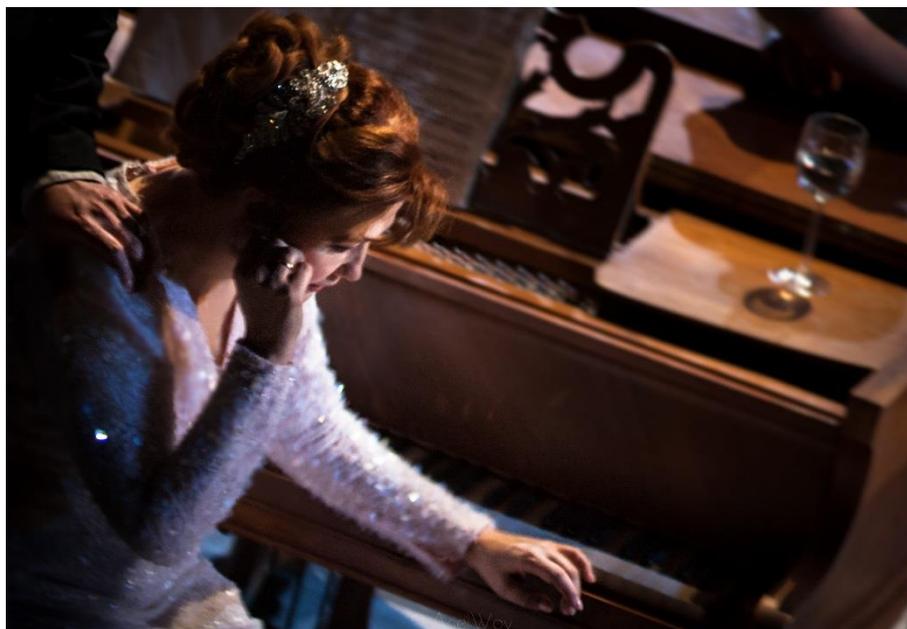


Again in Debrecen, as Violetta

Katalin Gyürky's interview with Klára Kolonits Hajdú Press, 1st April 2016

<http://www.hajdupress.hu/cikk/violettakent-ismet-debrecenben-interju-kolonits-kl>



- *How did it happen, that you are playing Violetta on the Debrecen stage?*
- This is quite an exciting story, because I got a call from Máté Szabó Sipos, the conductor, two weeks before the rehearsals began: the singer who originally was supposed to sing the role cancelled her appearance, and so they needed me.
- *But another exciting thing is that you actually came back to Debrecen: you were member of Csokonai Theatre company between 1995 and 1997. How was it to return into such a place, where at the beginning of your career the colleagues helped you a lot in mastering your playing skills? Can you tell us something about these years?*
- As I graduated from the singing department of the Franz Liszt Music Academy's Teacher Collegium, and actually was supposed to be concert singer, I got absolutely no stage practice during my studies. However the Magic Flute staged by József Ruszt that we played in 1994 in the Chamber Opera made such an impression on me, that it came out very clearly, that I would like to work on stage. After my diploma Balázs Kocsár invited me to Debrecen, and really great artists were working there at that time: Éva Mohos Nagy, György Tréfás, Tamás Albert. But I did not regard it as an easy step. My son was a toddler at that time, I was never far from home and I was an absolute beginner, who all of a sudden found herself in a well-functioning, strong, typically hierarchical theatre company - it wasn't smooth and conflict free task, as in fact being a part of such company does not really fit my temperament. But back then György Lengyel and all the theatre directors were holding everyone together as a flock, directing us: the dance, prose and music performers were living in symbiosis and we were constantly keeping eye on each other's productions. In addition I was living together with one of the company members, who was always present at my performances and always made his remarks on what should I change. Our roads

went apart later, but the constant strive of perfecting my acting skills remained. Now thanks to my husband, Dániel Dinyés - pianist, composer and conductor - I am very close to the prose theatre, and got advices from such artists as Piroska Molnár or Miklós Benedek. Thus I can say that I studied stage skills with the greatest actors. And in the meantime I have also a continuous strive for perfection in my singing as well. Going back to Debrecen: when I left in 1997, I never more became a member of theatre company. But I returned in 2004 to sing one role, and now I got invited again. And when I entered the dressing room and asked myself: did I reach what I wanted, when I have begun this journey? Was all that I did until now worth it?... And I felt that yes, I reached it, and it was worth it.



