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Katalin Török **THE DRAMA OF THE PRE-EXPRESSIVE**
Theodoros Terzopoulos' production of Waiting for Godot from a Theatre Anthropology perspective

Krisztián Balassa **REVIEW OF THE ART INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH KÁROLY SOMOSSY IN TERMS OF COMMUNICATION**
Entertainment industry and press at the turn of the century

János Vecsernyés **CINEMATOGRAPHY PRACTICE AS PROJECT PEDAGOGY**
Educational opportunities based on Constructivist learning theory

Vera Prontvai **THE POETICS OF AGON**
Judgment, suffering, competition and questions of destiny in the poetic theatre

Szofia Tölli **PRODUCTIONS DIRECTED BY ALESSANDRO SERRA AND SAVVAS STROUMPOS IN BUDAPEST**
Performance analyses involving the perspectives of Theatre Anthropology

Greetings to the Reader

Study

Essay

Case Study

Presentation of Works

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2 GREETINGS TO THE READER**5 STUDY**

Katalin Török **5** The drama of the Pre-Expressive

*Theodoros Terzopoulos' production of Waiting for Godot
from a Theatre Anthropology perspective*

Krisztián Balassa **17** Review of the art institutions associated with
Károly Somossy in terms of communication

55 ESSAY

János Vecsernyés **55** Cinematography practice as Project Pedagogy

78 CASE STUDY

Vera Prontvai **78** The poetics of agon

Szofia Tölli **93** Productions directed by Alessandro Serra
and Savvas Stroumpos in Budapest

*Performance analyses involving the perspectives
of Theatre Anthropology*

102 PRESENTATION OF WORKS

Katalin Gyürky **102** Contemporary dramas and their authors at
the 15th jubilee DESZKA Festival

Katalin Gyürky **108** Off we go again

About the show Expecting Godot

115 ABOUT OUR AUTHORS

Greetings to the Reader

We are pleased to present and recommend to our readers the latest issue of our journal, which once again offers a rich interdisciplinary content for both theoretical and practical theatre and film practitioners. The present issue offers a unique meeting point for the various segments of theatre and film, elucidating their essence, mechanisms of action and pedagogical possibilities from different perspectives.

Katalin Török, in her study *The Drama of the Pre-Expressive*, uses the tools of theatre anthropology to examine Theodoros Terzopoulos' production of *Waiting for Godot*, which was staged at the National Theatre. The author pays special attention to how the theme of waiting finds a performative interpretation on stage. The presentation and comparison of the concept of the pre-expressive with the tools of performance draws on Eugenio Barba's conceptual framework, enriching the theoretical study of theatre. Katalin Török's contribution has great significance, as it opens up new ways of interpreting Beckett's works and can be an inspiration for researchers of questions of performativity and rite in an international context.

Krisztián Balassa's study entitled *Review of the art institutions associated with Károly Somossy in terms of communication* examines the entertainment industry practices of the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries through the art institutions of Károly Somossy, with special attention to the means of communication, public relations and marketing. The research reveals the important role that the printed press played in the operation of the entertainment industry at the time, and how Somossy used this medium to reach his audience. The paper offers not only a historical perspective, but also provides current lessons for cultural communication and public relations strategies. The author deserves credit for analysing the past of the entertainment industry using the concepts of modern communication theory, thus serving as a bridge between past and present.

János Vecsernyés's essay, *Cinematography practice as Project Pedagogy*, focuses on a unique aspect of film education, cinematography practice, contrasting traditional frontal teaching strategies with project pedagogy, derived from the constructivist learning theory. The author points out that traditional

cinematography training practice is in harmony with the modern pedagogical principles, creating a link between education and artistic practice. This paper is not only relevant for professionals involved in the development of teaching methods, but also useful and inspiring for students participating in film education.

Vera Prontvai's case study, *The Poetics of Agon*, analyses Attila Vidnyánszky's production *Agon*, which uses the tools of poetic theatre to explore questions of judgement, suffering and fate. Building on Artaud's theory of the theatre of cruelty, the production focuses on the historical and moral struggles of humanity. Prontvai's study not only explores the philosophical and artistic background of directing, but also emphasises the potential for collective reflection inherent in theatre. What makes the writing special is that it explores the *Gesamkunstwerk* dimensions in performance that go beyond the boundaries of traditional theatrical interpretations, offering new directions for contemporary theatrical practice.

Szofia Tölli, in her paper *Productions directed by Alessandro Serra and Savvas Stroumpos in Budapest*, draws parallels between Hungarian and international theatre practices based on the perspectives of theatre anthropology, elaborating on how these productions relate to the concepts of ritual and cultural performance. The analysis is of particular value in the field of theatre research, as it not only gives new approaches for the domestic audience, but also enriches the dialogue on contemporary theatre in terms of an international context.

We trust that the individual pieces of writing will once again stimulate impulses in our readers that will help to create professional discourse in the various fields of art.

Zsolt Antal,
Editor-in-Chief

Eugenio Barba

Nicola Savarese

A SZÍNHÁZ ÖT KONTINENSE

TÉNYEK ÉS LEGENDÁK
A SZÍNÉSZ MATERÁLIS
KULTÚRÁJÁRÓL



The book can be purchased in The Writer's Bookshop (Írók Boltja)

Katalin Török

The drama of the Pre-Expressive

Theodoros Terzopoulos' production
of **Waiting for Godot** from
a Theatre Anthropology perspective

Abstract

The article analyses Theodoros Terzopoulos' staging of *Waiting for Godot* at the National Theatre, using the perspectives of theatre anthropology, focusing on how the work can be perceived as a performance of waiting. The paper discusses the definition of ritual, cultural performances, performativity, and describes the pre-expressive, explaining Eugenio Barba's terminology, comparing it to the set of tools of the performance.

Key words: theatre anthropology, cultural performance, rite, pre-expressive, Godot

The performance of waiting, the drama of the pre-expressive, the rite of waiting for Godot

35th minute. "What are we waiting for?" – "Godot."

"Greek director Theodoros Terzopoulos staged Beckett's most famous work, and the production was included in the programme of the 11th MITEM Festival. In the hands of Terzopoulos, *Waiting for Godot* becomes one lens to decipher the Other who, inside and outside of us, summons opposites: animal longing

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and divine tension, madness and dream, delirium and nightmare. A show that questions our own humanity. On stage, two young performers and three of the most intense and sensitive Italian actors; the music is signed by Panayiotis Velianitis, one of the first Greek composers of computer and computer aided music. The performance [...] [is] set on 'the ruins of the world', in a future more or less close to us, where all the present and the past wounds [are] kept open. The same for the expectations... At this borderline of human existence, what are the minimum possible conditions for restarting life, a life that is worth living? In *Aspettando Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*) there are two possible answers [...]. The first is the effort to communicate and coexist with the Other, the one who is before us, despite of any obstacles, even when these seem formidable! The second is the effort to communicate with the Other inside us, this inscrutable and dark area of repressed desires and fears, forgotten senses and instincts, the region of the animal and the divine, where madness and dream, delirium and nightmare are born," says the playbill of the National Theatre.¹

To understand how the analysis takes on an anthropological character, rather than following the aesthetics of theatre, I draw on the perspective of theatre anthropology, and more specifically on the approaches of Richard Schechner, Eugenio Barba, Nicola Savarese and Patris Pavis. Nevertheless, it will remain on the borderline, partly for reasons of the multidisciplinary of theatre studies as well as the absurdity of the play, and partly due to the theatrical elements of the production.

Theatre anthropology is a discipline of theatre studies and applied cultural anthropology at the same time. According to Richard Schechner, a prominent scholar in the field, "Just as theatre is anthropologizing itself, so anthropology is being theatricalized" (Schechner 1985, 33). Schechner's statement is true in several ways. The anthropologisation of theatre is true also in the sense that, as anthropology gained ground, Western theatre established more and more connections with the rituals of non-Western cultures, and in the dialogue between them, Western culture's own rituals, theatrical elements and dramatic forms began to play a mediating role; this interest motivated the theatre anthropology research of Jerzy Grotowski and his student Eugenio Barba in the 1960s, as well as the involvement of Peter Brook, Richard Schechner and Ariane Mnouchkine. However, anthropologization also means that theatre is heavily exposed to

1 See <https://nemzetiszinhas.hu/en/play/waiting-for-godot-2/related-links> (last visited: September 15, 2024).

the mediatised, technicised world of contemporary culture, to phenomena that transform one's cultural strategies, rewrite or question one's patterns of behaviour, alter one's perceptions, delineate one's thinking. The theatricalisation of anthropology is the result of a process that has made anthropology "an intellectual poaching license" (see Geertz 1994), i.e., interdisciplinary approaches have theatricalised anthropological research (see Ungvári Zrínyi 2011, 65–66).

Using the line of inquiry of theatre anthropology, I could also analyse *Waiting for Godot* from the perspective of cultural performance studies: to what extent can it be considered a social drama, moreover, as Schechner writes, "...I discovered that performance can take place anywhere, in all kinds of circumstances, and for incredibly diverse purposes. [...] Erving Goffman's 1959 breakthrough book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* made me feel that performances coexist with the conditions of human existence in a broad sense."²

Along the lines of this approach, why not consider *Waiting for Godot* as a *performance_of waiting* (performable on stage and in the theatrical medium)? In addition, to borrow Barba's concept of the pre-expressive, the pre-expressive is *itself* a state of *waiting*. Based on the research and conceptual framework of Lukes and Turner (see Connerton 1997; Turner 2002; 2003) the performance *Waiting for Godot* (!) is a rite. The rite of waiting.

In this sense, what we have is a multi-layered production, composed along the lines of theatre anthropology, on which the director's special, unconventional, body-consciousness-based actor-directing technique is built.

Rite, cultural performances, performativity

Rite is not only a relevant question for the anthropology of the spectator: in ritual action there is no difference between player/performer and spectator, as they participate together in the privileged, sacred space and time of the play. This privileged nature is valid for the historical period of the birth of the theatre, but also for the rites celebrated at all times, even the everyday ones (Ungvári Zrínyi 2011).

² Goffman's book was published in English in 1956, and the German edition Schechner refers to, *Die Präsentation des Selbst im Alltag*, was published in 1959. (The book is also available in Hungarian, translated by Gábor Berényi, under the title *Az én bemutatása a mindennapi életben*, Budapest: Pólya, 1999.) The above quote is my own translation.

It is before us, the audience, that the sacred space opens and closes, presented to us by Terzopoulos with the scenic element of the cross and audio inserts reminiscent of church music. Withered flowers on the proscenium with light on them—just as the flowers on the altar welcome a person entering a church (floral decorations are customary in Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran churches and Jewish temples), the audience is also greeted by this prop. The biblical, sacral layer remains present in the background (sometimes in the foreground, for example during Lucky's monologue),³ which is reinforced by the director through the play with the cross, the altar theme and the final scene (eleven bloody books descend into the space).

Rite, in Lukes' reading, is rule-governed activity of a symbolic character where rules guarantee repetition, the reproduction of a previously imposed order; in order, as the religious historian Jan Assmann argues, to "keep the world in mind" (Assmann quoted by Ungvári Zrínyi 2011, 123; the quote is my own translation).

For the two characters, Estragon and Vladimir, this ritual waiting marks their days and defines their future. They go to bed, wake up, fall out, make up, dance, starve and eat, sleep and wait according to rules. Their sacred space is the country road, the cross (element) that towers and builds around them, sometimes protecting them.

Victor Turner sees ritual as an anti-structure because it breaks the monotony of the structures of everyday life and allows one to move into another, ritualistic, more genuine world (Turner 2002).

In the culture of globalisation, however, knowing the composition of contemporary lifeworlds, we can observe that the process of everyday life is not homogeneous (we assume that it never was, only the continuity of human practice has made it appear that way); it is made up of experiential realities and spaces, as postmodern cultural strategies seek to create privileged spaces and times in the everyday world (see Welsch's description of the aestheticisation

3 "LUCKY – Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaqu with white beard quaquaquaqu outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers like the divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in torment plunged in fire whose fire flames if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm with a calm which even though intermittent is better than nothing but not so fast..." (Source: Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/1882602/mod_resource/content/1/Godot.pdf p. 34.; Hungarian: Beckett 2015.)



Picture 1. Scene from the National Theatre's production of *Waiting for Godot* (Director: Theodoros Terzopoulos, Photo: Zsolt Eöri Szabó)

of reality, the composition of physical and virtual realities in media spaces, Ungvári Zrínyi 2011, 123). Thus, places and events that were not previously within the domain of traditional rites have the chance to become rituals.

The experiential reality of Gogo and Didi (i.e., Estragon and Vladimir) is defined by the repetitive ritual acts they perform while waiting (going to bed,

sleeping, eating, quarrelling, dancing and meeting), through which they move from their miserable, everyday experiential space into a ritual, genuine world.

43rd minute. "What are we doing now?" – "We are waiting for Godot."

Enrico Fiore, who is quoted in the review lines next to the playbill, also refers to the performance as a composition unfolding in waiting: "Terzopoulos' *Waiting for Godot* is a theatrical machine, encouraging the spectator's gaze to succumb to the composition unfolding in unfulfilled expectation, defined by the actors and the stage space."⁴

Eugenio Barba's conceptual framework

Presence as energy

In the training of theatre-makers outside the realist tradition, research into the presence of the actor is a prominent feature. Starting from the 1960s, often on the border between performance and theatre, Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Richard Schechner or even Joseph Chaikin explored the potential of the actor's presence through different approaches, writes Barba in his book *Paper Canoe* (2001).

Eugenio Barba, who, after his collaboration with Grotowski, continued his research with his own company, Odin Teatret, made a number of observations on presence, which are based on his research in the field of theatre anthropology and Eastern theatre traditions. One of the most significant of these is the identification of a *pre-expressive* (pre-expression) stage in the actor's presence on stage, where the actor's presence is able to capture the spectator's attention before conveying any message.

In 1979 Barba founded the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA), whose first conference was held in Bonn in 1980. Theatre anthropology was developed on the basis of transcultural observations, comparative analyses and continuous interdisciplinary discussions; it "is the study of the pre-expressive scenic behaviour upon which different genres, styles, roles and personal or collective traditions are all based" (Barba 2001, 20).

Theatrical anthropology distinguishes between daily and extra-daily use of the body, i.e., technique. The former is effective, organised according to the

4 See <https://nemzetiszinhas.hu/en/play/waiting-for-godot-2/related-links> (last visited: September 15, 2024).

principle of “minimum energy input—maximum work.” In contrast, the extra-daily technique is not driven by efficiency but it works according to the principle of wasting energy and transforming the body into a technical form. Theatre anthropology classifies a performer’s work into three levels or organisation: 1) the performer’s personality; 2) the stage traditions and socio-historical context; and 3) pre-expressivity (the extra-daily use of the body). The latter is the biological level of the stage, i.e., the *bios*.

Barba considers this so important that, in his opinion, “[i]f [performers] are not effective on the pre-expressive level, they are not performers. They can be used within a particular performance but are no more than functional material in the hands of a director or choreographer. [...] The effectiveness of a performer’s pre-expressive level is the measure of her/his autonomy as an individual and as an artist” (Barba 2001, 133).⁵

Theatre anthropology is the study of human behaviour when using one’s physical and mental presence in consciously designed performance situations according to principles that differ from those used in everyday life (see Barba and Savarese 2021).

The first factor—the personality of the actor—is unique. The second—the tradition of the stage and the socio-historical—extends to everyone who belongs to the same performing style. Only the third, pre-expressive category applies to all performers of any era or culture; this is the “biological” level of performance. The first two factors determine the transition from pre-expressivity to representation (expressivity). The third is the invariant element (*idem*) that underlies cultural, stylistic and individual differences. The repetitive, recurring principles that can be detected at the biological level of performance enable the use of different modes of play, the individual elaboration of stage presence and dynamism. For certain physiological factors (body weight, balance, position of the spine, direction of gaze), these principles create pre-expressive tensions

5 Cf. “This extra-daily use of the body is what is called technique. A transcultural analysis of performance reveals that the performer’s work is the result of the fusion of three aspects which reflect three different levels of organisation 1. The performers’ personalities, their sensibilities, their artistic intelligence, their social *personae*: those characteristics that make them unique and one of a kind. 2. The particularities of the traditions and the socio-historical contexts through which the unique personality of a performer is manifest. 3. The use of physiology according to extra-daily body techniques. The recurrent and transcultural principles on which these extra-daily techniques are based are defined by theatre anthropology as the field of pre-expressivity” (Barba, Eugenio and Nicola Savarese. 2006. *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*. New York: Routledge, 5; Hungarian edition: Barba and Savarese 2021, 10–11.)

within the body. This creates a new field of force, in the theatrical sense the body becomes “decided”, “alive”, the presence (the scenic bios) is manifested, with which the performer engages the attention of the spectator, even before any personal expression is formally expressed. At the same time, this “before” implies a logical sequence rather than a temporal precedence. The different levels of organisation cannot be separated, within the performance and from the spectator’s point of view. They may only be separated through a kind of abstraction during analytical research and the technical realisation of the composition by the actor or dancer. ISTA’s research is concerned with the study of the principles involved in the extra-daily use of the body and their application in the creative work of the performer. Accordingly, theatre anthropology investigates the socio-cultural and physiological behaviour of humans in performance situations (see Barba and Savarese 2021).

55th minute. “What are we doing?” – “We’re waiting for Godot.”

Energy-saturated immobility

Another fundamental term that Barba coined in relation to energy is *sats*, the energy-saturated immobility, the moment/state before a movement, when the whole body is already in tension but the action is not yet visible. The energy can be suspended in the form of immobility in motion. *Sats* is the common element that unites the different individual artistic techniques of the actors of Odin Teatret. “My familiarity with my actors’ *sats* [...] helped me see beyond the opulence of the costumes and the seductive stylization of the Asian performers, and *to see bent knees*. This was how one of the first principles of Theatre Anthropology, the change of balance, was revealed to me”—testifies Barba in *Paper Canoe*. He continues by stating that it is not the desire to express that determines action, but the desire to act that determines what one expresses. Theatre anthropology places great emphasis on the presence of the performer and the conditions and the creation of this presence. Barba argues that presence has nothing to do with force, pressure or the pursuit of speed by all means. The actor can be extremely focused even when immobile. One example he gives is the bow that the archer draws but holds the string without releasing it. In immobility, restrained kinetic energy and tension are present. “I use a Scandinavian word, *sats*, to describe energy gathered onto itself, the starting point of action, the moment in which we concentrate all our forces before aiming it at an action” (Hungarian edition: Barba 2001, 97–98).

Director Theodoros Terzopoulos' training – energising the actor's body

Theodoros Terzopoulos, in his book *Return of Dionysus*, on theatre and the practical methodology of actor training, published in Hungarian last year (translated by András Kozma; Budapest: University of Theatre and Film, 2023), explains how he works with actors to implement his elaborate concept. Rehearsals for a production are usually preceded by lengthy training. The focus is on working with the diaphragm, which helps to refine the senses. In the director's approach, the actor's body transcends the physical body: it includes senses, feelings, imagination and instincts.

"The founder of the Attis Theatre developed his special method several decades ago, and it is taught at many theatre academies around the world. The most important factor is energy. Energy is often talked about in theatre, but it is often understood to mean muscle power. But it is much more than that, it also covers mental and emotional energy. Terzopoulos' method helps to mobilise all of these at once. The daily task is to work with the diaphragm to refine our senses. The Body, says Terzopoulos, is, with a capital letter, much more than a physical body: it includes senses, feelings, imagination, and instincts. But it all begins with the correct diaphragmatic respiration.

[...] From the moment you enter the world of energy, your body becomes softened, invigorated, animated, and strengthened. But it also becomes softer—the barriers, the mental and muscular resistance disappear. We arrive at what we might call a psychosomatic energy field. This term is also often misinterpreted, even though it is a very concrete thing. It means that one's whole being, body and soul, are interconnected. Terzopoulos' method is therefore a complex, psychosomatic work process which is independent of rehearsals and performance and must be worked on separately. Of course, the foundations that we build in the training sessions are put to use on stage. It is an investment, the results of which will hopefully be visible in the quality of the performance."⁶

6 See the Greek actor and director Savvas Stroumpos' words here: "Test és lélek energiái – a Terzopoulosz-módszer" ("Energies of Body and Soul – the Terzopoulos Method"), *Nemzeti Magazin* 2023/8. Online access: <https://nemzetiszinhas.hu/magazin/2022/03/test-es-lelek-energiai-bakkhansnok> (last visited: September 15, 2024).

The crunches, the hard work with the diaphragm is evident in all the actors during the performance of *Waiting for Godot*. For the two protagonists, the pre-expressive is discernible before every scene and every utterance, their speech typically starting from a presence that is the result of a physical act. A recurring ritual element is that they lie down, touching their heads, talk and fall asleep. The Boy's walking back and forth, his turning, motion, sequences of movements reflect a dance and choreographic technique. The bent knees constitute the actors' 'base position'. Their facial expressions, eye movements, teeth chattering, laughing, crying, wailing, body tremors, shaking, sometimes getting into an ecstatic state (saliva flowing from his mouth, while we do not hear an utterance) show a complete transcendence. Terzopoulos makes his actors use extra-daily use of their bodies, as Marcel Mauss writes in his book chapter "Biographical List of Body Techniques" (Mauss 2004), but also as we can read in the anthropological dictionary *The Secret Art of the Performer*, with many examples: "Every extra-daily technique is the consequence of a change of a point of balance in the daily technique. This change effects the spine and therefore the way the upper part of the body is extended, and the way the pelvis is held: that is, the way we move in space" (Barba and Savarese 2021, 271).

He keeps the actors *awake* and *alert* throughout, but in the final scene he lays the two bodies on top of each other and then bloody books descend from above.

Nothing proves better how valid the arsenal of theatre anthropology is and on what a wide spectrum the results of existing research and methods can be interpreted than the fact that the production of an absurd drama in the 21st century by a theatre director who is also renowned in Europe can also hold its own in an analysis based on the aspects examined by theatre anthropology. As a result of the work of the artists and researchers mentioned above, there is growing number of artists, researchers and spectators whose artistic insights or practical training are formulated within the tools of theatre anthropology.

85th minute. "We'll have to come back tomorrow to wait for Godot."

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Krisztián Balassa

Review of the art institutions associated with Károly Somossy in terms of communication

Abstract

This paper is an edited version of my thesis defended at Károli Gáspár Reformed University, Faculty of Arts Administration and Arts Management. I undertake the task of examining the communication of the entertainment institutions created by Károly Somossy, a highly influential figure of the time, from the time of the Compromise to the turn of the century after the Millennium celebrations (1867–1903). In my paper, I will explore the importance of communication, PR and marketing in the modern sense of the term, the tools were available for this, who used them and how, how much audience appeal they had, and whether it is plausible to say that the printed press was the most important communication tool of the period and, if so, how it was used by the entertainment industry. The research method I chose was to compare the popular press products of the time, the advertisements and advertising concepts of the various art institutions, after clarifying the basic concepts of communication. I have preserved the spelling of the period in the quotations. For reasons of space, I compare the data and communication of the largest and best documented institution, the Somossy Nightclub (Mulató)¹ and the

¹ Since there have been several Somossy Orpheums over the decades, it is important to note that although our greatest operettas were performed in the former New Somossy Nightclub, later the Király Theatre, I am

Budapest Operetta Theatre, which still operates these days in the same building. This is the building which, for almost ten years, from 1894 until Somossy's death in 1903, defined our understanding of nightlife, entertainment and amusement, and paved the way in Hungary for the uneducated child of the muses, operetta, to take off on its world-conquering journey.

Keywords: Károly Somossy, Budapest Operetta Theatre, PR, marketing, communication, entertainment industry, theatre

Somossy and his art institutions

The now almost forgotten 'godfather' of the entertainment industry, from the time of the Compromise over one hundred and fifty years ago until the turn of the century after the Millennium celebrations (1867–1903), was Károly Somossy (1828–1903), also known as the emperor of life. According to the available data, he created the name '*Pesti Broadway*' ('Broadway of Pest') (Buza 2020, 126), his influence is embedded in the stones and walls of Budapest, and although most of his buildings and works have disappeared like the ill-fated gamblers of the happy peacetime, his memory and undeniable merits live on with us night after night in our theatres, plays and operettas throughout the Hungarian capital. Just as Russian literature emerged from Gogol's *Cloak*, so, in fact, the modern Hungarian entertainment industry emerged from Somossy's tailsuit, or more stylistically from his top hat, who, although he did not invent anything that had not existed before, nevertheless, with his own methods and vision, developed and established to perfection several genres of entertainment, which later became the originals in Hungary and served as an example for Europe. Many tried to copy his ideas that wore immense elegance and style, but as the era came to an end and new genres and customs emerged, they could not keep up with the pace, and many failed. Among them Somossy himself, whose downfall in his twilight years was compounded by the fact that, at the turn of the century, he was no longer able to recognise the rule he had followed throughout his life: that the world is always changing and that, to remain successful, we must change.

relying on the data of the Budapest Operetta Theatre at Nagymező Street 17, because this institution is still in operation and we have comparable data.

The concept of communication

But before I get into the communication of the entertainment industry art institutions associated with Károly Somossy, let's look at the concept of communication. In the dictionary of foreign words and expressions (Bakos 2002, 41), the term has four meanings. The Latin form of the word is *communicatio*, -onis n Meaning: 1. disclosure 2. performance, surrender 3. *ret* to communicate ideas to listeners. In Horányi 1977, 5, *communication is lat* 1. information, (news) communication, 2. *inf* the communication and exchange of information by means of some device or signalling system (language, gesture, etc.), 3. *rarely* communication, connection, transport, contact. The meaning of communication can be understood as a process of communication based on the mutual exchange of information.

