

**BORI, Sára Hélène**

**BOGGIE: Assembling a Musical Jigsaw Puzzle**



**Boglárka Csemer: early career moments**

A few years ago I was walking home from a singing lesson with vocal coach, Myrtill Micheller at the now defunct Benczúr / Postás Academy of Music. I was not alone, vocalist, Boglárka Csemer was walking along, telling me about her love for French culture, music, language, everything French really. She had just moved back to Hungary from a gap year that she spent in Paris, so her memories were fresh and lively. A lot has happened since our conversation at the zebra crossing, an ever growing musical career has been established with hard work, stamina and as a missing piece of a slowly completed jigsaw puzzle, the power of the internet.

For a few years Boglárka Csemer (better known by her artist name, Boggie) seemed to be moving in the direction of becoming a jazz vocalist, well appreciated in the Hungarian jazz music scene: in autumn 2011 she won a special prize on a song contest announced by Hungary's top smooth jazz radio "Jazzy", handed over by the Hungarian Jazz Federation. Preceding this event, in 2009 she formed her own quartet, the Boglárka Csemer Quartet, the Budapest Jazz Club took them under its wings and a few years of regular performances throughout the whole country began. They played and they played and their audience grew slowly but surely. These few hundred people fell in love with young energy, clean, yet powerful and soulful singing, honest and emotional music, music that gives and does not expect anything in return.

However, if you paid your dues and people believe in your *raison d'être*, in some cases they will foster your path. This is how a fan became a patron and funded studio time for the band to record their very first album. By this time, the band had moved away from traditional jazz sounds and decided to run the project with Boglárka's French nickname, Boggie to highlight their change in musical direction. Boggie and her pianist, co-author Áron Sebestyén started working on own compositions, mainly influenced by French music: chansons, contemporary French pop music, a little soul and a little jazz. After one of her songs went viral on the Internet, her debut album titled "Boggie" (Tom Tom Records) ended 17th (jazz) and 3rd (world music) on the American Billboard chart. This outstanding album, which is more pop, than world music or jazz, produced with 'ready-to-play' arrangements contains songs in Hungarian, French and English languages, songs about life and death and the art of letting go, songs about love and adventures and finally, a song about fake beauty, a social criticism that changed a slow growing national career path into a rapidly evolving international one. This much discussed song is called, *Nouveau Parfum*.

To find out more about her biography, read: <http://www.boggieofficial.com/bio/>

### Boggie and the Nouveau Parfum success

“It seems as if this moment was the last, missing piece of a jigsaw puzzle. I have been working on this project for years, evolving as a singer, as a performer, growing as a songwriter, establishing a place for my project in the Hungarian music scene, but also solving practicalities, like putting together a portfolio, building a website, recording an album and signing a contract with a record label (Tom Tom Records). A year ago I would not have been ready for the Nouveau Parfum success at all, now I was ready, mentally and emotionally.” - quoting Boggie’s words about her sudden international success.

What was this success exactly? On January, the 13<sup>th</sup>, Zsófia Liter - member of a media team responsible for Boggie’s videoclip for the song Nouveau Parfum - sent out a few e-mails to major internet blogs like gizmodo and kotaku, as part of a promotion plan. Less than two hours later the tech blog gizmodo shared the video and it went internationally viral in a few hours. All minor and major blogs, online pages and magazines were sharing and writing about the girl who gets photoshopped in real time. Boggie’s message was crossing borders rapidly, her phone was ringing all day and her mailbox was filled in an instant. “It was unbelievable! I was talking to a friend on the phone and when I ended the call a few minutes later, the number of views grew by 3000” – she recalled. The video received 10 million views in 2 weeks time and thousands of new followers joined her loving group of Hungarian fans on social media. I repeatedly asked her those days how she managed to process all these feelings as even I could hardly cope with her success. Her response about the jigsaw puzzle stayed with me. It is indeed a big difference, handling unexpected success after working hard on getting this far or handling success when expected in some form and skipping a few pieces of this particular musical puzzle, which happens regularly with talent show contestants for example. Boggie could not have possibly foreseen her sudden success, but she most certainly worked hard on being ready for it.

The video in question was directed by the duo Nándor Lőrincz and Bálint Nagy. Their concept was to create an illusion of a real-time digital photo manipulation. This trick is the main reason why gizmodo and kotaku picked out this video of the tons of suggestions they receive every day. It is sci-fi, it creates the illusion of a software that photoshops people in a movie, it visualizes a non-existing program. Remarkably many people believed it was a new software and even went in search to buy it, though in reality, Boggie’s hair and make-up were done by real people and not a video photoshop software. According to the filmmakers, in contrary to the filming, which was completed in one single day, the post-production lasted 4 whole months.

