

The History of the Library of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music

On the 15th of November in 1875 music education began at the Academy of Music with 5 professors and 38 students, led by the presidency of Franz Liszt, it operated at a rented building at 4 Hal Square nearby the Danube. Even at that time a separate place was provided for books and scores.

The Library was founded mainly by donations from music publishers, including Liszt's Budapest-based publisher and friend, Ferdinand Táborzky, from the auctioned music library of the director of the National Theater Bódog Orczy. And even as a gift from the royal court, the first editions of the Mozart and Schubert series graced the library collection of the Hungarian Music Academy.

In the Autumn of 1879 the Academy moved to a new location, to the building known today as the „Old Music Academy” on Sugár (now Andrásy) Avenue. Composer, pianist and instructor Kornél Ábrányi was responsible for the Library at that time. The 1884/85 yearbook listed approximately 4.300 volumes of books and sheet music in the catalogue.

Following Liszt's death in 1886, his legacy, including his books and sheet music, was bequeathed to the Music Academy according to his heirs' wishes. After Ferenc Erkel's directorship, Ödön Mihalovich took over the management of the institution, directing both music and drama education from 1887-1893 under the name of National Royal Hungarian Academy of Music and Drama. In 1895, another inventory and catalogue were made of the collection. At that time, 7,500 books and sheet music were available to teachers and students. A reading group was formed, in which the books collected were later donated to the library.

The Academy of Music outgrew its site at Andrásy Avenue. The currently used neo classical and Art Nouveau building opened on the 12th of May in 1907, and the broad strip of Gyár Street in front of the Academy of Music was named Liszt Ferenc Square. A modern space opened for the library on the side next to the main concert hall. The library's collection grew rapidly, although World War I held back its growth.

In 1919 Jenő Hubay became the head of the college. In 1922 during his tenure, a new library regulation was introduced, which specified in detail the duties of the librarians appointed by the minister. A specialized catalogue was created for approximately 34,000 books and musical works.

From 1928, a globally recognized musicologist, Margit Prahács, a Liszt researcher, supervised and led the library. She created the Liszt Memorial Room in the building on Liszt Square, the predecessor of the Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum and Research Center today it can be found in the Old Music Academy. Her primary post-war task was to replace and repair lost and damaged works.

In 1971, under the directorship of musicologist János Kárpáti, the school was awarded university status, and the library was elevated to university library status.

In 1994, the processing of the inventory in electronic integrated library automation system began, that has been connected to music databases subscribed since 2010.

In the library of the renovated and restored building of the Liszt Academy, which is equipped with both heritage and modern features, we currently have a collection of nearly 500,000 sheet music, 70,000 books, 100 types of journals, about 6,000 CDs, and 1,500 DVDs. The shelves of our reading room offer composer and thematic critical editions, some of which are the only available copies in Hungary.

We preserve the intellectual legacy of numerous masters, such as Mór Vavrinecz, József Szigeti, Leó Weiner, Ede Zathureczky, Dénes Bartha, Antal Molnár, Bence Szabolcsi, Ditta Pásztory, Andor Földes, András Pernye, György Kroó, András Szöllősy, Zoltán Jeney, Péter Komlós, and many others. The valuable pieces of their collections constitute a significant part of our inventory.

In addition to practical education, we also assist those engaged in scientific research with our subscribed online databases. We provide essential professional literature for students of the doctoral school and musicology.

Our goal is to build a unique music database in Hungary and to carry out education support work of the highest quality in the library of the Liszt Academy, which celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2025, in line with the intention of its founder, Franz Liszt.

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