Based on the above definitions, we can state that communication is a two-way process and requires a sender to encode and transmit the message and a receiver to decode and interpret this message. The more effective the communication, the easier it is to interpret the message. But what makes communication effective and what is its purpose? In all cases, it is to convey the message as clearly and concisely as possible, facilitating mutual understanding between sender and receiver. Other objectives may include conflict resolution, social, professional and personal development, enhancing cooperation and building relationships.

In general, four types of communication are distinguished, however, they can be of different types. By type, communication can be verbal or non-verbal, visual or written. In this paper I will deal with the latter two. Verbal communication (Bányász 2008) is ancient to humans, dating back some 40,000 years, fast and direct, devoid of tools, with speech as its basic form, sound as its perceptual form, bound in space and time, open and loose in structure, with a poorer vocabulary, less information and message, and the listener's feedback can shape further text formation, and in all cases accompanied by non-verbal signs (mimicry, gesticulation). Types: face-to-face or mediated communication. We also include language, tone of voice, volume and pace of speech. "Non-verbal communication is the set of analogue linguistic codes that accompany verbal communication. It is characterised by the fact that it is not always an intended communication, but can be learned and controlled. Its perception is not conscious, there is no agreed system of signs, but its use is determined

by socialised rules and conventions. Regardless of this, it is culture-specific. In contrast to the communal nature of verbality, it is more personal and difficult to decode and misunderstand" (Kővágó 2009, 155–156). Types of verbality include posture (body language), facial expression, touch, eye contact and gestures. Written communication dates back to 6000–5000 BC, it is slow and indirect, instrument-intensive, unlimited in space and time, has a closed and bound structure, more time for precise expression, rich vocabulary, can convey a lot of information but no direct feedback, accompanied by few non-verbal signs. This can be any written medium, newspaper, blog, e-mail, article, book, etc. In the case of visual communication, the information channel allows the message to communicate visually to the recipient through graphic elements, which can be illustrations, pictures, colours, etc. It can be expressed through drawings, posters, electronic media, television or internet communication.

PR, marketing and advertising

According to the digital textbook of the Károli Gáspár Reformed University (Sepsi and Lázár 2013), the concept of PR is the art and practice of building trust. "The Hungarian Public relations Association's definition, adopted at its 1993 General Assembly, is 'the organisation of an organisation's communication'.² The textbook does not consider PR as a separate science, but considers it part of the science of management and organisation. For marketing and PR, he considers the *Kotler model* (see Kotler 1998) to be valid, where marketing and PR are separate sets with a common intersection.

According to the textbook mentioned above, marketing briefly means 'the profitable satisfaction of needs', and the authors cite the American Marketing Association's definition of marketing as an organisational function and process that creates, communicates and conveys value to customers and cultivates customer relationships in ways that benefit both the organisation and its stakeholders. "Turning market information outside the company into an internal

² "PR is a system of activities that deals with the relationship between an audience and an organisation [...]. It assumes the building of bilateral (feedback) relations, adapts to the interests of society, shapes and, if necessary, modifies the behaviour of the organisation and its employees [...]. The purpose is to create an image in people's minds—an 'image'—that is desirable and conveys recognition. Because whatever you believe is valuable, you demand it, you pay for it, you vote for it [...]. There is no analogous Hungarian equivalent, but its technical terms can be: public opinion forming, public relations, public relations management, public relations building, etc." See Sepsi and Lázár 2013.

resource through market research, competitive analysis and understanding consumer needs. The object of marketing can be a product, service, good, intellectual product, idea, idea, political personality or celebrity.³

The concept of advertising is most precisely defined in *Act XLVIII of 2008 on Essential Conditions of and Certain Limitations to Business Advertising Activity*.⁴ Accordingly, "advertising is any communication, information or representation intended to promote the sale or otherwise use of a good or service or, in connection with that purpose, to promote the name, trade mark or activities of an undertaking or to increase the recognition of goods or services."⁵

Communication between dualism and the turn of the century in the Kingdom of Hungary and the capital

After the fall of the War of Independence in 1848/1849, the Habsburg court declared martial law in the interests of national defence, in which the idea of freedom of the press did not fit. The era of neo-absolutism dawned, in which press affairs were managed directly from the Burg and the Austrian press law was taken as a basis. The most important of these was the 1852 press regulations. The fact that the military courts exercised jurisdiction over the press can rightly be seen as a complete repression of the press. The royal decree of June 1865 again entrusted the administration of press affairs to the Council of Governors. After the restoration of constitutionality, the Andrassy government re-enacted the 1848 law, which received a lot of criticism for its numerous shortcomings. In 1868, the Council of Ministers stated that "the situation in the press relations can be considered abnormal because of the absence of our laws."⁶

3 Ibid.

4 *Act XLVIII of 2008 on Essential Conditions of and Certain Limitations to Business Advertising Activity*. Online access: <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a0800048.tv> (last visited: March 29, 2024).

5 General advertising rules, what constitutes advertising? Online access: <https://reklamjog.hu/reklamszabalyok/altalanos/mi-minosul-reklamnak> (last visited: March 29, 2024).

6 The Criminal Code of 1878 further complicated the question of press regulation, as it repealed the misdemeanour provisions of the Press Act and placed them in the system of criminal law, so by the end of the century a rather fragmented regulation had developed, which later caused a lot of confusion of interpretation and concepts. In the 1880s, Kálmán Tisza wanted to reform the laws governing the press, but he was unsuccessful, although there were some improvements in certain details, such as the Code of Criminal

The governments of dualism saw it as their strategic task to boost culture and education, where illiteracy was a serious problem. According to the statistics available (T. Kiss 2013, 11–42), 68.7 percent of the population over the age of six in 1869 and 58.8 percent in the 1880s could not read and write, although this figure had fallen to 41 percent by the 1900s. It is therefore clear that getting any kind of written or printed marketing or press product to the public with such numbers was very difficult. However, these statistics refer to the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary. To get a more complete picture, we must also look at the statistics of the capital of the last quarter of the century, which fortunately show a much more favourable picture: 21.4% of the Hungarian native-speaking population in Budapest were illiterate in 1880, 24.3% in 1890 and 20.5% in 1900 (Áfra Nagy 1930, 111). At these rates, there was a good opportunity to effectively communicate the combined impact of written PR, marketing and advertising.

As early as the Middle Ages, in the 12th century (especially in France), wine tasting was a common trade, with wine tasters typically forming groups, shouting around the city and offering free wine tastings. In fact, they can be seen as the forerunners of the later proclaimers and pedlars. With the spread of book printing, written advertising, which mainly promoted the low price of books, became more important. Advertising in the modern sense of the word became popular with the appearance of newspapers, weeklies, magazines and wall stickers. The first printed advertisements were artistically framed announcements, and after their mass dissemination, the press and street advertising can be considered the main carriers of advertising. Print newspapers were given a new impetus by the war of independence. This was the time when such prestigious newspapers as *Budapesti Híradó*, *Pesti Divatlap*, *Honderü*, *Pesti Napló*, *Vasárnapi Ujság*, *Budapest Hírlap*, *Magyar Sajtó*, *Pesti Hírnök*, among others, were published, *Idők Tanuja*, *Esti Lapok*, and *A Hon*, as well as the only fiction daily, *Hölgyfutár*, and the two most famous mock newspapers, *Üstökös* and *Bolond Miska*. (After the defeat of the War of Independence, the censorship allowed only one press product, the *Pesti Napló*, and in 1852 new daily newspapers were gradually allowed to appear.)

Procedure, which abolished the right to anonymity and allowed the author to be investigated even by means of a search warrant, and reduced the powers of the jury in favour of the court system, and the Industry Act introduced restrictions on advertising, but real press reform was yet to come until István Tisza's second premiership (1913–1917). See Koltay and Nyakas 2017.

The term *fake news* exploded into the public consciousness in 2017, when it was chosen as the word of the year.⁷ Today we consider a hoax that contains a deliberately published falsehood to be a fake news story, which has the clear purpose of disinformation, and therefore should not be confused with misinformation without propaganda. A hundred and fifty years ago, there was a lot of this kind of misinformation in the newspapers, because journalists didn't bother to check their information, so they usually copied it from each other. Thus it was that a lot of rumours, legends and fake news about Károly Somossy came to light; some of them may have been deliberate, but also a mixture of gossip and laziness. At the end of his life, Somossy spent his last days in total poverty at Nagymező utca 32, opposite his former orpheum. He rented a room from a laundress, the widowed Illésné Klein, which he shared with several others. Yet the news spread in the newspapers that he had been in a poorhouse, and then that he had died there. These reports were later largely corrected (perhaps at the request of relatives). In December 1902, the *Pesti Napló* wrote about the Germanised Somossy who had moved to a poorhouse:

"A careworn, snow-white, soldier from forty-eight, Károly Somossy, moved into the blanket-covered bed of the poorhouse yesterday. Somossy, who, among his other roles, also played a role in the defence of the homeland and freedom... Then with the army, his Hungarianism disappeared all around him, because this old man, who had retreated into a poorhouse, had a great part to play in the fact that Budapest is still more German than it should be."

The paper *Magyar Génius* published an obituary of him on 8 March 1903, stating that he died in the poorhouse:

"...The public knows a lot about the last years of the king of the night. How the Nagymező Street and the Király Street nightclubs went bust was reported in the newspapers. He would not have gone broke or recovered quickly had he not grown old. 'If I can no longer love and burn,' said the

⁷ See Flood, Allison. 2017. "Fake news is 'very real' word of the year for 2017." *The Guardian*, November 2. Online access: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/nov/02/fake-news-is-very-real-word-of-the-year-for-2017> (last visited: March 18, 2024).

seventy-year-old old man, ‘what’s the use of money?’ And he gave up. He grew old physically, mentally. He sometimes stumbled into the orpheum and watched the new stars with the feeling of a flagellant. It was not misery that tormented him, but the thought that he could no longer hire the merry, frivolous fairies for his orpheum, for himself. And he died—in the poorhouse.”

It is typical of these contemporary news stories that they do not report facts, but tell stories. The journalist tells the story in a way that makes us feel as if we are there, at the scene, usually with a pathos, heartfelt embellishment, a colourful plot, exaggerated writing. In the print press, Somossy can only be read in his advertisements or his requests for correction, he has not made any statements as a private person. This was probably a conscious decision on his part: he did not even allow his own stars and celebrities whom he discovered to speak in front of the press, thus increasing interest in the unknown. The quotation from him in the article was most probably merely in the mind of a journalist with a vivid imagination. The above examples show how difficult it is to reconstruct after all this time what really happened, because some of what is written is true, and the rest is pure fiction for the sake of hype.

The life of Károly Somossy

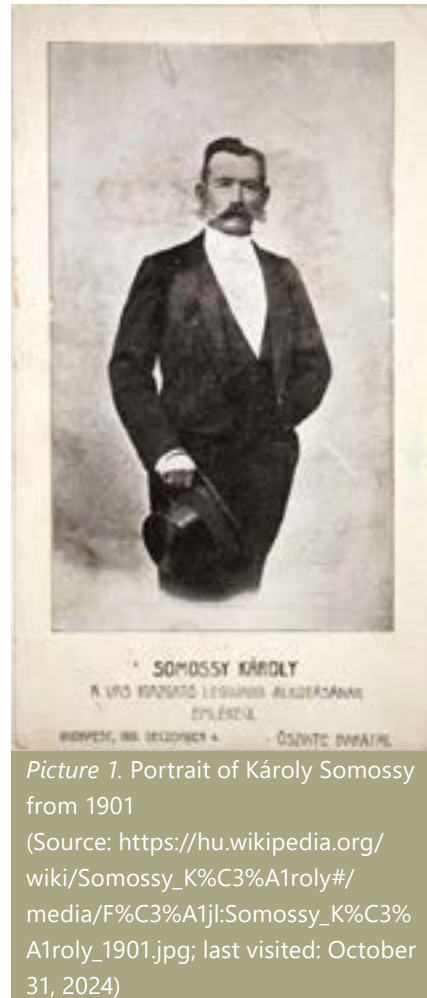
The encyclopaedias are wrong both about his birth and death,⁸ the former being “guessed” for 1837, the latter for 1902. In fact, he was born in Győr on 14 April 1828,⁹ named Carolus Singer. He was educated as a tailor, then became Klapka’s recruiting officer and chaplain in the war of independence,¹⁰ and later fought in the siege of Buda. In 1866, he first worked for Wilhelm Car-ré’s circus and then became deputy general manager of the Derssin Circus. In 1874, he was a foreman at the German Renz Circus, but this probably refers to guest appearances in Hungary. He rents the Korona Café (Crown Café) on the corner of Régi posta Street and Váci Street, and transforms the previously run-down premises into a glittering, glamorous interior never seen before.

8 See <https://mek.oszk.hu/00300/00355/html/ABC13280/14014.htm> (last visited: March 15, 2024).

9 According to a priestly record on his marriage certificate of 1857.

10 Rajna, Ferenc. 1923. „A pesti éjszaka királya”. *Világ*, August 5, 9.

At this time he also ran several cafés, such as the Boulevard and the Singer, and in 1869 he built the German Theatre in Gyapjú Street (he also obtained a concession to run theatres), and for a time he rented the Hermina Theatre in Hermina Square (in today's Hajós Street, next to the Hungarian State Opera House), and turned his attention to the nightclubs and music clubs.¹¹ He became the operator of such popular places of the time as the Anker Saal (Golden Anchor) in Hajós Street, the Beleznay Garden on the corner of today's Rákóczi Road and Puskin Street, the Carlé Varieté on the Károlyi Barracks (the building of the former Merlin Theatre is on the site), the Eldorado in Király Street 57 (Valero House) and the Tüköry's Neue Welt on the site of today's Vígszínház. He made huge fortunes, failed many times, but always stood up and started again. In Nagymező Street, he first started his business at No. 20, then acquired the plot at Nagymező Street 17 from the newspaper publisher Zsigmond Bródy, and later connected the plots at Mozsár Street 3–5 to it. Among his greatest undertakings was the First Metropolitan Orpheum, built in 1894 by Austrian architects Fellner and Helmer, the only surviving building from Somossy's legacy. He did not economise, the construction and equipment costs cost more than HUF 1 million forints (Molnár Gál 2001), while the cost of the Royal Hungarian Opera House, built in the neighbouring street with state money, amounted to HUF 2,261,200. The spectacular scenery was com-



Picture 1. Portrait of Károly Somossy from 1901

(Source: https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somossy_K%C3%A1roly#/media/F%C3%A1jl:Somossy_K%C3%A1roly_1901.jpg; last visited: October 31, 2024)

¹¹ Derived from the German word *Sängerei*, it was also used in Hungarian as 'song hall' (*dalcsarnok*). See Konrád 2013, 171.

plemented by amazing show politics, Somossy brought the biggest stars of the world to Budapest, and for about ten years Nagymező Street became the European centre of the entertainment industry, more famous than the Ronacher in Vienna or the Folies Bergère in Paris. At the height of his success, however, he couldn't stop and invented an entertainment district called Konstantinápoly in Budapest in Lágymányosi Bay. This venture surpassed all previous ones, it was considered the largest entertainment district in Europe in the period of the millennium, and it was the largest in Europe, entertaining forty thousand people at a time in the marshy area between the then under construction Szabadság Bridge and Rákóczi Bridge, where the architects (Lipót Kellner and Kálmán Gerster) dreamt up a replica of Constantinople (today's Istanbul) with mosques, a replica of the Hagia Sophia, theatres, cafés, winding little streets, orchestras, shops and bazaars. Both businesses went bankrupt because the Buda complex was competing with Somossy's own orpheum, cannibalising his income. He started a new business, bought the old Rémi nightclub at Király Street 71 and opened the New Somossy Nightclub, the last one, in December 1901. He built this business too on loans, using his own daughters as dummy while he ran the business from the background. After a while, advertisements appeared in various trade magazines and newspapers that no one should work with Károly Somossy because he was insolvent. Fed up with a series of scandals, the police closed the establishment, and thus the fate of the family was sealed. Somossy's body could not bear this last failure, and he died alone, penniless, in front of his orpheum in Nagymező Street, on 2 March 1903.

'Nightclub quarters' in Budapest

At the beginning of modernisation, in the middle of the 19th century, with industrialisation and the development of factories, the whole of Europe underwent a major change. The unification of Pest, Buda and Óbuda in 1873 saw an explosion in population, and the simultaneous rise of bourgeoisie and urbanisation changed the relationship between people and their environment. Unlike before, leisure time, various forms of entertainment and other written and unwritten rules of bourgeois culture were created. The citizens of Pest were almost driven out into the rich and spacious public squares by the cramped housing conditions and the lack of electric lighting (Gyáni 1996). The genre of cultured and less cultured entertainment was developed, with cafés, nightclubs,

orpheums, casinos and theatres opening up, offering a variety of entertainment to the curious public. The cafés became the centre of social life, where citizens discussed daily events and had access to a wide range of press products. The hierarchy was also observed between different places, e.g., the trash places were considered a lower order than the genre of the variety shows (Zsigmond 2015). These new forms of entertainment changed all previous traditions, as from then on, entertainment became not only the privilege of the aristocracy and the elite, but also the merchants, the tradesmen or even the maids could participate as spectators in the various ‘performances’. In fact, since the success of the most famous ‘song hall’, the *Kék Macska* (Blue Cat), orpheums and nightclubs have opened one by one, offering entertainment from a set table, in German, with short sketches, dance numbers, couplets and chansons. The word ‘orpheum’ itself, according to the Hungarian etymological dictionary (*Magyar etimológiai szótár*) means a musical entertainment nightclub, a take on the German *Orpheum*, which comes from the name of Orpheus, the legendary singer of the ancient Greek sagas.¹²

The difference between the entertainment venues that opened during the era of dualism can be observed primarily by looking at the quality of the programmes they offered to the general public. Thus, the bars, cabarets, orpheums, nightclubs, music clubs, chantants, breties, in fact, differed only in their programme, although the official police licence was only granted to song halls, so in fact all places of entertainment were considered to be such. The biggest difference, however, was the quality of the prostitution present in the individual places. The presence in the orpheums and dance halls was understandably subdued, but in the bars and nightclubs more room was given to lewd morals. The largest and most obscure nightclub was the *Blaue Katze* (Blue Cat; first called Feuchtinger’s Song Hall after the owner) at Király Street 15 (1855). Here they sang German-language couplets. The city’s most infamous and seedy street was known to all at the time. Before the construction of the Sugárút (now Andrásy Road), this street was the main route (2.5 kilometres long) to Városliget (City Park) (formerly Városerdő – City Forest). According to (the writer) Gyula Krúdy (who lived in the Pekáry House), this was the most Pestian street at that time. There were plenty of places of entertainment

¹² See *Magyar etimológiai szótár*. Online access: <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/search/?list=eyJmaWx0ZXJzJjogeyJNVSI6IFsiTkZPX0xFWF9MZHp29ub2tfRjE0RDMiXX0sICJxdWVyeSI6ICJvcmlldW0ifQ> (last visited: March 16, 2024).

and bars there. The Fekete Macska (Black Cat) music club, the 'Chat Noir' at Király Street 9, the Mandl-Nightclub at Király Street 39, on the floor of which there was a red-lamp hotel, the Tátra Nightclub at Tátra Street 77 and the Vörös Macska (Red Cat) at No. 47, in the Pekáry House. At the beginning of Király Street stood the Orczy House, with the Orczy Café and the Flora Hall, which officially served as a dancing school, but in fact provided girls for the solvent gentry. Across the street, on the site of the Anker Palace, stood the Gyertyánffy House, including the Herzl Café. On the corner of Kazinczy Street is the Berger Cellar, owned by Málcsi Berger and the birthplace of Budapest's couplet, known in the slang as 'berzseráj'. The Dobler Bazaar and the nightclub called Etablissement Armin were located at number 16.¹³

The fundamental change with which Somossy burst into the Budapest nightlife was quality and elegance compared to the previous frivolous, torn-skirted, pub-style trash places. In his novel *A vörös postakocsi* (The Red Stagecoach), Gyula Krúdy writes that Károly Somossy taught Budapest to party (Krúdy 2008, in the chapter "A bécsi nők Pesten" ["Viennese women in Pest"]). I thought that these infamous places, deeply despised during the day, but frequently visited at night, did not advertise themselves, as word of mouth spread about the attractions they offered to a mostly male audience. I was wrong. In 1887, the *Neues Pester Journal* advertised in large print the highly successful performance of *Egy éj Athénban* (A Night in Athens) at the Kék Macska (Blue Cat), a brothel of brothels. Interestingly, it does not give any details, no location, no time. I can only deduce one thing from this: that at that time everyone knew what time the shows started and where to go if you wanted to have fun. (Apart from the ads in *Pester Lloyd* and the *Neues Pester Journal*, I could not find any other platform where they advertised.) In 1885, the chief of police banned the owner of the house from Budapest for good because of her scandalous lifestyle and the scandalous reputation of the

13 And these were just the main venues on Király Street, but we should not forget the other nearby nightclubs either, although there are a few that were established after the turn of the century. Without claiming completeness: the Pruggmayr (later Herzmann), the Mehádia, the Wekerle Nightclub, the Wertheimer Orpheum (Népszínház St.), the Admiral (Magyar St.), the Tabarin, the Imperial (Vilmos császár Road), the Capri (Podmaniczky St.), the Fodor (József Boulevard), the Friedmann Orpheum (later Kristálypalota [Crystal Palace]), Paulay E. St.), the Kék Egér ([Blue Mouse], Teréz Boulevard), the Steinhardt Orpheum (Rákóczi Road), the Trocadero (Tátra Orpheum), the Walhalla (Király St. 23.), the Foliès Caprice (Révay St. 18.), the Jardin de Paris (Erzsébet királyné Road), the Parisienne (Rákóczi Road 63.), the Pavillon Mascotte (Palais de Danse, Paulay E. St.), and the longest-lived one is the Royal Orpheum (Erzsébet Boulevard). See *Magyar színházművészeti lexikon* entry 'orpheum'. Online access: <https://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02139/html/sz18/50.html> (last visited: March 28, 2024).

Berger Cellar.¹⁴ In the case of the Flora Hall, I found no advertisements, but plenty of news about police actions and the withdrawal of industry rights.¹⁵ There are also no paid newspaper advertisements about the *Neue Welt*, i.e., the Újvilág (New World) orpheum, of which Somossy was also the director for a time in the 1970s. However, there are many complaints, and it also draws attention to another phenomenon: the importance of street and public advertising and wall stickers. On the second page of *A Hon* of 21 October 1870, there is an editorial entry in which the journalist laments the proliferation of German-speaking nightclubs.¹⁶

Presentation of the Somossy art institutions and analysis of their communication

Cafés

Singer café (1862–1866)

The Singer Café was Somossy's first major foray into the hospitality industry. To give an idea of the kind of place on the corner of Hajós Street and today's Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Road, here is a report by Rudolf Szentesi (József Kiss), a reporter of the time who published under a pseudonym: "...at night the most disorderly parties are held, where the army of lewd ladies, having appeared, becomes a scene of immorality and scandal" (Buza 2020, 123). There are newspaper reports of fights, patrols, where the owner is threatened—fined 100 forints, and if they break the ban again and prostitute women are found in the café, the business is closed.¹⁷ The *Pesti Napló* reports¹⁸ that the café was closed in 1866 for this reason.

¹⁴ *Pesti Hírlap*, August 15, 1885, 6.

¹⁵ *Pesti Hírlap*, May 2, 1886, 8.

¹⁶ "'Neue Welt Orpheum grosse Vorstellung', 'Neues Herculanum', 'Varietes Actien-Theater', 'Kindertheater', 'Concert Saal', 'singspiel-halle', 'Damen-Kapelle', 'senger-gesellschaft', 'Grosse Volkssanger-Vorstellung' and another ten or so folk singing societies, all of which maintain themselves in the capital of Hungary, of course, as being German. Then there is the 'Fürst's neues Theater zum goldenen Anker', to whom the city allowed the erection of a song hall, which he however christened 'new theatre', against which the city council protested. We won't even mention the German advertisements of private individuals.—On a corner there is a small, white billboard, hiding modestly, so that no one will see it. The inscription reads 'National Theatre, Coriolanus'—Rejoice, Germania! Die deutsche Zunge reicht so lang!" (*A Hon*, October 21, 1870.)

¹⁷ *Pesti Hírnök*, January 12, 1865, 3.

¹⁸ *Pesti Napló*, March 30, 1866, 3.

Its literary memory is preserved in the book written by József Kiss in 1874, where the virtuous poor girl turned café prostitute is killed by the murderous count with a poisoned cigarette in the middle of the Singer café (Bevilaqua Borsody and Mazsáry, 1935). No advertisements or further commercials could be found.

Korona Café (Crown Café) (1866–1870)

A café had been operating at the junction of Váci Street and Régi posta Street since 1786 (Szalai 1973), but it gained real fame when Somossy took over in 1866,¹⁹ and his shop, with its wooden panelling, marble tables, plush armchairs, velvet-cushioned chairs, huge gold mirrors and gas lighting, which was then considered modern, was a forerunner of elegant cafés. The place had a double function: on the one hand, it served as a literary meeting place where the most famous poets and writers met in the evenings (e.g., Krúdy dreamt of one of his heroes, Fridolin, the ‘hunchbacked marquer’), while in the secret rooms behind the doors and mirrors, huge card battles and illegal games took place.²⁰

With good business sense, Somossy focused on the euphoria over the Compromise. The crown, as a royal-imperial jewel, rhymed well with his sympathy for the Habsburg monarchs, so he requested to change his name from Singer to Somossy, in keeping with the Hungarianising fever of the Hungarian citizens, and received permission from Franz Joseph.²¹ In 1867, on coronation day, he named the establishment *Első Magyar Korona Kávéház* (The First Hungarian Crown Café) and inaugurated it with great ceremony. The choice of the location was also a great idea, as the Régi Posta Street was the busiest street in Pest, from where the four- and six-horse coaches set off to all parts of the country, and everyone who came to the capital arrived here. According to the daily *Napi Magyarország*, under the leadership of Károly Somossy, the café openly

19 Palóczi, Edgár. 1913. “A Korona kávéház”. *Pesti Hírlap*, September 25, 33.

20 A legend was known at the time, which was later written by Ferenc Rajna, Somossy’s son-in-law, in the newspapers: “When Prince Charles of Hohenzollern went to Bucharest to take his new throne, he passed through Pest. This is where the brave soldiers of Ghikas and the Cantacuzenes spotted him. Somossy hid the young king from his determined pursuers. But they somehow sniffed out the king’s hideout and spent a few days inspecting the Korona Café. They watched the two billiard players play for hours in boredom. They finally got tired of lurking in vain and left without ever coming back. And the two billiard players were Somossy and the future King Carol, whom Somossy had so disguised that his future loyal subjects could not recognise him. However, they would not have spared him a friendly stab or a humane bullet. By the fourth day Somossy had driven the king out of Pest. Free of charge. For nothing.” (Rajna, Ferenc. 1923. „A pesti éjszaka királya”. *Világ*, August 5, 9.)

