advisory board of the Budapest Spring Festival which is Hungary's most important annual artistic event.

Since 2006 he serves as music director for Hungary's leading contemporary music group, the UMZE Chamber Ensemble. His appearances, as conductor of this ensemble include Espinho Music Festival (Portugal), Zagreb Biennale (Croatia) Bornaola Festival (Spain) and Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival (Germany) as well as most of the major Hungarian music festivals. He is the artistic director of the annual Hommage à Ligeti concert series of the Palace of Arts – Budapest.

Since 1990 he is professor at Franz Liszt Academy of Music. He has held numerous masterclasses: Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt (1996), Groznjan, Croatia (1997) Juilliard School of Music and Yale University, USA (1998) Senzoku Gakuen College of Music, Toho Gakuen College of Music and Nagoya College of Music in Japan (1999) First International Percussion Summer Camp, Taiwan (1999) Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia (2002) Janacek Academy, Brno, Czech Republic (2008) and Bartók - New Music Festival held in Hungary in 1990, 1998, 2002 and 2003.

In 2002 Zoltán Rácz received the award of Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres given by Madame Catherine Tasca, Minister of Culture and Communication of the French Republic.