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SLOVAKIAN FEMALE COMPOSERS AND ROCK INSTRUMENTALISTS: THEIR STATUS, SUCCESS AND PERSPECTIVES¹

Abstract

The paper discusses gender issues and the reception of female musicians in Slovakia. Using historical analysis, the author examines the establishment of, and behaviour towards, females in various genres from classical to jazz, alternative rock and electronic music. Whilst the acceptance of classical female composers began forty years ago, their jazz and rock counterparts were disadvantaged by a twenty-year delay. It was not until 2000 that female instrumentalists started to gain attention from audiences as drummers, bassists, or guitarists. Based on the evaluation of a survey of Slovakian alternative rock players, a study of their careers, and a comparison of selected artists, the writer analyses issues relating to the acceptance of female composers and instrumentalists in Slovakia. The vast majority of research participants, who are musically educated, identified market size as one of the barriers for female musicians. With regard to audience perception of females on stage, half of the respondents stated that gender predominates, and the rest, on the other hand, believed that the quality of music-making had a greater significance.

Key words: female composers, female rock instrumentalists, classical music, jazz, alternative rock, electronic music, Slovak music

1. Research on Feminism and Music in Slovakia

Issues about the social acceptance of female artists still persist in Slovakia. On the one hand, female musicians face the challenge of asserting themselves in competition with their male counterparts who have had more time to professionalise since they are not tied to female domestic roles. However, they may also be expected to conform with gender norms in their work. On the other hand, there are very heterogeneously differentiated audiences, which can choose their favourite style and genre and form themselves into a particular segment of listeners. The aim of this study is to investigate whether the audience receives female musicians only as gendered attractions or as talented musicians. On another line, the contribution traces changes in Slovak audiences, which have appeared to be conservative so far.

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In Slovak musicology, the most discussed issue regarding female musicians has been their status in the musical culture. Since the works published in Slovakia in this area form rather an exception to the mainstream, the authors deal with historical topics (Jónasová 2015; Lengová 2002, 2014, 2015, 2019; Táborecká 2002) and look for female composers and musicians from the nineteenth century up to the present. The topics are also dealt with by students (Apfelová 2013; Beňová 2004; Juhaščíková 2017; Lechmanová 2018; Prohásková 2020) or the female composers themselves (Čekovská 2019; Szeghy 2000; Ursínyová 1999). The latter contribute to this area with essay-like testimonies about their status, since women as composers are attractive for the media (Kmitřová 2002; Kopcsayová 2012; Letňanová 2020; Tuchý 2020; Zajacová 2002). Students and junior researchers earnestly try to grasp this topic (Beňová 2004; Lukáčová 2012), but their engagement, on the whole, does not tend to be long-term and systematic due to their fluctuating interests and work opportunities in academic positions. This fluctuation is necessitated by their circumstances – the livelihood of young people and the underfunding of musical culture. Changing jobs is not the choice of female researchers. They often choose this topic only for it being an interesting phenomenon (Buffa 2012) and do not deal with its specifically sociological issues; instead, they approach it with the traditional methods of the musical analysis of melody, harmony, and form. Certain specificities of female musical thinking such as sensuality, musical poetry, fragility, and the subtleness of expression (for instance composers as Iris Szeghy and Ľubica Čekovská) manifest themselves here (Buffa 2012: 59). On the other hand, female composers (e.g. Viera Janárčeková) reveal themselves in the exactly opposite light, too – sophistication, experimenting, speculativeness (Buffa 2012: 26) or compositional techniques with references to the Darmstadt School (Iris Szeghy), (Zagorski 2020: 47, 58). However, all these characteristic features may be attributed to male composers as well, which is a premise noted already in the nineteenth century by Richard Wallaschek (1882, 1903, Muszkalska 2009: 79-80; Ostleitner 1994), the founder of empirically oriented musicology. At the 2019 UNESCO conference in Paris, which discussed this topic, Slovakia was represented by the composer Ľubica Čekovská. She said:

Compositions cannot be judged according to whether they were written by a woman or a man because chords cannot be divided into female and male ones; therefore, regardless of the fact whether the composer is a woman or a man, their music may equally be of high or low quality (Čekovská 2019).

