

ERKEL FERENC

Conservatory

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Elemér Duka

Cello



PLACE OF BIRTH
BUDAPEST

DATE OF BIRTH
02. 11. 1991.

BIOGRAPHY - DISCOGRAPHY

Elemér Duka was born on November 2, 1991, in Budapest as the firstborn of a renowned musical dynasty that traces its roots back several centuries on both his maternal and paternal sides.

His father, the celebrated primás (lead violinist) Elemér Duka, was a pioneer in combining world-famous film scores and classical pieces on his groundbreaking 1994 album. His mother, Annamária Vaskó, also hails from a well-known musical family. His younger brother, Vilmos, is a distinguished double bassist.

Elemér was introduced to the cello at the age of five, inspired by his paternal grandfather, who was also a cellist.

Education

- He began his music studies at the Józsefváros Music School under the guidance of Katalin Kellerné Gergely.
- At the age of 12, he was admitted to the Béla Bartók Conservatory, where he studied under renowned cellist László Szilvásy.
- He began his higher education at the Vienna Conservatory, which he could not complete due to the tragic passing of his father.
- In 2021, he resumed his academic path and is currently completing his degree in classical cello at the University of Pécs, studying under László Pólus, principal cellist of the Hungarian State Opera.

From early childhood, classical and Hungarian Gypsy music have played a central role in his life and musical expression.

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Orchestral Engagements & Performances

- He has performed in the ensembles of numerous prominent violinists and prime violinist, including:
 - his father, Elemér Duka,
 - Miklós Lakatos,
 - Lajos Sárközy Sr. and Jr.,
 - József Lendvai “Csócsi”,
 - Zoltán Patai,
 - and Tcha Limberger.
- Between 2012 and 2015, he served as principal cellist for the Roma Hungaricum State Ensemble, a group composed entirely of professionally trained musicians selected through a competitive audition process.
- In 2016, he founded his own ensemble, performing for over two years as a unique "cellist-primás" at the Central Café in Budapest — a rare formation in Hungary.
- In 2018, he was invited to join the world-renowned *100 Member Gypsy Orchestra*, honored with the Hungarian Heritage and Hungarikum Awards, as principal cellist. After a three-year break, he was again invited by president Lőrinc Róbert Danyi to return as both section leader and soloist.
- In the realm of classical music, he was principal cellist of the *Bohemian Virtuosi*, founded by two-time Grammy-winning violinist Géza Hosszú-Legocky. With this ensemble, he toured internationally and performed alongside top-tier artists, including a memorable concert at the 2012 Ravello Festival with legendary Argentine pianist Martha Argerich.
- Since 2015, he has served as principal cellist of the *Primarius Symphony Orchestra*, founded by internationally acclaimed violinist Zoltán Mága. With this orchestra, he has toured in:
 - the United States,
 - China,
 - Japan,
 - and Colombia.

During his tenure, he has performed on stage with such global icons as:

- 16-time Grammy Award-winning producer and pianist David Foster,
- world-renowned pianist and conductor Tamás Vásáry (during the Budapest New Year's Concert series),
- celebrated Russian violinist Zakhar Bron (at the Vienna New Year's Concert),
- and performed a full concert at *Carnegie Hall* in New York, where he shared the stage with famed violinist Shlomo Mintz.

He also had the honor of performing for Pope Francis in the Vatican with this orchestra.

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Competitions and Recordings

- Elemér Duka has earned top honors in numerous cello competitions at local, national, and international levels.
- In 2020, he released his debut solo album, recorded at the *Hungaroton Studio*, featuring a wide variety of musical styles: classical chamber music, film scores, and traditional Gypsy music, performed both solo and with his ensemble *Gipsy Chamber Orchestra*.

The album includes duets with:

- Ernő Kállai (concertmaster of the Hungarian State Opera),
- Ditta Rohmann (head of the cello department at the Liszt Academy of Music),
- and cimbalom virtuoso Jenő Lisztes.

Gipsy Chamber Orchestra

- *Elemér Duka & the Gipsy Chamber Orchestra*, led by Duka as a prime cellist, is a one-of-a-kind ensemble combining traditional Hungarian instruments, such as the cimbalom, with a virtuosic classical sound.
- The group has performed internationally at prestigious festivals including:
 - the Rome Chamber Music Festival,
 - Manchester Classical Days,
 - the Split Summer Festival,
 - and the Hungarian Festival at the Liszt Academy in Budapest.
- Their repertoire includes:
 - works by Kodály, Bartók, Weiner, and Liszt,
 - original compositions,
 - innovative fusions of classical and traditional Gypsy music,
 - as well as modern film scores and popular hits reimagined with classical instrumentation — aiming to engage and inspire younger generations.
- The ensemble has collaborated with several international *Liszt Institutes*, including those in Zagreb, Stuttgart, Brussels, and Paris, performing to full houses with critical acclaim.

Festival Leadership

- For the past four years, Elemér Duka has served as artistic director of the "*Klassz a Belvárosban*" classical music festival in Budapest's 5th district.

In this role, he has collaborated with distinguished artists such as:

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- János Balázs (pianist),
- Máté Szűcs (violist),
- Balázs Hornyák (flutist),
- the *Kelemen Barnabás Quartet*,
- Gábor Farkas (pianist),
- László Fenyő (cellist),
- Ditta Rohmann (cellist),
- and Andrea Vigh (harpist).



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