21 Court Decree No. 14 746, *Sürgöny*, October 30, 1866, 1.

adopted the national flag.²² When it comes to advertising, the Korona Café is worth mentioning not only for its own marketing, but also for what it meant to the neighbouring shops: there are countless advertisements referring to the café.²³ I could not find any other commercials or newspaper advertisements in the case of the Korona Café, and I assume that there was most probably no need for them.

Boulevard Café (1870)

The history of the Boulevard Café (Váci Boulevard 24, District 5) is lost in obscurity, I could not find any early advertisements, there are later ones, but only after the turn of the century, when it was already owned by Ármin Garai (Goldhammer). Apart from a couple of police reports, and the fact that it became a meeting place for sparkling water vendors in 1912,²⁴ there is no more news or publicity about it. In 1871, a new café owner advertises in *Pester Lloyd* in German: J. Mahler, who claims to have had the premises completely renovated and offers the utmost comfort to its visitors.²⁵

Circus and variety

Wilhelm Carré's Circus (1855–1859)

Wilhelm Carré, born in 1817, originally performed as a rider in Ernst Renz's circus, but later founded his own circus and toured extensively in the Balkans. In 1887 he built the Royal Theatre Carré circus in Amsterdam, which is now a theatre. Somossy met the Carré family in the 1860s and worked as their secretary. Their guest appearances in Hungary took place in 1855, 1856 and 1859, and

22 M. E. 2000. "A kávéház kultusza a magyar irodalomban". *Napi Magyarország*, January 22, 25.

23 "The Society of Merchant Youths in Pest has moved its accommodation from George's Day to the second floor above the Korona Café in Váci Street." – "For the forthcoming festivities it offers its richly supplied, selected, most elegant crystal glass sets of excellent quality, of the most elegant shape and grinding, and also its finest glassware for lighting from the first-rate Czech factories. Respectfully, the glass and mirror warehouse of Henrik Giergl, Váci Street 15, next to the Korona Café." – "Miksa Hatschek optician's shop. Since George Day, it has existed in Váci Street, next to the Korona Café." – "Against secret diseases and their serious after-effects, after many years of experience, according to the method of the world-famous Kleord (former teacher from Paris), with assured success, orders the physician F. Sugár. Home: Pest, Váci utca 15, next to the Korona Café." (*Vasárnapi Ujság*, April 28, 1867, 205; *Pesti Napló*, 29 May, 1867, 4; May 21, 1867, 4; November 22, 1867, 4.)

24 See https://ejf.hu/sites/default/files/DN/DanubiusNoster_kulonyszam2019.pdf (last visited: March 14, 2024).

25 *Pester Lloyd*, August 26, 1871, 6.

Somossy most probably took part in all of them. The circus has consciously promoted itself. Their advertisements were published in German, mainly in the daily newspaper *Pester Lloyd*, where they drew the attention of the public to the demonstrations and attractions of the group, which usually consisted of seventy riders and fifty horses.²⁶ The advertisement is always signed ‘Director Wilhelm Carré’, emphasising that the circus director himself is addressing the public. The performances were held in the Beleznay Garden (once located on the corner of Rákóczi Road and Puskin Street), which was later rented by Somossy and operated as an orpheum with great success.

*The Renz Circus of Vienna (1870–1874)*²⁷

The famous Renz Circus, founded by the German Ernst Jacob Renz (1815–1892), regularly set up its famous tent on the former Stephans Platz, now Klauzál Square, from 1870, usually entertaining audiences with a hundred performers and eighty horses. Somossy put together the show, which has been performed with great success for years. This is where the novelty begins—which, according to legend, was invented by Somossy—to turn the performances into plays, so that the circus stunt is retained, but in theatrical guise. This is how *Hamupipóke* (*Cindarella*), the most famous show was born.²⁸ I found German-language advertisements in *Pester Lloyd*: they advertise an unprecedented show and wonderful fog images with the fantasy name ‘*brillante magische Soirée Fantastique*’.²⁹

The Deressin Circus in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár) (1872–1873)

The biographical descriptions mention the Deressin Circus in Prague next to Somossy’s name, so it was difficult to untangle the reality from the distorted and changed news. József Deressin’s riding school was founded in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár), and when it is introduced, József Deressin signs the advertisements as the director of the Turkish Imperial Riding School, and the company is not even referred to as the Deressin Circus, but as *Cirque Français*. In 1872, their performances in Pest are banned because the police consider the stage and auditorium a fire

²⁶ *Pester Lloyd*, February 6, 1859, 3; December 21, 1855, 4.

²⁷ *Fővárosi Lapok*, July 7, 1874, 668.

²⁸ *Internationale Artisten-Revue*, March 10, 1902, 1.

²⁹ *Pester Lloyd*, October 24, 1868, 6.

hazard.³⁰ The family business first appeared at Nagymező Street 20 in 1873 with the character dancer Mari Schumann and the *gymnast* Mr. Csali, and concluded with the Fire Queen (Tűzkirálynő), madame director Derssin, on her own horse.³¹ Mention is made of the unrivalled transportable riding arena and circus, which can be erected in forty-eight hours, the lodge structure is made of iron, and was built in Pest for 20 thousand forints.³² Since Somossy was active in Pest at this time, it is likely that there was some kind of collaboration between him and the Derssin Circus on his own property.

Carlé Varieté – Károly Barracks (1871–1877)

According to contemporary accounts, Somossy was the secretary and the soul of the shows. The song hall inside the Károly Barracks, which can hold around two thousand people, was a huge success and was also the birthplace of the first variety theatre. It was here that Somossy experimented with the recipe that would become the basis of his later success: stunning performances with spectacular show elements. The advertisements say: the most beautiful and spectacular performances are also for families. Although the available pictures show illegible advertisements, it is clear that there are ten large billboards on the side of the building advertising various shows. It is reasonable to assume that if they were there before, they were advertising the current shows on this platform.³³ International performers, an 8 o'clock start, with shows ending after midnight. The Carlé group was presented as coming from the Crystal Palace in London.³⁴ They performed under several names: Carlé Truppe, Carlé Varieté, Carlé Orpheum.

Nightclubs

Anker Saal (1868–1875)

Various parties and balls used to be held in the Golden Anchor Hall (Arany Horgony terem) at Hermina Square 6 (now Hajós Street). Somossy created the first variety theatre in the country in this place, besides the soirées and balls

30 *Magyar Polgár*, October 17, 1872, 3.

31 *A Hon*, January 4, 1873, 3.

32 *Ellenőr*, March 16, 1873, 3.

33 See the Fortepan community photo archive: <https://fortepan.hu/hu/photos/?id=82327> (last visited: March 10, 2024).

34 *Egyetértés*, April 4, 1877, 4.

(Molnár Gál 2001). He had already tried his hand at variety³⁵ with the Carlé brothers, but here he perfected the compilation of the show. Newspaper commercials also contain cross-references to each other, e.g., *A Hon* in 1868 states: "Every Wednesday and Saturday during the whole carnival season there is a great masquerade ball in the 'Golden Anchor' hall, Hermina Square 6. Read more on the big wall stickers. The rooms are rented out for social balls, parties and circles at a discount."³⁶ It was here that Somossy discovered Pál Linzer, sometimes credited as conductor, sometimes as choreographer or actor, but he is credited with inventing the special masquerade ball where the ladies have nothing on except the masks covering their faces. This fact is somewhat tempered by the fact that I also found a lot of charity events, including toddler nursery and events for children. Many dances and balls were advertised in the newspapers.

Eldorado (1871)

Under the name Eldorado, Somossy opened a nightclub at Király Street 57, in the old Valero House, owned by the owners of the Valero silk factory. I did not find any commercial or advertisement about the institution.

Neue Welt (1873)

In the sixties, Pest started on the bumpy road to becoming a metropolis. But there were not many places to go out, so if you wanted to spend money like that, you had to go to Vienna. The architect Sándor Tüköry wanted the elite to spend their wealth in his art institutions at all costs, so he created his nightclub on the site of the Vígszínház, called Neue Welt (New World [Újvilág]). As this was considered a very infamous neighbourhood, he paid/hired the local thugs to guarantee the safety of his guests. It is likely that Somossy's previous experience at the *Két Pisztoly (Two Pistols) Inn*³⁷ also contributed to his success as manager of the *Újvilág* for a time. *Pesti Napló* writes about the institution's advertising

35 According to *A magyar nyelv értelmező szótára*, a variety is "an entertainment place where singers, dancers, actors and artists perform light and light-hearted comic scenes and numbers." See <https://mek.oszk.hu/adatbazis/magyar-nyelv-ertelmezo-szotara/szotar.php?szo=VARIET%C3%89&offset=32&kezdobetu=V%20lv%20%C3%A9rtelmez%C5%91%20sz%C3%B3t%C3%A1ra> (last visited: October 30, 2024).

36 *A Hon*, January 5, 1868, 4.

37 After the defeat of the war of independence, Somossy worked as a waiter at the *Két Pisztoly (Two Pistols) Inn*, which was next to the National Museum, in today's Kálvin Square. It was demolished in 1874.

practices: “The entrepreneur of the *Újvilág*, in order to make a little reclamation of his premises, advertises on large wall stickers that tomorrow, 17 October, he will hold a splendid masquerade ball in honour of the visiting pole travellers, to which the named guests have also arrived. Some business companies often resort to this kind of advertising to attract the public; but in the present case it is no mere gimmick; the travellers have indeed promised to appear...”³⁸

Etablissement Somossy Nightclub I. (1889–1893)

Although the advertisements ran under this name until 1899, I thought it important to distinguish between the buildings. Somossy opened the institution at Nagymező Street 17 in 1894, which has since been known as the Budapest Operetta Theatre, and earlier as the *First Metropolitan Orpheum (Első Fővárosi Orfeum)*. A number of novelties appear in the advertisements, including the indication of offices and telephone numbers, the name of the director-owner, details of the show and the name of the orchestra of the winter garden and its lead violinist are also mentioned. The stars are usually highlighted in a black frame, the more famous names (see Cecilia Carola) in capitals. The shows are displayed in a clearly visible way, with an exact start time and date. Sometimes they also inform the reader about ticketing options.³⁹ Many advertisements have survived in German and Hungarian.

Etablissement Somossy Nightclub II. (1894–1901)

With this institution, we have reached the most perfect version of the entertainment industry complexes developed earlier. The Somossy Nightclub contained everything that was the luxury entertainment of the time for the aristocracy and commoners. The electric lighting, the magnificent interior, the rich show proved that over the decades Somossy has learned everything about the art of entertainment and hospitality.⁴⁰

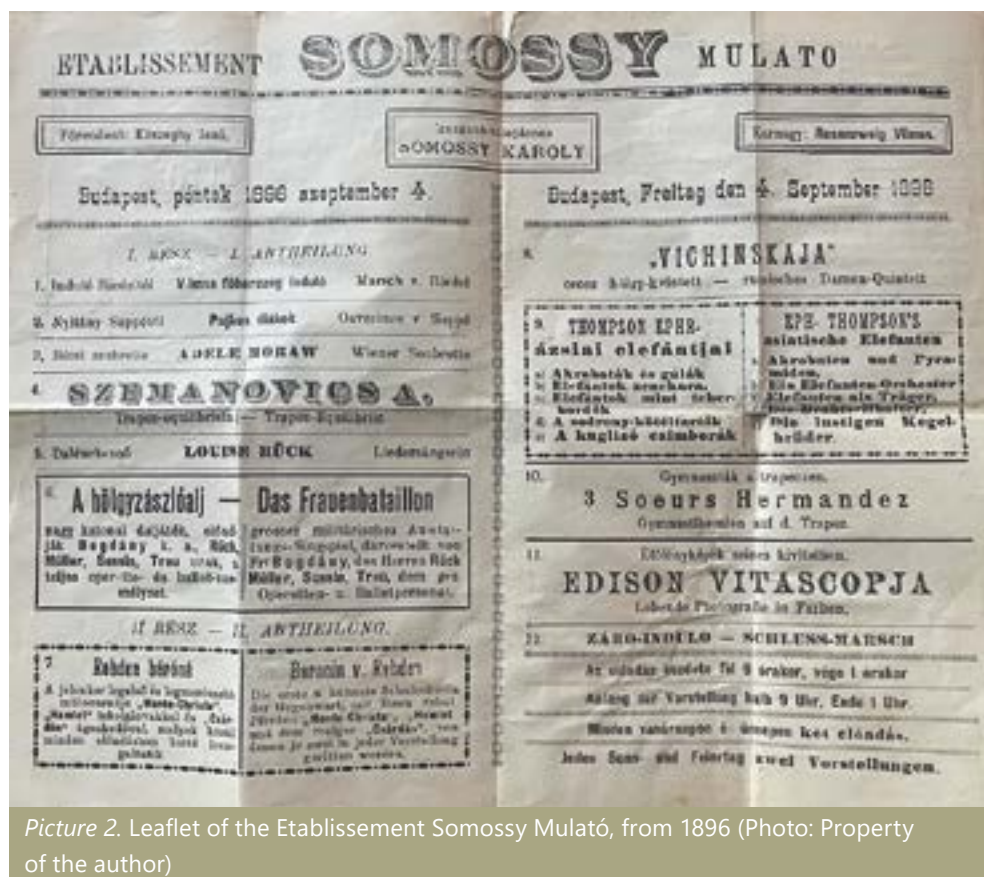
These few years were the most dazzling and successful period of Somossy’s life, which could have been the crowning achievement of his career, had he been more skilful with money. It was at this time that charity balls and events came

38 *Pesti Napló*, October 17, 1874, 2.

39 *Pesti Napló*, January 1, 1896, 14.

40 After Somossy’s bankruptcy in 1899, restaurateur Ferenc Albrecht tried to run the place under the name Somossy Nightclub, Somossy kept him as artistic director, then Imre Waldmann took over the operation in 1901 and renamed it the Fővárosi Orfeum (Metropolitan Orfeum).

into fashion, to which Somossy devoted his time, energy and money. There are many advertisements in the newspapers, thousands more than before in archives and databases promoting various productions and stars.⁴¹ Most of the objects and advertising, in the form of brochures, programme leaflets, table-top programme menu cards, etc., date from this period. In the Theatre History Collection of the National Széchényi Library I found programme leaflets with Somossy's figure and rich drawings. In a clever way, he not only promotes



Picture 2. Leaflet of the Etablissement Somossy Mulató, from 1896 (Photo: Property of the author)

41 Arcanum, Digitális Tudománytár. Online access: https://adt.arcanum.com/hu/search/results/?list=eyJxdWVyeSI6ICJURVhUPShcmV0YVJsaXNzZWV1bnQgc29tb3NzeSBtdWxdFx1MDBmM1wikSBEQVRFPSPgxODk0LTAxLTAxLS0xOTAxLTAxLTAxSklScjZ3J0JjogkRBVEUifQ&per_page=20 (last visited: March 28, 2024).

his own show, but also gives space to the appearance of other companies. So it is possible to read about cheap food and stationery, photographers, a specialist in pipe cutting, the services of the 'most offerable' men's clothing company, a dentist or original Singer sewing machines while flipping through the programme leaflet. The Somossy Nightclub communicated directly with the public through the programme leaflets and through advertisements in the newspaper. Postcards, signed photographs and music scores for prima donnas also became increasingly popular at this time.

The institutional PR treatment of the time was considered special, as Somossy did not allow his stars to make any statements. While there are many reports and personal experiences of the celebrities of the era, there are none of the stars of Somossy Nightclub. Why? Because Somossy's tactic is that the less fans know about them, the greater the mystery and excitement, the more he can increase curiosity. Nowadays it is the other way round: who does not advertise themselves do not really exist. Part of the PR was that Somossy could only be seen with his legendary walking stick, tails and top hat. Sending his clothes to Vienna and London to be laundered was a standard for him. Exquisite elegance, perfection of appearance and taste have become as much a part of the marketing of the building as the people who work in it. Another effective weapon of communication was the use of buffet dames. These beautiful girls, usually from the poorer classes, dressed in magnificent gowns and behaved like distinguished women in the winter garden of the orpheum. They were excellent conversationalists, knew how to eat caviar and were good in judging expensive champagnes. The most famous buffet dames were Mariska Récsi, Mici Schwarz, Stefi Bauer, Klára Ward, Klára Hédidédi, Irén Schenk, Thekla and Emilia Turcsányi (i.e., the infamous Elza Mágnás).

Constantinople in Budapest (Konstantinápoly Budapesten) (1896)

I am convinced that the establishment of Little Constantinople in the Lágymányos Bay was Somossy's idea, although in 1896 officially the first company was still established without him. Warned to be careful by the Ancient Buda Castle fiasco (he was not put in charge of the entertainment centre), he officially stayed out of the bureaucratic maze, preferring to pull the strings from behind the scenes. After a bad first year, by 1897 he was officially a tenant of the place, but he still couldn't pull off his otherwise fantastic plan, which was based on poor foundations. The use of the logo appeared in advertisements: a five-pointed

star in a Turkish crescent. The show description highlights the attractions, the famous performers and the entrance fee. As this area is fairly far from the city centre, four lines are devoted to describing the approach. It was possible to get there by boat, 'electric train' and omnibus.⁴²

New Somossy Nightclub (1901–1902)

The last attempt of the multiply failed and multiply successful director was the construction of a nightclub at Király Street 71. With all his strength, he took the plunge once more, but now only as artistic director, leaving the leadership on paper to his two daughters. Of course, he was still in control, a choice made for the sake of credibility. The first descriptions and reviews were very good, but later the company went into a debt spiral and became insolvent within a few months. Artists and foreign performers were so angry with the Somossy family that they sent out paid advertisements warning everyone not to work for Somossy even by chance, because he did not pay the performers after the shows. This fact, and the fact that they could no longer buy police permits, was enough for the police to close the place down, sealing the family's fate for good. The newspaper commercials⁴³ that can be found are almost identical to those of the earlier Somossy orpheums. It is important to mention that after the fall, the closed down nightclub was taken over by László Beöthy (1873–1931), a journalist and theatre director, who opened the Király (King) Theatre less than a year later, which achieved worldwide success with productions of *A víg özvegy* (The Merry Widow), *Csárdáskirálynő* (The Csárdás Queen), *János vitéz*, *Mágnás Miska*, *Leányvásár* (The Girl Fair), *Sybil*, *Luxemburg grófja* (The Count of Luxembourg), *A bajadér* (The Indian Dancer), *A montmartre-i ibolya* (The Violet of Montmartre) and *Gül Baba* (Kellér 1960).

Orpheums

Orpheum (1870–1872)

Simply called the Orpheum, it was the first iron-framed nightclub that Somossy had in Nagymező Street, although it was still on the plot at number 20, where the Mai Manó House is now located. The institution must not have been doing

⁴² *Pesti Hírlap*, July 26, 1896, 22.

⁴³ *Pesti Hírlap*, December 3, 1901, 20.

too well, because a year later Somossy's belongings in the orpheum were auctioned off.⁴⁴ *Pesti Napló* wrote about the place in 1870.⁴⁵

Summer Orpheum (1884)

For a year in 1884, it advertised its summer orpheum under this name at Nagymező Street 17.⁴⁶ The advertisements are the usual ones, the name is a bit confusing, because an orpheum of the same name was opened in Hunyadi Square in 1878.⁴⁷ However, Somossy's new marketing idea remained in the newspapers, with the newspaper *Nemzet* writing in 1886 that: "Permission is granted to K. Somossi to erect an advertising lamp-post at the corner of Andrassy Boulevard and Gyár Street."⁴⁸ So, on the corner of today's Andrassy Road and Jókai Square, Liszt Ferenc Square, he had a privately owned advertising pillar erected, on which he could place posters of his own business. This way, the crowds coming from the busy Andrassy Road and the Oktogon, as well as from the Opera, can also be informed about the latest shows.

Neues Orpheum – Beleznay Garden (1872–1878)

The Beleznay Garden stood on a plot of land on the corner of today's Rákóczi Street and Puskin Street. It takes its name from the Beleznay Palace in the garden, and after the family died out, the entrepreneurs who rented the castle were

44 *Ellenőr*, April 19, 1871, 3.

45 "The newly opened summer premises of the 'Orpheum' in Nagymező Street, just a few steps from the Terézváros church, are not the last among the entertainment venues in Pest. The layout of the room is exemplary and pretty. The first courtyard is for the non-paying public, with stairs leading down to the left and right into the second courtyard. To the right and left of the entrance stairs are covered premises, to allow the public to take refuge in case of sudden rainfall. Where these covered halls end, in the middle of the courtyard is the orchestra area, followed by the auditorium and dining area, which is calculated for 150-200 tables, and opposite the entrance is the pretty stage. There are 12-12 lodges on the right and left of the audience, on a higher ground. Each of these lodges consists of arbours with liane. There is a table set up in each arbour. The lighting is sumptuous but not glaring, the food is good and not expensive compared to other similar places, and the entertainment is highly varied. A company of more than fifteen members performs small comedies, then the four Swedish sisters sing their national songs, then young Crosby shows his daredevil skills, standing on a pole for 20 minutes, firing pistols and drinking beer, then the actors, singers and power artists start again. The intervals are filled by a military band. The director has contracted a ballet company of 40 members, which will begin performances of the ballet entitled *Irma* on Saturday this week. In 8 days, the ballet will be followed by an 8-member French theatre company, so they have made sure there is enough variety." (*Pesti Napló*, August 17, 1870, Annex to issue 161.)

46 *Egyetértés*, July 3, 1884, 7.

47 *Egyetértés*, May 23, 1878, 4.

48 *Nemzet*, August 25, 1886, 3.

able to hold events there from 1828 onwards. The converted ballroom could accommodate two hundred people, and an outdoor stage was set up in the garden, which was later converted into a variety theatre and rented by Somossy as director. He referred to the Beleznay Garden as the Neues Orpheum on the posters that could be found, and placed his own portrait on the upper-central part, surrounded by ornate designs, with his name written underneath as 'Director K. Somossy'. The stars were listed according to the programme schedule, some of them with their names framed or, in the fashion of the time, surrounded on both sides by black palms, the index finger marking the star's name. Almost all of the newspaper advertisements for the art institution are in German, which may well reflect the target group Somossy was trying to reach.⁴⁹

Első Fővárosi Orpheum (First Metropolitan Orpheum) (1887–1893)

Somossy changed the name of his institutions for a number of reasons. The new names were mainly used to build up his own 'brand', but sometimes the director who had fallen into the credit trap had to set up a new company while the previous one was being auctioned off. He realised that with a catchy name, success is more convincing, thus adding the adjectives 'metropolitan' and 'first' to the name of the former orpheum, he established the famous institution on the plot of land at Nagymező Street 17, true, it was still an iron-structureed summer theatre. The new building was later renamed the Somossy Orpheum, although advertisements still referred to the institution by two names until 1896, probably to give readers time to get used to the change. In their advertisements, they do not give an address, but they are keen to show that they are prepared both for the winter and summer seasons. The performers are highlighted in bold, with a brief description of the special performances.

Theatres

Deutsches Theater, the German Theatre on Gyapjú Street (1869–1889)

After the German Theatre of Pest City burnt down in 1847, a temporary wooden theatre (Nottheater) was built on what is now Erzsébet Square, but there was a growing demand for the German-speaking population to have their own the-

⁴⁹ *Neues Pester Journal*, June 19, 1878, 10.

atre in Pest. Somossy wanted to build a variety theatre,⁵⁰ and was granted the necessary permission to hold theatre performances.⁵¹ In the end, probably for financial reasons, he passed the building to a joint stock company,⁵² which continued the construction and opened the German Theatre in 1869, with a capacity of two thousand people. Here, Somossy could gain a lot of experience in the art of theatre-making. Newspaper advertisements are quite ordinary, with the name of the German Theatre highlighted, the address "gyapju utczában" (in Gyapjú Street) underneath, the date and title of the performance, and the start time of the performance.⁵³ The theatre perished in 1889.

Hermina Theatre (1883–1884)

This theatre was not founded by Somossy, but in 1883 he acquired it and converted it into a winter orpheum, while the building at Nagymező Street 17, which was already in operation at the time, was used as a summer orpheum. In 1884 this winter orpheum was acquired from him by József Pruggmayr, who continued to run it. In the advertisements, it happens that the commercials of the two art institutions are placed below and above each other, so Somossy thought it important to point out that both orpheums will continue to operate in the same place.⁵⁴

Stars, language issues, show politics

In her essay,⁵⁵ Gyöngyi Heltai writes that the phenomenon of the prima donna as a kind of cultural construct was shaped by the theatre industry just in the change. Librettists have often sought to parody popular performances and

50 Hungaricana Közgyűjteményi Portál (Public Collection Portal). Online access: <https://maps.hungaricana.hu/hu/BFLTervtar/10390/?list=eyJxdWVyeSI6ICJclnNvbW9zc3kgalx1MDBIMXJvbHlclij9> (last visited: March 28, 2024).