Other researchers have dealt with the topic of women and music with a broader scope of genre and style, from folk music, through jazz and rock, up to classical music (Kajanová 2018; Urbancová 2019). As for the statistics of the proportion of female instrumentalists in Slovak symphonic orchestras, research has not been conducted in Slovakia on this area yet, although in global research it forms the oldest and one of the most fundamental topics in the area of women and music. Many prominent Slovak musicologists do not want to deal with this topic because they are convinced that there is no connection between music and aspects of sexuality, or music and the discrimination of women, as exposed in this context. While the first issue of the relationship of music and sexuality probably does not have any internal connection

and still forms the subject of research conducted by psychologists, the latter issue cannot be circumvented by saying that if women were talented, they would assert themselves because, in our opinion, each artist, regardless of their gender, fights for their artistic “rivalry field” (Bourdieu 1994; Pietraszewski 2016: 217). Moreover, in the case of female musicians, prejudices have to be overcome because, in their efforts to assert themselves on the musical scene, male artists are preferred to female ones. The prevailing attitudes of Slovak musicologists correspond to the conservative views of Slovak society, which tends to maintain the status quo and not change anything from it. (Bitušíková 2002: 63) However, this paraphrased reflection of Alexandra Bitušíková from 2002 does not mean that Slovak society is not open to change or that no dynamic development is taking place in it.

The stale waters of the musical public were stirred up by *Cinka Panna*, the 2008 film (directed by Dušan Rapoš in Slovak-Czech-Hungarian co-production) about Cinka Panna, the first female Gypsy first violinist of the eighteenth century. By an exaggerated emphasis on her emancipatory ambitions, the film makers diminished the values of this talented musician and improviser with perfect pitch. They focused on her relationship with men and the nobility, avoided authentic Romani folk music, and did not engage Romani actors because they did not want to “bother” with them (Bernát, 2008). Therefore, her views, updated in the new millennium as a legacy for the society, turned against contemporary female tendencies and only supported the prejudices of the conservative Slovak audience. This is confirmed also by the several negative critiques, which take into account the screenplay, the direction, the camera, the actors’ performances, but ignore the music (Bernát 2008; Klembara 2009; Šilanová 2008).

According to foreign media, the recent direction of Slovak society points to a “victory for progressive values” because a woman, Zuzana Čaputová, won the presidential election with 58.4% of the vote, although previously women had only been successful in local politics (Bitušíková 2006).² Another candidate, Maroš Šefčovič, said during the campaign that he wanted to appeal to voters “who insist that Slovakia should remain a Christian country”, by which he attacked Čaputová’s liberal views about LGBT rights and abortion legislation (Walker 2019).

Let us return to the first issue, where all pieces of research imply that music works with abstract musical tools. When sexuality is analysed, it only happens in the lyrics of the songs or compositions, or in music videos, i.e., in the “words” or images, outside music (Peraino, Cusick, 2013; Wilbourne 2017; Wright, Qureshi 2015). Nevertheless, some researchers examine through music the area of gender and sexuality in teenagers (Hodas 1991), which includes sociological aspects of the reception of certain genres as “female” (pop music) or “male” (heavy metal). Other pieces of research note that masculinity or femininity in music belong to the sphere of sociology (Bradby, Laing 2001) because, for example, despite the quantitative preferences for heavy metal among men, the theories about rock music being a male genre or form, and pop music belonging only to girls, have not yet been either confirmed or refuted (Bradby, Laing 2001: 295). On the contrary, in gender

2 It is worth noticing that the results of a survey on alternative rock, which asked whether female instrumentalists are received as women or as musicians, is also close to the mean, although there is no correlation between presidential elections and surveys on alternative rock.

stereotypes where, in real life, we would expect that women would act as the fair sex, it turns out that these expectations can easily be circumvented through the internet. If they are excluded by male musicians of extreme metal “from offline real presentations” (Schaap, Berkers 2014: 101) in the real musical life, this does not mean that female musicians and female singers cannot record metal music, evade the presented stereotypes of female singers, and upload their recorded music on YouTube. In their research, Dutch researchers included fifteen videos on YouTube with their cover versions, which involved men and fifteen cover versions performed by female musicians. From the examined amount of sixty-five extreme metal video clips, female musicians performed in the original videos only in two cases (Schaap, Berkers 2014) Research on the extreme metal scene, where comments to the videos were examined (Schaap, Berkers 2014: 106), revealed that, although the proportion of the statements of men and women was equal (the number of views, likes, dislikes, and comments), men participated to a larger extent in the comments and recommendations for the artists (criticism of the visual aspects of the videos, of the vocal techniques, the sound, etc.) (Schaap, Berkers 2014: 108).

