

## Laudation

### of Guitarist Ferenc Snétberger on the occasion of presenting the

### JUSTITIA REGNORUM FUNDAMENTUM Award

It is our honour to greet **Ferenc Snétberger**, Hungarian composer and guitarist of Sinti origin, laureate of the Kossuth and Liszt Ferenc Awards. This year he is one of the persons honoured with the Justitia Regnorum Fundamentum award for his extraordinary professional work of many decades, supporting musically talented young persons of disadvantaged social background – especially ones of Roma origin. He has been engaged for many years in searching for talents, musical training and mentoring. Mr Snétberger is also very active and successful in the field of cultural diplomacy aimed at fighting racism and discrimination.

Ferenc Snétberger was born in the town of Salgótarján in 1957 in a family of musicians. He learned classical music and jazz guitar. His compositions and his repertoire unite the features of Romani music, Brazilian music, Flamenco, classical guitar music and jazz. He has several solo guitar albums and also contributed to many records of other artists. In 1987 he established the ensemble called *Trio Stendhal* together with László Dés and Kornél Horváth. They are renowned in Hungary, giving concerts worldwide. Since 1988 he has been living in Berlin, he is married with one son.

He had many concerts in Europe, Japan, Korea, India and the United States as a member of different formations (such as together with Markus Stockhausen from 1999, and the *Nomad Trio* from 2004 – to mention only the most important ones). As a solo player he played the works of Vivaldi, Spanish composer Joaquín Rodrigo or jazz guitarist John McLaughlin. He also composed music for films and for theatre as well. He also played together with such renowned artists as American singer Bobby McFerrin.

In addition to giving concerts all around the world, he also holds it important to stick to his roots, to remember the events of the past, and he realised it very soon how important it is to provide musical training to young talents with disadvantaged social background.

One of his works, *In Memory of My People*, composed for guitar and grand orchestra in 1995 was a milestone of his fight against racism and discrimination. It commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the holocaust. This work – inspired by traditional Romani tunes – was performed by the artist with a grand orchestra in Hungary, Italy and Germany, and in 2007 it was played in the United Nations Headquarters in New York on the International Holocaust Memorial Day. It was also performed in 2013 at the inauguration ceremony of the Roma Holocaust Memorial in Berlin.

He is deeply committed to the Roma culture as an artist, setting an example and creating values: in 2011 he played in the German Parliament in the presence of the chancellor of Germany to commemorate the victims of Roma Holocaust. In 2014 the German Ministry of Family Affairs appointed him – among other prominent personalities – to be one of the ambassadors of the Year against Racism and Discrimination.

Ferenc Snétberger has been an honorary freeman of his native town, Salgótarján since 2002 and of Budapest since 2010. His awards include the Order of the Merit of the Republic of Hungary (2012),

Liszt Ferenc Award (2005), Prima Award (2013), Kossuth Award (2014), Fair Play Award of the Hungarian Olympic Committee in the category of arts (2014) and “My Country” Life Achievement Award (2015).

His work in the field of nurturing talents is exemplary. In 2011 he made his dream come true and founded a musical school in the village of Felsőörs, based on the model of the music school of Neukölln in Berlin: in the school, talented children can learn music in very good conditions.

The school is called *Snétberger Musical Talent Centre* and it aims to be a musical talent school acknowledged in Hungary and also internationally. It offers world-class musical training and mentoring for talented Roma children with difficult social background. Each year there are 60-65 young talents who participate in the 12-week programme of the school.

Ferenc Snétberger is still active, performing on concerts and his musical creativity is unbroken. His latest LP „Ferenc Snétberger in Concert” has been performed on several stages and there are more and more concert places coming up.

Ferenc Snétberger is a deeply committed person, a humanist, a professional with exemplary achievements in his social and cultural activities. With the Award we would like to honour and thank him for his committed work. We congratulate him for the Justitia Regnorum Fundamentum Award that he is unfortunately not able to receive personally due to his other commitments at the moment.

Budapest, 24 June 2016