

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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SPECIAL FEATURE on

ROSA SUCK

Birth: 10th May, 1844 in Pest

Death: 2nd October 2, 1921 in Budapest

Rosa Suck was the daughter of Erzsébet Suck née Berkovits (around 1821–1877) and Leopold Suck (1821–1897), the solo cellist of the Pest National Theatre and teacher at the Pest Conservatory who had immigrated from Saxony. Rosa had three siblings: Caroline, Leopold and Elise. She received her schooling from 1850 at Maria Pröbstl's girls' educational institute. A year later she began playing the cello, initially on a viola, which was gradually replaced by larger instruments. When she was ten years old, her father began tutoring her regularly. He remained her only teacher, later accompanying her on part of her concert tours and initially also taking part in her performances.

Rosa Suck's first public concert on March 9th, 1858 was significantly announced by the press:

"Violin and violoncello are those instruments that are rarely used by women, and in Pesth one hardly ever heard a cello player. We shouldn't be deprived of this pleasure for very long, since the fourteen-year-old daughter of Mr. Suck, professor at the conservatory, has shown an extraordinary talent for this instrument"

Soon after, a trip to Vienna ended with an invitation to perform at the court concert on December 8th, 1859, together with Mathilde Wildauer, Johann Nepomuk Beck and Gustav Walter from the Vienna Court Opera.

In the years that followed, Rosa Suck gave concerts mainly in her immediate vicinity: 1860 in Neusatz (SRB Novi Sad), Stuhlweißenburg (H Székesfehérvár), Pest, Raab (H Győr) and Poppa (H Pápa), 1861 in Debresin (H Debrecen), Oradea (H Nagyvárad, RO Oradea), Cluj (H Kolozsvár, RO Cluj-Napoca), Arad, Timisoara (RO Timișoara) and Ipolyság (SK Šahi), 1862 in Kassau (Kaschau, H Kassa, SK Košice), Eperies (H Eperjes, SK Prešov), Mischkoltz (H Miskolc), Erlau (H Eger) and Debresin (H Debrecen), 1863 in Pest, Füred and Stuhlweißenburg (H Székesfehérvár), 1864 and 1865 in Pest. In the spring of 1865, a concert tour took her to Belgrade (Court Concert), Esseg (H Eszék, HR Osijek), Zombor (H Zobor) and Pécs (H Pécs).

In Hungary, where the question of political and cultural sovereignty played a major role in these decades of the nineteenth century, she repeatedly achieved storms of applause with Hungarian-tinged programmes, for example with her father Leopold Suck's 'Fantasy on Hungarian National Songs' (Pesti Emlék), which she often played, and occasionally also with the performance of 'Szószat', a national song by Béni Egressy, which according to the diary "*was strictly forbidden*" (April 24th, 1862).

The relevant repertoire also included a style of playing based on Hungarian folklore, as the "Kronstädter Zeitung" documents in 1860:

"The phantasy was reproduced by the concert hostess in that free, erratic manner that characterizes the performance of Hungarian folk songs. With fire she played the wildly moving Csárdás, in which the piece ends"
(Kronstädter Zeitung February 8th, 1860).

The same newspaper also stated that Rosa Suck often appeared in Hungarian national costume or with a "*national bow in her hair*" (March 12th, 1860).

In September 1865 she declined an invitation from the English conductor Alfred Mellon to spend three months in London at the Covent Garden Concerts, for lack of "courage" and because of a lack of language skills (as revealed in her diary on September 2nd, 1865).

On the other hand, from the summer of 1865, a trip to Paris was prepared through language lessons. This significant journey as a fully-fledged concert artist began at the end of January 1866 and ended months later in May 1866, after stops in Brussels, The Hague, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Berlin and Dessau. Rosa Suck was accompanied on this grand tour by her mother. Her diary, which contains entries from 1858 to 1866, documents this journey in great detail, and above all, with her encounters with so many important people of the day:

Hector Berlioz, Franz Liszt, Clara Schumann, Wilhelmine Clauss-Szarvady, Marcelina Czartoryska, Auguste-Joseph Franchomme, Emilio Naudin, Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume, François-Joseph Fétis, Princess Pauline Metternich, Princess Mathilde Bonaparte and others!

In addition to appearances in several Parisian salons, there was a public concert, on March 14th, 1866, in the Salle Erard, in which the pianist Charlotte Tardieu de Malleville participated with her. The Parisian press was consistently friendly and laudatory. On the return journey, Rosa Suck gave concerts in Amsterdam and Hamburg. However, and sadly, there are only scant indications of her later life...



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