51 *Budapesti Hírlap*, March 20, 1932, 4.

52 *Pesti Napló*, August 19, 1869, 2.

53 *A Hon*, October 8, 1881, 4.

54 "In order to avoid possible mistakes and disappointments, I have the pleasure to inform the honourable public that my winter and summer premises will be located at Nagymező utca 17... Károly Somossy, director." (*Egyetértés*, October 8, 1884.)

55 Heltai, Gyöngyi. 2014. "Primadonna-paradigma: Blahától az 'isteni Zsazsáig és Carola Cecíliától a Honthy-féle Cecíliáig". *Metszetek* 3(1): 82–116. Online access: https://epa.oszk.hu/04500/04590/00030/pdf/EPA04590_metszetek_2014_01.pdf (last visited: October 29, 2024).

prima donnas in their productions. So two standing stars existed at the same time: Lujza Blaha and Cecilia Carola. One is the sophisticated person, who had the whole of Pest and Europe at her feet, but performed mostly in German, and the other is the impeccable model of Hungarian theatre and morality: Mrs Blaha. Cecília Carola, the star of Somossy Nightclub, has been the subject of hundreds of scandalous articles, eagerly describing which prince or millionaire the prima donna flirted with, or which other nightclub she spent the night in after her performance. These rumours only added to the myth of the unknown, beautiful woman as an idol, and Carola's suitors were all turned away, so that millionaires, such as Mihály Lazarovich, squandered a significant part of their fortunes on her,⁵⁶ an aristocrat from Bačka, Maxi Lindenbaum, a linen merchant, Elek Chernaházi Bod,⁵⁷ a landowner, the son of the Russian millionaire Miklós Protopopov⁵⁸, the son of the Romanian Prime Minister, Viktor Sturdza⁵⁹ or even Prince Edward of Wales.⁶⁰

The language issue also caused a problem increasingly frequently. In 1894, the opening ceremony of the Somossy Nightclub was in Hungarian, the speech was written by Jenő Heltai, the orchestra played a Hungarian overture, and yet there were times when riots broke out in the audience. In 1895, e.g., on 20 August, after the singing of the *Himnusz* and the *Szózat* in the Somossy Nightclub, Cecilia Carola sang in German throughout the evening. The audience started shouting: "In Hungarian, in Hungarian!", and Carola was forced to start a few Hungarian songs, and then the crowd calmed down. In 1900, the daily newspaper *Hazánk* wrote in its Literature and Art column, that the actors' association threatened to expel any actor who performed in an orpheum. "Every nightclub is obliged to compose half of its show from Hungarian songs. But the actors' union punishes an actor who works in an orpheum with expulsion, loss of pension rights and the loss of all their rights. The consequence of this is that the Hungarian numbers in the orpheums are terribly bad, a real disgrace to the Hungarians. Thus the actors' association is the brake on Hungarianisation, and instead of serving the national cause, it is pushing things with its Spanish-like pride to the point

⁵⁶ *Magyarország*, January 13, 1935, 34.

⁵⁷ *Pesti Napló*, October 7, 1906, 13.

⁵⁸ *Pesti Napló*, July 20, 1905, 14.

⁵⁹ *Békés Megyei Közlöny*, June 14, 1904, 3.

⁶⁰ *Hétfő*, November 23, 1942, 4.

where, e.g., Ős-Budavára is preparing to hire a German couplet singer from Vienna this summer, with the reasoning that the National Actors' Association will prevent them from employing Hungarian couplet singers."⁶¹

Despite the fact that there is no written proof of Károly Somossy's Jewish origin, the newspapers (with the titles 'pro-German' and 'Jew') take it as a fact that he does not want Hungarian-language performances in his nightclubs, although this is factually untrue. At this time, attacks of an anti-Semitic nature had already started to be launched against him.⁶² Somossy was a thoroughbred businessman, playing what was in greater demand. He didn't realise in time that there was a need for Hungarian-language shows (which the competition had already realised), and this was probably a fatal mistake on his part.

For decades, Károly Somossy has shaped the development of variety and entertainment. The competition has not failed to copy and catch up with his shows of indescribable richness and imagination, one of which I would like to highlight: an advertisement in the *Nemzetközi Művészeti Szemlé (International Art Review)*⁶³ advertises several performances in German, and the name of the

61 *Hazánk*, January 16, 1900, 7.

62 "A Hungarian of Jewish religion! Hungarian Jew! Well, my God, there is that, just like there is the German, the Czech, the Serb or the Oláh with Hungarian sentiments. Perhaps more than an Oláh with Hungarian sentiments, but incomparably less than a Hungarian *Zipser*. And just as I cannot believe that the time will come when there will be only Hungarians in the realm of Saint Stephen, I similarly don't believe that a Jew from Ung County, Maramures or Budapest will in time become a good Hungarian. Well, why? I don't know either, but the average Jew is not Hungarian in their speech, thought and sentiment. For you complain that the Jews of Pest keeps speaking German among themselves, at home and in social life. They read German books, they reads German newspapers, their prayer book is German, and their purchase market is Vienna, i.e., Wien... And I maintain, and many people, especially foreigners, say with me, that Budapest has a wholly Jewish character. And I say that among the few people who visited the Barabás exhibition, none of them was Jewish. On the contrary, nine-tenths of the audiences at the Múcsarnok's musical Thursdays and the Folies-Caprice and Somossi are. Apropos, Somossi! Did you read about the fight in the orpheum the other day? As if that were the incident that characterises our Jews. One man stands up and protests against the German performance (I assume that Mr. Frank-Faragó is also Jewish), and the others shout him down and beat him up. And the next day, in the same room, during a performance by the same company, the same thing happens again, and there are not fifty or a hundred thousand people in Budapest who take revenge for this attack on the company, its employees and the audience. Oh yes! I readily admit that we have Jews who are fully Hungarian in sentiment, among them statesmen, politicians, scientists, excellent artists, writers and other eminent persons, who have become fully Hungarian in heart and soul; but our Jewry will still never be Hungarian. And there are a number of times and occasions when, with full conviction and due consideration, I would let all these excellencies go, if only we did not have any Jews..." (*Alkotmány*, January 2, 1900, 6.)

63 "Accessible through the International Theatre and Arts Bureau: *Artilleria Rusticana* – Burlesque Operetta (parody) in one act. Text: K. Somossy, music: Wilhelm Rosenzweig. *A nagy kalifa* [The Grand Caliph] – a spectacular operetta in one act. Text: K. Somossy, Music: Wilhelm Rosenzweig. *Giardinetto* – Large potpourri with great splendour. Compiled by Somossy and Rosenzweig. *Spiritiszták* [Spiritists] – Burlesque operetta

place: Budapest Orpheum. At that time, it was a disgrace for a journalist and writer to give their name to an orpheum show. This is why the text of these performances, i.e. the libretto, was written under the name of Károly Somossy, while they were all written by his son-in-law, Ferenc Rajna (Reiner) (1861–1933), so the great successes were—officially—achieved by Somossy.⁶⁴ When Somossy was just not thinking about new operettas, ballets or dance and live images, he was not afraid to use the latest achievements of the time. Its new song hall had electric lighting for the first time in Hungary, a telephone line was used in the building, and in 1896, for the first time in the country, films were shown in the winter garden. Károly Somossy acquired the rights to show the device in the Monarchy, and four months after the premiere of the Lumière brothers, a film was shown in Hungary at the Somossy Nightclub... “The animatograph! The latest photo-electronic marvel. It reproduces every living scene in motion—a mirror of real life. It can be seen daily from 10 a.m. until late in the evening in the winter garden of the Somossy Nightclub café. Entrance fee 1 crown.”⁶⁵

After Károly Somossy set foot on Nagymező Street, theatrical premises started to mushroom in the area. The list of old and new theatres⁶⁶ on this street alone is a good indication of how much this theatre district has been and still is bustling with life. In the last hundred years, several performances have been produced that evoke his figure and the world of the old orpheums.⁶⁷

in one act. Text by K. Somossy, music: Wilhelm Rosenzweig. *A női zászlóalj* [The Women's Battalion] – a great military show with singing, dancing and a dazzling spectacle. Text: K. Somossy, music: W. Rosenzweig. Performed at the Budapest Orpheum, with fantastic effects, it remains one of the most sought-after shows.” (*Nemzetközi Művészeti Szemle*, February 5, 1893, 16.)

64 Rajna, Ferenc. 1932. “Ahol a régi Pest mulatott”. *Budapesti Hírlap*, March 20., 4.

65 *Budapesti Hírlap*, April 28, 1896, 15.

66 List of theatres, cinemas, orpheums in Nagymező Street: Jardin d’Hiver, Renaissance Theatre, Radius Cinema, Vígszínház, Youth Theatre, Petőfi Theatre, National Theatre, Metropolitan Operetta Theatre, Thália Theatre, Arizóna Theatre, Művész Theatre, Mikroszkóp Stage, Somossy Orpheum, Budapest Operetta Theatre, Tivoli Theatre, Moulin Rouge, Pavillon Mascotte, Municipal Cabaret, Tarka Theatre, Vörös Malom (Red Mill), Budapest Café, Arizona, Budapest Dance Palace, Kálmán Imre Theatre, Edison Mozgó, Turán Cinema, Terv Cinema, Tivoli Cinema, Tivoli Light Play House, Tinódi Cinema, Radnóti Theatre.

67 Works depicting the figure of Károly Somossy and his Orpheum: *Régi orfeum* (Old Orpheum), premiered in 1932 in the Metropolitan Operetta Theatre (text: Jenő Faragó and István Békeffy, music: Lajos Lajtai, director: Vilmos Loránth), in which Hanna Honthy played Cecília Carola and Tivadar Bilcsi played Károly Somossy. The operetta *Egy boldog pesti nyár* (A Happy Pest Summer) was completed in 1943, with music by Dénes Buday, Mihály Eisemann and Szabolcs Fényes, and the libretto is the work by László Szilágyi and Attila Orbók. Directed by: Vilmos Tihanyi. Hanna Honthy is back again as Cecília, the old orpheum, which played itself at the Municipal Operetta Theatre, came to life. In 1950, Fővárosi Varieté (Municipal Variety) presented the play *A sziget rózsái* (The Roses of the Island), in which Teri Fejes played Cecília Carola; the sumptuous world

The competitors and the failure

While the greats were copying each other's shows, Somossy also put himself on the European entertainment industry map for the simple reason that his impresarios brought him the best and brightest stars, giving him considerable competitive strength to the Ronacher and Danzer's Orpheum in Vienna, the Moulin Rouge, the Folies Bergère and the Alcazar in Paris, the Apollo Theatre and the Wintergarten in Berlin, the Tivoli in Copenhagen and the Empire in London, not to mention the famous circuses, because Somossy featured wrestlers, performers, animal and animal acts, equestrians, singers, magicians and transformational artists, and thus competed even with the Ciniselli, Renz, Wulff, Herzog, Barokaldi, Beketow and Krone circuses.

Encouraged by the huge success, the owners of the other 'music clubs', and song halls did not stand idly by, and more and more orpheums and nightclubs, including the Herzmann Orpheum, were built, the Hungarian Orpheum, the Imperial Nightclub, the Oroszy Orpheum, the Jardin d'Hiver, the Parisienne, the Foliès Caprice, the Dobler Bazaar, the Walhalla Orpheum, the Kék Macska (Blue Cat), the Berger Cellar and the Mandl Nightclub. Interestingly, Oroszy (elsewhere Oroszi) was Antal Somossy's house poet, but he made so much money that he started his own business and built the building of the present Uránia National Film Theatre, the Oroszy Caprice. According to the story, behind the beautiful mirrors and walls were secret doors that the dancing ladies who worked there opened to entertain the wealthy guests⁶⁸ in the adjacent building, where the University of Theatre and Film Arts now stands. In the same way, the Herzmann Orpheum fought a fierce battle with Somossy, brought revue stars and tap dancers from Paris, its director wore a dark grey 'Franz Joseph', with a top hat, patent leather shoes and two-carriage coach, because he wanted to resemble the 'emperor of the night'

of the orpheum and the millennium came to life again. Music: Tibor Polgár, Szabolcs Fényes, directed by: Ernő Szabolcs. In 1954, Imre Kálmán's Békeffy–Keller transcription of the *Csárdáskirálynő* (Csárdás Queen) was performed, in which the Archduchess Cecília (Anhilte) is revealed to have once been a chansonnette herself. The play thus clearly referring to Cecília Carola and to the fact that the venue could once again be the Somossy Nightclub. The role was again played by Hanna Honthy, and she scored a huge success. On 17 November 2023, *Az Orfeum mágnása* (The Magician of the Orpheum) was premiered in two acts. Text: János Dénes Orbán, music: Péter Pejtsik. Károly Somossy was played by Attila Dolhai, Cecília Carola by Diána Kiss, directed by: Yvette Bozsik.

68 Molnár Gál, Péter. 1995. "A kalábriász parti". *Budapesti Negyed* 2: 73–90. Online access: <https://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00003/00007/molnar.htm> (last visited: October 29, 2024).

in everything, who slowly lured all Herzmann's stars to Nagymező Street 17. Herzmann went bankrupt and eventually died in the poorhouse.⁶⁹ The theatres often took joint actions against Somossy, because he performed full-length plays, operettas and ballets in his orpheum, and since he did not have a licence to do so, he posed competition with all other theatres. Yet the police did not intervene, a fact that was quite often bitterly expressed by the people concerned in the newspapers.

Somossy failed a lot with his performances and income from restaurants, nightclubs and orpheums, but he always managed to get up after a failure or found a generous friend to bail him out. His constant creativity and ideas pushed him to achieve new goals, but he was never financially secure. This is why it could happen that auctions were almost a daily occurrence in the Somossy family. Dozens of entries can be found on how and when Károly Somossy's movables, café equipment and shares, registered at various addresses, were auctioned off over his head. And he could start all over again. Never discouraged by failure, he started to gamble more and more, and produced more and more income. He sensed the *'zeitgeist'* of the moment and made the most of it. I am convinced that two factors played a role in Somossy's downfall. One is his unquenchable gambling obsession, the other is the changing *zeitgeist*, which decades earlier he had been able to grasp with a good sense. As the turn of the century approached, the demand for Hungarian-language performances grew in the rapidly expanding Budapest. Somossy has always made sure that there are some Hungarian words in the orpheum (bilingual programme leaflets, posters, etc.), but apart from that he has not addressed the issue. If he had spearheaded the initiative, he might have successfully carried his business into the next century. Meanwhile, the much celebrated and adored ideal of womanhood has also undergone major changes. Whereas the eighties and nineties were all about the Amazonian, more corpulent woman, by the turn of the century men were infatuated with a different kind of lady. The era of Cecilia Carola type prima donnas was slowly coming to an end. The combination of these factors meant that Somossy could not avoid failure in the end.

This is how the *Vendéglősök Lapja* reported the Orpheum's bankruptcy: "We already considered the German orpheums an almost indescribable stigma, and suddenly—quite unexpectedly—their main nest, the Somossi one—closed

⁶⁹ *Magyarság*, July 9, 1924, 4.

up the business because a good Hungarian orpheum had attacked in Ó-Budavár [Ancient Buda Castle].⁷⁰ Around 1901, he could no longer realistically assess the risk was worth taking in starting a business. He borrowed money from his own employees, who still believed in the legendary manager and were happy to lend him money, to build his new nightclub. The nightclub was completed at Király Street 71, the stars were signed on, but there was not enough money to run it on a daily basis. This was particularly embarrassing because Somossy made his two daughters the managers of the nightclub, but they were really just dummies, he was running everything from the background (the court later acquitted the two Somossy girls on this ground). When he could no longer afford to pay the staff, the performers or the licences, the police closed the doors of the nightclub for good and the place was locked up. From then on, endless court cases began, the two girls were captured, Somossy fell ill and never got up again. The staff working for the family could run after his money. To show how respected the Somossy family was, the advertisement of the Municipal Orpheum in the *Magyar Nemzet* is a good example: "The proceeds from tomorrow's performance on Friday will go to the Somossy grandchildren."⁷¹ The same in the daily newspaper *Magyarország* with the addition: "Overpayments are gratefully accepted by the committee collecting the income." Everyone saw and empathised with the tragedy and tried to help. This is a particularly a big thing from the former Somossy Nightclub (then already the Municipal Orpheum), which was also a competitor to the New Somossy Nightclub. Imre Waldmann, the director, has demonstrated his humanity. The Budapest Artists' Association founded by Somossy, Cecilia Carola (100 crowns) and the *Internationalis Loge* in Berlin (32 crowns) donated money for the funeral of Károly Somossy, because the family was so impoverished that they could not pay even for it.

⁷⁰ *Vendéglősök Lapja*, August 5, 1897, 4.

⁷¹ *Magyar Nemzet*, March 14, 1902, 15.

Communication and programme policy of the Budapest Operetta Theatre

It would be difficult to list the innumerable changes that took place in the field of communication in the last one hundred and fifty years. While the basics are similar, the importance of relations with the audience, internal and external PR, and marketing strategies is more important than ever in a fiercely competitive theatre world. The hundred year old Operetta Theatre is striving to meet the challenges of the modern age and is present on many platforms, in the media, online and in print. The former closed system is over, the stars of the theatre can appear in other theatres, but there is a trend in who are playing the main roles these days. Attila Dolhai, Zsolt Homonnay, Barbara Bordás, Diána Kiss, Péter Laki, Szendy Szilvi, Zoltán Kiss, Attila Bardóczy, Mónika Fischl, and the previously undeservedly neglected Nikolett Füredi, Gábor Dézsy Szabó and Veronika Nádasí are living their heyday. The website is clean and well laid out, although the excessive use of black gives a slightly sombre impression, arousing a sense of sadness. There is a certain perceptible anachronism in the programme planning (the choice of old and new pieces), in the use of logos (similarity with the logo of the Academy of Music), and in the naming of the National Song Theatre (at the end of the 19th century so was the naming of the Hungarian State Opera House). The site offers access to the most popular social media platforms, communication and barrier-free access are also easy to overview. With the complete redesign of the website, the memory of the successes and performances of the previous management has almost completely disappeared, and now only the then and current staff of the company and the few plays running are a reminder of the twenty-three years since the theatre's reconstruction. The theatre offers several types of season ticket (Premier+, János Sárdy, Romantika, Somossy Károly season ticket), gift vouchers and a frequent regular viewer card (Operett Gold Club, which offers various discounts) for the 2023/2024 season. In terms of show politics,, the selection is mixed, with a few old plays still running at the time of writing the paper, such as *Szépség és a Szörnyeteg* (*Beauty and the Beast*, 2005), *Mágnás Miska* (*Miska Mágnás*, 2002), *Lili bárónő* (*Baroness Lili*, 2005), *Jövőre, Veled, Itt!* (*Next Year, With You, Here!*, 2005) and *Virágot Algernonnak* (*Flowers for Algernon*, 2015), there are also hit plays that have been withdrawn but staged and re-staged, such as *Csárdáskirálynő* (*Csárdás Queen*, 2019, directed by Attila Vidnyánszky), or

Marica grófnő (Countess Marica, 2020, directed by Bozsik Yvette). In the field of musicals, they put on well-established and successful plays, such as *Hegedűs a háztetőn* (*Fiddler on the Roof*, 1964, current premiere: 2021), *La Mancha lovagja* (*Man of La Mancha*, 1965, current premiere: 2020), *Jekyll és Hyde* (*Jekyll and Hyde*, 1990, current premiere: 2022) and *Monte Cristo grófja* (*The Count of Monte Cristo*, 2011, current premiere: 2023). They also perform classics, such as Pongrác Kacsóh's *János vitéz* and Ferenc Lehár's *A mosoly országa* (*Land of Smiles*) or Jenő Huszka's operetta *Mária főhadnagy* (*Lieutenant Maria*). Periodically, seasonal productions are also performed, such as Tchaikovsky's *Diótörő* (*Nutcracker*) ballet, or *Veszedelemes viszonyok* (*Dangerous Affairs*), based on a letter novel with a historic background, directed by Csaba Kiss, with music by Adrián Kovács and text by Péter Müller Sziámi. With nearly twelve thousand subscribers, the theatre's YouTube channel is a very popular one, still featuring old footage from the last twenty years of the institution. A theatre competition for primary and secondary school groups to make creative videos called 'Tiétek a színpad!' ('You have the stage' was launched, and YouTube was the primary channel for connecting with audiences during the pandemic. Attila Dolhai's and Tibor Cári's musical drama about the tragedy of Trianon, entitled *Szétszakítottak* (*Torn Apart*), was created for the video sharing site, featuring the actors and singers of the theatre. The Instagram channel has nearly fourteen thousand followers and produces a wide range of ads and spontaneous test photos, the selection is quite mixed, probably several people manage the content. The content on the official Facebook page is almost identical to the Instagram content, but there are already one hundred and twenty-seven thousand followers. There are usually close to a hundred likes and comments on posts that are updated several times a day. (By the way, neither the Instagram nor the Facebook page links on the website work, so it's probably just a temporary error.) The theatre's 2023 budget report is not available on the website, but that of 2022 is there. On this basis, the theatre's total revenue for 2022 amounts to HUF 6,470,534,822, of which the budget revenue is HUF 1,597,637,815, the central, managing body subsidy is HUF 4,297,526,427, plus the use of the previous year's balance of HUF 575,370,580.⁷² The theatre could therefore operate with a subsidy of nearly HUF 5 billion during the 2022/2023 season. Two of these were staged: *Mária főhad-*

⁷² Source: Éves_költségvetési_beszámoló_2022._szöveges_indoklás.pdf (operett.hu) (last visited: October 15, 2024).

nagy (Lieutenant Maria) directed by Zsolt Homonnay, and *Monte Cristo grófja* (*The Count of Monte Cristo*) written by György Szomor.

For the new production (*Az Orfeum mágusa* – The Magician of the Orpheum), a statue of Károly Somossy was erected at the main entrance of the theatre in 2023.

My conversation with the theatre's marketing department revealed that the Budapest Operetta Theatre is actively using most of the advertising platforms that are known and available today. Print materials include public advertisements, giant billboards, roll-ups, stop boards, but they also appear in the printed press, magazines and in their own print materials. In response to today's challenges, current events are advertised on LED walls at the main entrance, and digital print materials are also shown inside the building on these special 'displays'. The theatre builds its cast on the basis of triple cast, as has been the practice in recent years: all three main characters appear on posters and advertisements, so that the audience can see who is playing in the performances. Actors are often sent to give interviews and reports, typically on the television programme entitled *Mokka* and other talk shows. The theatre now also offers actors the opportunity to present themselves on the website, with their own interface where they can display their CV and any other information they wish. The theatre's main communication channel is Facebook (it has the largest number of followers there), as the audience of the Operetta Theatre is largely older and Facebook is typically used by older people, at least not predominantly young people. And on their own website, they communicate official news and announcements.

Conclusions

At the end of the 19th century, the most important medium of communication was not only the printed press, but also street advertisements and posters, which could appear anywhere on advertising pillars, omnibuses, company signs, carts and even on the walls of houses. Károly Somossy may have been an innovator in many respects, but he had a similar vision of marketing to his competitors. The difference was that he had the brightest stars performing, and he was not afraid of introducing unconventional novelties, which is how he was the first to present the moving image to the Hungarian audience a few months after the Lumière brothers' premiere in Paris. We also saw that

he had an advertising column erected near the Oktogon to spread the word about his nightclub to a wider audience. When necessary, he hired omnibuses and boat trips to give the esteemed audience easier access to his facilities. He has been conscious in the marketing and advertising work. Newspaper advertising was usually concentrated in the capital, with only occasional news and advertisements in rural papers. It is also a fact that the bigger and bigger attractions, the 'Somossy facilities' started to 'cannibalise' each other after a while. So it was surely a mistaken decision for him to run the more than nightclub with a capacity of two thousand and create the Constantinople in Budapest (also known as Little Constantinople), which in its heyday was able to entertain forty thousand people, because in the meantime many other new art institutions were being built, not to mention the Ancient Buda Castle complex in the heart of the city, where tens of thousands of people could also spend their nights. There was too much supply in the rapidly growing Budapest and not enough demand. The administration activity of Károly Somossy had some errors in terms of personal and institutional PR. When he used his cane to beat a lawyer complaining about the theatre's operation in the street and threatened him, or when he was summoned to court for selling the exclusive rights to sell tickets to several contractors at the same time, or when he sued a prima donna who refused to go on stage (who fought back and won), all show that his violent temper sometimes overrode the image of a sober, thoughtful director, and that this did not reflect well on him or his institution. True, neither did his constant debts and his constant running away from creditors. There is no doubt, however, that his life's work, created through decades of hard work, enabled the flourishing and golden age of genres such as operetta and musicals, which later brought Hungary worldwide fame and huge success.

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János Vecsernyés

Cinematography practice as Project Pedagogy

Abstract

In this article, I contrast the effectiveness of the presentation-based teaching strategy (frontal instruction) with project pedagogy, another teaching strategy derived from the constructivist learning theory. Furthermore, I point out that the traditional cinematography practice used in the training of cinematographers since 1949 is based on modern pedagogical ideas, i.e., it mostly corresponds to a project pedagogy-based teaching strategy formulated on the constructivist learning theory.

Key concepts: project pedagogy, cooperative learning, frontal teaching, learning theories, behaviourism, constructivism, cinematography training, cinematography practice

Introduction

I taught László for two semesters in a university preparation course. He was an enthusiastic and hard-working student, never absent from class, always attentive and always taking notes.

The subject was cinematography, but—contrary to the usual practice at the Hungarian University of Theatre and Film Arts—I taught the classes in a classroom instead of a studio. This was the arrangement that was available then and there. I projected film clips on the screen, made presentations, but also did a lot of

drawing on the *flip chart*. Among other things, I also talked about *upstage* and *downstage* lighting design. (These two approaches are the basic building blocks for thinking about lighting.) I talked at length and in detail to the students about the advantages and disadvantages of these lighting constructions and the difficulties of their application, but I emphasised in summary that the *upstage* technique portrays the face more plastically, and in a sense more aesthetically, than the *downstage* method.