1.2. Women in the Position of Multiprofessional Musicians, Participatory Observation

Taking into account that the least represented female professions in arts are those of a composer and instrumentalist, this was the area where we tried to conduct a comparison and qualitative research through interviews. We monitored mainly those female professions in arts which have been exclusive for female musicians in Slovakia for the past ten years. Solo professions in arts, where women figure as singers-composers-lyricists-instrumentalists in one person, have been appearing increasingly often. While Zuzana Smatanová, Katka Knechtová, both singers, guitarists, and authors of their music and lyrics, entered the scene in the late 1990s, the emergence of Sima Martausová (b. 1988) and of Katarzia (b. 1989, Katarína Kubošiová by her real name) took place fifteen years later, in the mid-2010s. At that time, the music market focused on live concerts to avoid the income deficit arising from the pirated copying of CDs and file sharing systems, which affected the market since the late 1990s and had a radical impact on the institutions, the economy, the management, and the artistic direction of the personalities (Spitz, Hunter 2005). The Slovak National Group of the IFPI was dissolved and the album sales are now monitored by the Czech National Group of the IFPI in Prague. Some media looked for ways to expand the musical market by organizing joint Czechoslovak SuperStar reality shows (the first show was broadcast in 2009 by the Czech TV Nova and the Slovak TV Markíza). To prevent the total collapse of the Slovak pop music scene, compulsory quotas of playing Slovak music in the media were introduced (from 2016, private media must contain at least 20%, from 2017, 25% of the broadcasting time monthly; state media from 2016 stands at 30%, since 2017 35%).³ All these

3 Act No. 278/2015 Coll., on the Amendment and Supplementation of Act No. 308/2000 Coll. on Broadcasting and Retransmission and on the Amendment of Act No. 195/2000 Coll. on Telecommunications, as Amended, Amending and Supplementing Certain Acts, § 28b, in force since 20/052016, <https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2015-278>

factors led to the challenges of how to attractively address listeners to win them over for the artists. This took place partly thanks to special themes that reflect the problem of violence against women.⁴

There is similar experience with the establishment of female composers and performers thanks to themes such as violence against women or the discrimination of women abroad, too, where some female personalities have established themselves thanks to such themes (Szemere 2020). What the motives of the listeners are when reflecting on these themes formed the subject of our research carried out by observation at a club concert in Prešov⁵ and on the concert stage in Istropolis in Bratislava.⁶

In Prešov, from among the roughly two hundred standing audience members, the lyrics' passages cited below were sung aloud by men, as we verified by observation. The ironic and provocative remarks of Katarzia against the male bass guitarist, who was allegedly expecting news about the birth of his child during the concert, caused boisterous laughter. Similarly, the provocative attacks on men in her songs' lyrics triggered a turbulent response from the audience.

Here is a part of the lyrics:

Michal sa narodil, namiesto revu sa smial
 Omyl prírody, a predsa tak výnimočný zjav
 Tak prázdny a krásny, tak bez citu
 Neskúšaj s ním mať ani gram súcitu

Umenie podľa neho stojí na ľudských troskách
 Vraj na tom tiež fičím, vraj som sprostá
 Pod nátlakom revem ako fontána
 Myslí, že nie som Del Rey no Hannah Montana⁷

4 To mention but a few, S. Martausová: *Modlitba [Prayer]*, 2017, CD *Len tak sa stíšim [Only in That Way Will I Quiet]*, 2019, S. Martausová: *Dobry deň, to som ja [Good Morning, It's Me]*, a song for the television serial *Tajné životy [Secret Lives]* about violence against women living in a shelter, 2015-2017, CD *Dobry deň, to som ja [Good Morning, It's Me]*, 2013. Then there are themes of seeking equality with one's partner (Katarzia: *Michal [Michael]*, CD *Agnostika*, 2016), of female prostitution (Katarzia: *Hodinový hotel [Love Hotel]*, CD *Agnostika*, 2016), of the depression of the male partner and the woman being accused of being responsible for it (*Všetko sa mení [Everything Changes]*, Katarzia: CD *Agnostika*).