- *You played Violetta numerous times and in numerous stagings. Is it destiny, that you were working on this role also on one of the master classes, with Ileana Cotrubas?*
- I had more such experiences with Violetta, and it suggested to me, that I shall be aware of this role, that I have something in common with her. It was the first role that Opera House appointed for me, when I received their scholarship in 1995. Then I started to study it with Wanda Mazalin, who is now working here in Debrecen as répétiteur pianist. In 2002 my husband truly taught me this role, and then I played it for the first time in Patrícia Horváth's staging. The current production in Debrecen is the eighth or ninth, and I sang Violetta on stage more than eighty times. However this is such a complex role, that you can never reach the end of it. Meeting Ileana was wonderful, but every single staging and Nadine Duffaut's as well makes a building stone, very important building stone in my construction of Violetta. I don't know until when I can play this role but in the end, in my last Violetta all of these stones will be present.
- *And then surely the picture of Violetta will make itself clear in you.*
- I would like to make a remark here: it won't be the end either. This is an ingenious piece. You cannot make it your own, you can just keep trying. That's what I am doing.

- *As we are already talking about building stones of the Violetta picture: which staging stays closer to you? The traditional one, where this woman suffers her destiny, sacrifices herself and her life for her love, or the interpretation of Nadine Duffaut, which is constructed on completely different idea?*
- This is more polarized, a little more harsh approach which matches me and my age very well. It's clear I am not debutante any more, but a mature woman, mature personality who makes choices. That's why I like a lot the Violetta who - instead of suffering through her life - dares to make choices and bear their consequences. In the concept of Nadine, Violetta is a modern woman, true complex character. Not a two-dimensional figure, but a one that dares to be even antipathetic on stage. I find that my task is not to show some moral superiority through her, but a flesh-and-blood woman, who at the beginning dares to be even quite nasty for the young man who tries to court her. Nadine has a couple of very exact ideas that we can use to show this on stage. And in the same time we have to bear in mind that this piece had its premiere in the period of very serious moral standards, that stand very far away from our times. Nowadays the ostracism of a woman sick of tuberculosis is not such a big deal any more, not to mention the violence of men towards women. And in addition I am not fragile twenty years old girl anymore and I'm not trying to show this on stage, because it would be false. It would be anachronistic, if I was trying to play a woman a lot younger than myself. For that reason I find it very good, what happens in end in the staging of Nadine Duffaut: when Violetta is deprived of all her feminine attributes, and it is really harsh, but immensely true. We lose our feminine beauty as time goes by, but we stay women, and mothers, even if we have no children. And that's why at the end of the opera, as a true woman with brutally trimmed hair it's me who tries to console Alfredo in the face of my death, as if in this production I were his mother and his lover in one person. It is drastically different that all of the other Violetta-concepts and for me it is perfectly all right now. For this stage of my life it is exceptionally well matching stage interpretation.



- *Thus Violetta dies as a woman and in this meaning also as mother. What kind of feeling is it for you, to die on stage in the major part of your roles?*
- I will begin my answer from some distance: I was such a child who was scared of death. In my primary school during an exhibition about ancient Egypt I saw mummies and got shocked, I ran away from the museum, terribly afraid of nonexistence. This fear stayed with me through my whole youth. However I became mother very early, and there was one moment when it seemed like neither me, neither my son will stay alive. And then, finding myself in that situation, I had to confront death and "come to terms" with it. There were many levels of this process. My life got shaped in such a way, that various deathly diseases reached me already, and here my personal story is connected to Traviata. In 2006 I became asthmatic and once I got such an attack, that they told my husband: if you brought her to the hospital 45 minutes later, we wouldn't be able to save her anymore. It's not casual, that my husband, who is here with me in Debrecen, was not able to watch even today's main rehearsal ending. He could not, because he already saw his wife on the edge of death, he already experienced such a thing. As for myself, I could make use of these experiences in Boheme, in Rigoletto or now in this role, and more times I die on stage, less I fear of death itself.



- *We can also put in such a way, that you keep getting these roles because you need to deal with the thought of death.*
- It is true, and when my greatparents were dying I was with them, and now in Autumn, when my beloved father in law passed away, I could be there with him as well. Therefore one is able to conduct his loved ones and himself as well from existence to nonexistence. I think that this is one the highest steps, the most important parts of love: that one shall be able to be on that journey. This is a kind of knowledge and experience, that is in my roles as well.

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