Soon after, László applied for admission to a university course in cinematography. He went through to the third round of entrance exams where the candidates had to create a series of photographs based on keywords.¹ The images that László produced revealed that he had walked into all possible traps of *upstage* and *downstage* construction while taking those photographs. He showed the photographs on the projector, and I pointed out the weaknesses of the lighting design. With great difficulty, he recalled what he had learned in the preparatory course, but he had failed to remember it while taking the photos, and he certainly had not been able to apply it.

During the course, I had explained the material, adding illustrations and drawings, doing my best with the classroom, the projector and the *flip chart*, but László's case proved that the effectiveness of the method was not satisfactory.

This is not an isolated case. I have experienced it several times, and my colleagues often report similar experiences. We repeatedly encounter the fundamental problem of the above-mentioned method of *frontal teaching*, a presentation strategy derived from the *learning theory of behaviourism*, where it is often found that the effectiveness of the retention of new information is low.

It is likely that György Illés established this form of education not so much because of his expertise in the science of pedagogy, but rather because his pedagogical skills and his instinctive educational concept, proven over the decades, suggested the use of cinematography practice in education. The educational conditions of 1947, i.e., the period immediately before the institution became a college, are well described by Géza Radványi² (Szabó 1955, 198): "As a matter

1 Of course, photographs taken in a particular light can also have an upstage or downstage lighting construction, depending on where the subject and the camera are positioned in relation to them and which direction the subject is facing.

2 Géza Radványi had already been asked to teach filmmaking at the future College of Theatre and Film Arts, and it was then that he shot his film *Somewhere in Europe*, in which György Illés was the assistant cinematographer alongside Barnabás Hegyi.

of fact, we started out not knowing what to do. [...] I actually had to learn while teaching. I had to learn how to teach film at all. There were no established systems back then. [...] Perhaps the most important discovery I made was that you can only teach film if you make film.”

All this echoes the way the project method evolved as an educational strategy. The roots of project teaching go all the way back to seventeenth-century Italy and France, where a project was a large-scale construction plan drawn up by students of architecture. While the practice is rooted in the old days, constructivism, which provides the theoretical background for the pedagogical strategy at issue, only emerged as an epistemological movement in the 1970s.

The introduction of cinematography practice may also have been dictated by the inevitable practice-orientation of artistic training in general, as well as by the fact that at that time the theoretical background of cinematography training was not adequately formulated, so no one undertook to teach purely theoretical courses.

At the same time, it is also important to see the differences between the cinematography practice applied at the College (later University) of Theatre and Film Arts and project pedagogy, which has matured into an approach with established traditions and experience. In my paper, I will discuss these differences and try to prove that if we apply the methods of project pedagogy with more thorough preparation and thoughtfulness in the implementation of cinematography practice, we will enhance the effectiveness of cinematography training.

I find it important to clarify that I do not intend to make discoveries in the science of pedagogy, and I do not aspire to the label “pedagogical treatise”, but I merely wish—somewhat summarily and using simplified terms—to incorporate, i.e., to adopt existing research findings and attempt to use them.

Learning theory background

It is a fundamental goal of the Zsigmond Vilmos Zsigmond Institute of Cinematography (ZSVMMI) to provide its students with up-to-date and marketable knowledge. Students acquire this knowledge through learning. It is therefore inevitable to clarify the concept of ‘learning’ and to delve into the world of learning theories and teaching-learning strategies.

The meaning of the word 'learning' can be examined in everyday terms, but also in psychological and pedagogical terms. For us, it is worth focusing on the latter two.

Although theories in the psychology of learning often define 'learning' in slightly different ways, they agree on the crucial role of memory and the availability and retrieval of information. Although learning is most closely related to remembering, the concept of 'learning' has recently been given a broader psychological interpretation, which can be understood in its relation to psychic processes, and which includes the development of the whole personality and of all intellectual capacities (Virág 2013, 16). This concept is also in line with the pedagogical interpretation, according to which learning is not just about acquiring information, but also about shaping behaviour. This is particularly true in the case of art education since the aim of education is not only to achieve memorisation, but also to activate and develop all cognitive functions (perception, memory, imagination, thinking), and also since education focuses not only on cognition, but also on action, i.e., the practical application of what is learnt.

Cinematography is a highly complex activity, therefore the training of cinematographers also involves preparing students to analyse problems and problem situations and to learn how to solve them, as well as teaching them various practical actions (psychomotor skills), social attitudes and behaviours (communication, cooperation, the ability to compromise, processing states of mind, etc.).

In any case, it is clear that the issue of learning in a pedagogical context is not independent of the psychological approach, since learning is mostly viewed in relation to the individual, and the individual is a system examined by psychology (Virág 2013, 17). It is therefore no coincidence that the development of learning theories is inseparable from the evolution of psychological approaches and that learning theories are thus based on psychological movements such as behaviourism, cognitivism or constructivism.

As I promised in the abstract, I will later contrast the effectiveness of the presentation-based teaching strategy (frontal teaching) with that of another teaching strategy, project pedagogy, which is grounded in constructivist learning theory. In order to make the juxtaposition understandable and usable for us, educators, it is essential to see how a teaching or learning strategy relates to learning theories.

Learning theories examine learning in general terms, whereas a “learning strategy is a process plan, a particular set of activities to participants achieve a specific learning objective” (Cube 1999, 59).³ In another formulation, “an educational strategy is a complex system of methods, tools, organisational forms and ways of achieving specific objectives which is based on a coherent theoretical foundation, has a specific syntax (a definition and sequence of steps to be taken) and is implemented in a distinctive learning environment” (Falus 2003, 246). A third approach “interprets strategies as systems of activities that result in the mobilisation of forms of thinking and actions that make it possible to solve the didactic task and the development of the corresponding skills. In this interpretation, strategies have a dual purpose: to acquire knowledge and to foster intellectual skills” (Nagy 1997, 57).

Nevertheless, the definitions of educational strategies coincide in that an educational strategy describes how to organise the course of education in a particular case, in what steps, using what infrastructure, etc., while in the midst of the practical tasks, we do not forget about the theoretical background, the learning theory that provides a framework for our activities, i.e., the educational strategy is based on forms of learning that can be traced back to psychological foundations. Learning theory is manifested for the teacher and the student through the teaching strategy.

The learning theory of behaviourism and the characteristics and problems of presentation strategy

Behaviourism was the dominant paradigm in psychological research in the first half of the 20th century. This school is not concerned with the physiological processes that underlie behaviour. According to this model, the organism is a black box, whose functioning we try to predict from regularities that can be determined based on input (stimuli) and output (reaction). In the behaviourist perspective, learning is nothing more than the generation (conditioning) of responses (reactions) to a stimulus (stimulus) and the resulting behavioural change. This approach focuses on the teacher and the subject matter.

Today, the dominant strategy of Hungarian teaching practice is the presentation strategy (often referred to as frontal teaching), a common form of

³ The quote is my own translation.

classroom work, which is typically based on the learning theory of behaviourist psychology. The teacher stands in front of the students in the classroom, explaining the material. Optimally, he or she also uses aids (draws on the board, shows presentation materials, etc.), but mostly and principally the information to be processed is conveyed to the students through the linguistic sign system. In other words, the presentation strategy is a strategy for transmitting and receiving information. The assumption is that if information is communicated to the learner in the teaching-learning process, the learner will understand and remember it as a result of the explanation.

Since instruction based on a presentation strategy mostly and essentially uses a system of linguistic signals to convey information to the learner, it is worth classifying the types of linguistic expression typically used in instruction according to the level of verbality and the amount of other information that helps to process the linguistic elements (Gyarmathy 2015, 49):

- **Reading:** It represents the highest level of verbality. The processing of the text is supported by nothing but the verbal material itself.
- **Reading out:** The specificity of the material read out is that only the linguistic elements are available, but the reader can segment and interpret the linguistic material by his/her emphasis and tone of voice. There are good readers who make the text easier to process and more enjoyable.
- **Personal, one-way presentation:** The same auditory tools are available to the presenter as for reading out, but it is essential to what extent the presenter helps the listener to process the information by providing visual stimuli and tuning in. There are effective and less effective presenters.
- **Personal, interactive presentation:** It could be called a conversation, a debate or a discussion. This is the most effective form of communication. Verbalization is aided by visual stimuli, facial expressions, gestures and auditory stimuli, voice inflection, intonation, segmentation and attunement.

We can say that a teacher is considered competent and prepared in the context of frontal teaching if he/she practises the personal, interactive form of the above linguistic expressions and is also an effective speaker.

In terms of the effectiveness of recording information, after the student reads it, about 10 percent of the information is recorded, if someone tells them the same data, the ratio rises to 20 percent, using diagrams may increase the amount of knowledge acquired to 30 percent, and if the presentation of information is

supported by moving images, audiovisuals, up to 50 percent can be achieved (Kendrovics 2021, 167).

The question is whether this is the maximum efficiency that can be achieved, or whether there are educational strategies that can improve the ratio. A further question is whether there are other disadvantages to the presentation-based teaching strategy, or more precisely, whether there are other teaching strategies that may prove to be more effective and have other advantages.

It is worth noting the fact that when researchers classify teaching strategies (Knausz 2001, 61), it often looks like there is the presentation strategy and then there are the others: these are the alternative strategies. “Alternative strategies are called into being by criticisms of presentation strategies, as alternatives to the presentation strategy” (Virág 2013, 74). The main critical elements can be summarized as follows (Knausz 2001, 58):

- During a presentation, it is not clear what learning processes are taking place in each learner. Feedback is scarce and there is especially little information on the progress of individual learners, making it difficult to adapt teaching to learners’ performance.
- During a presentation, learners are atomized, unable to take advantage of the opportunity to learn from each other’s schemas. They do not even learn the basic elements of cooperation, so education is built on competition.
- During a presentation, there is a good chance that learners acquire “foreign knowledge”: knowledge that is impossible to experience, comprehend and, therefore, in the long run, to remember.
- Presentation artificially separates theoretical knowledge from practical application, so it does not prepare students for life. This is related to the fact that the elements of knowledge that are interrelated in practice are fragmented into subjects and thus are represented in the learner’s mind in different—impenetrable—schemas.
- The presentation paradigm is culturally aggressive: it promotes a dominant culture and ignores the cultural diversity of learners.
- Presentation focuses on the outcome of knowledge acquisition, on the ready-made, recorded knowledge, and ignores the process of knowledge acquisition, which will be increasingly important in the future.

Project pedagogy based on constructivist learning theory

While the learning theory of behaviourism is not concerned with what happens between the receipt of a stimulus and the formulation of a response, the learning theory of constructivism investigates precisely that: how knowledge is formed. “Constructivism sees learning not as a transfer of knowledge but as a construction of knowledge, i.e., as an active process. The most important step in this process is that the learner interprets new information using his or her existing, systematic knowledge. According to the constructivist approach, the learner not only absorbs knowledge, but also creates it on the basis of his or her prior knowledge. [...] In this process, new knowledge is not simply added to our existing knowledge system in an additive or cumulative manner, as previous approaches emphasized, but is based on a complex interplay of elements of the cognitive system at any given moment and is constantly transformed in structure” (Virág 2013, 44).

Let us revisit László’s case, mentioned in my introduction. He, being inexperienced in the world of light constructions, presumably only knew about the role of light in filmmaking that it is the light that makes the characters visible. He listened attentively and took down what I said about *upstage* and *downstage* lighting constructions. I assume that he remembered it or looked at his notes later at home. It is obvious that the lighting schemes in question contradict his prior knowledge since he had not thought at all that lighting could have an aesthetic function. I think two possibilities are likely. In one, he memorises what he has heard, and in the process fails to link the new knowledge to the existing knowledge system because of the contradiction, so the new knowledge element hovers in a vacuum (until it is forgotten), with no anchoring taking place. The other possibility is that anchoring does occur, i.e., the new knowledge item gets linked to the existing system of knowledge items, but the contradiction is only resolved if László falsifies the new knowledge item: for example, in the rush and stress of the entrance exam, having already positioned the subject, put down the camera and determined the direction of the subject’s gaze, he confuses which lighting construct portrays the face more plastically, and therefore more aesthetically. (My assumption is that in the case of László, it was the former.)

The above example illustrates how a presentation-based teaching strategy based on behaviourist learning theory *fails to work*.

The objective based on a constructivist approach is to make sure that—while the new element of knowledge is in contradiction with the existing system of knowledge elements (the only function of lighting is to make the actor visible vs lighting also has an aesthetic function)—“processing and anchoring” take place, i.e., the new element of knowledge is put in place in the existing system of knowledge elements and the new information does not change. The internal system undergoes a change, but this change is already a radical transformation, because then we accept some completely new theory or explanation” (Nahalka 2002, 59). This *conceptual shift* is a type of learning that involves the greatest change. A further condition for its operability is that “the new explanatory system must not be inferior to the old one, i.e., it must be able to explain what the old one did”: the fact that lighting has an aesthetic function does not exclude the fact that lighting also serves to make the character visible. Indeed, it does not exclude it.

Project pedagogy or project teaching is a learning-teaching strategy in which students select or accept a problem or a topic and process it—in the case of cinematographers’ training, in a group collaboration. The final outcome is always a presentable intellectual or material work or product.

To understand clearly what project pedagogy is, we also need to understand precisely what a project is, including the main characteristics of what we call a “project.” We come closer to understanding this if a project is contrasted with work done on an ongoing basis: a project is a periodic activity, not a regularly repeated one with similar content. Every project has a definable start and end. We start a project because we want to create something that has not existed before, at least in terms of a significant part of its elements. A project is therefore unique, it may be similar to previous activities, but it is never identical to them. In contrast, non-project-based workflows are continuous and repetitive, the work is performed on a continuous basis, there is no fixed end to it, the people doing the work often repeat previous operations, and the result of the work is often the same as previously. (In the case of higher education, for instance, this might mean that the main goal of the workflows is to ensure the continuity of the institution. In other words, this type of education does not focus on the efficiency of education, but on the continuity of work.)

As a combined result of being active and involved in a project, as well as the analysis and evaluation of the project, the processing and anchoring take place, i.e., new knowledge is constructed in the mind of the student, and the

new knowledge element is put in place in the system of existing knowledge elements, thus creating the said conceptual shift.

In order to implement a project, implementation stages must be defined. These are (see Knausz 2001):

- **Choice of topics:** A project is an activity that students do willingly and of their own accord. This should already apply to the choice of the topic, but the teacher can influence the choice of the topic according to certain criteria, for example by requiring it to be linked to the curriculum (but, of course, it may be independent of it). There may also be a compromise solution, whereby the teacher decides on the theme and the method of implementation, but the sub-themes are discussed jointly.
- **Setting the objectives:** The specificity of a project in education is that it has a dual objective—in addition to the final product, a learning process must take place, and in the case of a project, both objectives must be reflected upon, while at the same time the scope of the lessons to be learned must be defined.

Evaluation: After the final product is completed and presented, the evaluation

- is carried out, which can only be a text-based evaluation, as grading is an unknown concept in project teaching. In addition to the dual objective (product and learning process), the evaluation should also cover a third aspect, the internal functioning of the group (e.g., how conflicts were handled). The evaluation stage also provides an opportunity to explore the theoretical background of the phenomena, regularities and observations that emerge during the implementation of the project. This is the time when there is a chance that, while the new elements of knowledge may contradict the system of knowledge elements existing before the project was implemented, processing and anchoring can take place, i.e., the new knowledge elements, supported by the theoretical background, can be placed in the system of existing knowledge elements, i.e., new knowledge is constructed.

Project pedagogy builds on the practice of the anticipation-action-feedback-prediction cycle, so the implementation of the above project is repeated, while the product to be created and the lesson to be learned is always different, at least in part, always capable of offering something new.

Let us see to what extent and in what way the criticisms of the presentation-based teaching strategy, which have been summarised in the previously listed points, affect the practice of project pedagogy.

- Since the main focus of the project is not on the activity of the teacher but on that of the students, it is easy to monitor the learning processes of each student and to summarise information on the progress of each student, making it easier to adapt teaching to students' performance.
- During the project, students are not atomised, as they are reliant on cooperation due to the group activity. They are able to learn from each other's schemas. Cooperative learning may gain ground, whereby students learn the basic elements of cooperation, and education is not based on competition but on cooperation.
- By implementing the project, there is a good chance that the students will not acquire "foreign knowledge," but new knowledge that can be properly experienced, comprehended and remembered in the long term.
- Project-based learning does not artificially separate theoretical knowledge from practical application, so it prepares students for life. The knowledge elements that belong together in practice are not fragmented into subjects.
- In the implementation of the project, it is possible to take into account or even build on the cultural diversity of the students.
- Project-based learning does not only focus on the result of knowledge acquisition, on the ready-made, recorded knowledge, and thus does not ignore the process of knowledge acquisition.

The link between project pedagogy and cooperative learning

"In guided learning, three basic learning situations are distinguished. In individualised learning, the learner works through the personalised material at an individual pace. Competitive learning is the most common (and most comfortable) learning situation, but competition between learners may have a detrimental effect on the development of group spirit. Cooperative learning is based on cooperation and leads to a strengthening of group spirit. [...] People are by nature goal-driven and achieve their goals through competition or cooperation, but collaboration is much more effective in achieving them." (Virág, 2013, 115).

This is especially important in the light of the fact that filmmaking would be impossible without the cooperation of many people. On the one hand,

creating a production requires a wide range of skills, and this necessitates the involvement of a staff of people with expertise in different fields: no one person can acquire this much knowledge in sufficient depth (just think of the skills of an actor and a production manager). On the other hand, even if one could, he or she would not have the capacity to cope: a large number of operations have to be carried out in a given time, for example, think of the work of a director and a cinematographer: there is a great overlap between the two professions, it happens that an artist is a cinematographer in one production and a director in another, but it is much rarer that he or she does both jobs in the same film.

Cinematography practice and project-based pedagogy

Cinematography practice in the old days and at present

Cinematography practice is an essential part of training cinematographers. As Lajos Koltai recalls from his college years,⁴ “It was all based on this little studio exercise, trying to create moods and pretending that it was part of a film.”⁵

Géza Radványi and György Illés were commissioned by Ferenc Hont⁶ to start building up the film training. They were convinced that practice should be an essential part of the education: “That’s how *Somewhere in Europe* [1947] was produced. In fact I made it because I had discussed with the people in charge that I could not teach film in any other way, only if we undertook this great adventure together with all the students, and they could understand all the details of how a film is ‘made’ in the middle of making a specific film...” (Szabó 1995, 198), remembers Géza Radványi. And from the very beginning, cinematographers were engaged in cinematography practice with due regularity; in Koltai’s time, for example, six hours were devoted to it twice a week.

Exam films have also played a significant role, but they have a different impact on the professional development of student cinematographers, as exam films

4 Lajos Koltai was admitted to the College of Theatre and Film Arts in 1965, in István Pásztor’s class, and graduated in 1970. György Illés took over the class from the third year due to István Pásztor’s health problems.

5 Based on oral communication by Lajos Koltai, January 4, 2023.

6 Between 1945 and 1949 he served as the Director General of the College of Theatre and Film Arts.

are made less frequently, usually one or two a year, and the nature and size of the assignment is slightly different, and feedback is less frequent.

Continuing to focus on cinematography practice, we will examine how this element of the training and its implementation fulfils its function from the perspective of project pedagogy, and more specifically how it meets the requirements set by project pedagogy.

Academic literature draws attention to the central role of experience in the practice of project pedagogy: the individual has an active influence on his or her environment, and gains knowledge and experience from it. We have an impact on the object of our activity, which in turn has an impact on us. The closer the relationship between the individual and the object of his or her activity, the more useful the experience. It is essential to see that the process of acquiring habits and cognition is largely dependent on the individual and cannot be fully planned. Insofar as education is concerned, it is clear that the influence of the teacher on the process of cognition is limited: he or she will not be able to predict exactly what lessons the student will have gained after completing the project (Bake 2005/2006, 42). This might be what Kálmán Nádasdy had in mind, according to a Szinetár anecdote: "One day a student came to his class and brought a tape recorder—a novelty at the time—to record what the professor was going to say. Then Nádasdy said, 'I'll go outside if this tape recorder is here.' 'But Professor, why don't you let us record it?' 'If it is not recorded, then what you memorize from it and pass on will be told in such a way that something is always added and taken away from it, and so it will remain contemporary' (Szinetár and Kozák, 203, 35).

Spontaneity and openness are therefore essential features of project pedagogy, but vague or unclear objectives are a serious threat to the project. Thus, while it may seem contradictory to what has been stated above, it is essential to define a structure along which to plan the implementation of the project (Bake 2005/2006, 62).

I will use a seven-stage model, originally developed for language teaching, but with some modifications it can be applied to our field as well (Frey 2002, 158). I have taken step 7 out of the process because, in the case of cinematography practice, it coincides with step 5. While I take up the remaining six points, I will report on the relevant concrete and specific elements of cinematography practice used both in the past and at present, and my suggestions for the future. In addition, I will illustrate the specific actions to be taken for each point, using

a case study example of a cinematography practice, so that the work process is clear and easy to follow.

The six-stage model of the project method and cinematography practice

1. Launching the project

Every project starts from a specific idea, task, specific motivation, intention or purpose. Students have to collect their suggestions. They are asked to structure and organise the material.

At the same time, the instructor must take the lead: he or she must accurately assess the knowledge and skills of the students, because under-planned tasks offer as little to learn as over-ambitious ones. In addition, exercises must fit into the structure of education spanning several semesters. This has not always worked flawlessly, and the assignments have not always been designed with sufficient planning and consciousness: "Papi⁷ came in: what do you want to do? Then you told him what you wanted to do. And then he said, well, if you want something so badly, you have to do it!"⁸ How much the instructor takes control of the project is to some degree up to him or her, but he or she must have some leeway. In my opinion and in my experience, cinematography practice works well if the task is defined at least to the extent of a key word.

Example: Shoot a 2-minute scene without dialogue using two cameras.

2. A review of the initiated project within a pre-agreed framework

We draw up the project outline, on which the rest of the project is based. All participants must be engaged in the work. To ensure a clear and transparent process, we need to create rules. It may be useful, for example, to set deadlines and to expect proper argumentation.

The latter are not alien to the filmmaking process. Deadlines set out what we have to do, and filmmaking is governed by rules well known in the industry. Instructors are responsible for constantly instilling and enforcing them.

⁷ György Illés' nickname in the profession was Papi.

⁸ Based on oral communication by Lajos Koltai, January 4, 2023.

The former, engaging participants in the work, is a more complex task.

Traditionally, cinematography practice is done in a rotation of the crew made up of members of the cinematography class: one of them is the director of photography, there is a *focus puller*, a chief lighting technician (gaffer), a *key grip*, etc. This usually works well and only breaks down when the class is too small. This is rare, but there are examples. István Pásztor's, later György Illés's, cinematography class (1965–1969) only had two students, Lajos Koltai and Péter Jankura. Somehow, the crew still had to be made up: "And yes! I do remember Dezső and his classmates⁹ being there regularly. They were interested in cinematography and lighting and all that, so they joined. But that was just so you could make a crew for the exercise."¹⁰

However, it is not just the functionality of the crew that is at stake.

The presence of students of directing is a question that goes beyond cinematography practice. Whether or not student directors participated in cinematography practice varied from period to period. Even when there was a partner directing class, cooperation was not assured. (Of course, it was not possible when there was no partner class.)¹¹ The aim of cinematography practice is not only to activate and develop all cognitive functions (perception, memory, imagination, thinking) and it does not only focus on action, i.e., the practical application of what has been learnt, but also on the analysis and solution of problems, problem situations, and the teaching of social attitudes and behaviours (communication, cooperation, ability to compromise, dealing with emotional states, etc.). Working with a director as a partner, a client and sometimes a rival is a communicative situation that is about collaboration, compromise and the difficulties of processing emotional states.

A further argument for the presence of a director is that in our experience—fortunately, many cinematography teachers shared this opinion—the student cinematographer is the director, who, in the absence of another creative intention, tends to assign himself a task in which he or she can work with the

9 Koltai is referring to his colleagues in the directing class: Sándor Albert, Tamás Farkas, Gyula Gazdag, Katalin Keller, Dezső Magyar, István Sípos, and Rezső Szörény.

10 Based on oral communication by Lajos Koltai, January 4, 2023.

11 Not often, but it happens: the BA Cameraman class led by Tibor Máthé, which graduated in 2013, had to shoot both cinematography practice exercises and exam films without directors. It is no coincidence that two of the students later graduated with an MA in directing.

tools he or she has already practised, which are familiar and effective, and therefore the lesson to be learnt can be very limited.

In other words, without a director, there is no film, or even cinematography practice.

I am convinced that it is not just a question of having a directing class alongside a cinematography class, but also that the cinematography practice cannot fulfil its purpose without a student director.

The other question is how to make a student director understand and accept that the cinematography practice is primarily for the student cinematographer, and that the director cannot “steal the show”. So, on the one hand, we are dealing with an etude or a study that has a special role to play in the education of a cinematographer, and on the other hand, this is a work of film art, however small, with a meaning, a mechanism of action, a mood, etc. How to make a student director understand that he or she cannot design an etude in which the professional lessons of cinematography are pushed into the background? How to avoid the director spending time waiting for the character to cry, but leaving no time for lighting the next shot? At this point, the instructor plays a crucial role again.

The prioritisation method can be helpful. This involves the director drawing up a list of priorities at each scene level. He or she decides for each scene whether the focus should be on the acting, the spectacle of the action, the presentation of a stunning location, etc. This is one of the most important and useful operations to be carried out by the director. There is no such thing as a shoot that proceeds according to the paper form as one always has to adapt to what is happening, constantly adjusting plans, always making compromises. And that is when it is good to have a fixed point in our lives, the priority of the scene, because that will guide us in recognising a workable compromise.