The success of these female musicians, singers, and instrumentalists is connected to the fact that they expose up-to-date female themes, and the listeners receive them thanks to these themes. In some cases, their compositional merits are disputed; to mention an example, the song of Sima Martausová & For You: *Nenahraditeľná [Irreplaceable]* (2019) has been labelled as a copy of the song of Macy Gray: *I Try* (1999) because the melody and the harmony of the refrain are identical (Vrška 2019).

5 On 22/09/2017 in the Christiania club as part of the FemFest event, Katarzia for MyMamy.

6 One Day Jazz Fest, White Moon Session, leader: Martin Valihora, guests: Anita Soul and Katarzia, Istropolis, 10/11/2017.

7 Katarzia: *Michal*, CD *Agnostika*, Slnko Records 2016, SZ 0085 1 331. Translated by Lea and Geoff Duffell.

Michal was born, instead of crying he was laughing
 A nature's error and yet of such an extraordinary appearance
 So empty but beautiful, so devoid of emotions
 Do not even attempt to show a grain of sympathy to him.

He believes art stands on human wreckage
 He says I am part of it too
 and that I am stupid
 Under the pressure I bawl like a fountain
 He thinks I am not a Del Rey nor a Hannah Montana

While the audience in the club had fun and laughed ironically at various controversial issues, and the reception involved examples of both positive and negative discrimination, the jazz audience in the Big Hall of Istropolis in Bratislava did not dare to act like this. The jazz audience remained cold, responded to her performance only with short, polite applause, and even the reviews of the concert only noted that it was pop music and rock songs, since her performance was part of a jazz festival (Oláh 2017). This was another type of audience, characterised already by Adorno (1975: 17, 26, 46). Although today's audience is not as homogeneous as Adorno assumed (Broeckx 1971: 76-77), "jazz experts" look for other artistic values than of the "music as entertainment" type, attempt structural listening (Sofer 2017), and behave differently (Buhl 2004: 128, 175).

We verified this attitude of ironic ridicule and its serious acceptance by various types of listeners by the method of interview at a music criticism lesson in 2017. Twenty-three students, aged between 19 and 25, were presented with Katarzia's complete album *Agnostika*. Fifteen respondents thought that the success of Katarzia was based on these provoking themes, five respondents were of the opinion that she was a talented lyricist, composer, and musician, and three did not find this theme interesting at all. While the first two opinions were stated by both men and women, the three respondents who did not find the theme interesting were men.

1.3. Women in Classical Music and in Jazz, Rock, and Pop Music

The reception of female musicians varies according to the music genre. In Slovakia, female classical composers have been battling prejudices for almost 40 years and despite an earlier start than their jazz and rock counterparts, their problems are similarly unresolved.

For my study into the musical and social status of female musicians in Slovakia after 2000, I have selected the following four: Lubica Čekovská, Jana Bezek, Hanka Gregušová, and Shina. They all emerged from a multi-genre and multi-stylistic environment with no prejudices against high or low art and are open to all classical music genres, as well as to jazz, rock, electronic music and pop music. Čekovská (b. 1975) exemplifies a classical artist who, in 2013, achieved high status in composition with her modern opera *Dorian Gray* (Lechmanová 2018). Bezek (b. 1977) began with jazz, debuted as a jazz composer and pianist, and worked her way into the field of classical composition. Gregušová (b. 1980) is a jazz singer, writes poetry, and adds

a finishing touch to jazz compositions by improvisation. Shina (b. 1968) is a composer of alternative music pieces in which she crosses into rock, folk, electronic and classical music genres. After having compared their career developments and achievements, I can conclude that, despite preconceptions, females in the classical genre find it easier to establish themselves, as they can still utilise traditional institutions (Slovak Philharmonic, 1949, Opera – Slovak National Theatre, 1920). On the contrary, no traditional institutions of the philharmonic or opera type, which enjoy state support, existed in jazz or rock music. This situation changed after the year 2000 when several jazz and rock festivals were established, and jazz and rock musicians, both male and female, have been able to equally apply for state support through grants, just like in classical music. The decade after the Velvet Revolution may be viewed as a transitional period of transformation in institutions with regard to jazz and rock music.

