

Franghiz Ali-Zadeh

- Biography -

Franghiz Ali-Zadeh was born on 28 May 1947 in Baku/Azerbaijan. She passed the piano examination in 1970 and the composition examination in 1972 at the Conservatory in her home city, and there followed a period as aspirant with Kara Karayev from 1973 until 1976. Her 1989 doctoral thesis was *Orchestration in Works of Composers of Azerbaijan*. Already beginning in 1976, she taught in the specialist area of music history at the Conservatory in Baku and from 1990 was professor in the subjects of contemporary music and history of orchestral styles. From 1993 to 1996 she was the choral director at the Mersin (Turkey) opera house, and then an instructor in piano and music theory at the Conservatory there for two years. Ali-Zadeh worked in Baku again in 1998 and 1999. She was in residence in Berlin in 1999/2000 as a DAAD stipend recipient and since then has lived in Germany and Azerbaijan.

In 1980 Ali-Zadeh received the prize of the Azerbaijani Composers' Union and in 1990 she was named "Meritorious Artist" of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic. In November 2000 she received the honorary title of "People's Artist of the Republic of Azerbaijan" and was named "UNESCO Artist for Peace" in 2008.

Ali-Zadeh's catalogue of works includes solo, chamber, ensemble and orchestral music. She introduced herself in the West for the first time with her *Piano Sonata in Memory of Alban Berg* in 1976 at the music festival in Pesaro; after this, her music was performed at festivals in Stockholm, Warsaw, Berlin, London, Heidelberg, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Zürich, Cologne, Bonn, Hamburg, Duisburg and at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival. There followed numerous performances, portrait concerts, radio and CD recordings in the USA, Switzerland, Great Britain, Germany, Holland, Portugal, Denmark, France, Italy, Australia, Spain, Israel, Estonia and Turkey. Numerous works of Ali-Zadeh have served as ballet music (in Helsinki, New York, Berlin, Singapore and London).

Interpreters such as Mstislav Rostropovich, Yo-Yo Ma, Evelyn Glennie, Ivan Monighetti, David Geringas, Julius Berger, Wu Man, Alexander Ivashkin, Alim Qasimov, Vladimir Tonkha, Elsbeth Moser and many others have committed themselves to her music. Ensembles and orchestras throughout the world play her music with enthusiasm.

In a unique way, Ali-Zadeh succeeds in blending the musical traditions of her homeland with modern western compositional techniques. In her music, rich in contrasts, lightness is mirrored by vehemence, a playful carefree quality with brooding thoughts, tender transparency with powerful colours, calm simplicity with turbulent virtuosity and meditation with ecstasy. Thus the composer reflects the religious and cultural inner conflicts between East and West and between national tradition and West European modernism. On the other hand, she realises, in music, the personal tensions that have resulted during the course of her life.

As a pianist, Ali-Zadeh has tirelessly committed herself to performing works by contemporary composers of the former Soviet Union. Moreover, it is thanks to her initiative that works of the Second Viennese School and composers such as Olivier Messiaen, John Cage and George Crumb were first performed in Baku.