Again, this is an operation that directors need to learn anyway. In the case of a cinematography exercise, the instructor can say: precedence is given to the mood of the lighting, so it is at the top of the list of priorities.

Drawing up the project outline, on which the rest of the project will be based, is done together with the student director. At this stage, the instructor again has an important role to play: he or she must explain where the starting point (the keyword) comes from and what its professional and artistic background is. The starting point, so to speak, must be embedded in the context of the film industry, the art of film.

Example: In recent years, there has been a clear tendency to shoot not only action scenes with multiple cameras, but also scenes requiring a limited apparatus, perhaps even chamber scenes or so-called *dialogue scenes*. One reason is the producer: he or she wants to ensure that there is still a chance for things to be decided on the editing table. The other reason is the director: he or she wants to make sure that there is still a chance for things to be decided on the editing table. To do that, you have to produce the cuts, two cameras shoot twice as many cuts. There is no doubt that there are other benefits to multi-camera shooting: it significantly reduces *continuity* problems.

3. Developing the project (project plan)

At this phase, the project takes its final shape. Participants develop their ideas about the possible outcome, discuss their respective roles, draw up plans, clarify the basic conditions and allocate tasks. At the end of the process, the draft project should be in a written form. In order to clarify the decisions, the participation of the students is essential, and in this process essential social cooperation experiences are gained.

Irrespective of being aware of it or not, the cinematographer in fact constantly makes promises that he or she then has to keep. Although this may sound prosaic, the success of keeping promises is a crucial part of the cinematographer's professional and creative competence. On the one hand, he or she makes aesthetic, creative promises to the director (and sometimes to the producer): promises a mood, effect, meaning, taste, style, visual concept, genre, etc. On the other hand, he or she makes practical agreements with the producer, the director, the production manager, the first assistant and often other crew members: he or she sets the necessary technical, material and time frames. The production ultimately holds him to account for these promises.

Stage 3, project development, is the time for promises. The first professional requirement is careful planning. In this phase, the necessary research for the design must be done, the documentation to represent the plan must be prepared, and the plan must be shared and fine-tuned with the director and other crew members.

Careful planning has not always been a requirement in education—or in many cases in industry. Lajos Koltai, for instance, recalls that in his college days, students were hardly ever asked to do this.¹² Although György Illés comments

12 Based on oral communication by Lajos Koltai, January 4, 2023.

on this somewhat differently in an interview, his wording ultimately supports Koltai's recollections: "If you do a photography workshop, you have to write it down in two sentences in advance. [...] In fact, there were classes where I required that the lighting be also drawn in advance."¹³ This means that there were classes of which George Illés did not require this.

Example: There is a need for a visual reference, a literary and technical script, a cut list, a *storyboard*, a *mise-en-scène* layout, a lighting plan and a production plan, all agreed with and accepted by the director.

A prerequisite for the implementation of cinematography practise is to have a functioning crew. The members of the crew are selected from among the students and at this stage the roles of the crew are allocated. Cinematography practice simulates a real-life shooting environment, as a consequence of which students learn the roles, see and practice what tasks and responsibilities are associated with each job. Here, the role of the instructor is to explain the basics.

4. Implementation of the project

The project participants have already made their decisions and are working to implement them. Teamwork plays a strong role in the development of the project. Almost complete autonomy and activity without top-down management is a key element of the project. (The inability to cooperate is often blamed as a reason for potential project failure.)

While the students are filming the cinematography exercise, a certain psychological pressure is created—a must for filming. This can be explained by the tight timeframe, the fever of filmmaking, the desire to complete and the inevitable, usually minor, personal conflicts that arise. Students in this situation typically use the knowledge they have already acquired and make limited use of new concepts. One thing is certain: they are not yet able to draw lessons, or only imprecisely. The focus is on the successful implementation of the task and cooperation.

Even the smallest crew is made up of several members, many of whom are creative people with plenty of individual artistic ambition. No wonder, then, that one of the most difficult tasks is to coordinate the work of the staff and also to align the different ideas and teach the students how to do this.

¹³ Interview with György Illés, 1994, by Károly Csala. Online access: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZMHSkdNI8A> (last visited: October 3, 2024).

Example: Micromanagement is one of the most common problems. “Bob leans on the lectern, crossing one leg over the other, one arm akimbo. He looks out over the heads of the students, arching an eyebrow thoughtfully. An actor’s reaction to a script saturated with that kind of detail is to toss it in the trash, thinking, ‘They don’t want an actor, they want a puppet,’” warns Robert McKee (N. d., 383), and advises the writer: “Eliminate all camera and editing notations. In the same way actors ignore behavioral description, directors laugh at RACK FOCUS TO, PAN TO, TIGHT TWO SHOT ON, and all other efforts to direct the film from the page. If you write TRACK ON, does the reader see a film flowing through his imagination? No. He now sees a film being made. Delete CUT TO, SMASH CUT TO, LAP DISSOLVE TO, and other transitions. The reader assumes that all changes of angle are done on a cut” (ibid., 397).

William C. Martell warns of a similar danger in his book on dialogue writing (Martell 2011, 105): Overly controlling – and sometimes the writer is micro-managing the script and wants everything to be exactly as they envision it, without the slightest difference. “This line must be delivered exactly like this!” [...] The writer doesn’t want to leave any room for interpretation or change. Film is a collaborative medium and everyone involved is some form of artist. Not only will they want to interpret your screenplay, you will want them to add their artistic skills to yours.” Of course, the tendency to micromanage is not unique to the writer: the director sometimes “pre-acts” to big-name actors, showing them how to sit down at the table or hold their hands. But sometimes he or she also likes to tell the cinematographer the exact location of the camera, and I once heard a director specify the iris! At the same time, the cinematographer is not exempt from such things: he or she keeps jumping up from the camera, telling the chief lighting technician where the light cables should run, down to the millimetre. This marks the death of collaboration.

5. Checkpoints

The participants’ activities should be interrupted for a moment at times. These checkpoints are intended to avoid aimless and hasty action, as well as to help us make comments, report back to each other on intermediate results, and provide an opportunity for reconsideration and appropriate responses.

The cinematography exercise must be completed, even if it is a little incomplete, even if it is not exactly as planned, even if it is not perfectly successful. The instruc-

tor also has a key role in this. He or she must rescue the project from collapsing. When the instructor sees that the work is seriously stuck, he or she can articulate the nature of the complication and give the students advice—usually practical—to help them through the deadlock.

Example: A common problem for beginner filmmakers is the lack of an efficient rehearsal method, which often leads to a considerable loss of time. In such cases, the instructor has to step in and guide the crew members on the right methods. Although lessons are only identified at the next stage, there are some professional tricks that can only be taught effectively at the moment the problem arises.

6. Completion of the project

The end result of a project is not necessarily a tangible product. The activity itself can be the goal of the project. In any case, the completion of the project should be made clear. An educational project should always end with a recognisable outcome: this may be a product or enriching experience.

The filmed cinematography exercise must be edited, sound must be added, it must be colour-graded and mixed. The emphasis is on screening and the subsequent analysis.

As I mentioned earlier, the textual evaluation is carried out after the final product has been produced and presented. Project pedagogy builds on the practice of the anticipation-action-feedback-prediction cycle, so evaluation is a key component as feedback and, without it, lessons are not learnt. In addition to the dual objective (product and learning process), the evaluation should also address a third aspect: the internal functioning of the group (e.g., how conflicts were handled).

The evaluation phase also provides an opportunity to explore the theoretical background of the phenomena, regularities and observations that emerge during the implementation of the project.

It is a common phenomenon in art education that students are reluctant to see creation as an activity that always has a professional content. “Another prejudice maintains that verbal analysis will paralyse intuitive creation and comprehension. Again there is a core of truth. The history of the past and the experience of the present provide many examples of how destructive the formulas and recipes can be. But are we to conclude that in the arts one power of the

mind must be suspended so another may function? Is it not true that disturbances occur precisely when any one mental faculty operates at the expense of the others? The delicate balance of all our mental powers—the only thing that allows us to live a full life and work well—is disrupted not only when the intellect overpowers intuition, but also when the intuition crowds out thoughts. Groping in the dark is no more fruitful than blind obedience to rules” (Arnheim 1979, 11). We are probably not dealing with a new phenomenon, as Béla Balázs stated as early as 1958 (Balázs 1984, 12), “...the existence of every vocation presupposes its own theory. Practice is like the science of the miracle doctor. A quack does not know theory, his recipes are dictated by experience, and he is often more skilful at curing than a trained doctor. But only if he is dealing with a disease he has already treated. He is clueless when confronted with a new task. The essence of experience is that it applies only to cases already familiar to him and is of no use in solving a new problem. For experimentation, however, the film is a rather expensive undertaking. Nor is experimentation in technique haphazard. Theory first sets the goal, calculates the possibilities, and only paves the way to the goal. You know better than anyone that film is a young art which presents you with a new challenge every day, where no previous experience helps you. The director is forced to become aware of the principles he or she has unconsciously followed until now, and this is how his purposeful, creative artistic method evolves.”

Example: The almost universally prevailing approach to cinematographic lighting in the world today is known as *source lighting*. The idea is to imagine a diegetic light source behind each light that appears, so that the lighting gives the illusion of naturalness, as if it were shot in a given light, without artificial lights. This initiates a process of augmentation in the viewer’s mind: from the properties of the light represented (its quantity, placement, direction, quality and colour), combined with everyday experience, the viewer builds a model of the light source (e.g., the sun shining into the room).

While previously only light sources that appear in the image (reading lamps, neon signs, TV sets, etc.) were called *diegetic light sources*, with the rise of source lighting, the light sources imagined by the viewer’s augmentations actually become such since they are part of the story.

Since these lights are almost never produced with the same light source as imagined (we do not bring the sun into the studio), artificially produced light will never be the same as the original. The question is what the viewer notices

of the deception, in other words, what becomes his or her belief and what does not. The test of source lighting consists of whether the viewer incorporates the diegetic light source into the model of the world outside the image that the cinematographer intended.

And success depends not only on everyday and professional experience, but also on theoretical knowledge of the whole process of vision.

Conclusion

In its current form, cinematography practice has many features in common with the educational strategy of project pedagogy, but in order to enjoy the full benefits of this strategy, there is still work to be done. It feels as if we have stopped halfway through. It is necessary to study, master, and apply all the elements, protocols and syntaxes of the strategy that have been developed and therefore already exist. This allows the student to enjoy the greater efficiency of project pedagogy, to benefit from being the focus of education, to experience and practice the benefits and joy of cooperative working, and to acquire competitive knowledge that is open to cultural diversity, that does not separate theory from practice, and thus prepares them for life.

Some of the teachers would be open to this, but even among them there is a prevailing opinion that project pedagogy can only be relevant for practical subjects, while theoretical education should stick to the presentation-based strategy based on the learning theory of behaviourism.

My opinion is different. In my view—and hopefully the above article is sufficient proof of this—it is precisely about how practical and theoretical education can be operated within a single strategy, in a common system. It is necessary to align practice with theoretical classes in accordance with the established syntax of the educational process and the relevant subject matter. This is no small task, and the teaching of theoretical subjects needs to be reconsidered, for example, the routine of a chronological approach to historical subjects (film history, art history, etc.). This task, which requires dedication and enormous organisational work, is still ahead of us. We have to convince colleagues, the university's management, education funding... It is not impossible that a law will have to be changed (remember that project pedagogy does not use the tools of grading, it only provides feedback through textual, mostly oral, assessment), and the list goes on.

It will be difficult, but I think it will be worth it.

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Vera Prontvai

The poetics of agon

Abstract

The case study explores the poetics of judgment, suffering, competition and the reversibility (or irreversibility) of fate in poetic theatre through Attila Vidnyánszky's production of *Agón*. The director places brutality, death and confrontation with the sins of humanity at the centre of the performance, using the means of Artaud's theatre of cruelty, based on the music and text by Péter Pál Józsa. Through the use of a language that he calls poetic theatre, Vidnyánszky depicts the historical and moral struggles of humanity: the collective sins of mankind, events of war and history, from antiquity to nuclear catastrophe. The Gesamtkunst staging is inspired by the spirit of Lucifer's rebellion, the desire to destroy man, to eradicate himself, integrating both the martyrdom of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste and the burial of Christ, which is typical of contemporary thinking. The performance can also be interpreted as a Madách paraphrase, because at the end, next to the man and woman entering the stage, there is a child who (perhaps) can bring about the reversal of humanity's fate, and who (perhaps) will be able to build a cathedral from swear-words.

Keywords: agon, agonal run, poetic theatre, Gesamtkunst, Madách-paraphrase, Vidnyánszky, Péter Pál Józsa, Walter Benjamin, Gesamtkunstwerk

As the integration of the agonal moment into the concept of *poetic theatre* has not yet been carried out (although it is arguable that this aspect would make the already established, partly fragmentary, approach to *poetic theatre* more complete), I will attempt to examine how the poetics of the representation of the agon structures the space, time, text and scenic design of theatrical

performance. I also seek to define the conditions under which performance can function as a site of *agonal run (escape)*, *pronouncement of judgment* and *reversibility of fate*, while bearing the characteristics of *poetic theatre*, nonlinear storytelling, powerful musicality, metaphoricality and allegorisation inscribed in space, the centrality of the human body, the specific use of space, the universality of time or the universalisation of individual experience.¹

The *agon* has been a component of theatre from the very beginning (as Walter Benjamin's conception of tragedy points out, see Benjamin 1980), but not only in the sense that the protagonist, in the course of a moral and intellectual struggle, clashes his world order with the views represented by the chorus, but also in the sense that tragedy can be a site of escape and of the possibility of changing fate, where the judgment of the gods on human beings can be reversed. This connection is highlighted, among others, by Carrie L. Asman in her study "Theater and Agon / Agon and Theater,"² analysing in detail Benjamin's conception of tragedy, which was greatly influenced by his work with the German philosopher Florens Christian Rang and the latter's *Historische Psychologie des Karnevals* (Asman 1992, 611). Asman publishes Rang's diary entry "Agon und Theater," which introduces the term "agonal run," representing sacrifice in the theatre, "Agonal run in the theatre is also a sacrifice, see the sacrifice of the archon basileus. The agonal run in the theatre is also a judgment, because it represents the final judgment."³ The agon is a form of public display: the ancient Greeks understood *agonal struggle* as both a physical contest and a competition between talents in poetry and music, and the judges were called *agonotes*.

1 By *poetic theatre*, I mean the creative workshop centred around the National Theatre and the form of theatre described by András Visky. Ernő Verebes, dramaturg, believes that poetic theatre is a theatrical language referring to intangible, intellectually indeterminate things. According to the dramaturg, this is a paradox which can only be accessed through poetry. This type of theatre is defined by an expansion of the mode of representation and a constant broadening of its boundaries, a representation of reality imbued with verticality. See Verebes 2015. In Visky's book of essays *What is theatre for?*, identifies as characteristics of what he considers poetic theatre the interpretation of time as a universal time, the perception of personal and seemingly incidental events as a universal experience, the alteration of the relationship between "*petit récit*" and "*grand récit*", the intensification of the musical tone of the language spoken on stage, and the intense bodily experience of the spectator (Visky 2020, 62).

2 "Benjamin sees tragedy not only as a place of agony, struggle, debate, competition and sacrifice, but also as a place of revolution, rupture and escape where the judgement of the gods over humans is reversed." (Asman 1992, 607.)

3 "*Der agonale Lauf ist auch im Theater noch Totenopfer, siehe das Opfer des Archon Basileus. Der agonale Lauf ist auch im Theater Gericht, denn er stellt das jüngste Gericht vor.*" (Ibid., 612. The above quote is my own translation.)

The ancient Greek *ἀγών* (meaning 'competition') had an integrative and interactional function, referring to the gatherings of the *polis*, where competitions to assess physical ability and talent constituted the defining elements of the democratic public sphere. According to Asman's study, the theatrical event (like the *agon* and justice) takes place in front of the public (the spectators), awaiting the verdict of those present. An interesting aspect of Rang's thought is that he derives the *agon* from the ritual sacrifice made to the deceased, the death sacrifice, from which the individual can escape, that is, be pardoned. "Dialogue is a contest, or competition. Both voices that accuse and excuse man or God are competing for the common goal of escape. This is the final judgment on God and man."⁴ In other words, the events on stage can suspend the direction of the development of fate that has been evolving up to that point, the scene on stage is the space and time where and when the agonal run of the fugitive can be interrupted for a time (the time of the judgment) or permanently.

Benjamin illustrates the connection between the *agon* and theatre with the story of the *Oresteia* and the motifs of struggle that appear in it. The person condemned to run makes a sacrifice, flees and asks the gods for help. In the final part of the *Oresteia* trilogy, the tragedy of the *Eumenides*, a judicial reckoning takes place, with legal consequences regarding the situation of the matricidal son. Orestes flees from the Erinyes, the goddesses of vengeance, to Athens, where hearings are held before the Areios Pagos to hear his accusers and his own defence. The jury acquits the matricidal son, Pallas Athena and Apollo testify in favour of Orestes, and the son is pardoned by the Erinyes, who become the guardians of justice, the Eumenides. To quote Benjamin (Benjamin 1980, 294), "Death thereby becomes salvation: death's crisis. A archaic example of this is the overcoming of human slaughter at the altar through an escape from the sacrificial knife, that is, the running around the altar, with the final embrace of the altar by the one consigned to death, whereby the altar turns into an asylum, the angry god into a merciful one, and the doomed victim into a the captive and servant of the god. This is precisely the schema of the *Oresteia*." That is, the sacrificial victim tries to avoid his fate, touches the altar, and the angry gods, now propitiated, are transformed into merciful, compassionate gods.

4 "Als jüngstes Gericht nimmt dieser Wettlauf die menschlich-göttliche Vergangenheit in sich, der Lauf vollzieht sich im Bild der den Lauf schon vollendet habenden großen Toten. Die Gemeinde anerkennt das Opfer, den Tod, aber dekretiert zugleich den Sieg, so dem Menschen wie dem Gott." (Ibid. The above quote is my own translation.)

The duality of the *agonal run* that takes place in public, linked to the final judgement, is played out in Attila Vidnyánszky's staging of *Agon*⁵ adapted from the work of the philosopher-composer Péter Józsa Pál (perhaps inspired by Benjamin's concept of tragedy). The production is the latest piece of *poetic theatre* represented by the director (presumably inspired by the Russian-Ukrainian war), which, just like the work *Mesés férfiak szárnyakkal* (Fabulous Men with Wings), seeks to create a new theatrical form, in this case a combination of elements of ancient Greek and contemporary poetic theatre, for which Józsa's text provides an excellent opportunity. The author's only theatrical work, written in 2012, can be defined as both an opera and a two-act tragedy.⁶ Józsa wrote the script and composed the music himself. At the beginning of the poem, he defines his composition as an opera, while he also evokes the initial phrase of the opening line of Zarathustra's passage 342—*incipit tragoedia*—"The tragoedia begins" (ibid., 241)—from Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*,⁷ which also announces the death of God (Józsa 2022, 4): "L. Ottó Horváth: To good fortune—incipit opera, are you writing? (Peti: I'm writing it, don't worry!)—or perhaps to the misfortune of us all, well, you found me, my loyal friends from the wine bar. (Martin: My loyal friends from the wine bar.)" The staging, with its elements of poetic theatre, depicts an extended moment of humanity's *agonal run*, giving the spectator the opportunity to make his own judgement on history and humanity (which he himself has shaped). A particular feature of Vidnyánszky's poem is that during the voting on stage (using black and white balls, reminiscent of Roman times), the audience becomes both accused and accusers, confronted with the catastrophic events of the past centuries.

As Benjamin sees it, the performance, by its unrepeatability, is a decisive and cosmic event, for which "the community is invited to perform and judge" (Benjamin 1980, 310). Józsa's tragedy in free verse is both a speech of accusation and defence, centred on a defendant on trial, who is portrayed by several actors (e.g., Lajos Ottó Horváth, Martin Mészáros) in Vidnyánszky's production. The trial

5 Józsa, Péter Pál. *Agon*. Directed by Attila Vidnyánszky, National Theatre, Budapest, premiere: 4 March 2022, actors: Lilla Borbála Fogarasi, Hanga Martos, Mari Nagy, Nándor Berettyán, Péter Herczegh, Lajos Ottó Horváth, József Kovács S., István Madácsi, Martin Mészáros, Domán Szép, with the participation of the Honvéd Férfikar Choir, conducted by Kálmán Strausz.

6 Józsa, Péter Pál. 2022. *Agon*, script.

7 "God is dead, but given the way people are, there may still for millenia be caves in which they show his shadow.—And we—we must still defeat his shadow as well!" (Nietzsche 1926, 126.)

is a paraphrase of the trial of Socrates, and like the ancient philosopher, Józsa's defendant is sentenced to death after he makes his case. The judge and the jury, however, are not analysing the fate and context of a specific individual, but those of humanity, and within that, they are passing judgement on the history of Hungarians. The passage, spoken by Martin Mészáros, invites those present in the space of the theatre to revisit together, before the death penalty is pronounced, all that has happened to humanity so far (Józsa 2022, 5): "So sit around me before the ship docks from Delos." (As tradition has it, the execution of Socrates was carried out after the holy ship of Delo docked.) The interplay of different historical and temporal planes can be interpreted as the timelessness of the destruction wrought by humanity. The leading theme of the poem, rich in associations, is the indictment of the world, and in a narrower sense of Hungarian history, the doubt and disillusionment with civilisation and contemporary society. The judgement, the voting, is done with black and white balls, and thanks to visions of apocalyptic events, the judges (actors, chorus members, spectators) can decide on the history of humanity, people's mentality and behaviour patterns.



Picture 1. Scene from the National Theatre's production of Agon (Photo: Zsolt Eöri Szabó)

The arena-like space of the performance is reminiscent of ancient amphitheatres and battlefields: the audience is seated in rows of seats around the stage, sloping down from the top, between the symphony orchestra and the Honvéd Male Choir. The scenes take place in the centre of the arena, in a narrow space a few metres in diameter, around a rotating rectangle. The horrors of the 20th century are re-enacted in a set invoking antiquity and become part of the *agon* along with it, with an ever-increasing number of instruments evoking torture or totalitarian regimes on stage. The costumes, designed by Alexander Bilozub, resemble ancient masks and long, baggy dresses, but at the same time there are characters appearing on stage wearing period costumes appropriate to the historical event. The performance presents the great events of humanity in a mostly linear sequence, but at the same time it stages collective and individual sins in parallel, which are expanded into an apocalyptic vision by numerous allusions, back and forth, story fragments, interjections. From ancient history to the atomic bomb, the system of contexts and allusions is designed to intensify the agonal situation in which aggression becomes uncontrollable. The amplified impulses analyse the main stages of the history of humanity (and of Hungary), mentioning among others Teiresias, George Dózsa, Cardinal Mindszenty, and Lenin. In the grand visions and vistas, literacy, Chernobyl, the Janssen vaccine, Kiev and Kharkiv all coexist. (The latter references are presumably not in Józsa's written text but may have been inspired by the director or the actors.) However, the specific historical events are placed in universal time by the metaphors written into the spatial structure of the scenery, suggesting that the agonisation of humanity began with Adam and Eve and continues to the present day.

The written text, as well as the text spoken on stage (with a sentence or phrase added by the director and the actors), contains echoing phrases, repetitions of parts, long periodic sentences. The acoustic pulsation of the text spoken by the actors is an integral part of the music Józsa composed. So much so that the Liszt Prize-winning conductor Kálmán Strausz recited the text to the actors beforehand so that they would learn the correct rhythmic pattern. "It's very difficult, because you have to keep the rhythm even within a sentence, because the choir responds to what is being said, and they say it where it is written in the score. Not before, not after," Vidnyánszky said of the performance.⁸

⁸ "Kifeszített pillanat: Vidnyánszky Attila rendező az *Agónról*" ("A Strained Moment: Director Attila Vidnyánszky on *Agon*"). *Nemzeti Magazin* 2022/2: 8.

The recurring symploces of the poem's text (for example, "the final dose of the coveted democrat-curse, the holy cesspool!" and "If we don't go to the mass latrine, they will pour it out for us"—Józsa 2022, 5, 8) always reappear throughout the performance, adding different aspects. A frequent motif in Józsa's text is the latrine, accompanied by concepts related to the outhouse, such as faecal matter and plumbing. Since the text is a monologue rich in associations, metaphors and metonymies, it provides an excellent platform for the director's fragmentary dramaturgy, for the elimination of linear storytelling and the development of allegorical representation. Péter Pál Józsa's play has not yet appeared in print, so we can only infer from the National Theatre's script what changes the director made to the author's writing. Other texts, presumably inserted afterwards (by the director or on the basis of actors' improvisations), are in larger type (*ibid.*, 10): "József Kovács S.: Printing started out as an inherent linguistic and conceptual quirk. Are you listening?—Simmonides?! / Chorus member: I'm listening! / That which is distorted in conception remains bull-headed in every way. We're poisoned to the core, but we're not dead yet. / H. L. O.: Not yet. / To the columns of Heracles I say: Cloaca multorum diabolorum!" In a passage reflecting on literacy, Mari Nagy calls out to the audience as she shoves the parchment into the mouth of the huge face on the stage and wounds her hand (*ibid.*, 7): "Let go! Mother! Fake blood. Don't worry!"

