

Where did the students of the *cimbalom* department come from?:

An analysis of the register of the students at the Royal Academy of Music Budapest (1897-1947)

OTA Mineo

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, several departments of the *cimbalom*, Hungarian hammered dulcimer, were established at music schools in Budapest and in other cities in Hungary. Contemporary yearbooks and student register of the Royal Academy of Music Budapest suggest us what kind of people needed the framework of modern music school for learning this “national” instrument, which formerly had been played and taught almost exclusively by Romany musicians. First of all, the student register of the Royal Academy from 1897 to 1947 shows that during the first two decades young people of different classes, ethnicities and religions studied at the same cimbalom department, even if only a small number of students from families of Romany musicians had been there. Secondly, it tells us that the diversity in the social background of the students, which had been so prominent before the Great War, disappeared during the interwar years: while the number of students from the lower middle class and the working class—and from the families of “musicians”—drastically increased, very few business men and high-ranking officials came to allow their sons or daughters to learn the instrument at the Royal Academy. This phenomenon suggests how the institute’s initial prospect of raising cimbalom musicians, who were “ready for artistic purpose” and familiar with Hungarian music, became incompatible with the reality of the interwar Hungarian middle-class society.