Let us also mention the female classical composers Viera Janárčeková (b. 1941) and Iris Szeghy (b. 1956). Since Janárčeková emigrated to Germany in 1972, it was Szeghy who had to overcome challenging prejudices in the early 1980s (Zagar 1998, Szeghy 2000: 73–80, Veselý 2017). Arriving in Rottenburg, Janárčeková worked as a piano teacher because, as a composer, she was an autodidact. Janárčeková did not begin to experience success as a composer until the 1980s, at the time of a trend that affirmed the position of female composers. After Szeghy and Janárčeková, the opening into the field of classical music in Slovakia was followed by other female composers: Olga Kroupová (b. 1966), Lubica Čekovská (b. 1975), Lucia Koňakovská (b. 1975), Petra Bachratá (b. 1975), Jana Kmitřová (b. 1976), Lucia Papanetzová (b. 1978), and Lucia Chutřková (b. 1984).

For the sake of completeness, the first female singer of popular music in Slovakia was Magdaléna Schwingerová-Mutňanská (1915-1993), who entered the scene in 1942 (SP *Kde kvitnú ruže červené*), followed in the same year by Mária Smutná-Vlková and the vocal trio Včielky. The first Slovak female jazz singer was Gabriela Hermélyová (SP *Ty nie si môj typ*), followed by Elena Příbusová (1941-2011), Gabriela Húščavová, Ria Hajnalová, Helena Blehárová, Adriena Bartošová - singer, pianist, leader, and composer, and the singer Silvia Josifoská. From among the more recent female singers who entered the scene in the new millennium, let us mention Lucia Lužinská. In the past decade, there have been a lot more female jazz singers, which can be documented by the albums released at the Esprit event, and a poll about the best jazz album of the year – Anita Soul, Ester Wiesnerová, Hana Šebestová (Esprit Award 2016), Sisa Feher, Jana Gavačová, Brigita Szelidová, Elia Kačiová, the vocal Paper Moon Trio, Iveta Lišková, Miriam Bayle, Kristína Mihalová - singer and composer, Kristína Prekopová, Zuzana Mikulcová - pianist, singer, and composer. The efforts of female pop singers to enter the professional Slovak scene were reinforced by several superstar reality shows. However, only a few of them achieved a professional status, thanks to the good teamwork of producers, arrangers, instrumentalists, and managers (e.g. Celeste Buckingham, Emma Drobná).

The situation in accepting female jazz musicians changed in the new millennium. Since 2000, females have been composing as well as playing musical instruments. Those that moved abroad or collaborated with international artists have been particularly

successful. Among them, the singer Hanka Gregušová and the vibraphone player and composer Ľudmila Štefániková (b. 1982) deserve special attention. Gregušová earned a good reputation through her career in the USA, where, in 2017, she was taken under the wing of her mentor-to-be, Cassandra Wilson (last album Hanka G: *Universal Ancestry*, 2021). Štefániková, after her debuts in Paris and New York, has been performing in the USA with her All Female Jazz Quartet. She has released the albums *Be Beautiful* (2012) and *ElectricCity* (2013).⁸

A positive change in appreciating female musicians seems to be associated with the 2016 Esprit Jazz, in which three women succeeded with ease in a competition of 17 nominated albums. The flautist and composer Sisa Michalidesová (b. 1983) won the Esprit Award for her album *Dream Rhapsody* (2015), which she recorded with the Venezuelan pianist Benito Gonzales. At the Esprit event dedicated to the International Day of Jazz declared by UNESCO, Michalidesová won the critics award, the singer Ingrid Bezák scored the audience award for her album *Deep Inside* (2015), and the pianist and composer Jana Bezek was ranked second by the audience for her CD *Jana Bezek Trio: Cracow* (2015).

The situation on the Slovak rock music scene changed around the year 2000. Female musicians started to establish themselves as percussionists, bass guitarists, and solo guitarists. Until then, a notion had prevailed that “male” strength and adequate technical “speed” were necessary to play these instruments, and that heavy metal was a “total denial of gender anxieties through the articulation of fantastic worlds without women” (Walser 1992: 278, Walser 1993: 110, Rafalovich 2006: 19). Female rock instrumentalists commented on these stereotypical notions in the below-mentioned research. Significant personalities who have made profile albums and performed at festivals in Slovakia and abroad include Agnes Lovecká (drums; *Živé kvety* band), Shina (bass guitar), Zuzana Ďurčeková (percussion; bands Kolowrat and Dalla Matina Alla Sera), Veroni Meszáros (bass guitar; Moustache band), Zsuzsi Vermes (guitar; bands Moustache and Gwerkova), Radmila Kvasničková and Ria Bobotová from the Youcoco band (guitar, percussion), and Barbora Chrappová (bass guitar; bands Vandali and Čad).