The script of the performance consists of five parts. After a situation recalling the Socratic defence, Józsa reflects on literacy (*ibid.*, 9), "It is worth examining together how we have come from the dawn of Gutenmorg's movable lead types to the luminously pitch-dark forgery of our spirit encoded in the binary number system." Then, referring to the *Credo* of Beethoven's *Missa solennis* (written by the master in deafness), he points out the duality of music and art (*ibid.*, 15), "It's nice, nice what you've created, but you'll be punished for it, you earthly mortal. The gods, your judges have assembled and adjudicated. No more shall you listen to your celestial music, the music of the spheres." As an opposition to the height of art, the actors lay Hanga Martos on top of the rotating rectangle in the middle of the arena, paint her dress red and rape her. In the third stage, in addition to the events taking place in the world (Great Wall of China, Kharkiv, Kiev, Mariupol), the references to Hungarian history become increasingly dense and concrete (for example, the mention of Stalin, Ratko, Hitler, Tisza, and Teleki). The script suggests that some of the references were integrated into the text by the director and his creative collaborators, and scenes were built on them. In the fourth part, the act

of hanging of the first defendant on meat hooks begins as the vote is concluded. The final part of the script concludes with the nuclear disaster (ibid., 30: "The hot rocks mix with air, cool, solidify and seep into your brain. The incandescent cloud of ash falls on your body, your teeth and bones crack, your brain boils and explodes.") and the ritual funeral ceremony and burial of the accused (and Christ).

Vidnyánszky has divided the free verse text, written by Józsa as a monodrama, between eight characters, who also use performance techniques to illustrate individual story fragments. The latter is alluded to in the second part of the subtitle chosen by the creators of the performance: *A cathedral from swear-words performance, only YOU get it*. Lajos Ottó Horváth appears as the main accused in the performance, but sometimes other actors (Martin Mészáros or Hanga Horváth) take the position of the accused. Péter Herczegh, József S. Kovács, István Madácsi and Domán Szép play mostly negative characters. Hanga Martos and Mari Nagy represent the feminine principle, integrating into the performance phenomena that initially appear in the world as positive values. To quote a passage from Mari Nagy (ibid., 6), "You live in a sad security, you poor imperishable ones... You cannot know the divine moments of man, when we fall into each other like stars, destroying ourselves, to be reborn as spheres." Yet it is the female principal that suffers the most agonistic brutality: the white dress of Martos Hanga is painted with authoritarian signs, she is raped, and a deformed child is torn from her body. At the end of the performance (like Madách's Eve), it is she who gives birth to a child, although this allusion is more indirect in *Agon* than in Madách's *Az ember tragédiája* (The Tragedy of Man).

Of Vidnyánszky's *Gesamtkunstwerk* productions, *Agon* is one of the most complex and structured works. The adaptation of the poetic text to the stage, its rhythm, the constant presence of the chorus and orchestra, the amphitheatre-like spatial arrangement, allude to ancient tragedies, demonstrating the interconnectedness of actors, chorus and space. Despite the fact that Péter Pál Józsa, a graduate of music high school, defines his work as a tragedy, the "incipit opera" opening and the low-toned music, as well as the text for male chorus, are essentially an opera or oratorio. According to the Liszt Ferenc Prize-winning conductor Kálmán Strausz, the work features stringed instruments that evoke a fundamentally sad, dark atmosphere.⁹ As the script of the play

⁹ "Zenébe öntött élet: Strausz Kálmán karmester az *Agón*ról" ("Life cast in music: conductor Kálmán Strausz on *Agon*"). *Nemzeti Magazin* 2022/2: 11.

must be in tune with the music, the performance is guided by two conductors, one conducting the orchestra and the other the actors. The orchestra and male chorus members of the play (which is a prequel to the Gesamtkunstwerk *Johanna a máglyán*—Joan of Arc at the Stake)¹⁰ are seated in the audience. The members of the Honvéd Férfikar, embodying the Greek tragedy chorus that traces the fate of humanity, appear in costume, and the set of the performance creates a painting-like scenography. Vidnyánszky's staging is based on a combined effect of various arts (literature, drama, music, dance, painting) and technical devices. *Gesamtkunstwerk* puts different artistic disciplines at the service of a specific work of art, with Richard Wagner being its best-known representative, who considered the unification of the arts his vocation and considered music, fiction, dance and gesture to be of equal importance in his works. Dániel Tibor Hegyi indicates in his study of János Térey's *A Nibelung lakópark* (Nibelung Residential Compound) that "a Gesamtkunstwerk in the Wagnerian sense, which uses music and poetry as 'mere' components in order to give priority to the plot, is far from being equal to performances that use elements of other arts (as an insert) to colour the production without aiming to establish an organic relationship between them in the course of the performance" (Hegy 2023, 161). As a staging using the technique of poetry, the connecting element of the *Agon* is the music and the text as its acoustic element, and it is primarily the interplay of these elements that gives the rhythm, dynamics and visionary quality of the performance.

The production makes use of the means of Artaud's theatre of cruelty. The primary tension is sustained by the drastic depictions of bodies and death, and the brutality of the play is also indicated by the set piece, with the mouth on the huge face swallowing people and bloody body parts, a reference to the phrase "man-crusher" in the text (Józsa 2022, 19): "If long-range writing is invented somewhere, mass latrine camps will be set up there. And the human crusher. Transition from one to the other." The strong imagery of *Agon*, with its particularly disturbing sound effects, often reminiscent of bombardment, its depiction of man's vile instincts (the distribution of *Playboy* pictures to the audience, or the handing over of a male genital organ to an audience member

10 Paul Claudel and Arthur Honegger: *Johanna a máglyán* (Joan of Arc at the Stake), Nemzeti Színház, Budapest. Opening date: 29 November 2013. Lead actor: Kátya Tompos. Directed by Attila Vidnyánszky. Dramaturg: Zsófia Rideg. The performance was a Gesamtkunstwerk with opera singers, choirs, symphony orchestra and actors.

in the front rows), and its illustration of the dismemberment of a child torn from its mother (ibid., 20: “Look what I’ve been rummaging around! I pulled out his oesophagus. Look what I’ve found! Ah... I’m pulling his rectum now.”) depicting a series of historical events, eventually coalesce into the collective sins of humanity. While the woman lying on the central rotating plinth (table, altar or coffin) is almost dismembered by the characters, there are references to Marx, Engels, Lenin, embryos, and tanks. In Artaud’s theatre of cruelty, “language can conquer that part of space which lies outside the realm of words” (Artaud 1999, 137), the strong textual material of the drama, the sombreness of live music, the drastic sound and light effects, violent war and private scenes, the throwing of pieces of flesh, bones and body parts are intended to confront and (shock) the bodies of those present, in the course of which the spectator can bury or recreate the meaning of human existence. After the passage ending in a nuclear catastrophe, Lajos Ottó Horváth, the actor representing the primary defendant, is lifted up (like Sándor Berettyán, playing Adam in Vidnyánszky’s staging of *Az ember tragédiája* (The Tragedy of Man)¹¹ in the scene evoking the Spirit of the Earth), hung on meat hooks, and then buried in a symbolic funeral, throwing the cross of Christ into his grave. The dramatic danse macabre on stage finally ends with the burial of man and Christ.

One of the strongest claims of Vidnyánszky’s production is that those present on stage are both the perpetrators and the sufferers of the brutality in the world. The expansion of historical events from antiquity to the present day into a global catastrophe puts the audience in a situation of judgement, and during the performance everyone can decide for themselves whether they vote life or death for humanity using the black and white balls that repeatedly appear, signifying the ancient Roman vote. According to Hans-Thies Lehmann, when the boundary between real and fictional experience in post-dramatic theatre disappears, “the metaphorical-symbolic space becomes metonymic” (Lehmann 2009, 180). Metonymy as a figure of speech brings together two things that correspond to each other by asserting the part as a whole. In this relation, the space of the stage can be considered metonymic in so far as the events that begin on it incorporate the bodily space of the spectators. To use Lehmann’s formulation, the main defining feature of the stage space, the fact that it is

11 Imre Madách, *Az ember tragédiája* (The Tragedy of Man), Nemzeti Színház, Budapest. Opening date: 19 October 2018. Directed by Attila Vidnyánszky.

“highlighted and filled as a real part or continuation of the theatrical space, can be called metonymic” (ibid.). In the performance of *Agon*, the spectator (just like the actors, chorus members and musicians present) becomes both accuser and accused, passing a fateful judgment on himself or herself.

Asman points out that in Benjamin’s theory of tragedy, the polarization of body and language plays a significant role: tragedy is not only the site of bodily but also linguistic sacrifice. Its central paradox is that the ritual of the sacrifice of the body is replaced by the sacrifice of language, the essence of “self” and “meaning” can only be preserved by their negation, allowing through silence the questioning and rewriting of hitherto valid meanings.¹² And all this is prepared by the silent struggle and the silent flight on stage.¹³ According to Benjamin, the *agonal match* that preceded the drama and concluded the rehearsal usually took place in silence, the “tragic hero knowing only one language that suits him perfectly: silence.” (Benjamin 1980, 295). The philosopher also points out, in the context of the *Oresteia*, that the sacrifice of the body is here substituted for the sacrifice of language, and that in the final part of the trilogy, Orestes no longer speaks, his silence introducing a tragic silence, a site of the questioning of meanings. The sacrifice is saved from literal death, which becomes the contractual death of muteness and bondage, the body is saved, but language is sacrificed; the sacrifice of body, *physis*, is exchanged for the voluntary sacrifice of language.¹⁴ The deepest silence of the *agon* is brought about by the cross thrown to the ground by Martin Mészáros and the burial of that cross. At one point in the performance, the actor throws away the crucifix, crying out “*Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum*”, which is also heard in the *Csíksomlyói passió* (Passion of Csíksomlyó)¹⁵ (according to the notations in the script, this sentence was not part of Józsa text), and the crucifix is buried along with the primary accused. The extended moment of humanity’s *agonal run* is interrupted by the

12 “The ritual sacrifice of body is replaced in tragedy by the sacrifice of language (in place of body), thus enabling ‘self/body and ‘meaning’ to be redeemed through silence.” (Asman 1992, 614.)

13 “The wordless struggle (‘wortloses Ringen’) and mute escape (‘stummes Entlaufen’) are necessary processes which prepare the stage for the un-folding of dialogue and speech in tragedy.” (Ibid., 608.)

14 “The transformation of myth is completed by substitution; the sacrifice of body, *physis*, is exchanged for the sacrifice of language.” (Ibid., 615.)

15 *Csíksomlyói passió* (Passion of Csíksomlyó), based on 18th century Franciscan school dramas and Géza Szócs’ *Passió*, National Theatre, Budapest. Opening date: 10 March 2017. Directed by Attila Vidnyánszky. Choreographer: Zoltán Zsuráfszky. Dramaturg: Zsolt Szász.

pronouncement of death, bringing with it the traumatised silence of millennia of suffering.

From the point of view of poetic theatre, it is important to note Asman's warning: in the common thought of Rang and Benjamin, the free word can rise above the written law, and the persuasive power of live speech can give rise to a higher truth.¹⁶ The silence of the *agon* can be broken by the *ecstatic word*, because it can break out of the power of the written form and break through the system of the *agon* established up to that point. To quote Benjamin (Benjamin 1980, 305–306), "For Athenian law, the important and characteristic element is the Dionysian irruption – namely, the fact that the intoxicating, ecstatic word can break through the regular encirclement of the *agon*, that a higher justice could spring from the force of conviction in living speech than from the trial of factions opposing each other with weapons or prescribed verbal forms. By means of the *logos*, in freedom, the ordeal is broken through. This is at bottom the cognation of juridical process and tragedy in Athens." In the transition from the sacrifice of body to the sacrifice of language, the silence of the *agon* can thus be broken by the *ecstatic word*. In Vidnyánszky's staging, this word is (in my opinion) none other than the blessing in the final scene of the performance, the folk song *Where I am going, even the trees weep*, sung by an opera singer, rising above the coffin of the accused, the coffin of humanity. The blessing acknowledges what has happened to mankind and conveys a salvific power; it is an irrevocable word and gesture that brings good. A call to humanity to become a promoter of salvation.¹⁷ Blessing also carries with it the possibility of changing fate: the *ecstatic word* can make those who judge and/or survive merciful and change the fate of humanity. Humanity's flight from its self-inflicted traumas is brought to a close at the time the blessing is being sung, the accumulated horrors are silenced, the funeral takes place. The time and ritual effect of the blessing, however, creates a possibility for change.

In the logical structure of the dramatic text, Józsa has reached the point that Béla Hamvas reached in his essay on the *agon*: the *agon* is a form of life that "embezzles the soul-world" (Hamvas 1993, 383), whereas the "master of the soul-

16 "According to the letter from Rang, of central importance is the fact that the free word, 'das freie Wort' as the spoken word, is allowed to assert itself over the power of the written law (dictamen) and that a higher justice arose out of the persuasive power of living speech in contrast to the trial by weapons and the formulaic phrases in the dialogical debate of the feuding parties." (Benjamin 1980, 614.)

17 See *Katolikus lexikon*, I, edited by Dr. István Diós. Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 2004, 129.

world is love. [...] And love is absolute freedom" (ibid., 389–390). This appears in the last lines of Józsa's text (Józsa 2022, 32), "Divine One, thou seest my inmost soul, thou knowest that therein dwells the love of humanity and the desire to do good." The poem presents the soul-murder of humanity on itself, but in its final, funeral phase, there is a glimmer of hope: the ecstatic word that breaks through the circle of the *agon*. In Józsa's text, there is a reference to the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, condemned to death in Cappadocia by Emperor Licinus because they were Christians. They were martyrs who died by freezing to death for Christ, and the thoughts they professed are echoed by Lajos Ottó Horváth, who appears in the role of the sacrificial victim (ibid., 25): "I have power over my body, which I have learned to despise. My soul, however, is not subject to any external violence." It is not evident, but the script suggests that the sentences from the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste were inserted afterwards, i.e., the director reinforced the reference to them in Józsa's text. A similar intertext is the subtitle chosen by the director and his fellow creators, which quotes László Nagy, "a cathedral from swear-words". Socrates, in his defence (from the basic situation of which the poem unfolds), points out that he has spent his whole life seeking the good of the people, avoiding all acquisition of wealth and fame, and reproaches Athenian citizens for doing the opposite (Platón, n.d.): "... so are you not ashamed that, while you take care to acquire as much wealth as possible, with honour and glory as well, yet you take no care or thought for understanding or truth, or for the best possible state of your soul? The basic idea of Socrates, the possibility of the betterment of the soul, is as much in line with the quote of László Nagy as the phrases attributed to the Forty Martyrs of Sebastián. Although Józsa's text implies that the relationship between mortals on earth and the gods in heaven has ceased (Józsa 2022, 26: "Tonality has disappeared – we have buried it with us. Through the overtones and the rings of the spheres, the axis has crumbled. The message between angels and men is broken."), the final thoughts of the written text on philanthropy, the intertexts inserted by the director and the final image of the performance suggest that it is philanthropy and freedom of the soul (i.e., not submitting to the dominant ideological systems) that can lead the survivors out of the failures and traumatic lows of humanity.

Vidnyánszky's staging can be interpreted as a paraphrase of Madách's *Tragedy*, thus going beyond and complementing Józsa's work. Both *Agon* and *Tragedy* analyse and list the greatest mistakes humanity has made. Józsa depicts the events of Hungarian history, Madách those of world history; at the end of *Agon*,

humanity comes to the atomic bomb, and in the last scene of *Tragedy* Adam is determined to commit suicide. Both representations of the world originate in Lucifer's rebellion: the desire for man's destruction, his self-annihilation. Adam would commit suicide as proof of free will, while the forty of Sebaste embrace death for the sake of Christ, whom the world is constantly burying. "And thou too, Lucifer, art yet a link / Within my universe. Work on, work on! / Thy fond denial and thy knowledge cold / Shall be the leaven in the mind of man, / And though he stray a brief space from the road, / It matters not, he shall return to it." (Madách 2023, 65), says the Lord in Madách's work. In other words, despite the Luciferian power, God is present even in crisis, and (if man does not put obstacles in his way) he will carry through the work that has been begun. No specific reference to redemption does appear in Józsa's text, but it does in Vidnyánszky's production: in the last minutes of the performance, after the scenography of the slaughterhouse and the burial of "humanity", during the singing of the blessing, Hanga Martos and Martin Mészáros appear as a couple on the top steps of one side of the arena, with a small child between them. After the extended moment of humanity's *agonal run*, the final judgment is made: death to humanity. The appearance of the child, however, may bring with it the reversibility of the fate of humanity, for it may be he who will build a cathedral from swear-words, if he is able to preserve the freedom of his soul.

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Szofia Tölli

Productions directed by Alessandro Serra and Savvas Stroumpos in Budapest

Performance analyses involving
the perspectives of Theatre Anthropology

The subject of my paper is two performances that were presented at the 11th Madách International Theatre Meeting (MITEM):¹ one is the closing event, *Tragùdia – The Song of Oedipus*,² directed by Alessandro Serra, and the other is *The Seagull*,³ staged by Savvas Stroumpos. In addition to analysing these performances, I explore their cultural and theatrical context and attempt to approach them from the perspective of Theatre Anthropology.

1 The festival was held between 6–28 April 2024 at the National Theatre in Budapest, <https://mitem.hu/program/eloadasok> (last visited: May 2, 2024).

2 Co-production performance – Sardegna Teatro, Teatro Bellini di Napoli, ERT Emilia Romagna Teatro Fondazione, Fondazione Teatro Due Parma. The online playbill of the performance: <https://mitem.hu/program/eloadasok/tragedia-oidipusz-eneke> (last visited: May 2, 2024).

3 Zero Point Theatre. The online playbill of the performance: <https://mitem.hu/program/eloadasok/siraly-2> (last visited: May 2, 2024).

The art and method of Alessandro Serra—links to Jerzy Grotowski

In 1999 Alessandro Serra founded the theatre company named TeatroPersona, which did not exclusively operate as a theatre company, but also as a theatre research group and a creative workshop. In his experiments, he wanted to follow the path laid down by Grotowski, focusing on the study of physical actions and the practice of so-called vibratory songs.

By placing the emphasis on the actor's actions, he relates to Grotowski's poor theatre, which emphasized the practice of the actors over aesthetic solutions. "[W]e found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, 'live' communion. This is an ancient theoretical truth, of course, but when rigorously tested in practice it undermines most of our usual ideas about theatre. It challenges the notion of theatre as a synthesis of disparate creative disciplines—literature, sculpture, painting, architecture, lighting, acting, (under the direction of a *metteur en scène*. This 'synthetic theatre' is the contemporary theatre, which we readily call the 'Rich Theatre'—rich in flaws" (Grotowski 1968, 19). In poor theatre, the actor is a central figure who plays a key role in creating a relationship between the performer and the audience during the performance. This required precise training of the actor, focusing on the total psychophysical unity of the actor, while trying to eliminate the fixed movements (masks) of learned behaviour. The aim was to influence the collective unconscious of the audience (Mendes de Jesus and Sousa Pereira 2022). Regarding the performance of *Tragùdia – The Song of Oedipus* at MITEM, we can state that Alessandro Serra tries to get close to the collective unconscious on the basis of a story familiar in European culture. He explains this in an interview with the MITEM team:

"The performance is based on myth, not history. Theatre is only created beyond the story, I would say, when the plot is 'negligible' or at least widely known. The audience of Sophocles was perfectly familiar with the story of Oedipus through oral tradition, but especially through the countless tragedies dedicated to him before Sophocles. Oedipus is not an invention of Sophocles. Just as the story of Hamlet is not Shakespeare's. Today, half

a millennium later, theatres around the world are full of *Hamlets*, proving that spectators don't go to the theatre because someone tells them a story." (Kornya 2024.)

As regards vibratory songs, it is important to point out that at this point we can also draw parallels with Grotowski's method. The Polish theatre-maker used the tools of Theatre Anthropology to research the ritual songs of ancient traditions. In doing so, he collaborated with artists and researchers of African descent: they collected and used African and diasporic songs of African origin (Mendes de Jesus and Sousa Pereira 2022). In the context of Serra's *Tragùdia*, we can say that the basic concept of the staging derives from the word "tragùdia" and its etymology: the Greek word for "tragedy" means "the song of the goat" or "the song for the goat" (Kornya 2024). He bases his staging on the role of the chorus and the songs of the chorus, in which the coordination of the actors' body movements appears as an important component.

Serra is involved in his projects as a creator with a complex theatrical vision, not "just" as a director. In addition to writing and staging his productions, he is personally responsible for the design and construction of sets, lighting and costumes. This is a departure from the so-called traditional mainstream theatre practice. Serra thinks of theatre in a coherent system and, in his own words, "writes for the stage", where writing is an act that comprises all theatrical processes. This approach results in a four-dimensional drama that takes place in the given place and time (as the fourth dimension), with 'readable' instructions guiding the actors' movements alongside the dialogue.

In Serra's *Tragùdia*, the lights are linked to the dramaturgy, while the set does not have an aesthetic function, but is a tangible material: it helps and determines the movement of the actors. The flickering, stroboscopic nature of the lights breaks the constancy of the scenery, giving a visual dimension of agitation and fragmentation.

The relationship of the staging with other theatrical traditions, aesthetic insights

It is crucial to interpret the ancient myths and mysteries evoked in the performance in an anthropological and cultural context. The purpose and point of the well-known story of Oedipus is for the blind “swollen-ankled” man to pass on a true secret, a sacred mystery at the end of his life. The performance can also be interpreted as a mystery play inspired by antiquity, revealing deeper cultural and sacral layers to the audience.

The method of the Italian theatre-maker is very similar to East and Southeast Asian theatrical forms. For the sake of simplicity, it is worth restricting the comparison to MITEM’s productions and programmes. Last year’s Theatre Olympics and MITEM performances include several Far Eastern ritual theatre forms that parallel Alessandro Serra’s method and theatre. In the Indian Kathakali performance (Tölli 2023a) we saw dramaturgically interconnected excerpts from the epic of the *Mahabharata*, while in the Tibetan opera (Tölli 2023b) the story of the dakini (fairy lady) Nangsa Obum was reenacted. We are talking about three very different theatrical and dance languages, but in addition to the fact that they make the viewer process the events happening on stage by elaborating a familiar plot (in their own context), there are other reasons why these styles and schools are comparable. It is worth highlighting some aspects that apply to all three performances.

The action is accompanied by songs alongside or replacing spoken words. The stage movement marks out a ritual space. The set is either absent or only indicative, and the location of the action is identified by the dialogue, the songs of the chorus and the context. The stage movements, the choreographies unfolding in the space, the spatial formations are also closely linked to the story being told. The choral songs in *Tragùdia* evoke the atmosphere of early Gregorian chants and harmonious polyphonic church songs. The movement of the chorus members often resembles a school of fish: it is defined by energy beams, currents, and shows patterns.

In an aesthetic analysis of the performance, it is important to examine the role and significance of the lights, the set and the costumes. In Serra’s case, the lights follow the dramaturgy, while the set is a tangible material that supports and defines the movement of the actors. The flickering of the lights and the illusory appearance of the set support the visual expression of the fragmented



Picture 1. Stage view from Alessandro Serra's production of *Tragùdia*
(Photo: Zsolt Eöri Szabó)

and agitated nature of the performance. The Gesamtkunstwerk-type artistic vision of the performance offers a unique experience that intensely engages the senses and the imagination of the audience.

Conclusion

Alessandro Serra's production of *Tragùdia – The Song of Oedipus* is an example of how theatre can reinterpret ancient Greek theatre, following and using Grotowski's theatrical method. As in the various forms of Eastern ritual theatre, this is supported by songs and body manipulation, complemented by minimalist but complex visuals rich in signs.



The art and method of Savvas Stroumpos— links to Theodoros Terzopoulos and Eugenio Barba

Along the lines of the anthropological and cultural context of the performance of *Tragùdia – The Song of Oedipus*, interpreted above, it is worth examining *The Seagull*, directed by Savvas Stroumpos and offered in the programme of MITEM. The production places particular emphasis on the theatrical techniques developed by Stroumpos' master, Theodoros Terzopoulos, allowing the deeper psychological layers of the characters to be explored. Terzopoulos's method is described in detail in last year's publication in Hungarian (Terzopulosz 2023). In his theatre, as we have seen with Serra, the actor is at the centre. The action on stage is governed by breathing, for which he provides his actors with the right basis in a complex training session.

Stroumpos's interpretation of Chekhov's play is linked to the tools of physical theatre and to the theatrical forms researched and summarised by Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese. Each character awaits his or her scene in a specific extra-daily position of balance. These positions allow the presence of the players to come alive before they actually start playing (Barba and Savarese 2020, 64). As with commedia dell'arte character types, the actors adopt a typical pose when they are not in the scene, and work with a set of movements suited to their role when they are in the foreground. In contrast to the director's MITEM performance last year, *Report to an Academy*, the most important stage element here is not movement, but frozen images and interlocking gazes, as the dialogue is mostly delivered in a tension-filled stillness.

Barba and Savarese describe how the so-called unstable balance, which is almost fundamental to Eastern theatrical forms, is also present in Western theatres, for example in the commedia dell'arte style. This observation is particularly interesting since the postures of the characters in *The Seagull* are reminiscent of the poses of the various role types anyway. This particular state of balance leads to stylisation, to aesthetic suggestiveness (Barba and Savarese 2020, 64), and this is also true for the performance examined. Here, the extra-daily balance evokes the *demi-plié* position of classical ballet (Barba and Savarese 2020, 67): knees bent, all parts of the feet touching the ground, feet crossed.



Picture 2. Scene from Savvas Stroumpos's performance of *The Seagull*—Elpiniki Marapidi in the role of Nina, and Savvas Stroumpos in the role of Trigorin (Photo: Zsolt Eöri Szabó)

The characters', especially Trigorin's, hand positions captivate the eye. As with balance, we glimpse the extra-daily, but the definite codification typical of Asian theatre (Barba and Savarese 2020, 154) is not perceptible. The actor tenses his fingers at every moment of the scenes, which increases the flow of his energies and helps to prevent those who are not in the scene but are on the stage from entering a state of rest.

The list could be extended further, as the performance would offer a good basis for an analysis based on all the dictionary entries of *Színházantropológiai szótár* (A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology). However, the scope of this paper does not allow this.