Instead of promoting the possibility of a new kind of technology like this, the song and video make a firm statement against the untrue images adverted by today’s media. Boggie’s statement against overly photoshopped and unrealistic representation of women was quickly decoded by millions, regardless of language or country. The song was uploaded in a Hungarian and a French version, both have different lyrics but send out the same message, about not wanting to be a product (*Je ne suis pas leur produit* - says the French lyric) and about the importance of inner and natural beauty. The topic is accurate, sensitive and a girl singing her heart out while showing her makeup-less face being turned into a glamorous cover girl was a direct hit.

Watch the video here: <http://vimeo.com/83502019>

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As for the future, the Boggie team is planning a series of concerts inside and outside of Hungary. The Boggie band is working on new songs and eventually a new album. Besides taking a major part in all these, Boggie started working on a new project with classical guitarist, Robert Sinha with whom she visited The Netherlands on a weekend in February to play three remarkable concerts.

### **Boggie and Robert Sinha in the Netherlands**

While planning this article I was wondering if I could succeed in writing as an objective critic. Well, I probably could have but I decided that I preferred not to. With the memories of a Boggie concert in December still in my head and with the warm feelings still with me from the past three concerts with Robert Sinha in The Hague and Amsterdam, it would have made no sense to fight the overwhelming enthusiasm that got behold of me as a member of the audience, as a co-author/lyricist of her English songs, as a friend, as a fan.

A few words about Robert Sinha: Robert is a classical guitar player and composer, who graduated from the Dutch Royal Music Academy in 2006. In Hungary he is acknowledged for his outstanding world-music projects. He has performed in New York (2010), Paris (2009, 2012), Amsterdam (2004), Brussels (2006, 2008, 2012), Madrid (2009), Delhi (2011), Zaragoza (2008), Helsinki (2009), The Hague (2012), Bordeaux (2009, 2012) and Tilburg (2012).

#### First concert at The Hungarian Ambassador's Residence

The Boggie feat Robert Sinha project mainly builds on flamenco and tango guitar and Hungarian folk music. In their songs, they use well-known compositions as Astor Piazzola's *Libertango* or generally known Hungarian folk themes as their starting point, but their project also includes new songs they have written together.

Boggie and Robert played an acoustic concert (no amplifiers, no microphones) to a gentle, tranquil audience. Children, sitting in the first row remained silent all along, listening carefully and peacefully. All songs were in Hungarian and although most members of the audience did not speak the language, the emotions were carried well by both musicians, people laughed when the song allowed it and cried or shivered at other moments. I have to add that most of the songs stimulate deep, lyrical emotions instead of light, unclouded feelings. In majority, it adds to the concert, one is pulled into a world of thought, a world of serious emotions, on the other hand it would enlighten the experience to add a few, less painful songs to their repertoire. This might be a perspective for their hopefully long lasting collaboration, yet another puzzle to be completed.



Second concert at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of February a commemoration of a Dutch sea captain Michiel de Ruyter was held at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century De Ruyter rescued Hungarian galley slaves from captivity and is therefore regarded as a hero by not just the Dutch, but Hungarians as well. Chairman of the De Ruyter Foundation, Frans de Ruyter is a direct descendant of the sea captain and the interesting twist is that Robert Sinha is a descendant of one of the galley slaves freed by Michiel de Ruyter. This story and the again extraordinary performance of our musicians lit up the atmosphere in the auditorium of the museum. With their repertoire of folk influenced songs, again they managed to touch the souls of their audience. Though, the circumstances were different to the living room concert a day before and so

the experience was different as well. The audience consisted of approximately 200 people instead of twenty and there was sound technique involved. This did not influence the high standards of the performance but I have to say that the more intimate setting fits the project better. Regardless, I have to agree with Frans de Ruyter's appreciative remark, stating that there is no doubt Boggie's video would gain another 200 views that day.



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Third and final concert in The Hague, another private living room concert

One of the conclusions of these three concerts is that Boggie has a remarkable skill to engage any sorts of audience types. On the third location, the audience was open-minded, enthusiastic, outspoken and she again managed to handle it. She managed to handle it just as she managed to communicate with a small number of refined people, a bigger audience whose primary reason of attending the event was not the Boggie & Robert Sinha concert and an audience of people who have a more expressive attitude towards a musical experience. Whether she is on a stage in an auditorium, or sitting on a chair in a living room she is channeling a message and she always gets through. No matter if she is singing in English, French or Hungarian. Robert Sinha accompanies her and gives her a balanced base, while on some moments flourishing with virtuoso guitar playing.



A versatile artist is able to face challenges in different musical worlds. With the Boglárka Csemer quartet she proved herself in jazz, with the Boggie project she is proving herself in pop and with the Robert Sinha project she is proving herself in folk.

One final thought on the jigsaw puzzle concept: I honestly hope that besides how Boggie defined her success with the video as a last piece of a jigsaw puzzle, it will eventually also be a first piece of numerous new puzzles. Me and another few thousand enthusiasts are certainly looking forward to the continuous progression of the musical experience she creates and are glad to be part of it in one way or another. Boggie, puzzle on!

