

# VARONEN CELLO DUO CONCERT AT THE EMBASSY OF FINLAND IN BUDAPEST 2025

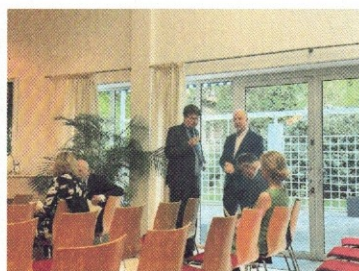
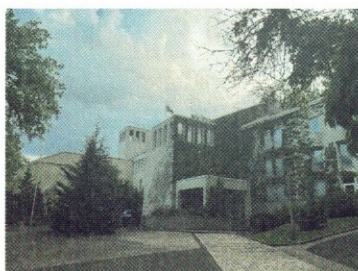
April 24, 2025



*Celebration of 25 Years of Musical Excellence and Building Bridges through Music*

*Edited by Anna Popper*

As part of its active **cultural diplomacy** in Hungary, the **Embassy of Finland in Budapest** hosted a distinguished concert on 23 April 2025, by the **Varonen Cello Duo** (*Selloduo Anna-Maaria & Olli Varonen*), celebrating their 25th anniversary. Held in the embassy's elegant, Finnish-style reception hall, the evening brought together a vibrant international audience of diplomats, musicians, friends and music lovers.







**His Excellency Pertti Anttinen, Ambassador of Finland to Hungary, opened the event** with warm remarks, emphasizing the importance of cultural exchange in strengthening the long-standing ***Finnish-Hungarian relations***, which also include the ***linguistic kinship*** between the two nations. He introduced the artists – *Anna-Maaria Varonen and Olli Varonen* – both of whom have strong personal and professional ties to Hungary through their studies at the renowned Liszt Academy of Music.



*The Varonen Cello Duo* presented a rich and varied program featuring works by Jean Sibelius, Nils Erik Fougstedt, Luigi Boccherini, Béla Bartók, Erkki Melartin, and Harri Wessman. Several pieces, originally composed for violin or other instruments, were



masterfully arranged for two cellos by Olli Varonen, giving the evening a fresh and intimate soundscape.



The program also included a selection of Finnish folk songs, arranged by Anna-Maaria Varonen, paying homage to their musical roots. Throughout the concert, the duo seamlessly **bridged the musical traditions of Finland and Hungary**, captivating the audience with their sensitive interpretations and technical brilliance.



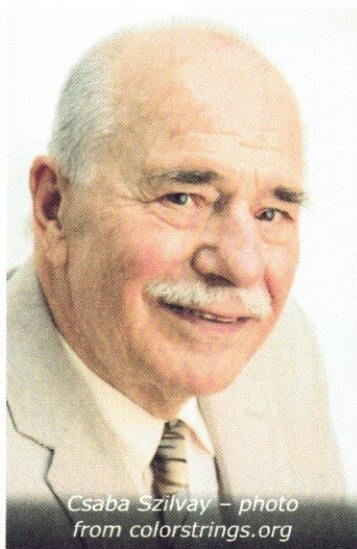
**Olli Varonen's** cello journey began in early childhood. At the age of 13, he was admitted to the youth division of the Sibelius Academy and became a member of the *Helsinki Strings Youth Orchestra*, founded by *Csaba and Géza Szilvay*. Inspired by



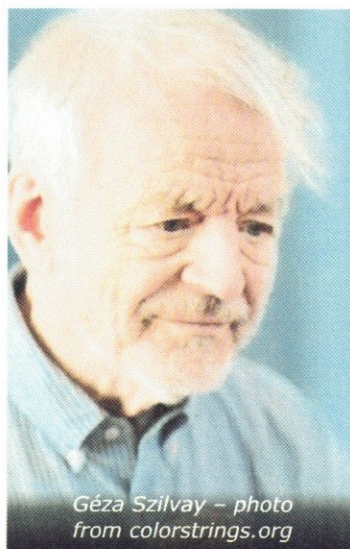
the Szilvay brothers' father, he became a builder of the cultural bridge between Finland and Hungary.



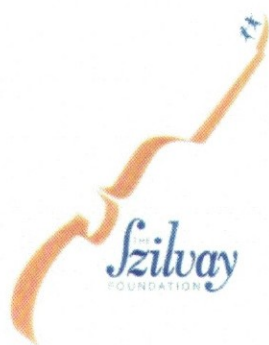
Sibelius Academy  
building



Csaba Szilvay – photo  
from colorstrings.org



Géza Szilvay – photo  
from colorstrings.org



Csaba Szilvay is a world-renowned Hungarian cello pedagogue and – together with his brother Géza – the founder and long-time conductor of the Helsinki Strings.