2. Female Rock Instrumentalists

In 2013, the Department of Musicology at Comenius University in Bratislava conducted a questionnaire survey of eleven Slovak female musicians who, instead of having stereotypical vocalist roles, played bass guitar, guitar, or drums in mostly alternative rock bands (Apfelová 2013). The questions concerned their music education, the status of female instrumentalists in Slovakia and abroad, demotivational factors, gender and musical aspects pertaining to audience perception of women as instrumentalists, and their image in the band.

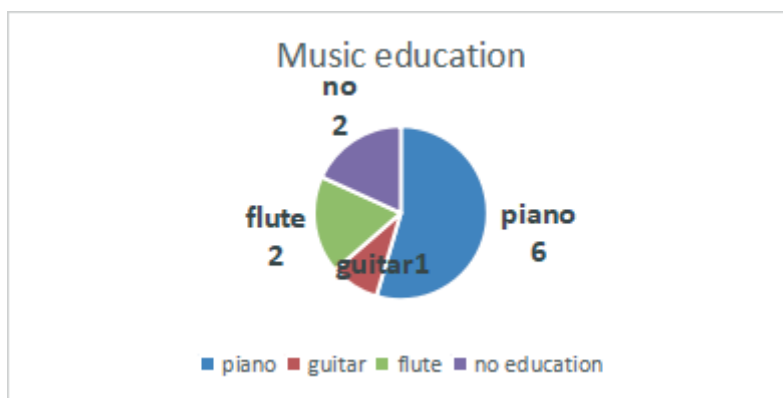
Female instrumentalists were asked ten questions. Their answers were not preformulated in the research but were expressed by the female musicians themselves. The goal of the research was to get an insight into the issues of women

⁸ In a line-up with her female colleagues Amanda Andrews (guitar), Christine Moad (bass guitar), Jazz Robertson (drums), and guest performers Peter Lipa (vocals)–the legend of Slovak jazz–and the American trumpeter Greg Hopkins.

instrumentalists and find the true reasons behind their status in their answers. From the ten questions, we identified and evaluated five areas of issues in their answers. Certain formulations recurred in the answers of female instrumentalists, from which we created qualitative categories. We evaluated the identical categories in word cloud software, which means that the bigger the font in word cloud, the more frequently the given qualitative category appeared in their answers.

As far as music education, two female instrumentalists did not acquire any and the remaining nine matriculated from an elementary school of arts. As Figure 1 demonstrates, six respondents studied the piano, two learnt flute, and one guitar. However, in rock bands they did not play the studied instruments (e.g., a guitarist switched to a bass guitar).

Figure 1



When asked whether Slovak female instrumentalists had a different status from their counterparts abroad, five participants responded positively, five agreed that there was no difference, and one did not know (refer to Table 1).

Tabla 1

Difference in status	Number of answers
Yes	5
No	5
I do not know	1

Those agreeing on the disparate status of domestic and foreign female instrumentalists supported their opinion with a variety of reasons. The market size as the chief cause was given by two respondents. One stated that in Slovakia it is rare for female musicians to play typically “male” instruments. Feeling empowered to defend their status in band was also a factor, according to one. Likewise, one interviewee claimed that the difference was associated with the overall position of women in society.

Another question aimed to investigate demotivation with respect to gender stereotypes, especially family responsibilities and rearing of children. As many as six

musicians indicated that they had wanted to stop playing (see Table 2). Nevertheless, only one mentioned family and children as the main reason.

Table 2

Have you ever wanted to stop playing?	Number of answers
Yes	6
No	5

Other demotivational factors included:

- desire for listening to silence and seeking new inspiration (2 respondents)
- unsuccessful concert performances (1)
- problematic relationships among band members (1)
- and dissatisfaction with their own performance (1).

In response to a question about audience perceptions of gender and music abilities, four participants believed that gender judgement predominates, and the same number thought it was the quality of performance itself. Three claimed that both had an equal standing (Table 3).

Table 3

Aspects in audience perceptions	Number of answers
Gender	4
Music	4
Both	3

Given the balance of the two aspects, the presence of female instrumentalists undoubtedly influences audience perceptions, but they are also valued as musicians. Although our research sample was small, it can be concluded that the gender and music aspects overlap and, hence, society is probably moving towards a bias-free music culture. Although this conclusion cannot be derived only from the statements of female instrumentalists, since these reflect the attitude of female musicians and their self-reflection, further research should focus on audience reception.

