

Hungarian Musicians at the *Festival of Political Songs* in East Berlin (in the 1970s and early 1980s)

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The *Festival of Political Songs* (Festival des politischen Liedes), held between 1970 and 1990 in East Berlin, was the largest state-funded international showcase of protest songs in East Central Europe during the Cold War. It was an event that brought together dozens of musicians, journalists and scholars from geographically and culturally distant countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Therefore, it quickly acquired an exceptional status in the Eastern Bloc and also became attractive to performers who, thematically and genre-wise, followed a different trend from the festival's mainstream. As significant as the festival was, however, only a few works have dealt with its history so far, and most of them have been concerned with local (GDR) issues.

Relying on archival documents (of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv and the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), media coverage, and oral history interviews (with festival organizers Lutz Kirchenwitz and Elke Bitterhof), I will reconstruct in my paper the early history of the festival from a Hungarian perspective. I am mainly interested in how Hungarian performers (such as Orfeo, Kaláka, and Monszun) got in touch with the organizers, which songs they played during their performances, and how they built personal and professional networks during their stay in the GDR. I will also discuss the special role of the renowned Marxist musicologist János Maróthy in mediating between the East German and Hungarian scenes of political song. Maróthy helped many musicians to be invited to the festival and encouraged them to become more familiar with the international protest song tradition, by involving them in his research on urban folk music and workers' songs at the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In the final part of my paper, I will explore how Maróthy (and the musicians he patronized) contributed to the realization of the largest Hungarian protest song contest (*Fiatál Dalosok Országos Találkozója*, Székesfehérvár, 1973–1998), which was clearly inspired by its East German counterpart.

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