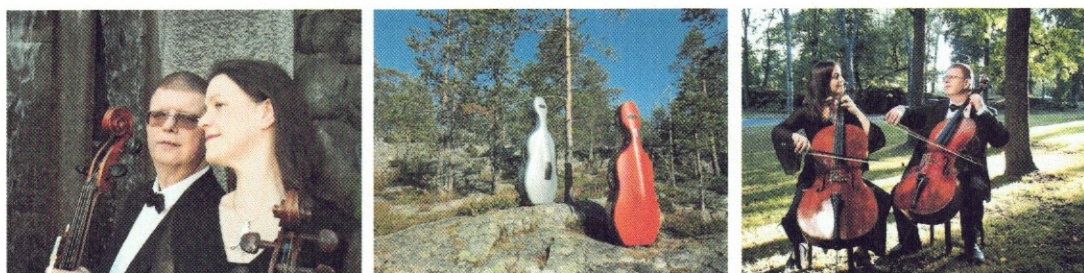
**The Szilvay brothers'** visionary contributions to music education have had a lasting impact on generations of young musicians in Finland and around the world.

Inspired by the Szilvays' deep commitment to musical excellence, Olli Varonen continued his studies at the **Liszt Music Academy in Budapest**. His wife, Anna-Maaria Varonen, also studied at the Liszt Academy, albeit during a different period.



With several acclaimed CDs to their name, **Olli and Anna-Maaria Varonen** have thrilled audiences in over **1,500 concerts** across 11 European countries, the USA, Singapore, and Senegal, performing both as soloists and in duo formations.





Photos from [selloduo.fi](http://selloduo.fi)



The concert at the embassy concluded with a glass of wine and a ***lively reception***, creating a warm and friendly ambiance where guests exchanged impressions and celebrated the evening's success.

### **Evening of Music at Liszt Academy**

The celebration continued on 24 April with an ***Evening of Music*** at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, in cooperation with ***FinnAgora***, highlighting the enduring depth of Finnish-Hungarian musical relations.



The program began with a Finnish-Hungarian music ***research seminar*** at the *Chamber Music Hall X*, featuring speakers such as Simo Mikkonen (University of Eastern Finland), Matti Vainio (University of Helsinki / University of Jyväskylä), Szabolcs László (Institute of History, HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities) and Zsuzsanna Polyák (Kodály Institute / Liszt Academy of Music). Their lectures offered fascinating insights into the historical and contemporary dialogue between the two cultures.





Later, a newly published biography of the **brothers Géza and Csaba Szilvay** was presented, honouring their transformative contributions to music pedagogy and international cultural exchange. The **book launch** stirred deep emotion among the participants, many of whom have personally witnessed the profound impact of the Szilvay method throughout Europe.



Csaba Szilvay taught cello at the Jyväskylä Conservatory from 1971 to 1976, at the East Helsinki Music Institute and the Helsinki Conservatory from 1976 onward, and at the Sibelius Academy from 1978. Together with his brother Géza, he achieved international recognition as a string pedagogue and conductor of children's and youth orchestras. The Szilvay brothers are the authors of the **Colourstrings** method, based on Zoltán Kodály's educational philosophy. They have delivered hundreds of lectures on this methodology worldwide.

In recognition of their outstanding work for youth culture, they have received numerous awards in Finland, including the Knight Order of the Finnish Lion (1981), the Culture Prize of Finland (1983), the Helsinki Culture Prize (1995), the International Kodály Prize (2007), and the Order of the White Rose of Finland (2018).





The day culminated with a ***jubilant gala concert by the Varonen Cello Duo***, hosted by ***FinnAgora***. This performance was an emotional moment, recalling the duo's formative years at the Liszt Academy – a revered institution where many world-famous musicians once studied and later returned as teachers.

Performing at such a historic venue lent special significance to the concert, making it a heartfelt tribute to one of their musical roots, their mentors, and the enduring spirit of intercultural collaboration.



Their captivating performance not only celebrated a quarter-century of artistic achievement, but also reaffirmed their commitment to building musical bridges between Finland and Hungary for future generations.



Photo from [selloduo.fi](http://selloduo.fi)