The final question focussed on image, i.e., physical appearance and whether it is important for females on stage.

Respondents were in unanimously positive agreement and their view was reflected by participant Zsuzsi Vermes (guitarist in bands Moustache and Gwerkova):

Women have always added a unique value onto music scenes. Not only with their aesthetic appearance but also the ability to perform as well as men.

Our survey affirmed that Slovak society has been overcoming prejudices against female musicians. Having said that, embedded stereotypes do still exist in the music world, and there are yet things to eliminate. The following statements mentioned by the surveyed artists provide a few examples: “a band leader must be a man”, “you had better sing than play, put away the bass so that you can move around freely.”

Or some usual comments of sound engineers: “you do not understand, I shall do it my way, I know better”, “female sensitive music”, “I will give you valuable advice on how to play”, “woman: bad player”, “woman in band, singer only”, “woman in band = cause of dissolution.” There have also been cases of positive discrimination, such as “a woman behind the drums is a better choice, because she does not show off her technique and dominance to others.” Overall, however, the status of Slovak female musicians also relates to stereotypes, which differ between the classical genre and jazz, rock and pop music. With regard to audience perception of females’ instrumentalists on stage, half of the respondents stated that gender predominates, and the rest, on the other hand, believed that the quality of music-making had a greater significance for listeners.

3. Conclusion

Even though Slovak women as jazz, rock and pop musicians have striven for greater recognition on the music scene, they are still regarded as exotica, especially in composer, conductor, and instrumentalist roles. Women artists are commonly and most frequently offered vocal parts, in which they can showcase their unique tessituras together with their sex appeal. However, this stereotype does not correspond with the ambitions of Slovak women artists themselves as their education, professional training and abilities match those of men. One of the factors, impacting even more on the acceptance of women in the music industry, is the multitude of active artists that makes it difficult to identify those having a high standard. Regardless, man or woman, all performers find themselves in highly competitive and challenging national and international markets where they need to seize the attention of listeners and the media. Nevertheless, in this current competitive environment, in which the audiences’ favour tends to be won by attractive shows produced with non-musical elements, the quality of music itself inevitably suffers. Besides, numerous alternatives for spending free time (e.g. tourism, sports, or unusual experiences) represent another contributor to a decline in music listening (Roberts 2006: 15, Mogilner & Norton 2016: 12-16); this is supported by statistics (The U. S. Consumer 2020: 23) clearly showing an unfavourable outcome for music. In line with the conclusions of late nineteenth-century empirical sociology, discussions in the media as well as in the general public about the expectations of men and women as musicians do not seem to be musically based and are generally prejudicial.

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COMPOSITRICI E MUSICISTE ROCK SLOVACCHE: IL LORO STATUS, IL SUCCESSO E LE PROSPETTIVE

Riassunto

Il presente contributo intende trattare le questioni di genere legate alla ricezione delle donne musiciste in Slovacchia. Attraverso un'analisi storica, l'autrice esamina l'affermazione delle donne, e il comportamento nei loro confronti, nei diversi generi musicali, dalla musica classica al jazz, al rock alternativo e alla musica elettronica. Se da una parte l'accettazione di donne compositrici nell'ambito della musica classica è iniziata quarant'anni fa, dall'altra le loro controparti in ambito jazz e rock sono in svantaggio con un ritardo di vent'anni. Bisognerà attendere il 2000 affinché le musiciste donne inizino ad attirare l'attenzione del pubblico come batteriste, bassiste o chitarriste. Sulla base del risultato di un sondaggio effettuato tra musiciste di rock alternativo slovacco, di un attento studio sulle loro carriere musicali e di un confronto tra le artiste selezionate, l'autrice analizza le questioni relative all'accettazione di compositrici e musiciste donne in Slovacchia. La stragrande maggioranza delle partecipanti a questa ricerca, che sono in possesso di una solida formazione musicale, ha identificato nelle dimensioni del mercato musicale uno dei maggiori ostacoli per le musiciste. Per quanto riguarda la percezione del pubblico circa le donne sul palco, la metà delle intervistate ha affermato che la parte predominante è costituita dal genere, mentre l'altra metà ritiene invece che la qualità del fare musica abbia una maggiore valenza.

Parole chiave: donne compositrici, musiciste rock, musica classica, jazz, rock alternativo, musica elettronica, musica slovacca