Analysis of the performance

In *The Seagull*, we see that the set, like in *Tragùdia*, strives for minimalism, but instead of the side and backstage elements serving as a screen, we see a white platform on the floor. More precisely, there is an empty white circle in the

middle of the stage, with two white projections on the sides, smaller platforms, and a tiny chair on the right. There is seemingly nothing to suggest the lakeside setting described by Chekhov. Five actors are on stage simultaneously: Nina, Treplev, Arkadina, Trigorin and the mysterious Pierrot. Stroumpos has therefore got rid of the estate manager and his wife, as well as many other characters. The focus is on the main characters and the seagull itself. Nina, Treplev and Arkadina are behind the white circle, while Trigorin is seated on a chair lit by a separate circle of light. Pierrot starts in the middle and then takes the platform closer to the audience. The novelist, by virtue of his physical position, is clearly presented as an outsider, while he too becomes involved in the strange state of consciousness unfolding within the white circle.

During the scenes, only those who are in dialogue or who are delivering a monologue occupy the circle, and then everyone goes back to their original place. Each character's movement is unique, revealing the personality traits of the character. Nina's soft movements suggest her fragility, Trigorin's smoothness is evident in his movements, while Arkadina's dual personality is portrayed in the greatest amplitudes—sometimes broken and fallen, sometimes chatting and laughing with feigned ease.

Pierrot performs several functions: he narrates by reciting the author's instructions and occasionally engages in dialogue with Treplev. He can also be seen as Kostya's inner voice, who is above all a seagull himself. The way he brings to life the movement and the voice of the water bird is an astonishing feat of body awareness and body management.

Conclusion

In *The Seagull*, the director interprets and reinterprets Chekhov's classic work in a unique way. The director's method combined with the actors' learned technique creates a layered and intense performance in which the use of extra-daily balance is most salient, but the hand positions also add important elements to the shaping of the roles.

Summary

On the one hand, the two MITEM performances above provide a point of reference for examining the work of the theatre-makers who have been prominent

in European theatre: through the productions of Serra and Stroumpos, different methods (Grotowski's poor theatre, Barba's collections) are kept alive on the contemporary stage. On the other hand, through them all the knowledge contained in the theoretical works and collected volumes of the masters is given practical meaning.

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Katalin Gyürky

Contemporary dramas and their authors at the 15th jubilee DESZKA Festival

DESZKA Festival, which has focused on contemporary Hungarian drama since its inception in 2006, was held for the first time since 2019 in an interpersonal and reorganised form, welcoming theatre-makers and the wider audience for the fifteenth time this year at the Csokonai National Theatre in Debrecen. The more than one-week-long event series, which took place between 9 and 18 May 2024 and featured thirty-one performances and numerous accompanying events, examined, in the spirit of rethinking, the situation of contemporary Hungarian drama from perspectives not used before.

The idea that the popularisation of contemporary Hungarian drama has to start somewhere in childhood was also demonstrated by two programme series at this year's DESZKA Festival. CSIP—Csokonai Youth Programme—which has been operating successfully in the theatre of the "Civis city" for years, organised a conference on 9 and 10 May, the opening days of the Biennale, with youth performances, round-table discussions and workshops to explore the topic of how theatre itself, the theatrical form, could offer solutions to process trauma

experienced by young children, from pre-school to primary school. Then, from 11 May, parallel to DESZKA's adult performances, the now long-established GörDESZKA section also started its programme under the coordination of the Vojtina Puppet Theatre, the co-organiser of the event series alongside Csokonai National Theatre. Through their selection of performances invited to the festival, addressing a very broad age range of audiences from three to nineteen years old, they proved how valid and relevant puppetry and the puppet as a medium can be in reflecting on the problems of our time. These include the psychological abuse among children, which is becoming increasingly common in classroom communities (see the production *Az osztály vesztese* [Loser of the Class] written by Anikó Wéber and directed by Angéla Kolozsi), or our Covid-induced traumas, which were explored in the Budapest Puppet Theatre's adult show, *Dekameron 2023*, a wonderful combination of adult theatre and puppet theatre, based on texts by ten contemporary Hungarian authors.

By mentioning the ten contemporary authors in the context of *Dekameron 2023*—as the puppet theatre production is based on texts by Péter Fábrián, Dóra Gimesi, János Háty, Sándor Jászberényi, Sári O Horváth, Lajos Parti Nagy, Csaba Székely, Rémusz Szikszai, István Tasnádi, Péter Závada—we have arrived at one of the main questions of the jubilee DESZKA Festival, which, according to the organisers' intent, was not necessarily answered by the adult performances invited to the festival from the most popular theatres in Hungary and abroad but by the accompanying programmes called SzéIDESZKA. Namely, the question of "What does the term 'contemporary playwright' mean today?" was addressed through a series of book presentations, round-table discussions and stage readings.

As a courtesy of Selinunte Publishing, the tireless torchbearer and book publisher of contemporary Hungarian drama, the lectures were accompanied by a series of book launches, in the framework of which the head of the publishing house, István Sándor L, and myself, discussed the above-mentioned topic with Ákos Németh, chairman of the Playwrights' Round Table, which had been invited to co-organise DESZKA, along with András Forgách, István Tasnádi, Szabolcs Hajdu, Attila Lőrinczy, and Andrea Pass, and it was within the framework of this series that another discussion took place with this year's guest of honour, Károly Szakonyi, who was addressed by Ákos Herczeg, editor of the *Alföld* journal.

Symptomatically, the answer—although many authors responded—pointed in one direction: the modern-day playwright is forced to diversify their activities. See Attila Lőrinczy, who, in addition to writing, also works as a dramaturg, or

István Tasnádi, who also directs performances. Szabolcs Hajdu, who is both a film director and an actor, had the most roles at DESZKA Festival: he was not only the director and scriptwriter of the Radnóti Miklós Theatre's production of *Legközelebbi ember* (The Closest Man), but also one of the actors in the show, while the screening of his latest film, *Kálmán-nap* (Kálmán's Day) was included in one of the very important and innovative SzéIDESZKA programmes, Contemporary Dramas in Cinema, which was organised for the first time this year. Similarly, there was a screening of the film *Memo*, based on the screenplay by István Tasnádi, whose other text intended for the stage, *Szibériai csárdás* (Siberian Csárdás), was performed in a large stage production by the Attila József Theatre.

But the fact that the concept of "contemporary Hungarian playwright" can be interpreted even more broadly than the above-mentioned "occupations" is well illustrated by Gábor Gulyás, who, as an aesthete, alongside his visual arts projects, created his drama *Új honfoglalás* (New Conquest), which was presented to the audience in the programme of DESZKA in the form of a stage reading directed by Árpád Árkosi and performed by the Csokonai National Theatre.

Another example of how many different selves can be hidden within one creative person is Csaba Kiss, whose latest contemporary Hungarian drama, *Júdás* (Judas), was also directed by him and was also presented at the festival in the form of a stage reading.

If the concept of a "contemporary Hungarian playwright" includes and can include so many things, the question rightly arises as to whether a person translating to Hungarian or from Hungarian into another European language becomes a playwright himself/herself in the process of translating a text written by another. One of SzéIDESZKA's round-table discussions, "Contemporary Dramas Abroad", explored this question as well, as András Kozma, Margit Garajszki, George Volceanov and Ákos Németh shared their views on what factors influence the marketability of a drama translated from Hungarian for theatres in Slovakia, Romania, Russia or even in German- or English-speaking countries. The quality of the translation and the translator's expertise is only the first step, because if there is no domestic or foreign intention—and no financial resources are available—to promote these texts, the translator can hardly become a contemporary playwright, or even a recognised translator, as the finished or unfinished texts will remain in the drawer. The situation is of course quite different in areas where Hungarian is the minority language and bilingual

theatres operate, and it is different again in Russia where Hungarian texts have not really made a breakthrough in theatres, apart from István Örkény's plays. Not even when they are translated into Russian by such excellent translators as Oksana Yakimenko or Tatiana Voronkina, who deceased in 2022. In the meantime, sometimes chance does help talent—the career of Ákos Németh is a good example for this as he has published more drama books in Italian, English, German, Turkish, etc. than in Hungarian.

Speaking of translation, the University Theatre of Debrecen has been organising a translation competition under the name “Egy sima, egy fordított” for years, whereby those who feel like can translate foreign-language dramas into Hungarian. This year, DESZKA Festival hosted this competition's award ceremony again, with the three winning texts being turned into stage readings by second-year students of directing at the Hungarian University of Theatre and Film Arts—Mihály Kepics, János Botond Vasicsek and Mózes Horváth—and read by the actors of the Csokonai National Theatre.



Picture 1. *Is a stage adaptation a new drama?* – Round table discussion in a SzéIDESZKA session (Photo: Csokonai National Theatre)



Picture 2. Kata Pető and Barnabás Rohonyi in the show *Milf*, directed by Krisztián Gergye (Photo: Csokonai National Theatre)

And if the concept of a “contemporary Hungarian playwright” is so complex, even fluid, then what about “contemporary Hungarian drama”? The answer to this question was sought by another roundtable discussion in the SzÉLDESZKA programme, which touched on one of the important novelty of this year’s festival in its very title.

The event titled “Is stage adaptation a new drama?” was organised because, unlike previous biennials, this year’s jubilee festival included several adult productions based on classic or contemporary novels and short stories. Talking about the stage adaptation of Dezső Kosztolányi’s *Anna Édes* by István Szabó K., the stage adaptation of András Visky’s *Kitelepítés* (Displacement) by Árpád Ákos, the monodrama of Sándor Tar’s short story titled *A mi utcánk* (Our Street) directed by Attila Szabó, and many other adaptations of this kind not presented

at DESZKA Festival, dramaturg Ildikó Lőkös and her colleagues—István Szabó K., András Kozma, Ernő Verebes, András Visky—stated: yes, a script adapted from the original text for the stage can be evaluated as a contemporary Hungarian drama. That is why it is important that the playbill for these performances should not feature the author of the classic work as the author of the play, but should instead say something along the lines of *Anna Édes. Adapted for the stage from Dezső Kosztolányi's novel by Ildikó Lőkös and István Szabó K.*

Of course, we should be under no illusion: this latter issue—whether it is an adaptation of a classical work or a contemporary drama that is being performed on stage—is obviously only of interest and importance to a professional audience. Fortunately, the civilian audience attending the DESZKA Festival also hailed the performances that were based on contemporary dramas—see, for example, *A sűgő* (The Prompter), a production based on a text by the young actor Nándor Berettyán of the National Theatre, or the two-character but all the more monumental production of the play *Milf*, written by Viktor Kovács and Dominik Kovács, directed by Krisztián Gergye, which addresses the problems of middle-aged women, or, from across the border, the play *Félelem és reszketés Szabadkán* (Fear and Trembling in Subotica), written and directed by Borisz Kucsov of the Subotica Kosztolányi Dezső Theatre, which offered a glimpse of contemporary Subotica in the form of a bizarre dystopia billed as a “comic-book drama”. Just like the adaptation of Szilárd Borbély's novel *Nincstelenek* (The Dispossessed), directed by Bálint Botos at the Csokonai National Theatre, or the production of *Apró, véres balladák* (Tiny, Bloody Ballads), based on Endre Ady's texts, unknown to many, were also highly appreciated by the audience. After all, there could be no more wonderful acknowledgement than the enthusiastic applause—often a standing ovation—lasting for long minutes after each performance confirming that contemporary Hungarian dramas, and thus the DESZKA Festival, which promotes and celebrates contemporary Hungarian dramas, has a place and relevance in our theatrical life both in Hungary and beyond our borders.

Katalin Gyürky

Off we go again

About the show *Expecting Godot*

At the end of September 2024, the career of István Szabó K. as a director arrived at his third adaptation of *Godot*. By staging Samuel Beckett's legend of waiting, the Jászai Mari Prize-winning director maps and tracks the changes in the world and in his view of the world every ten years: what one could—or could not—hope for two decades ago, and ten years later, and what might—or might not—give reason for optimism in the present situation, viewed from the here and now.

The difference between the director's three adaptations of *Godot* so far, and the continuous change in his horizon of expectation (of himself, of theatre-making and of the world) related to this, is perhaps most evident in the current modification of the title of the production. For while his 2004 and 2014 productions of Beckett's drama, retaining the title of the original Hungarian translation of the play, *Godot-ra várva* (*Waiting for Godot*), emphasized waiting for something—focusing on the pointlessness of it and the inevitability of being destroyed while waiting—the current production at the Csokonai National Theatre, based on the title of the recent translation of Beckett's work, focuses on waiting for someone. *Godot-t várva* (*Expecting Godot*)—reads the title, amplifying the allegory of God in the drama, which can be interpreted in so many ways, a longing for the redemption or *restitutio* expected/expectable from the person of Godot.

In light of this, the set becomes extremely evocative: using the visual elements of Beckett's own *Godot* production, which he staged only once, István Szabó K. and set designer Ianis Vasilatos envisioned the Beckettian barren landscape on the audience's right, on top of a piano, with a tree jutting out of it, a tree on which Jesus was once crucified with the two criminals. The positioning of two small human-like figures on the piano, approaching the tree, may already lead us to the association that Estragon and Vladimir, who appear in the meantime, are perhaps the doppelgangers or successors of these two criminals. One of whom—as the important message of Vladimir, played by Zoltan Seress, is heard in the show—according to a certain Gospel source, was saved...

The fact that the Beckettian interior is not positioned in the centre, but to the side, indicates that the director has placed at least as much, if not more emphasis on the path that Vladimir and Estragon—and in other respects, Pozzo and Lucky—must/should take to gain redemption and mercy than on the elements of the set. Yet the uncertainty of the fulfilment of divine *restitution*



Picture 1. Árpád Bakota and Zoltán Seress at the press rehearsal of the production *Godot-t várva* (Expecting Godot) at the Csokonai National Theatre on 25 September 2024, directed by István Szabó K. (Photo: Theater.hu – Béla Ilovsky)

is also demonstrated by the texts and diagrams written by the actors on the black wall surrounding the stage during the play, the centrepiece of which is a drawing imitating a hangman's game.

When the two criminals (?), travellers / highwaymen (?), Estragon and Vladimir, lament at the very beginning of the play about whether they should hang themselves on the tree if Godot does not come and about who should hang himself first, the "GodøT" inscription on the wall becomes a symbol of the postponement of their decision until the end of the play: if they hang themselves prematurely and do not wait for Godot to arrive, it is no good, and if they do not hang themselves, it is no good either, because in Beckett's world, man, created in the image and likeness of God (see the syllable 'Go' in Estragon's nickname, Gogo, and the 'D' in Vladimir's nickname, Didi, implying that their names reflect their nature as God's creatures), is exposed to the elusiveness of time. In conjunction with this, man is also exposed to a lack of linearity, to the uncertainty of the present and the future as such, including the coming of Godot.

The indefinability of the present and the future is already indicated at the beginning of the play by the dialogue between Vladimir and Estragon: Zoltán Seress' Estragon convinces Vladimir, played by Árpád Bakota, talking about the day of Godot's coming: "He said Saturday. I think. I must have made a note of it." To this Estragon rebuts, "But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? Or Monday? Or Friday?"

But if there is nothing to provide a clue as to the present day, or the present hour, or the present minute, the only option for the two figures heading for the tree is to hold on to the past. In keeping with their habitus—see Vladimir's educated wit, and his counterpart and complement, the ignorant instinctive Estragon's "attitude"—they sometimes have flashbacks to an episode they perhaps experienced once (or more times) in the history of humanity they represent. In this directorial concept, the impression is that the first act of Beckett's drama is a continuation of an unwritten Act Zero, in which what was once lived and experienced is resurfacing here and now in the form of fragments of memories and reminiscences.

In order to evoke these, to give a sense of *déjà vu* on stage, the director and the actors playing the two characters make adequate use of the props indicated by the author's instructions in Beckett's drama. The hat is especially important for Vladimir; as if without wearing it—as it happens in the second act—the

character, who is prone to philosophizing and pondering, were not only be incapable of thinking, but could not reach—so to speak, could not extend to—the ethereal heights to which his thoughts aspire. In contrast, his complementary companion, the instinctive Estragon, is constantly having trouble with his shoes. His earthbound nature, the satisfaction of his material needs, the suppression of his hunger and his desire to sleep are further reinforced by the presence or absence of his footwear, i.e., his “ground-grasping” accessory. As a result of their unlikeness, the quality of their memories and even their ability to remember are also different. While the idealist Vladimir, who is inclined to abstraction and still enthusiastic and hopeful about ideals, can recall certain fragments of history he once experienced, such as the time he pulled Estragon out of the Seine, or certain mythical events—see his reflections on the two criminals—his travel companion, who can only think in material terms, is only reminded by the *Holy Scripture* of satisfying his physical needs: “I remember the maps of the Holy Land. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty.” But most of the time, Gogo cannot think of anything in response to Didi’s questions, because, compared to his partner, he is even less or not at all capable of remembering. As a victim of collective and individual memory loss, he cannot even remember how long he has been unhappy.

In István Szabó K.’s remarkably coherent staging, elaborated to the finest detail, the difference in the remembering abilities of the two travellers/highwaymen—who are actually “on the road (highway men)” because of their being stuck on the road, condemned to be stranded—also determines the performance of the actors who embody them: while Vladimir’s contemplative, philosophical attitude is perfectly reflected in Seress’s extremely strong scenic presence, seasoned with humanistic elements, often with empathy and neighbourly love for Estragon, the “clown theme” so important in Beckett’s drama, and the *clown* character of the two figures, can be detected mainly in Bakota’s acting, interspersed with elements of movement theatre. The difference between the two thus engenders a higher quality of “clowning”: instead of tacky clown jokes, they produce more burlesque-like elements, scenes peppered with a Buster Keaton-type of humour, where Vladimir’s contemplation “cools down” Estragon’s similarly ephemeral clownish optimism.

Yet time does not pass, but rather goes round in circles, which is illustrated in Szabó K.’s adaptation by the behaviour of the two other characters, the Pozzo-Lucky duo, also intended to represent certain types of people, arriving

perpendicular to the horizontal axis of Vladimir-Estragon. They are the embodiment of the master-slave relationship, of the superior-subordinate order that has been inherent in the nature of man from time immemorial, and they also signal by their constant return to the stage: no, no one should expect that beyond the perpetual cycle of days and nights, there will be any progress on any level, especially not by constantly ending up in the same place. Csaba Sorbán's finicky master Pozzo leads the servant Lucky, impressively portrayed by Hunor Pál, carrying all sorts of trinkets, suitcases and chairs. In Vladimir's eyes, with their "transformation" upon their re-arrival, and in Estragon's eyes, with their sameness or even unrecognizability, the two represent not only humanity in a perpetual, cyclical state of re-generation—for one of the most powerful sentences in the play confronts us with the notion that "women give birth astride of a grave"—but also further reinforce the mythical circularity of time, i.e., the futility of waiting, of hoping for a possible divine *restitution*. And this is true even if each time they depart, they say goodbye with the phrase "God bless



Picture 2. Árpád Bakota, Csaba Sorbán and Zoltán Seress at the press rehearsal of the production *Godot-t várva* (Expecting Godot) at the Csokonai National Theatre on 25 September 2024, directed by István Szabó K. (Photo: Theater.hu – Béla Ilvoszky)

you,” which becomes extremely bizarre in this milieu. So much so that at one point it even occurs to Vladimir that he has actually slept through the human suffering that surfaces here through flashes of memory—for example, in Szabó K.’s production, the Holocaust, evoked through the looming image of “a billion dead”, “a mountain of corpses”, along with a gas chamber-like set piece that at one point spews out shoes—and if he has slept through it, he is not worthy of redemption.

Yet, the quintessence of being unworthy of mercy is Pozzo, who, in the first act, in Csaba Sorbán’s impressive performance, represented a Lord degenerated into a male prostitute, superior to all, especially Lucky—see the similarity between the names Godot and Pozzo, underpinned by the dialogue upon their arrival: “POZZO: I present myself: Pozzo. VLADIMIR: No way. ESTRAGON: He said Godot. VLADIMIR: No way.” The same effect is achieved by the vertical addition of Pozzo’s name to the inscription “GodøT.” However, by the second act, Pozzo has become blind and vulnerable. And as a blind man, he “does not know the concept of time,” which is why the following monologue bursts out of him in Sorbán’s heartbreakingly simple, unadorned performance: “Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It’s abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we’ll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you?” And since he has no idea whether time is advancing or has stalled, he now cries for mercy, timeless and clumsy.

His increasingly desperate cries, however, also reflect the “attitude” of Vladimir and Estragon, which has somewhat changed by the second act. This can happen because while in Szabó K.’s direction the first act is a continuation of a previous, unwritten act—Act Zero—the second act, following Beckett’s intent, becomes a mirror image of the first, only a much darker one. For while in the first act the criminals were only themselves, in the second one they start to play “Pozzo-and-Lucky”. This intersection of the two human axes, the horizontal and the vertical, thus also demonstrates at the level of “human matter”: there is nothing new under the sun, we keep repeating the same traits cyclically, but in ever lower forms. This is reflected in, Vladimir and Estragon’s, the two Good Samaritans’ becoming Merciless Samaritans as they hesitate over the matter of helping Pozzo, who has fallen to the ground.

But that is not the only indication. When Vladimir, having got rid of his own hat, puts Lucky's hat on his head—a hat that in the first act made the servant a half-thinking being between animal and human, and in which Hunor Pál enthralled the audience with a seemingly unutterable, incoherent monologue, at the same time tormenting his (Lucky's) master and the characters on the road listening to him—this hat proves insufficient for him as a means of making him to think. In its possession he cannot continue—we feel—not only to think but also to exist, to be. And yet he cries, 'Off we go again,' when suddenly the child (Márton Sinka), Godot's messenger appears again—for the second time, almost in a circular fashion—symbolizing the hope of redemption. But as much as the arrival of the young character of Beckett's play seems promising, it is equally unnerving. For the Boy's typical answer to Vladimir's questions about the person of Godot, about his coming, about the circumstances of his existence alongside Godot is, "I don't know, Sir."

I don't know who Godot is, I don't know if he will ever come, I don't know if I am Cain or Abel, or the two criminals, one of whom may have been saved, or Christ, waiting to be resurrected after the crucifixion. Or like this, as *ecce homo*, as a condensed way of being, everything and everyone together? Most probably the latter but, seeing the helpless immobility of Beckett's characters portrayed by the four actors, and given Godot's continued absence, we can only hope for the mercy of even having any knowledge about it.

Godot-t várva (Expecting Godot). Production of the Csokonai National Theatre – Debrecen

Opening night: September 27, 2024

Directed by István Szabó K.

Translated by former ELTE students of French, led by Ágnes Horváth

Played by Zoltán Seress Jászai Mari Award winner, Árpád Bakota Jászai Mari Award winner, Csaba Sorbán, Hunor Pál, Márton Milán Sinka

Costume Designer: Florina Belinda Vasilatos

Set designer: Ianis Vasilatos

Prompter: Adrienn Góz

Stage manager: Fruzsina Nagy

About our authors

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He graduated from Liszt Ferenc University of Music with a degree in choral conducting (2004) and a diploma in orchestral conducting (2013). In 2012 he was awarded 3rd prize at Aranyfálca International Conducting Competition and received the MTVA Special Prize. He has worked with the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Concerto Budapest Orchestra, Kodály Philharmonic Debrecen, Szeged Symphony Orchestra, Szolnok Symphony Orchestra, and regularly conducts the concerts of Danubia Orchestra. He has also worked with the Theater des Westens in Berlin, the Deutsches Theater München, the Apollo Theater Stuttgart and the Musical Dome in Cologne. In 2018 he was appointed Deputy Music Director of the Palladium Theater Stuttgart. In 2023, he graduated from the University of Miskolc with a degree in creative writing, and in 2024 from Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary with a degree in arts administration and arts management. His research interests include entertainment and theatre at the turn of the century.

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Theater specialist, theater historian, editor. She studied Hungarian–Russian at the University of Debrecen, then graduated from the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church as a theater historian. At the same time, she obtained her professional qualification as a writer at the joint course of OSZMI and PIM. Her writings have been published, among others, on *KULter.hu*, the art portal *ART7*, and *Magyar Nemzet*, and in 2023 in the volume *Metszéspontok – Fejezetek a temesvári színház történetéből* (Chapters from the history of the Temesvár theater; Székelyudvarhely: Top Invest). In 2019, she received the grand prize at the 7th Friss Hús film festival critic competition for her review *Húsba rejtve*. From 2022, she is a doctoral student at the University of Theater and Film Arts. She is also involved in Indian classical dance and completed her studies in Bhubaneswar, India. Member of Padmini Dance Ensemble, founder of Rukmini Sofia Dance.

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János Vecsernyés

Cinematographer and director. He has been making TV and feature films, documentaries and TV commercials since 1986. He is an associate professor at the University of Theatre and Film Arts, teaching cinematography and directing. Major works as cinematographer: *Peer Gynt* – TV film (directed by István Gaál, 1987); *Gaudiopolis* – TV film (directed by Erika Szántó, 1988); *Hoppá (Whoops)* – feature film (directed by Gyula Maár, 1992); *Balkán! Balkán! (Chira Chiralina)* – feature film (directed by Gyula Maár, 1993); *Üvegtigris 2. (Glass Tiger 2)* – feature film (directed by Péter Rudolf, 2005); *Szabadság, szerelem (Children of Glory)* – feature film (directed by Kriszta Goda, 2006); *A zöld sárkány gyermekei (Children of the Green Dragon)* – feature film (directed by Bence Miklauzic, 2010); *Vorzimmer zur Hölle (A pokol előszobája, The Hall of Hell)* – TV film (directed by Michael Keusch, 2012). Major films as director: *Kvartett (Quartet)* – feature film (2000); *Emelet (Miscalculation)* – feature film (2006); *Utolsó órák (The Last Hours)* – TV film (2013).

